Building a Digital Archive

10 Essential Steps to Building a Digital Archive

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africamediaonline
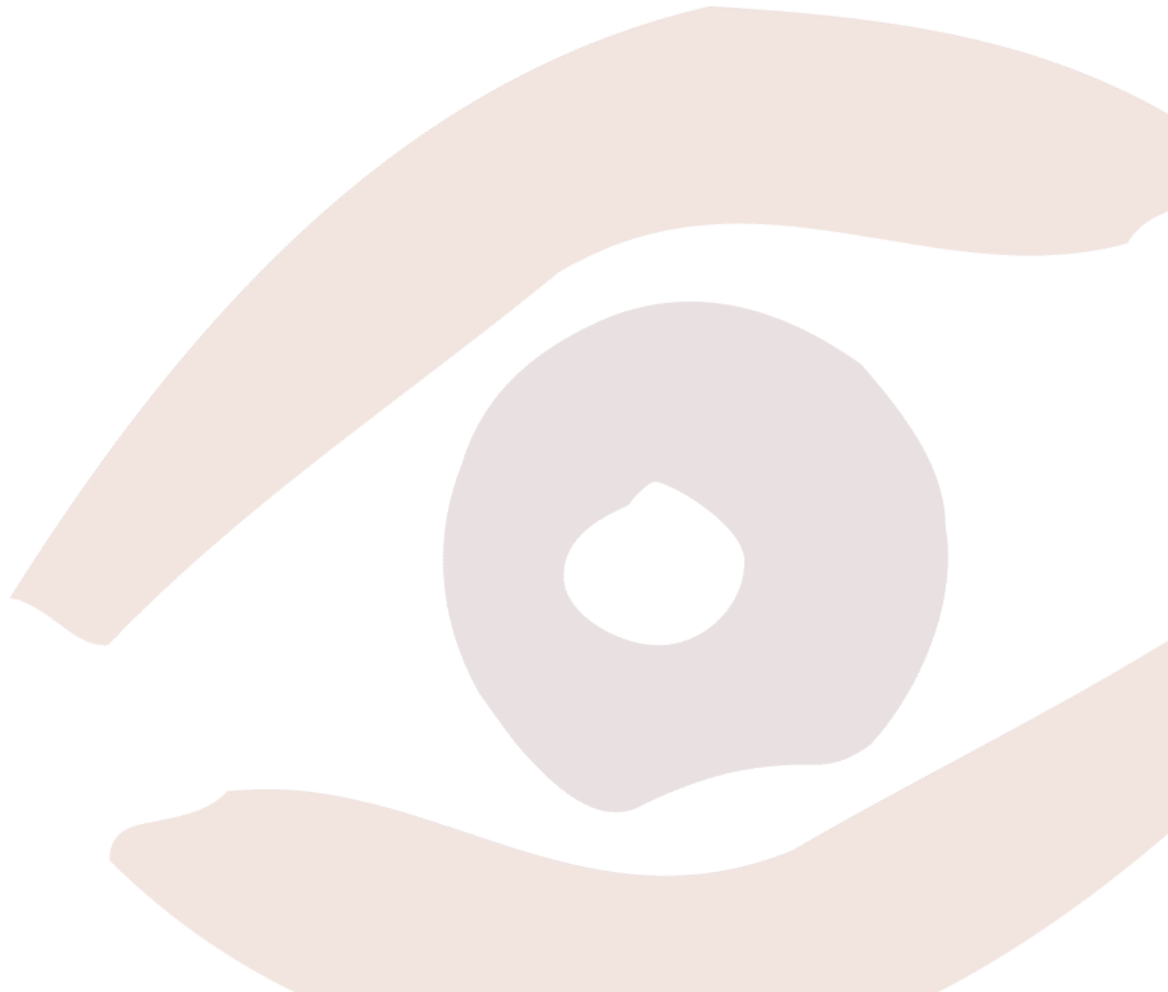africans telling africa's story

Introduction

Why build a digital archive?

Introduction

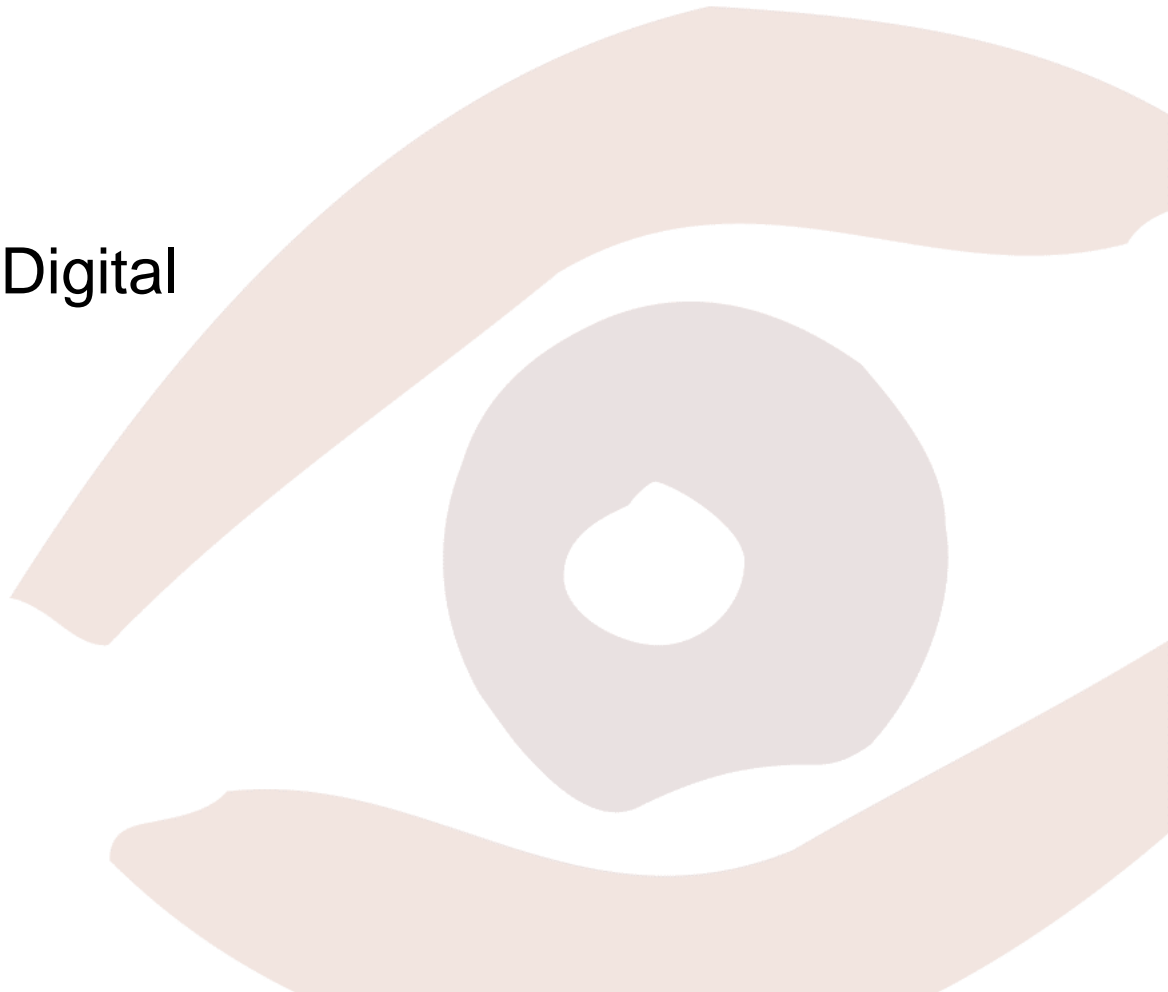Why build a digital archive?
- Preservation
- Access

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Digitised and Born Digital

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Digitised and Born Digital

Two Fundamental Principles

Work per collection

Like physical collections, digital collections have weight and significance as they are treated as a collection around a theme, a period of time, a place or some other organizing principle. Just as a disparate group of physical objects holds little weight and value so to a disparate group of digital files holds little value. Digitisation is therefore to be considered and carried out on a per collection basis. Important here is to structure a digitisation project around a single collection. If there is a requirement for material from different collections such as for a large exhibition that might draw on a sound collection, several photographic collections and a footage collection, treat each collection as a separate project because it is the collection that is both the organizing principle and brings uniformity and simplicity in management.

