

Survey of Digitized Rare Catholica

Summary Report of Results

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In March 2011, researchers designed and distributed a survey to 236 North American Catholic institutions including those listed in the American Catholic Colleges and Universities' (ACCU) online directory. The survey's purpose was to gather information regarding the digitization of Catholic materials at North American Catholic college, university, and seminary libraries and archives. 144 institutions responded providing a 61% response rate. Respondents had the option to remain anonymous, or provide their name and affiliation; 72% chose to identify themselves. The survey data provide an overview of what Catholic materials have been digitized, how these materials are being used by faculty, students and external communities, and whether there are issues involving digitization projects that are unique to Catholic materials or institutions.

Many institutions (67%) indicated that they have not yet digitized their Catholic resources. Of those which have digitized some Catholic resources, most have been in the form of images and visual materials or textual primary sources such as letters, manuscripts, diaries or papers. The three major barriers to digitizing Catholic materials include: lack of money, lack of staff, and lack of time. The majority of institutions do not yet have an institutional repository, nor do they have a digital librarian or a unit devoted to creating digital collections. Some, however, expressed that these resources may be available in the future.

It is encouraging to note that among the institutions that have digitized Catholic resources, 68% report that they are being used by faculty, users outside of the institution, and some undergraduate students and staff. When queried as to what materials the institutions would like to digitize if all barriers to digitization were removed, an extensive list of viable rare

collections was provided. However, some respondents indicated difficulty in identifying what materials are of value to the research community, while others appear to be concerned about copyright issues, and gaining permission from their religious order or the diocese.

A vast majority (84%) of institutions is not presently collaborating with other Catholic colleges, universities, or seminaries on digital Catholic projects; however a good number (47%) may be interested in such collaboration, while 32% are definitely interested. Most respondents have not joined a collaborative digital repository such as HathiTrust or OAlster, and are not sure about the benefits of joining.

Despite the fact that many of the institutions possess viable, unique Catholic resources that would benefit the Catholic research community, most have not been digitized and may not be in the near future due to lack of funding, staffing, or the facilities to carry out digitization projects. Since most of the digitized resources are generated from larger institutions, collaboration with the smaller colleges to promote all forms of Catholica may prove highly beneficial to Catholic scholarship writ large. The survey results indicate that once the resources are digitized, the research community will utilize them.

Survey results: http://bit.ly/Survey_results

Survey questions: http://bit.ly/Survey_questions