Learning from the past and looking to the future: the necessity of reevaluating digitization practices and procedures

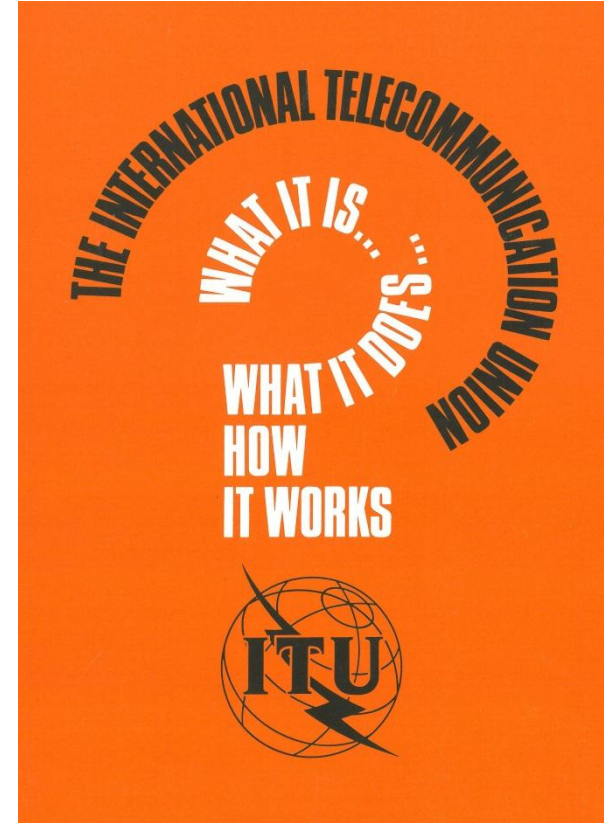Brie Grey-Noble, Digital Collections Librarian
Library and Archives Service
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

www.itu.int/history

What is ITU?

The International Telecommunication Union is the oldest existing international organization.

Since 1865, ITU has been at the centre of advances in communications – from telegraphy through to the modern world of satellites, mobile phones and the Internet.

Mission of the ITU Library & Archives Service

An important part of our mission is to acquire, preserve, and provide the best possible access to all ITU publications and official printed documents that result from its activities.

Why digitize?

"In a world where it is increasingly felt that if it's not online it doesn't exist, we need to make sure that our users are exposed to the wealth of information in special collections"
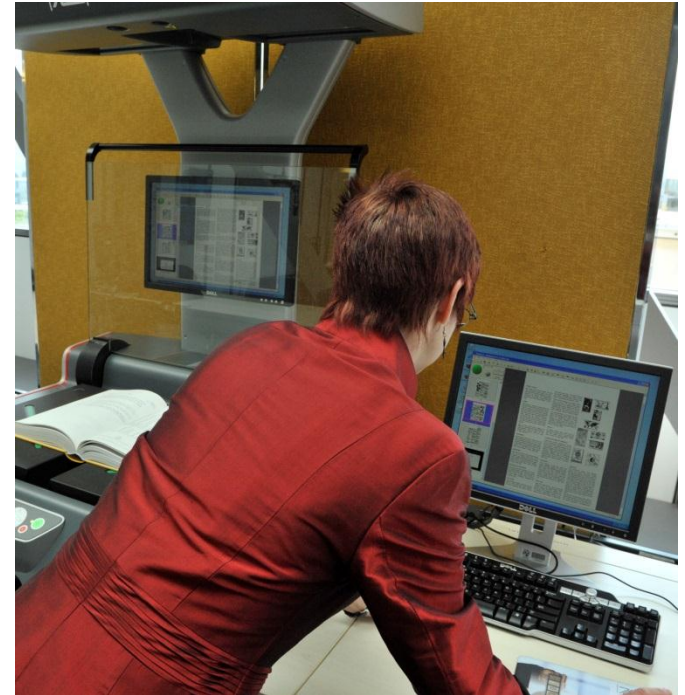
- Erway & Schaffner (2007)

The rapid growth of the Internet has changed the way that people seek information.

Why digitize?

Digitization has provided the opportunity to expand our mission by increasing access to many of ITU's key publications and documents by making digitized versions available online.

It has also enabled us to take an active role in telling ITU's story by researching and selecting publications and documents to share on our web site, the History of ITU Portal.

Phase One: 2007-2009

- **Limited resources**
- **Scanning was sporadic**
- **Very little assessment of print originals**
- **Minimal quality control of digital files**
- **At this stage, no specific procedures in place only a basic set of guidelines**

From digitization project to Digitization Programme

Project	vs.	Programme
Defined beginning and end		On-going part of daily operations
Small scope		Large scope
Objective is only to complete project		Integrated into organization's mission and goals
Limited resources (project-specific)		Dedicated resources to enable current and future projects

Our scanning project was expanded into a full-scale, on-going digitization programme with two main goals:

- to produce high-quality, authoritative digitized versions of key ITU publications and documents; and
- to tell the story of the International Telecommunication Union.

