

## **Practice Innovation: Moving a large, well-known web exhibit into a Library-managed content environment.**

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**Abstract:** The Virginia Center for Digital History's award-winning web site, "The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the Civil War" is a well-loved and heavily visited web site hosted at the University of Virginia since 1993. Its collection showcases a wide variety of manuscripts, newspapers, digital images, maps and teaching materials. The site had been continuously developed until 2007, when a grant-funded project to move the site from the Center into the University of Virginia Library's digital collections was developed. The site featured over 90,000 unique URLs spread across three servers, and needed to be made portable, low-maintenance, and reliable in a new server environment.

The migration took fifteen months and included a complete redevelopment of the technology stack, notably including a move away from databases in favor of modern indexing software. Migration stewards went through a phased process of evaluation, data standardization and editing, site reconstruction, testing and finally implementation and release to the public. The project benefited from the use of a number of free, open-source software solutions and delivered an exhibit that maintained the functionality and 'look and feel' of the site, while harmonizing the technologies used across the Library's online environment. This was the vanguard of a new Sustaining Digital Scholarship initiative at the University of Virginia Library, and was an innovative application of digital curation principles in the context of a large academic and research library.

This poster presentation will explain the major challenges in each phase, the strategies used to overcome them, and the resources essential to the task. It presents best practices regarding modernizing digital collections and how to curate them with an eye towards sustainable collections management. The lessons learned will be of interest to groups and institutions charged with maintaining large, heterogeneous collections with limited resources and changing technologies.

### **About the author:**

*Matthew Stephens* is a programmer working as part of the Sustaining Digital Scholarship Initiative at the University of Virginia Library. Prior to this he was a developer with the Philosophy Documentation Center. Mr. Stephens earned his Master's degree and Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Alberta.