AMS Historica. Preservation and valorisation of the University's digital cultural heritage. Service Charter

Office for the valorisation of the digital cultural heritage - Cultural heritage Management and development of the University's digital library Unit (ALMADL) - Cultural heritage Division (ARPAC) - University of Bologna

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

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1. Purpose of the Service

Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, through the Digital Library Management and Development Unit (AlmaDL) of the Cultural Heritage Area (ARPAC), provides **AMS Historica [the Service]**, the institutional Digital Library for the preservation and valorisation of the University's digital cultural heritage, with the aim of fostering its sharing and indexing and promoting its widest possible visibility and use.

The Service applies the methodological principles set out in the University [Policy on Digital Cultural Heritage](#) in force as of 1 January 2024, in compliance with national and international standards and best practices, and in line with the Open Access and Open Science principles referred to in the University [Policy on Open Access to Publications and Research Data](#) and in the University [Policy on Research Data Management](#).

2. Digital Objects Managed by the Service

The Service ensures the preservation and access to collections of heterogeneous sources, including multimedia materials, of scientific and cultural interest, in support of the University's institutional activities in research, teaching, and knowledge transfer and public engagement [Contents].

The Contents consist of individual digital objects or documents, each corresponding to the set of files that compose it—whether images, audio, or video—and the related metadata that enable their identification, organisation, and preservation.

The Contents are organised, in agreement with the proposers, into structured sets such as collections, fonds, complex of fonds or thematic aggregations. The deposit of Contents that are not part of a structured set will be assessed by the Service staff.

The Contents may derive both from initiatives aimed at valorising the cultural heritage of the University Library System, the Historical Archive, the University Library, and the University Museum System, and from research activities carried out within national and international scientific projects involving the digital reproduction of cultural heritage assets.

By way of example, the Contents managed within the Service may include images, texts, or audio and video recordings of:

- archival and library heritage, such as documents and archival fonds, manuscript codices, papyri, books, journals, newspapers;
- historical and artistic heritage, such as artworks and art objects, drawings, and prints;
- archaeological, architectural, and landscape heritage, such as archaeological sites, artefacts, casts, monumental complexes, public, private, and religious buildings, villas and historic residences, fortified architecture, rural buildings, and industrial archaeology structures;

- ethno-anthropological heritage, such as clothing and body ornaments, tools and everyday objects, non-verbal communication, dances, festivals and ceremonies, games, oral literature, music, performances and shows, knowledge and techniques;
- photographic and cinematic heritage, such as photographs, plates, negatives, positives, digital photography, photographic collections, films and cinematographic works, and audio-visual media in general;
- natural heritage, such as specimens of plant varieties, herbaria, mineral and rock samples, fossils;
- scientific and technological heritage, such as astronomical instruments, laboratory and measuring instruments, machines and machinery.

3. Service Users

The Service is intended for University structures, academic staff and researchers, students, doctoral candidates, grant holders, and technical and administrative staff involved in initiatives aimed at valorising digital cultural heritage within institutional activities [Content Providers].

All interested parties, in any capacity [Users], may access the digital collections through the Digital Library's functionalities, in compliance with the terms of use, and may request high-resolution copies of the Contents.

4. Service Features

The Service provides:

- the technological infrastructure and resources, including specialised staff, to organise, manage, preserve over time, and provide access to the Contents so that they can be directly used by Users;
- web services for interoperability (APIs), allowing the Contents to be disseminated or integrated and used within bespoke cultural products, such as editorial publications, digital learning resources, and virtual exhibition paths;
- technical consultancy for the management of digitisation projects or the creation of digital collections of cultural heritage, to facilitate their deposit in the institutional Digital Library;
- high-definition digital copies of the managed Contents, upon Users' request;
- a helpdesk to communicate with the Service Staff, particularly to request services or information and to receive support in the event of Digital Library malfunctions.

4.1 Publication Platform

The Service manages and provides, in collaboration with IT specialists, including external contractors, the technological platform for the publication and valorisation of digitised cultural heritage, ensuring the full functionality and stability of the website and web services, as well as the long-term persistence and usability of the published Contents.

The platform complies with internationally recognised technical and organisational standards, and guidelines for data archiving (ISO 14721:2012 and the FAIR principles for sound data management) and with the AGID Guidelines on software acquisition and reuse for public administrations, which promote the use of open-source software.

