Project at a Glance

• Provide Minnesotans with convenient online access to cultural records, including those found in museums, libraries, archives, government centers, schools and businesses
• Help organizations digitize their documents to make them more widely available
• Build computer capacity and develop electronic databases to enable people across the state and world to gain access to historical and cultural records

Project Description

The Minnesota Digital Library project was developed through a collaboration between library, museum and education organizations from across Minnesota. Work began in the summer of 2001. In August 2005, the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition launched its first collection of digitized photographic images, “Minnesota Reflections” (http://reflections.mndigital.org). This collection features digital representations of more than 5,000 photographic images created before 1909. They were contributed to the library by more than 55 organizations.

The continuing vision of the Minnesota Digital Library is to create convenient online access to digital copies of materials from all aspects of life in Minnesota, including cultural heritage, government, the arts, the sciences, industry and leisure. The coalition particularly seeks items in small historical societies, libraries, county and township offices, and private collections. The Minnesota Digital Library is a computer-centered means of preserving valuable information and knowledge of the significant resources of Minnesota and making these resources easily accessible.

Minnesota’s libraries, archives, historical societies and museums contain millions of items and add hundreds of thousands each year. They include numerous unique and valuable resources. Collectively, these collections represent the memory and heritage of the state and its people. The Minnesota Digital Library is a means of providing broad access through digitization to many of these resources while promoting preservation for the most fragile objects or those objects most subject to damage.

The target audiences for the Minnesota Digital Library are elementary and secondary school students and teachers, college and university students and faculty, and people from all walks of life interested in exploring the rich, often inaccessible resources of the state. This project enables each audience to use the digital forms of the original items in their research, learning and leisure activities, to help them develop and shape their understanding of Minnesota.

The members of the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition Steering Committee conduct and guide the work of the library. They represent 13 organizations and include people with administrative, computing, library, collection, organization and communication talents and skills. The coalition’s goal is to develop digitization projects beyond the photographs represented in “Minnesota Reflections.” Ongoing projects target historical and current documents. Future projects will add audio and video recordings and objects created in digital format, while continuing the work with images and documents.

The Minnesota Digital Library Coalition established a strong foundation for this project by adopting and disseminating best practices for digitization and description, purchasing and installing servers, scanners and software to digitize objects, and providing public access to those objects. Coalition members have conducted training in digitizing and describing objects for people in museum, library and education professions.
“Minnesota Reflections,” the signature project of the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition, represents the strength of collaboration between members of different organizations. Steering committee members work together to direct and execute the project. Participants collaborate by sharing their collections and information about the original objects and their digital copies.

Most of the funding for the Minnesota Digital Library to date has come from Library Services and Technology Act grants, provided by the State Library Services and School Technologies division of the Minnesota Department of Education. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities also contributed funding to the project. Other organizations have provided considerable time and talent.

Minnesota Digital Library Coalition

The Minnesota Digital Library Coalition is made up of professionals from the library, museum, archives, historical society, education and government communities in Minnesota. The coalition and its steering committee and management team work to create a server and database environment and use imaging tools to support ongoing and future work in establishing collections and providing services for public use of the collections.

In addition, coalition members work with local, regional and statewide organizations to identify and digitize the state’s unique resources and special collections. Libraries, historical societies, universities, high schools and archives all have contributed personnel time to the early stages of the development of the Minnesota Digital Library.

Mission Statement of the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition

The Minnesota Digital Library Coalition will collaboratively build coordinated access to Minnesota’s unique resources and special collections in digital and electronic formats for use by the people of Minnesota and, through the Internet, the people of the world.

Minnesota Digital Library Web sites, Home page:
www.mndigital.org

“Minnesota Reflections” collection:
reflections.mndigital.org

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Members of the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition include:
St. Cloud State University
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Winona State University
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Office of the Chancellor
University of Minnesota Libraries
Minnesota Historical Society
MINITEX Library Information Network

Members, participants and supporters of the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition include:
American Swedish Institute
Anoka County Historical Society
Becker County Historical Society
Big Stone County Historical Society
Beltrami County Historical Society
Blue Earth County Historical Society
Carleton County Historical Society
Central Minnesota Libraries Exchange
Clearwater County Historical Society
Concordia University, St. Paul
Cottonwood County Historical Society
Dakota County Historical Society
Douglas County Historical Society
Fillmore County Historical Society
Freeborn County Historical Society
Goodhue County Historical Society
Gustavus Adolphus College
Hamline University
Hennepin History Museum
Iron Range Research Center
James J. Hill Library
Lake County Historical Society
Macalester College
Martin County Historical Society
MetroNet (Metropolitan area multitype regional system)
Minneapolis Public Library
Minnesota Educational Media Organization
Minnesota Library Association
 Nicollet County Historical Society
Northeast Minnesota Historical Center

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Nicollet County Historical Society
Northeast Minnesota Historical Center
Northern Lights Library Network
Otter Tail County Historical Society
Pennington County Historical Society
Pipestone County Historical Society
Pope County Historical Society
Renville County Historical Society
Roseau County Historical Society
Sacred Heart Area Historical Society
St. Benedict’s Monastery
St. John’s Abbey
St. Olaf College
Scott County Historical Society
Sherburne County Historical Society
Southcentral Minnesota Inter-Library Exchange
Southeast Library System
Southwest Area Multicounty Multitype Interlibrary Exchange
Sterns History Museum
Stevens County Historical Society
Stewartville Public Library
Stillwater Public Library
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District
University of Minnesota, Duluth
University of Minnesota Libraries, University Archives
University of St. Thomas
Wanda Gag House Association
White Bear Lake Area Historical Society

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