

The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) and the SobekCM Open Source Software: Socio-Technical Communities & Collaboration¹

Description:

Academic research and cultural heritage institutions in the Caribbean—spanning over one million square miles of water, with hundreds of islands, many countries, and a multiplicity of languages and cultures—have longstanding collaborative relationships for preservation, access, and supporting scholarly research and teaching. The real-world complexities of the Caribbean ecosystem led to collaborative creation of the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC, www.dloc.com). The variety, complexity, and diversity of needs across dLOC's many partners led to the development of the SobekCM Open Source Software (<http://sobekrepository.org>). Being parallel to and intertwined with the development of dLOC, the SobekCM software relies on user-focused development. SobekCM has developed in collaboration with dLOC's institutional, scholarly, publishing, and other communities. Now, the dLOC and SobekCM communities are expanding further with recent work to build capacity using SobekCM as a front-end to high-performance computing systems available at the University of Florida (UF is the dLOC Technical Host Partner) and with the Sunshine State Education & Research Computing Alliance (SSERCA) community.

The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) is a collaborative digital library with 37 international partner institutions, affiliated partners, publishers, scholars, and other community members who contribute materials and expertise to the shared repository using the SobekCM Open Source software. dLOC partners contribute to and rely on the SobekCM software. dLOC's strong voice in the technical development flows from dLOC's inclusive and equitable partner structure. dLOC is a collaborative community with institutional partners who defined the shared governance model to support partner needs as well as the shared needs of many related and diverse communities, including scholarly and publisher communities. Created both as a repository and a community for building capacity, dLOC will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2014, and its already major achievements and ongoing activities with high levels of growth and development in the community, shared collaborative capacity, and technologies.

dLOC's success is founded in large part to its connection to and development from existing communities, being born from the work of a group within the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL) and being born from longstanding collaboration across the Caribbean for preservation and access with institutions in many countries and in Florida. The University of Florida (UF) has served as a technical partner in the Caribbean for many years and technology transitions, including the relatively recent transition from microfilm to digital. As the oldest university in Florida, UF has long traditions of advanced research and strong research entities within it, as with UF Research Computing,

¹ Submitted for DLF Community Spotlights (<http://www.diglib.org/topics/spotlight/>) and DLF Contribute (<http://www.diglib.org/archives/5482/>) using the web forms (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gWaukFRWtc3MiVdlalZZ_G8lOAxVtmhYwuzVMdUepY/viewform , <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1QOZKdsgtc7vKQellqPdTPAoZLE52fRV2z5HAExMTKjc/edit>)

and strong ties to larger collaboratives as with the Sunshine State Education & Research Computing Alliance (SSERCA). SSERCA is comprised of Florida's public and private universities and is designed to bring together geographically distributed institutions and their resources (high-end computing facilities, massive data storage systems, specialized research instruments, and high-speed networks). SSERCA, like dLOC, is designed to leverage the connected resources and thereby enable a collective impact that far exceeds the sum of individual parts. dLOC has shown its impact through dLOC itself, scholarly research, public scholarship, and technology with SobekCM. In doing so, dLOC and SobekCM together show the value of socio-technical communities and collaboration.