

Centre for History and Economics  
The Digitization of History  
Meeting in the Rylands Room, King's College, June 8 2007

These are some of the suggestions and questions that came up in our excellent meeting with Professor Grafton.

1. The digitization of history can encourage and can also discourage the use of archives and manuscript collections. It might be interesting to combine projects of digitization or micro-filming of archives with support for visits to archives, especially by young researchers. This might be of particular use in relation to archives in Africa, where one of the concerns of archivists has been with the decline in visits by historians from other countries; "no one would come here any more."
2. Could we think more about a universal archive of archives, in the sense of a worldwide on-line project of digitizing finding aids? A finding aid to finding aids? A project of this sort should be universally accessible, as well as universal in coverage.
3. An archive of archives should have an "easy interface," with "low bandwidth" requirements.
4. There are important technical questions which would have to be addressed, in relation to finding aids in Cyrillic, Arabic, and other scripts, and more generally to "unicode for non-Western languages."
5. It would be important to consider the sustainability of an eventual on-line project, both in the sense of the conservation of the digitized materials and in the sense of the continuity of effort and resources. The internet is strewn with statistical series that are not updated, and links that do not work. Does JSTOR, which has transformed graduate instruction in history, have a fifty-year plan? Should there be a fifty-year plan for an archive of archives?

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