

Selecting Alma Digital for Digital Asset Management

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1. Why a Digital Asset Management System?

- uOttawa Library Strategic Plan 2025
 - ‘Make collections easier to discover, use, and access’
 - ‘Expand, preserve, and promote our unique and special collections’
- Digital Collections that had limited accessibility and/or were being stored on unstable media:
 - Archives and Special Collections: Digitized rare books, periodicals, images, film
 - Digitized Historical Air Photos

2.1: Requirements

- Created by the 2020 DAMS Working Group:
 - Supports wide variety of digital content
 - Access controls and the ability to hide collections
 - Multilingual, public-facing interface
 - Ability to view images (including a viewer for multi-page documents), and play video and audio files
 - Ability to create permalinks to records
 - Ability to browse by collection
 - Ability to search
 - Adoption by other institutions

2.2: Chose Main Candidates for further analysis

- Working group surveyed other institutions on DAMS
 - Top pick Islandora
 - DSpace not suitable due to no in-browser viewing of images/time-based media
- Former Head of IT had experience with Samvera/Hyrax
- Preference for open-source options (Islandora and Hyrax) as aligning with institutional values
 - ‘Maximize opportunities for participation in the open scholarship movement’
 - Avoids ‘bundling’ of commercial software and publication packages and risk of dependency on single vendor (see Mace 2023)
- Alma Digital—fully integrated with Alma, familiar workflows

2.3: Analysis of candidates

- Evaluated test versions of software:
 - Islandora in Virtualbox
 - Hyrax through:
 - Out-of-box version supplied by vendor
 - Local instance on WSL2 using Docker
 - Limited activation of Alma Digital in current Alma/Primo instance
- Informal interviews with other repository admins
- Literature review
- Discussions with vendors

Comparison of Options

Requirement	Islandora 7/8	Hyrax 3/Samvera	Alma Digital
In-browser viewing of range of file types	Yes	Yes	Yes
Access controls for public viewing	Open/Instit/ Private	Open/ Instit/private	Open/Instit/ Private, by group, id, etc.
Support for bilingualism	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ability to create permalinks	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collection organization	Yes; No nesting	Yes	Yes
Ability to search	Yes (slow?)	Yes (slow?)	Omni
Adoption by other organizations	400; ↓	30; mostly in US	Internationally
Integration with other popular platforms	SSO; needs work Archivematica?	SSO; needs work Archivematica?	SSO, Alma
Workflow options (ie. Batch ingest)	Yes, but...	Yes, but...	Yes, but...
Documentation/Support	😐	😓	😊
Migration pathways	Disorganized	A bit disorganized	In contract
Staffing requirements	😓	😱	😊

Practical Constraints

- Staffing :
 - ‘Don’t think about a digital asset management system as a stand-alone project with a one-time cost for set up... in order to attain success, therefore, you absolutely cannot ignore the reality of staffing’ (Kaplan, 36).
 - An hour or two of programmer time each week
 - About ¼ of a Systems Librarian’s time
 - Implications of staff turnover while implementing complex systems
- \$\$\$
 - For open source: cost of outsourcing customisations, updates, hosting on external servers if in-house capacity not present

Challenges of Working with Open-Source

- Administration of Open-Source Communities and Projects
 - Not always transparent (eg. early popularization of Islandora by vendor)
- Reliability varies
 - Components created by hobbyists or for niche projects; abandoned due to changing needs/lack of funding
- Documentation primarily made by software developers
 - 'Good software is its own documentation!' 😬
 - Not always regularly updated or comprehensible to layperson
- Potentially high cost for human resources/vendor support if hosted locally or customisations required
 - But customisations then open to community, or unlocked after costs for development paid...