Two Fundamental Principles
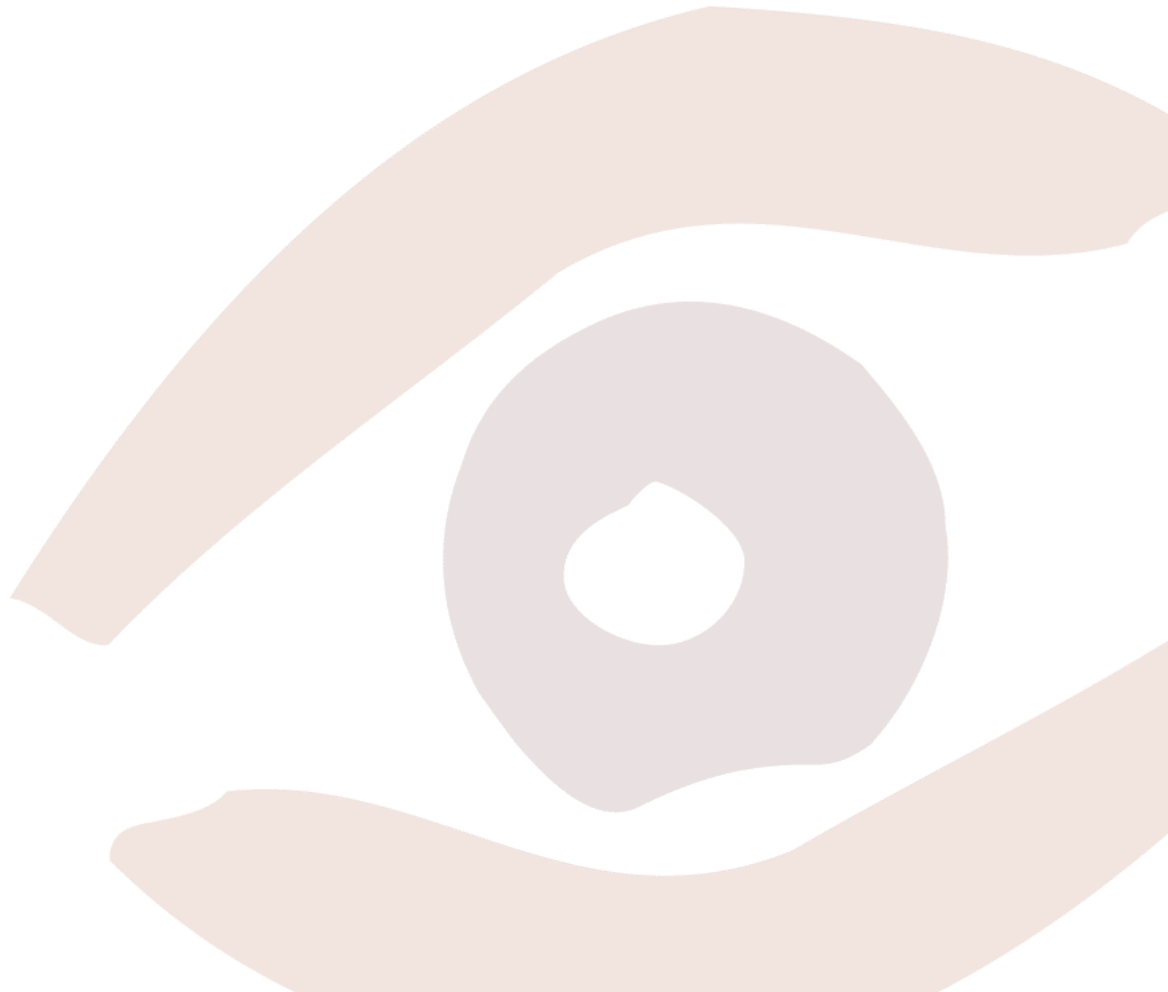
Work per collection

Work per project

Digitisation of any collection tends to be most successful when it is approached as a project with defined outcomes and associated timelines. A project has a start and a finish and this is enormously helpful in terms of measurable outcomes.
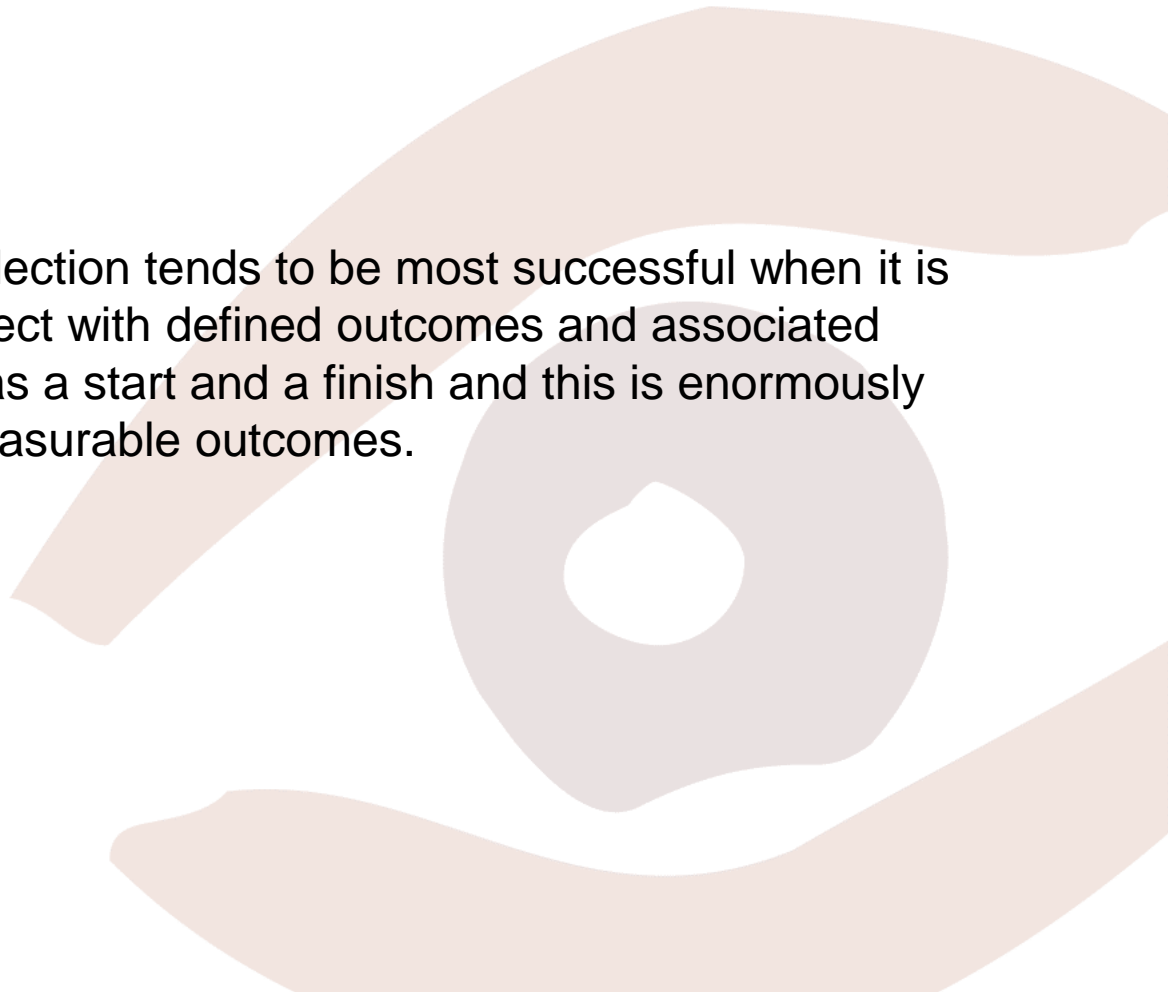
10 Processes
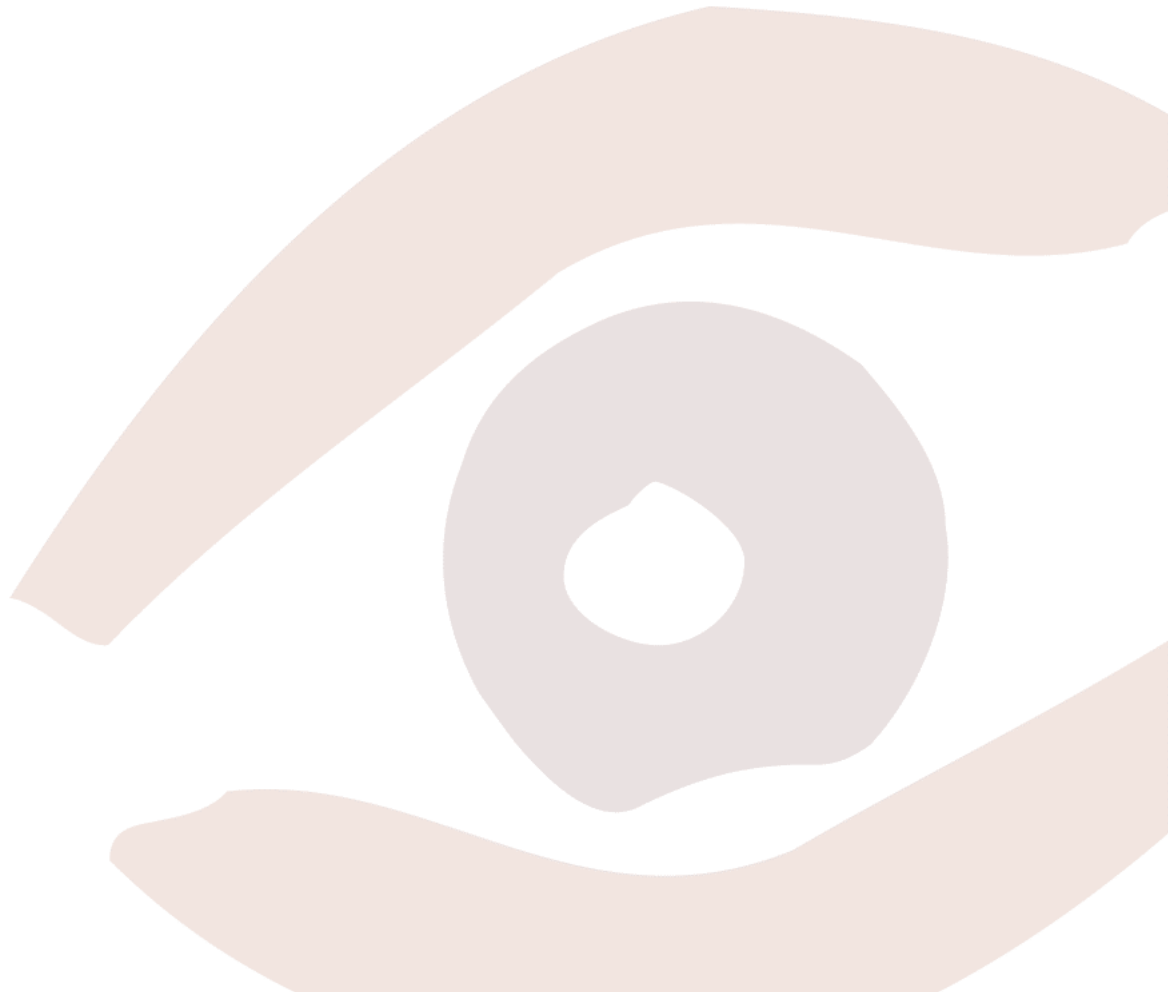
Of the digitisation life cycle