The platform also offers additional features for the valorisation of cultural heritage, including:

- management of entities relevant to reconstructing the semantic context of the archived Contents (e.g. People, Organisations, Places, Fonds, Periodicals, Projects), with the possibility of identifying entities using authoritative forms and enriching them with additional information (images, descriptions, persistent identifiers);
- faceted browsing and conceptual maps;
- integration with IIIF-compliant applications for the display of digital images;
- integration with applications enabling streaming access to audio-visual content;
- OCR functionalities and full-text search;
- Thematic aggregations and storytelling.

4.2 Deposit Procedure

The Service allows flexible and customised deposit and description of Contents, in compliance with national and international technical and organisational standards. To streamline upload procedures, the Service implements flexible workflows for ingesting Contents and their metadata, offering the following deposit options:

- bulk deposit managed by the Service Staff;
- manual deposit via the user interface by Content Providers;
- mixed deposit, with bulk upload of files and minimal metadata by the Service Staff and manual completion of metadata by the Content Provider.

The Service allows Content Providers to review the Contents uploaded to the platform in restricted access prior to publication.

4.3 Web Portal and Presentation of Contents

The web portal providing access to the Contents (https://historica.unibo.it/) is responsive to commonly used devices and enables identification of collections and fonds also on the basis of their provenance and affiliation with different Content Providers, thereby supporting recognition of individual contributions, including research projects or knowledge-enhancement initiatives.

The portal offers basic and advanced search functionalities—including within OCR-generated texts—and navigation through entities and faceted filters, enabling exploration of the platform's Contents through contextual and semantic relationships.

The Home Page provides guided exploration pathways of the Digital Library Contents, with the possibility to highlight individual collections or create thematic itineraries.

4.4 Metadata

Metadata are structured information describing the Contents and supporting their identification and indexing by search engines and aggregation portals; they facilitate organisation, management, and intelligibility; certify provenance and responsibilities; define access and reuse conditions; and describe preservation arrangements.

The Service ensures proper description of the Contents according to standard metadata schemas and provides assistance to Content Providers for correct metadata creation. Metadata specifications are detailed in the Guidelines.

All metadata describing the Contributions are made available under the [Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal licence](#).

Metadata are published and made openly and freely available through the platform's public APIs, in particular via the OAI-PMH protocol, accessible at: https://historica.unibo.it/oai

4.5 Persistent Identifiers

The Service ensures unique and durable identification of the Contents through the assignment of persistent identifiers (PIDs) based on the Handle protocol.

PIDs guarantee identification and traceability of the Contents on the web, facilitating citation and persistence regardless of changes to servers and/or metadata.

The functionality of a Handle may be verified through the free "Handle Resolver" web service available at: https://proxy.handle.net/

4.6 Interoperability and Visibility of Contents

The Service ensures repository compliance with international standards for metadata interoperability and transmission, as well as proper indexing of the Contents by major catalogues, portals, and aggregators—such as OpenAIRE, BASE, WorldCat, Cultura Italia, and Europeana—thereby ensuring maximum visibility of the digital collections.

The Service also ensures visibility through regional and national information systems dedicated to cultural heritage. In particular, for library and manuscript materials already catalogued, it guarantees linking to catalogue records (e.g. ACNP, SBN UBO hub, Manus Online) by including the relevant URI within the metadata. At the same time, the Service promotes cross-linking by contributing to the enrichment of specialised catalogues through the provision and updating of links to the corresponding digital Contents.

The Service adopts open IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework) standards for image formats, enabling full integration of works into third-party websites and online repositories using the same standard. This integration includes the ability to display entire works, individual images, or image portions, with access to advanced manipulation tools offered by IIIF viewers. Likewise, Users may access external works using the IIIF protocol enabling, for example, comparison between documents of different origins. The Service undertakes to make IIIF manifests—JSON documents describing digitised works—easily accessible, enabling off-site access through IIIF technology.

4.7 Terms of Use

The terms of use of the Contents are defined by the Content Providers at the start of the digitisation project, in compliance with current copyright legislation (Law No. 633 of 22 April 1941, as amended) and legislation on the protection and valorisation of cultural heritage (Legislative Decree No. 42 of 22 January 2004, as amended).

The Service implements both standard licences that promote discovery, study, sharing, and reuse of the Contents and a licence allowing use of the Contents only upon explicit authorisation from the copyright holder. The complete list of licences is available at: https://historica.unibo.it/info/end-user-agreement.