→ Went with Alma Digital

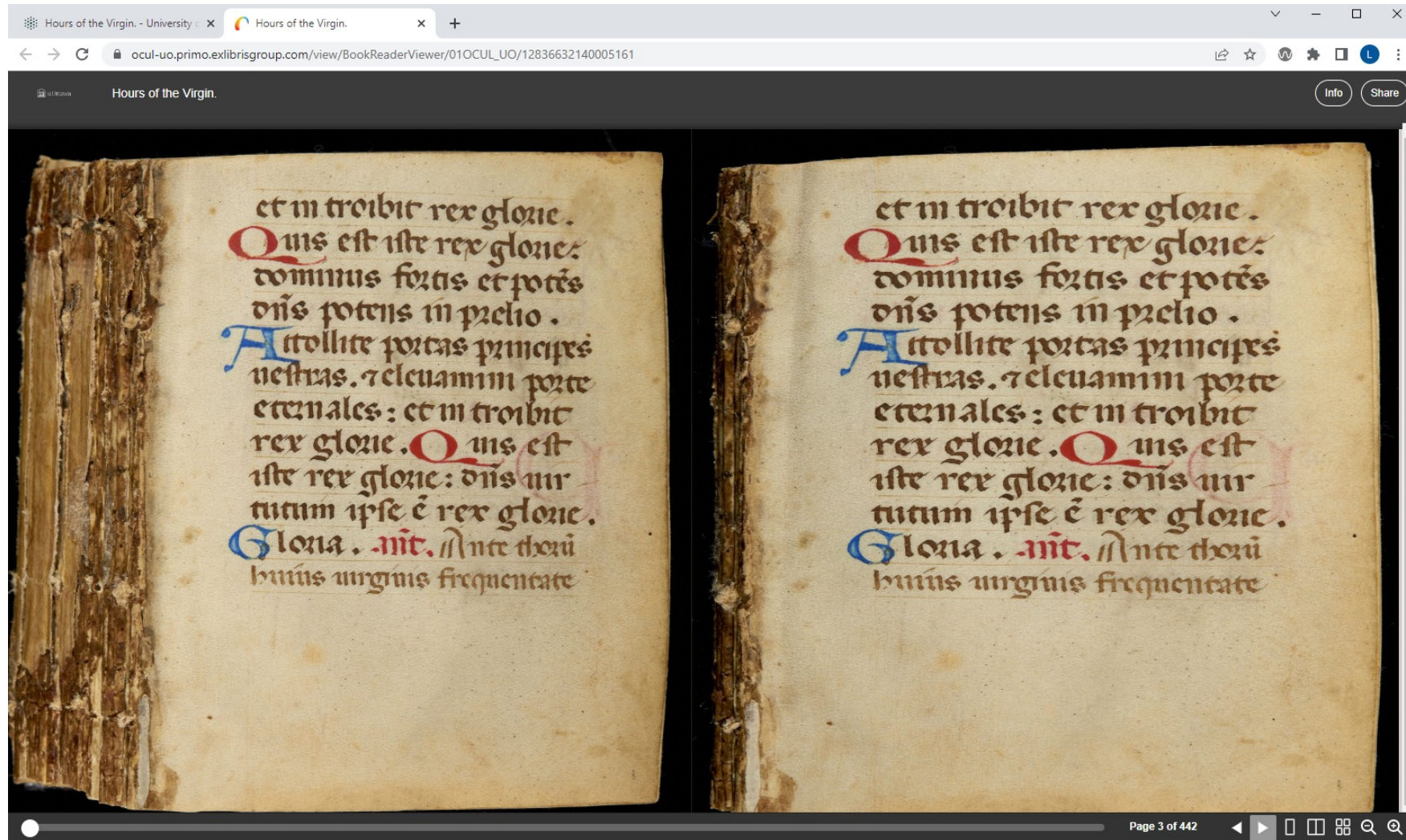
3. Implementation

- Not actually part of OCUL Alma subscription--negotiated with Ex Libris on subscription, data storage costs (start out with 3 TB)
- Adding materials fairly straightforward

Current Use Cases:

- (1) [Digitized archival materials](#)
- (2) [Digital Air Photos Collection](#)
- (3) [Hosting streaming videos](#) whose rights are owned by uOttawa Library