10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

1. Scoping

2. Screening

3. Selecting

4. Preparing

5. Capturing

10 Processes

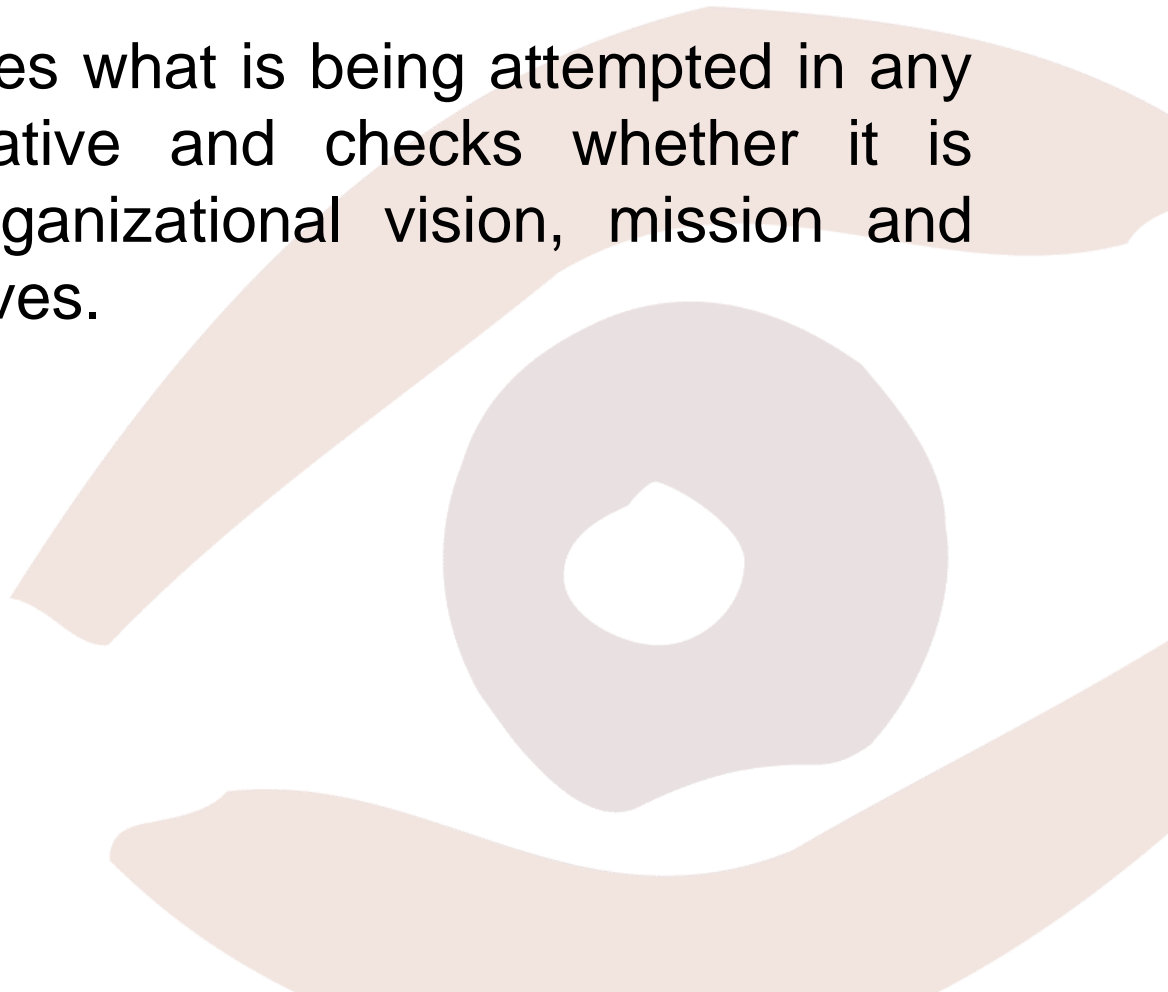## Of the digitisation life cycle

6. Describing

7. Loading
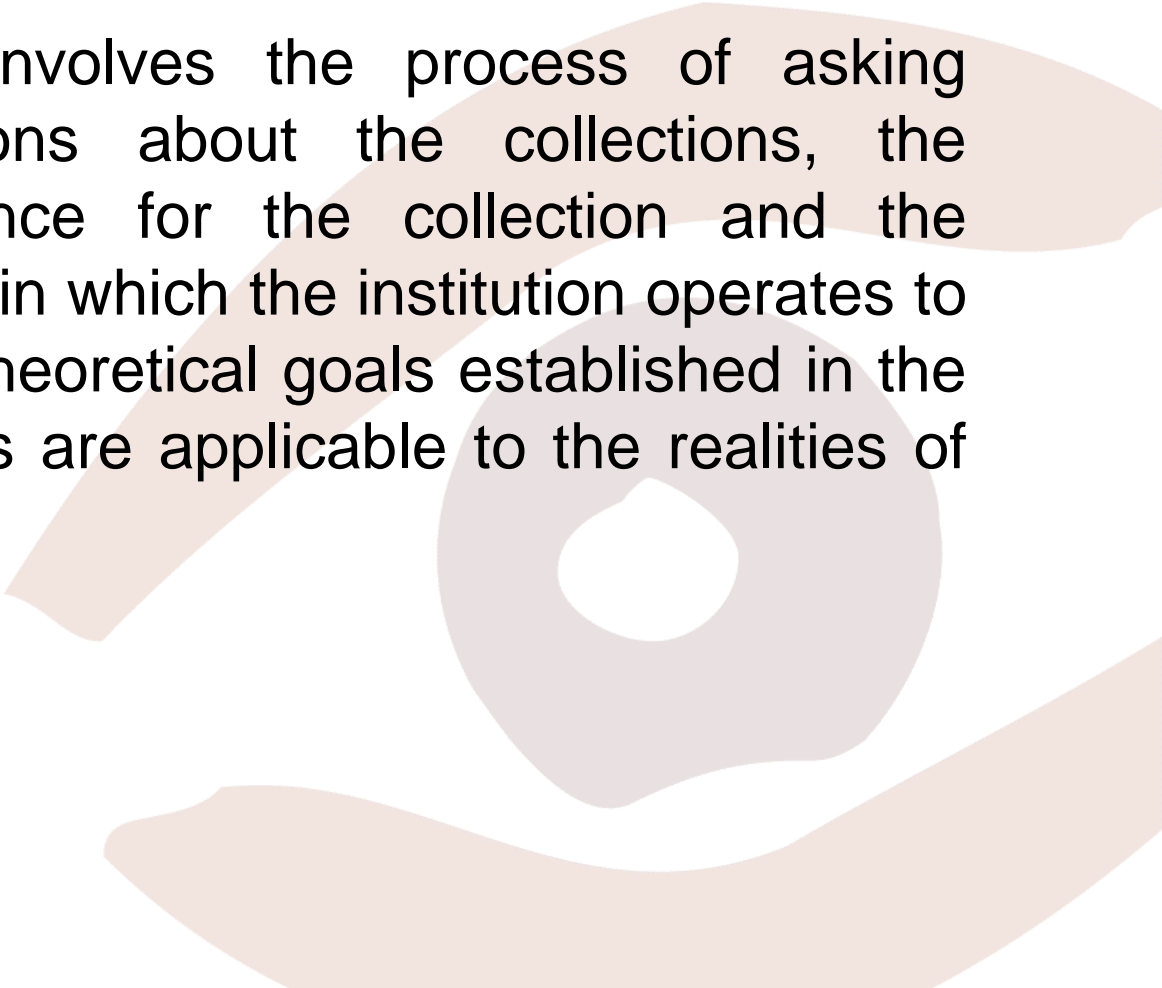
8. Storing

9. Accessing

10. Using

10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

1. Scoping – defines what is being attempted in any digitisation initiative and checks whether it is aligned with organizational vision, mission and strategic objectives.