The Service guarantees Users free and open access to the Contents at web resolution. Additional uses are governed by the applicable licences indicated in the administrative metadata.

The Service accepts no liability for the choice of licence applied to the Contents or for any damage resulting from improper use of the Contents by Users.

4.8 Statistics

The Service provides statistics on views and downloads of the Contents through the platform.

Statistics are also available by users' geographical origin and by access date.

4.9 Preservation of Published and Master Copies

The Service ensures the long-term preservation of both the published Contents and the master versions by identifying and maintaining dedicated preservation solutions.

In particular, long-term preservation of files and metadata—both master copies and web-optimised copies—is guaranteed through agreements with external organisations that ensure secure dual-copy storage in geographically separate locations.

In addition, master files complete with metadata are also preserved locally, in duplicate copies and on at least two different storage media.

4.10 Technical Assistance

The Service provides Content Providers with technical and professional consultancy and assistance for managing cultural heritage digitisation projects and for deposit procedures in the Digital Library. In particular, the Service offers support for the following activities:

- analysis and selection of original materials;
- legal assessment (rights management, usage licences);
- quality control and management of digital reproductions;
- metadata creation;
- deposit procedures in the Digital Library;
- dissemination and indexing.

The following documentation is also available upon request:

- Technical Guidelines for the digitisation and metadata creation of digital reproductions;
- Template for technical specifications for outsourcing digitisation activities;
- Template in Italian and English for authorisation to use materials to be digitised, deposited, and published.

4.11 Provision of High-Definition Digital Copies

Upon Users' request, the Service provides high-definition files, or the best available resolution, relating to the Contents managed by the Service and preserved in the Digital Library.

Conditions of use of the Contents are defined on the basis of the usage licences specified by the Content Providers and recorded in the administrative metadata.

5. Admission to the Service

5.1 Deposit and Publication Request

To access the deposit and publication service for a digital collection, the Content Provider undertakes to digitally acquire, manage, and describe the digital reproductions in accordance with the **Technical Guidelines** provided by the Service and to agree with the Service Staff on the procedures for depositing files and related metadata.

Customisation of descriptive metadata and configuration of a digital collection within the Digital Library may entail additional costs for the Service, for which a contribution may be requested from the Content Provider solely by way of reimbursement of expenses.

In particular, to access the deposit and publication service, the Content Provider, after obtaining approval from the Scientific Steering Committee of the relevant disciplinary library, must:

- establish a collaborative relationship with the Service Staff by contacting the helpdesk;
- submit an expression of interest and complete the Data Management Plan (by 30 April);
- accept the cost estimate for configuration and sign the "Deposit and Publication Request Form" according to the type of collection to be deposited, whether University-owned or third-party (by 20 July).

Submitted requests will be communicated to the Scientific Steering Committee of the University Library System (SBA), which may indicate an order of priority.

The forms can be downloaded at the following links:

- [Form for University cultural heritage + Data Management Plan template](#);
- [Form for third-party cultural heritage + Data Management Plan template](#).

All communications must be sent to the official email address: historica@unibo.it

Timelines: acknowledgment of receipt within 3 working days; response and transmission of any cost estimate by 30 June.

Costs: reimbursement of expenses for any non-standard customisations and configurations.

5.2 Request for Consultancy and Technical Documentation

Requests for technical consultancy and for the documentation referred to in section 4.10 must be sent by Content Providers to the email address: historica@unibo.it

Timelines: acknowledgment of receipt within 3 working days.

5.3 Request for High-Resolution Digital Copies

Requests for high-definition files referred to in section 4.11 must include:

- the requester's personal details;
- the handle of the digital object;
- document details, including page or folio number where applicable;
- reasons for and intended use of the reproductions.

Requests must be sent to the email address: **historica@unibo.it**

Timelines: acknowledgment of receipt within 3 working days.

Costs: according to the University fee schedule (currently under definition).

6. Helpdesk

The Service Staff, through the official email address historica@unibo.it:

- provides information on the services offered and on the digital collections;
- offers assistance to Content Providers involved in digitisation projects at every stage of the process;
- responds to complaints and reports of malfunctions submitted by Users and activates IT staff for the necessary corrective actions;
- manages requests for high-resolution digital copies.

Timelines: acknowledgment of receipt within 3 working days.

7. Document History

30th April 2025	AlmaDL	final draft
8th May 2025	University Library System Steering Committee	approval
20 January 2026	AlmaDL	publication