Digitized archival materials



Digital Air Photos Collection

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `ocul-uo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/collectionDiscovery?vid=01OCUL_UO:UO_DEFAULT&collectionId=81847542120005161`. The page header includes the 'omni' logo, 'uOttawa', and navigation links for 'NEW SEARCH', 'JOURNAL SEARCH', 'BROWSE', and 'COLLECTION DISCOVERY'. A 'Sign in' button and a 'Menu' dropdown are also present. The main heading is 'Aerial Photographs', with a sub-heading 'COLLECTIONS /'. Below this, a search instruction is provided: 'Search our collection by year and flightline. Or, search this collection in our interactive map: <https://gsguo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4c010ecf0fb3434890214fa63c942928>'. A search bar with the placeholder text 'Search' and a magnifying glass icon is located below the heading. The section 'Sub-collections (5)' displays five sub-collections, each represented by a thumbnail image and a label: 'SUB-COLLECTION 1930', 'SUB-COLLECTION 1933', 'SUB-COLLECTION 1938', 'SUB-COLLECTION 1944', and 'SUB-COLLECTION 1945'. Each thumbnail shows a grid of aerial photographs. A blue speech bubble icon with an exclamation mark is located in the bottom right corner.

Aerial Photographs - University of Ottawa

Hours of the Virgin.

NEW SEARCH JOURNAL SEARCH BROWSE COLLECTION DISCOVERY

Sign in Menu

COLLECTIONS /

Aerial Photographs

Search our collection by year and flightline. Or, search this collection in our interactive map: <https://gsguo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4c010ecf0fb3434890214fa63c942928>

Sort sub-collections by Relevance

Search

Sub-collections (5)

SUB-COLLECTION 1930

SUB-COLLECTION 1933

SUB-COLLECTION 1938

SUB-COLLECTION 1944

SUB-COLLECTION 1945

Hosting streaming videos

The screenshot shows a web browser window with three tabs: 'Naila and the uprising - Universit...', 'Naila and the uprising / Just Vision', and 'Hours of the Virgin...'. The address bar shows the URL 'ocul-uo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/delivery/01OCUL_UO:UO_DEFAULT/12858052210005161'. The page header features the 'omni' logo and 'uOttawa' on the left, and 'Sullivan, Carolyn' on the right. Below the header, a red banner contains the text: 'Naila and the uprising / Just Vision presents in association with Fork Films ; directed by Julia Bacha ; produced by Rula Salameh, Rebekah Wingert-Jabi. / Naila And The Uprising_991045181855805161'. The main content area is a video player with a black screen displaying the text 'JUST VISION PRESENTS'. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a progress bar, a volume icon, a timestamp of '-1:10:55', a '1x' speed indicator, and a full screen icon. To the right of the video player is a sidebar with a 'Description' section. The sidebar contains the following information:

- Title:** Naila and the uprising / Just Vision presents in association with Fork Films ; directed by Julia Bacha ; produced by Rula Salameh, Rebekah Wingert-Jabi.
- Material Type:** Computer file
- Description:** Combines live interviews with the activists with animated sequences depicting their struggles.
- Description:** "When a nation-wide uprising breaks out in 1987, a woman in Gaza must make a choice between love, family, and freedom. Undaunted, she embraces all three, joining a clandestine network of women in a movement that forces the world to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination for the first time. Naila and the Uprising chronicles the remarkable journey of Naila Ayesh whose story weaves through the most vibrant, nonviolent mobilization in Palestinian history -- the First Intifada in the late 1980s"--IMDb, searched November 7, 2018

4. Challenges

- What to store where?
 - Dspace:
 - Electronic Theses and Dissertations
 - OERs and OA articles produced by uOttawa authors
 - AtoM
 - Images (not IIIF compliant), pdfs, audio not requiring rights management
 - OLRC
 - Backup copies (LOCKSS!)
 - Archivematica
 - Digital Preservation

5. Looking forward...

- Always be migrating!
 - ‘All software solutions are temporary’ (McAulay, 2021)
 - ‘A gift to a future self’– looking at ‘documentation, data integrity, inventory processes, and communications [with stakeholders]’ during this implementation/migration to prep for the next
- Dspace 7.x ?
 - Exciting new features that will meet technical requirements not available in previous versions!
 - IIIF supported in 7.1+ (need compatible image server)
 - 7.2+ has a media viewer
- Shared repository infrastructure?

Questions, comments...?

Email me!

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