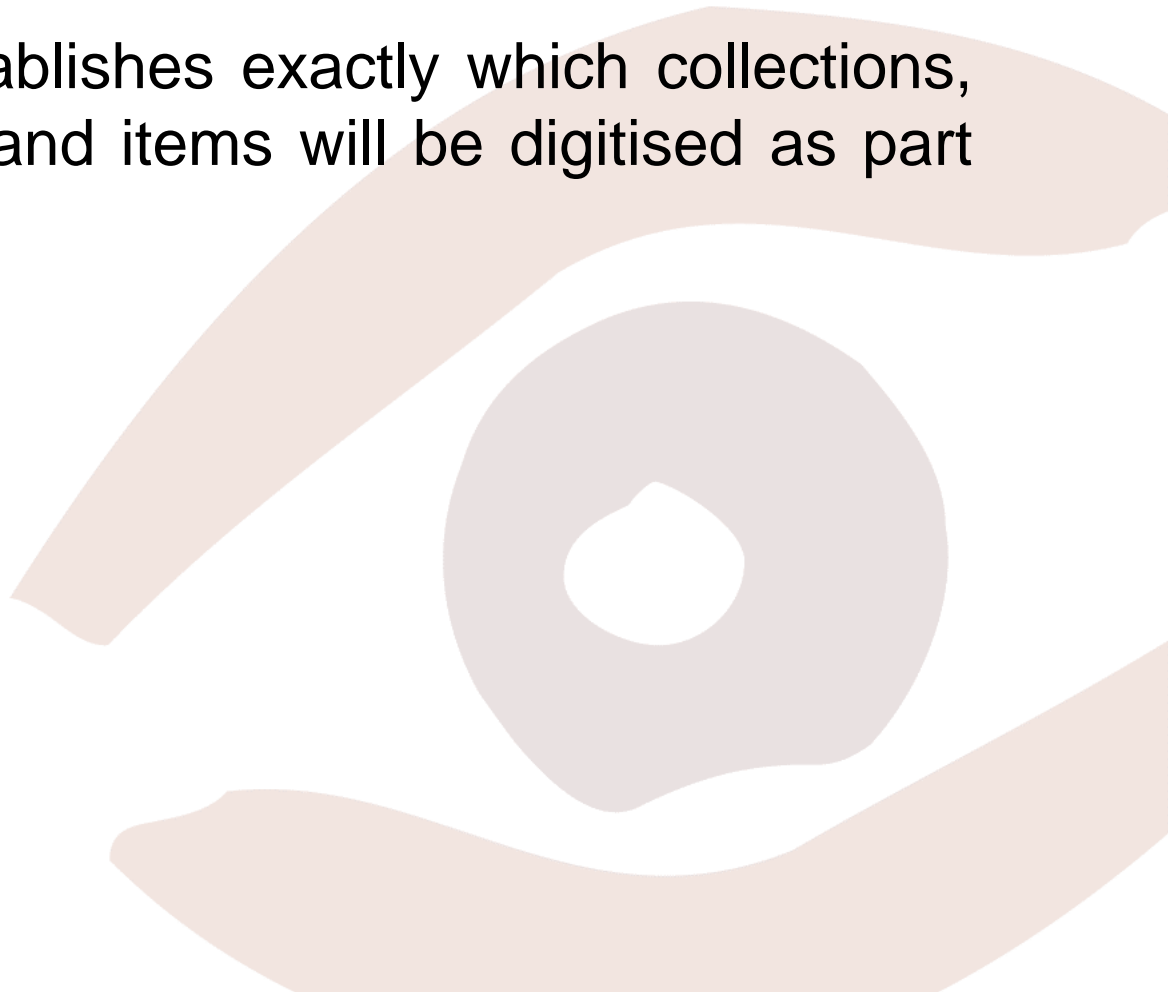
10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

2. **Screening** – involves the process of asking probing questions about the collections, the potential audience for the collection and the broader context in which the institution operates to check that the theoretical goals established in the Scoping process are applicable to the realities of the collections.
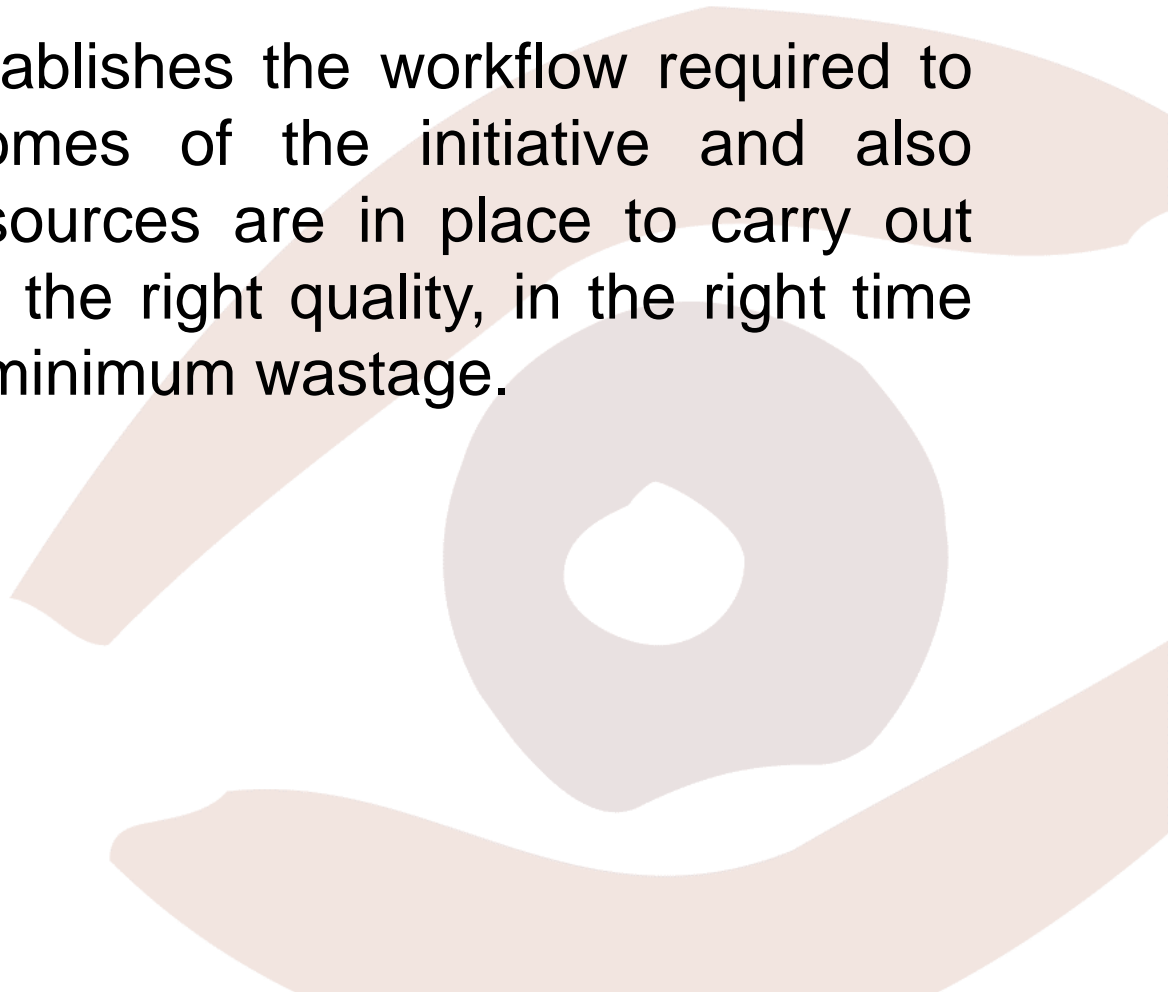
10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