Phase Two: 2009-2013

- **Increased resources**
- **Critical approach to digitization process**
- **Developed a workflow and standard procedures**
- **Launched a web site to facilitate access to our digital files**

Telling ITU's story

During phase two, we also came up with the idea to use our publications and documents to tell ITU's story. As a result, providing an informed and authoritative history of the Union became a fundamental part of our digitization programme.
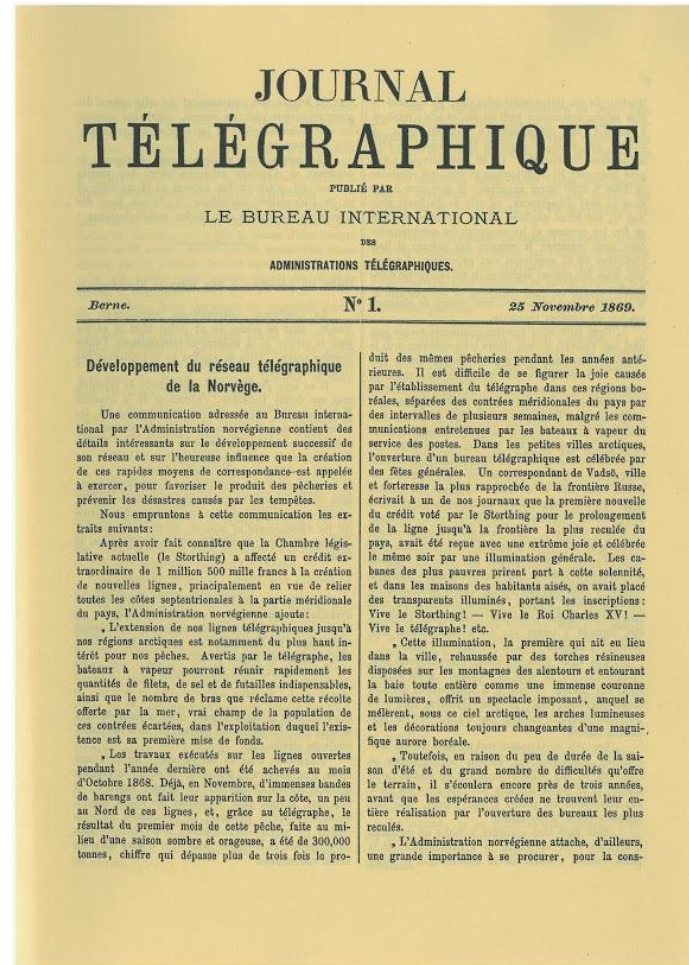
Phase Three: 2013-today

- **Began new project - digitization of ITU's Journal**
- **In parallel, continued digitization of conferences collection**
- **Modified workflow and procedures**
- **Prepared for our first outsourcing experience**
- **Faced new challenges and limitations**
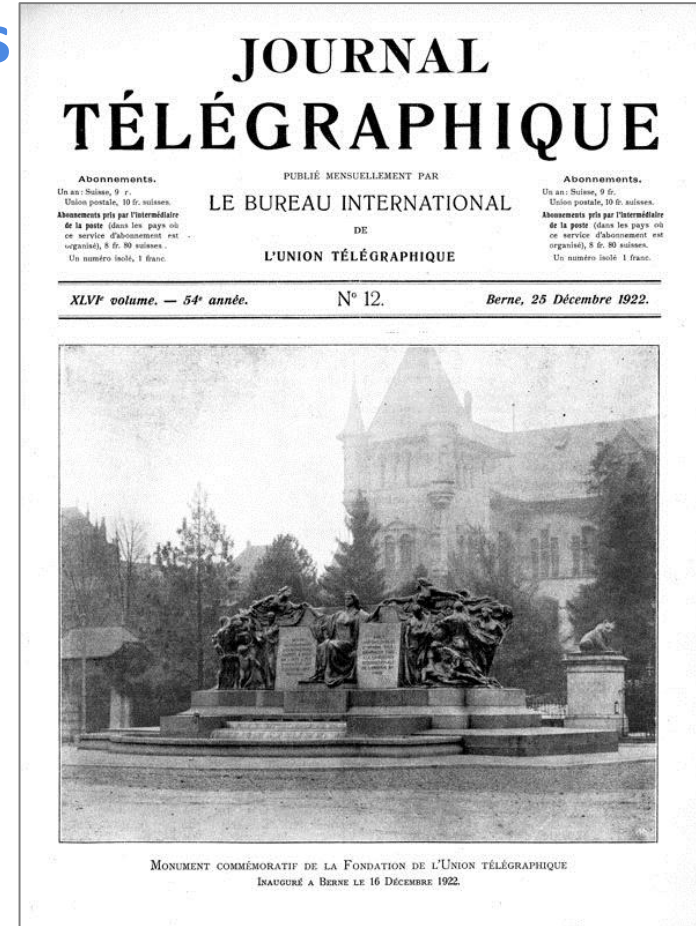
Why digitize the Telecommunication Journal?

As one of ITU's oldest publications, it is a resource with enormous historical value and high research potential.

Providing online access to the Journal will undoubtedly supply the research community with greater insight into the Union's rich history.

Challenges, decisions, and limitations

- Continuous publication series spanning nearly 150 years

- Pre-scanning assessment and preparation

- Supplement series

JOURNAL TÉLÉGRAPHIQUE

PUBLIÉ MENSUELLEMENT PAR

LE BUREAU INTERNATIONAL

DE

L'UNION TÉLÉGRAPHIQUE

Abonnements.
Un an : Suisse, 9 fr.
Union postale, 10 fr. suisses.
Abonnements pris par l'intermédiaire de la poste (dans les pays où ce service d'abonnement est organisé), 8 fr. 80 suisses.
Un numéro isolé, 1 franc.

XLVIᵉ volume. — 54ᵉ année.   Nᵒ 12.   Berne, 25 Décembre 1922.

MONUMENT COMMÉMORATIF DE LA FONDATION DE L'UNION TÉLÉGRAPHIQUE
INAUGURÉ A BERNE LE 16 DÉCEMBRE 1922.

Challenges, decisions, and limitations

- Quality control

- File format

- Access and delivery

- Integrating historic and current issues

What we have learned

- Document decisions as they are made
- Respond to decisions by modifying procedures
- Be open and flexible! What has worked in the past won't necessary work for future projects

Further information
www.itu.int/history

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