3. Selecting – establishes exactly which collections, sub-collections and items will be digitised as part of the project.

10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

4. Preparing – establishes the workflow required to fulfill the outcomes of the initiative and also ensures the resources are in place to carry out that workflow at the right quality, in the right time frame and with minimum wastage.
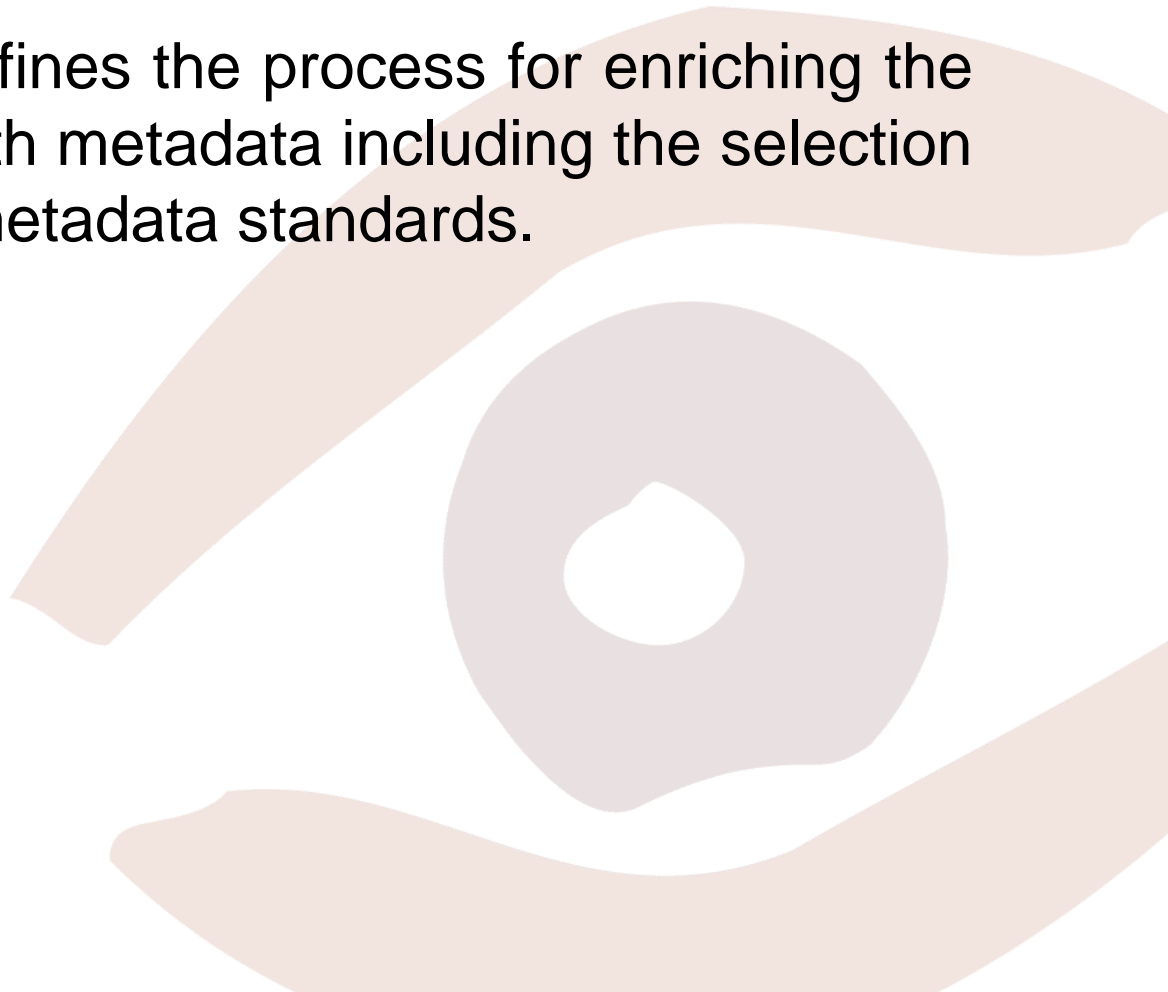
10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

5. Capturing – is the actual digital capture of selected items and focuses on the standards and techniques required for archival capture of the collections.
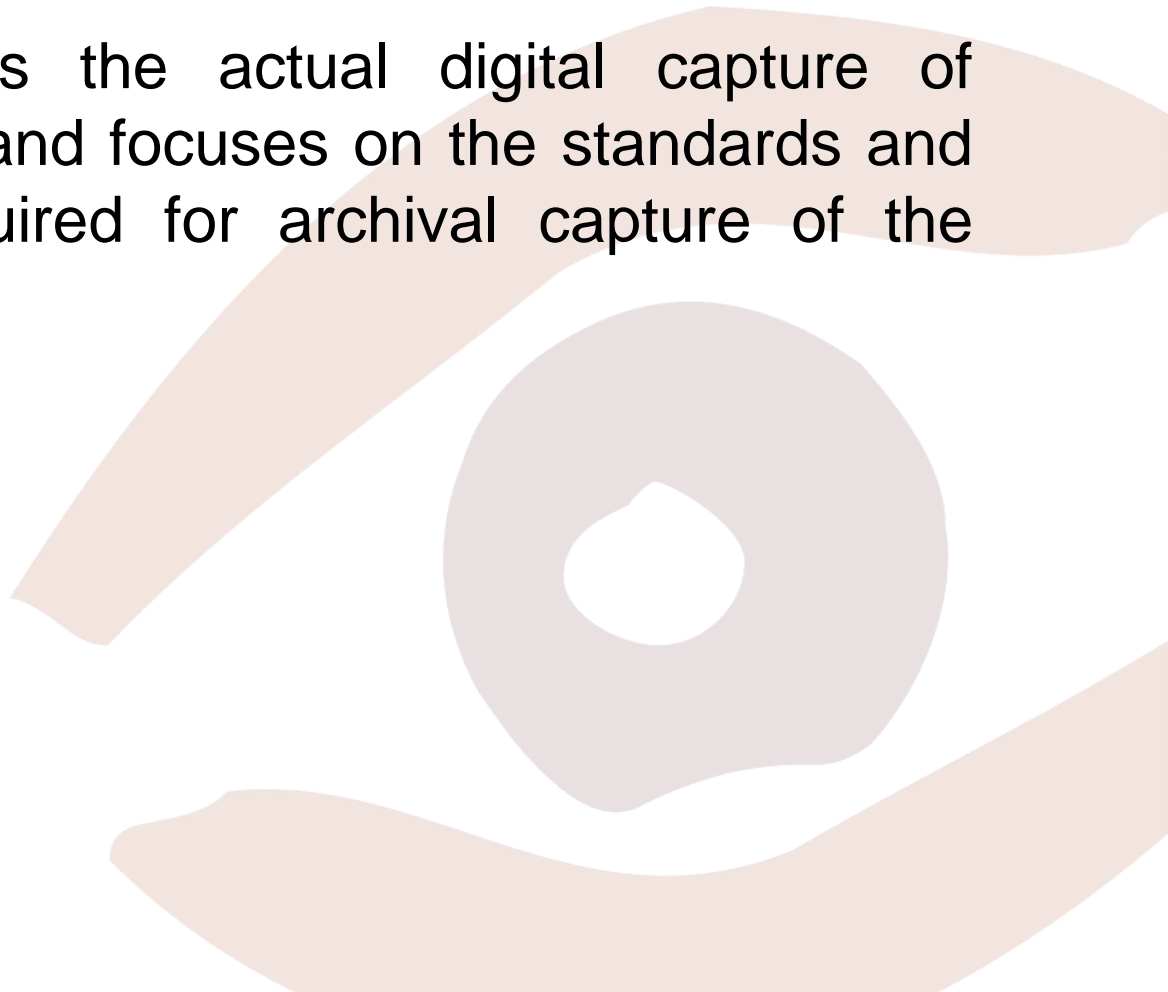
10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

6. Describing – defines the process for enriching the digitised files with metadata including the selection of appropriate metadata standards.
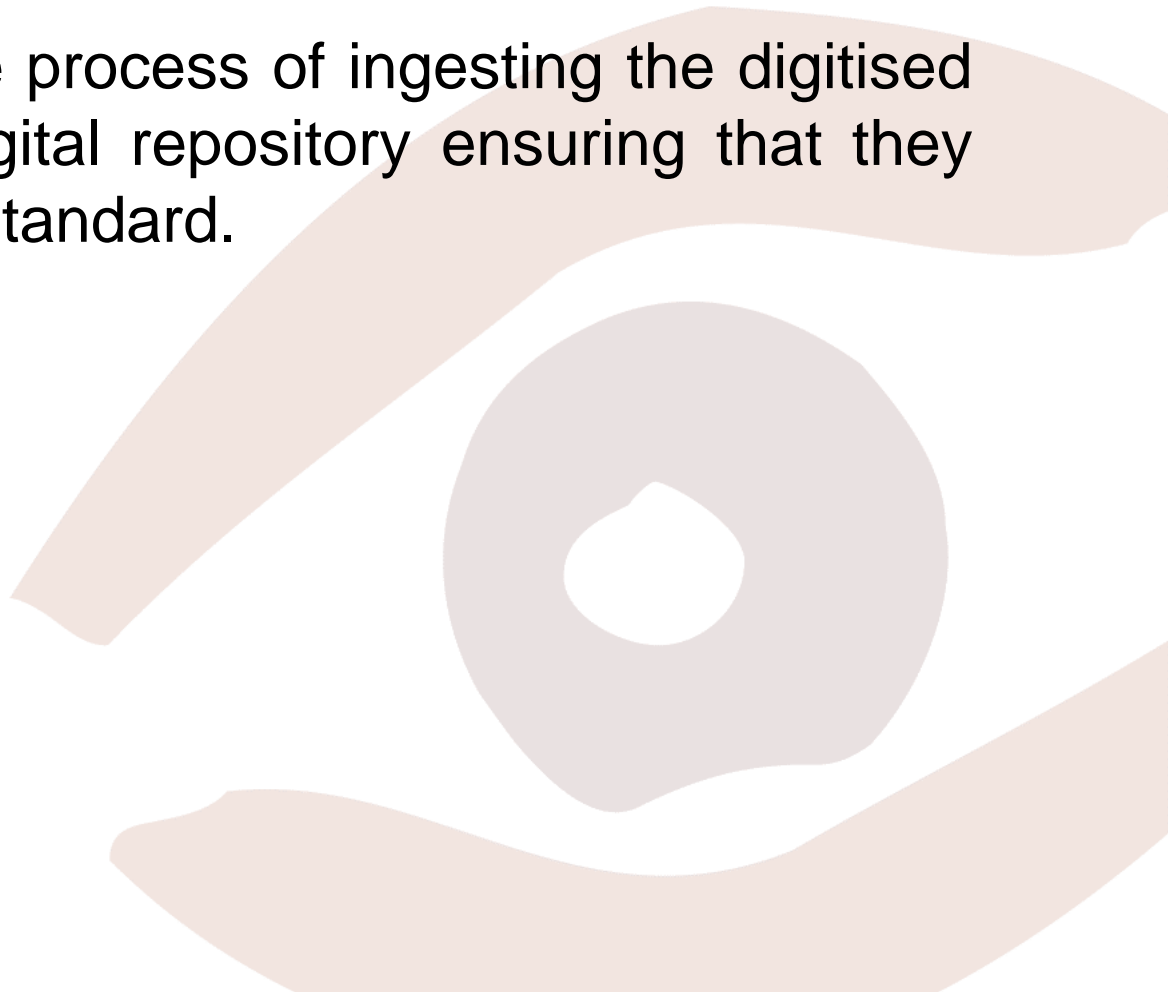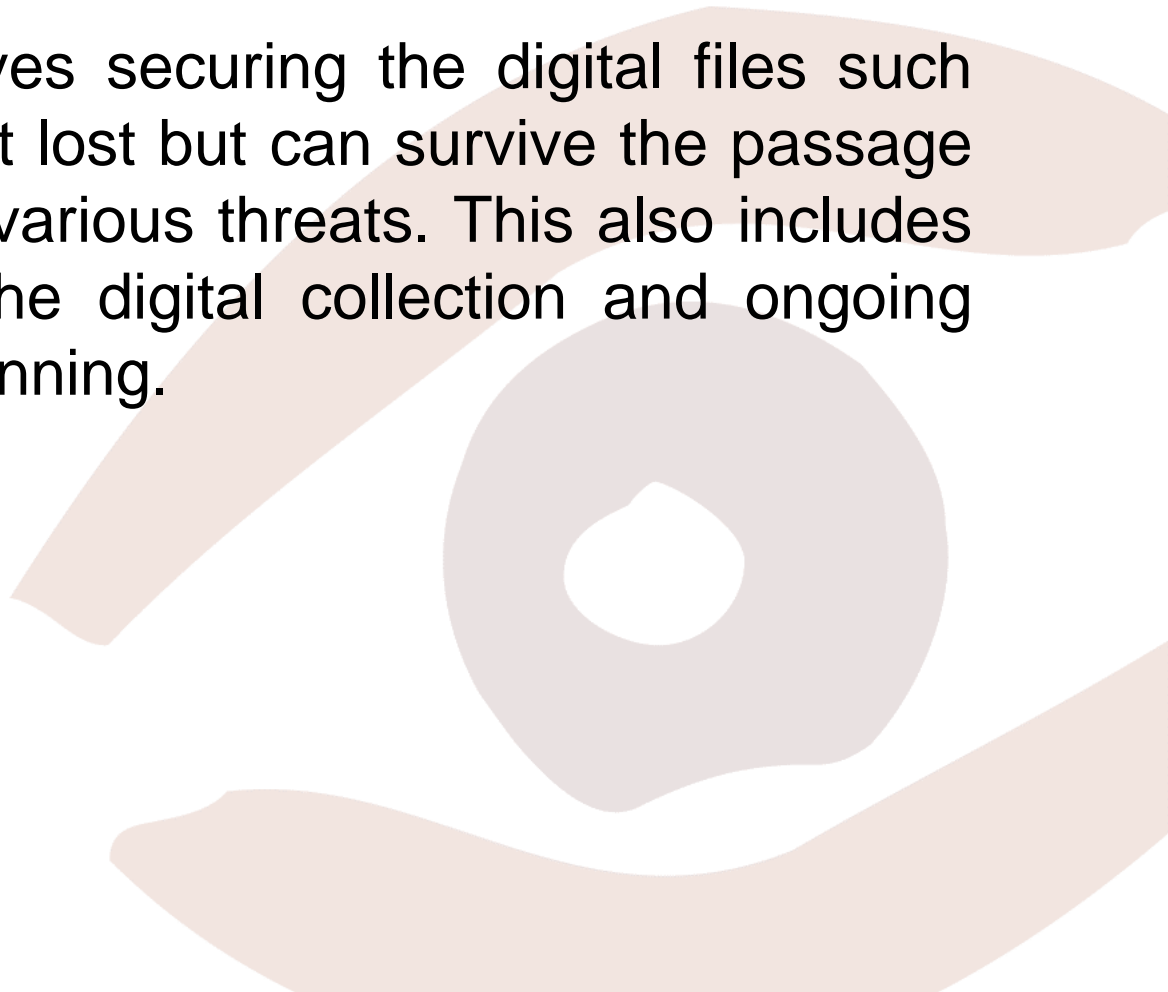
10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

7. Loading – is the process of ingesting the digitised files into the digital repository ensuring that they are at the right standard.

10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

**8. Storing** – involves securing the digital files such that they are not lost but can survive the passage of time against various threats. This also includes administrating the digital collection and ongoing preservation planning.

10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

9. Accessing – this is the process for granting access to the digital records to various audiences to which you want to grant access.
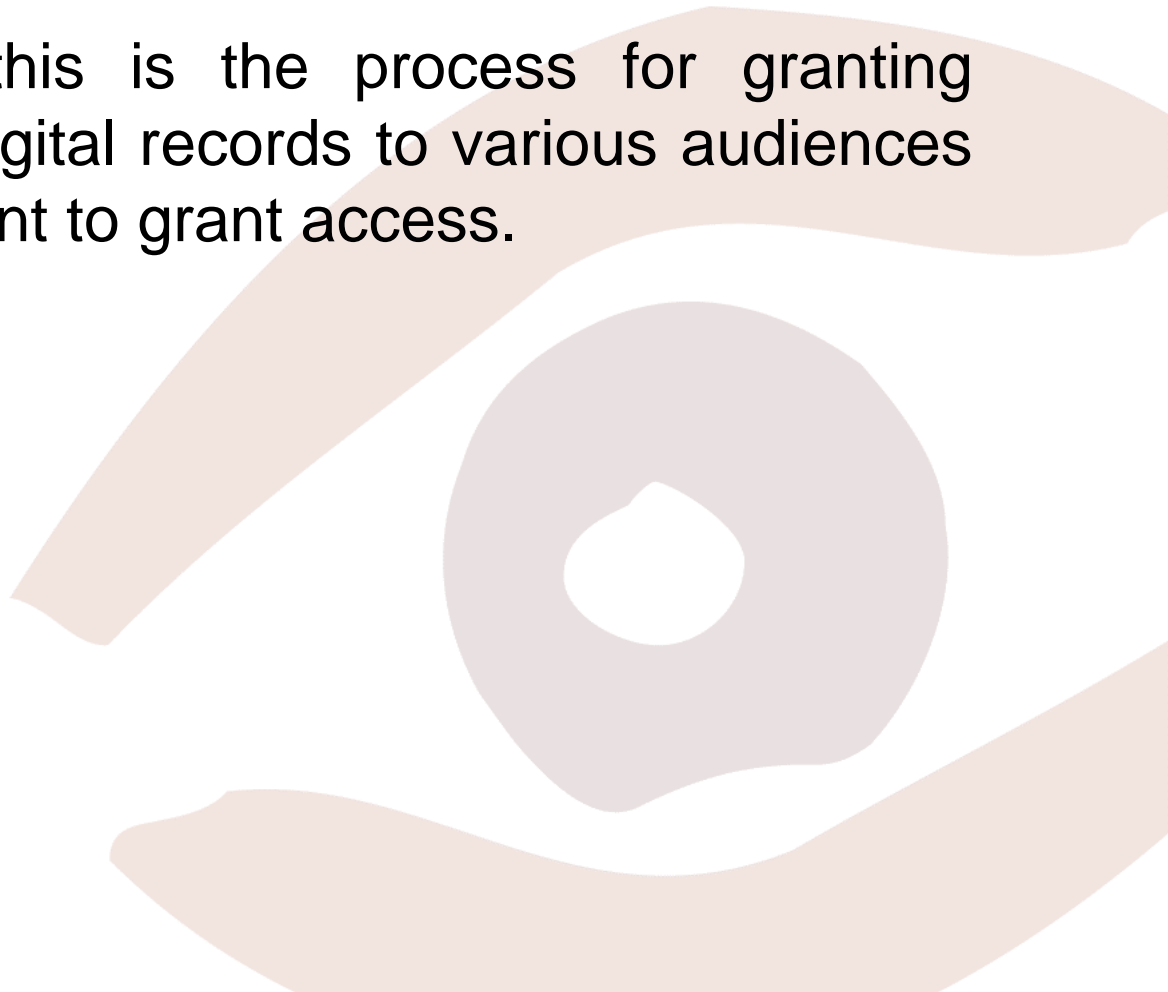
10 Processes

Of the digitisation life cycle

10. Using – this is the process of establishing parameters and processes for the use of the digital files
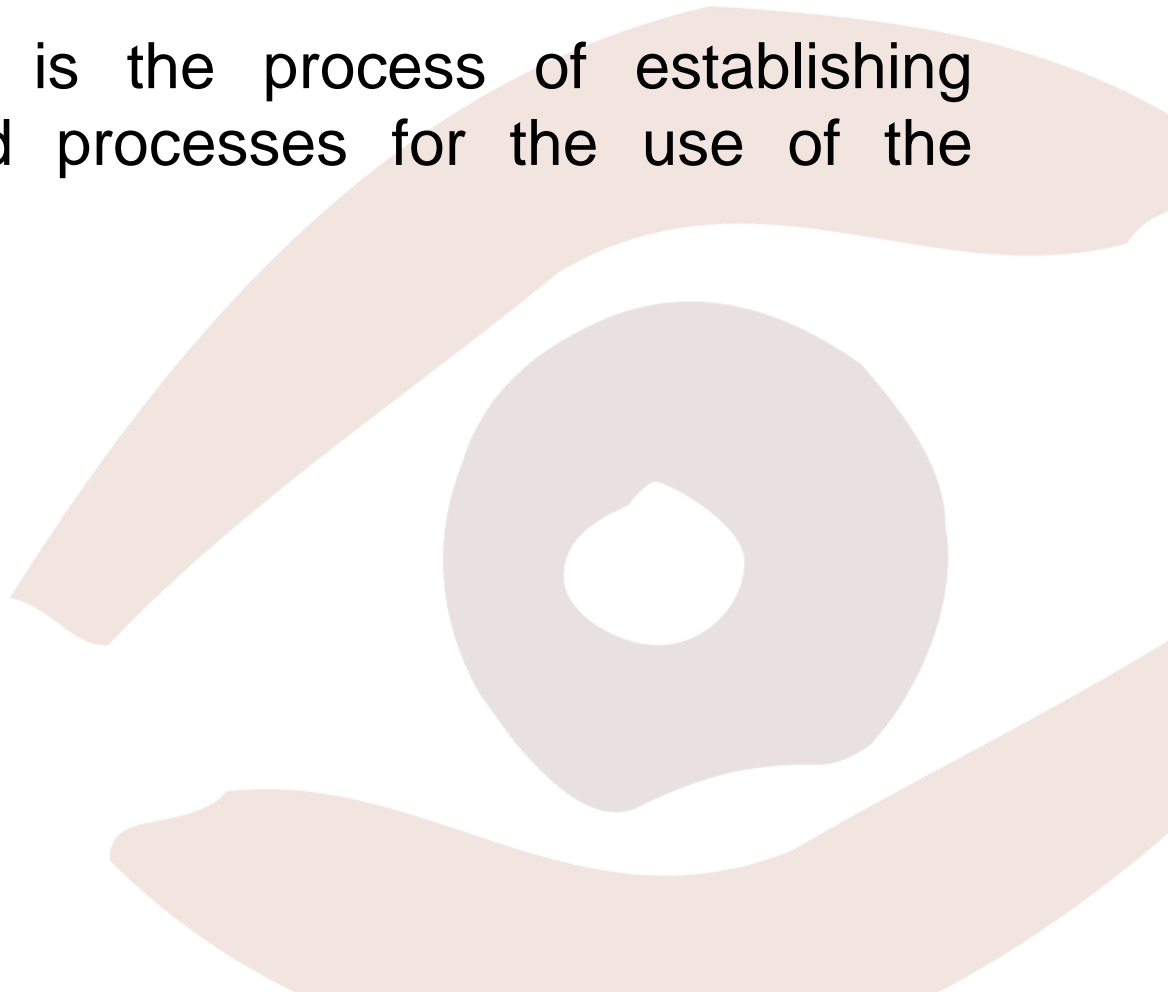
Key Questions

Why (digitise this collection in the first place)?

What (work needs to be done)?

Who (should do it)?

Where (should it take place)?

When (will it take place)?

How (will it be done)?

Key Questions: Planning
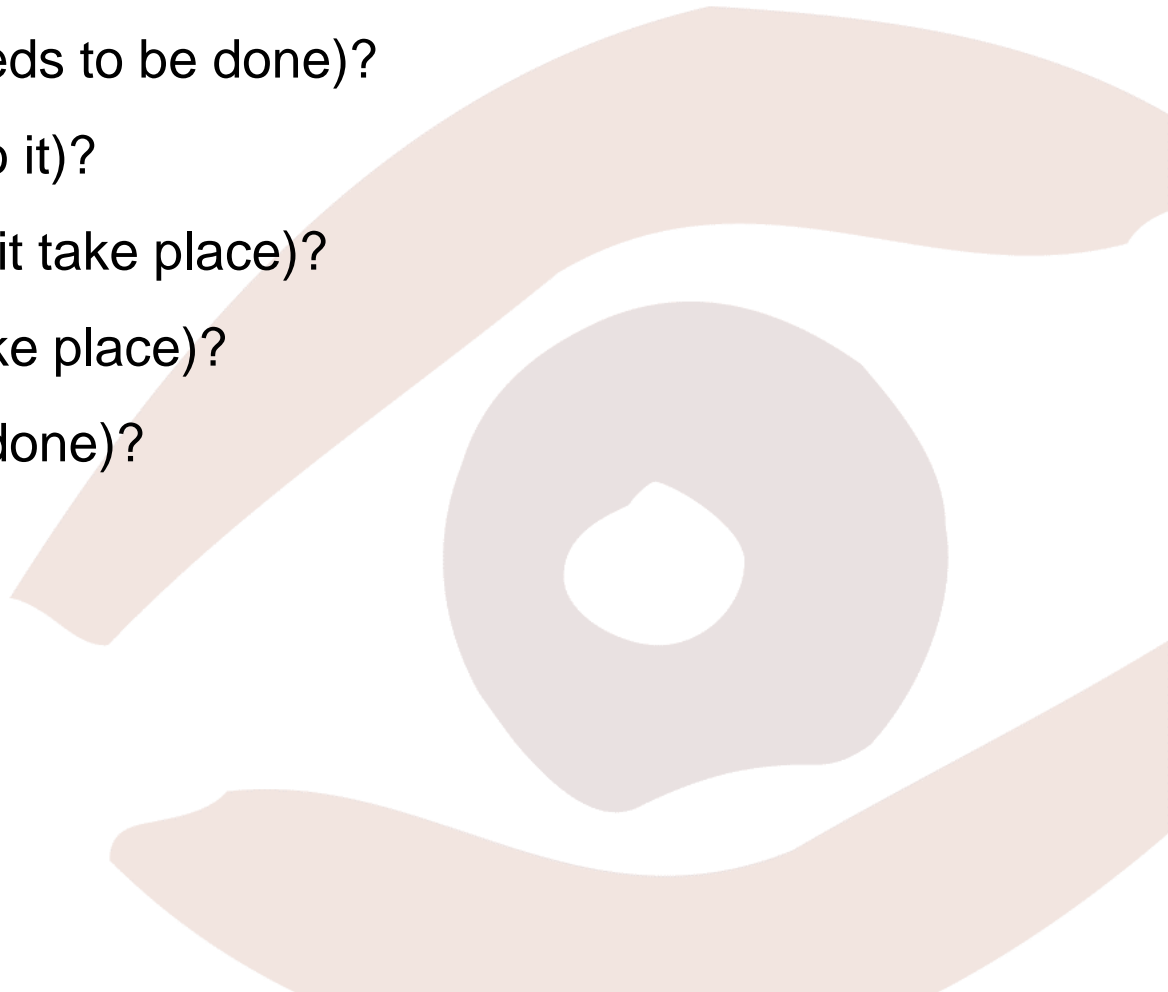
Why?

When considering the digitisation of any collection in the first step is to find clear answers to the question, Why digitise this collection in the first place? If we do not know why we are digitizing in the first place, we do not have a firm foundation for undertaking digitisation. Any digitisation project is intensive, requiring significant resources and time and, therefore, it demands significant buy-in from the whole institution. Answering Why? has the potential to align the project with the goals of your organisation giving clarity of purpose. It is the essential foundation for the success of any digitisation project. The **1. Scoping Process** is the process that assists in answering this essential question.

Key Questions: Planning

What?

Once the "Why digitise this collection?" question has been answered in the Scoping Process the next step to take is to answer the question "What work needs to be done?" The question is answered in the next two processes, the **2. Screening Process** and the **3. Selecting Process**. The Screening Process assists in aligning the realities of the collection in question with the theoretical goal established in the Scoping Process. The Selecting Process enables one to establish clear principles for what material is included in the digitisation project and what is excluded.

Key Questions: Planning

Who? Where? When? How?
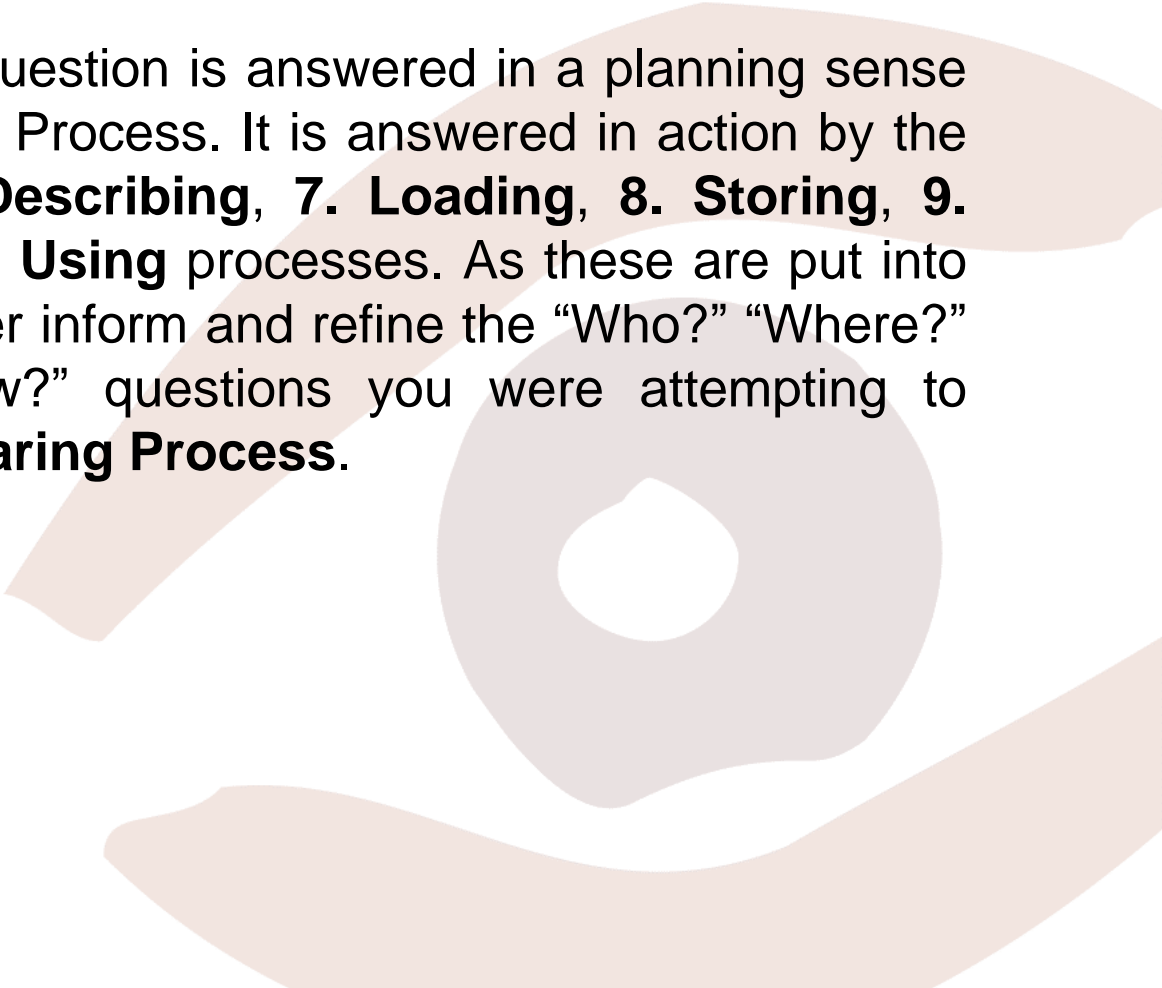
Up to this point you have answered the questions about your proposed project: "Why digitise this collection?" and "What work needs to be done?" in terms of determining what parts of the collection will be digitised. The next question that needs to be answered prior to final approval of the proposed project is "How will digitisation be done?" This includes the questions "Who is going to do it?" "Where are they going to do it?" and "When are they going to do it?". This is the fine detail of the plan and is covered in the **4. Preparing Process**.

Key Questions: Implementation

How?

While the "How?" question is answered in a planning sense by the 4. Preparing Process. It is answered in action by the **5. Capturing**, **6. Describing**, **7. Loading**, **8. Storing**, **9. Accessing** and **10. Using** processes. As these are put into place so they further inform and refine the "Who?" "Where?" and "When?" "How?" questions you were attempting to answer in the **Preparing Process**.

Questions?