Map Imaging Service Providers

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Introduction:

For many institutions, outsourcing is the most practical way to carry out map digitization projects. High-resolution images of large maps cannot be obtained using the equipment available in most libraries, such as desktop scanners and ordinary digital cameras. Top quality high-resolution scanning of large maps requires such expensive equipment as digital view camera backs, oversized flatbed scanners, or specialized drum scanners. Only the largest institutions have the budget and support staff to be able to employ such equipment. Except for very large libraries with thousands of maps to digitize, outsourcing is the only alternative. And, given the rapid obsolescence of scanning equipment and the need for trained technicians, even the largest research libraries have outsourced map digitization projects.

Anyone working with a service provider should be prepared to ask a number of questions, and to draw up a contract specifying exactly what is expected. It is always a good idea to ask vendors for references. A few things to consider: What is the cost per item? At what resolution will the maps be scanned? What type of image files will be provided? How will the scanned images be stored? What metadata, if any, will be provided? If some of the maps are to be scanned through mylar, what will be done to minimize reflections? How important is total color fidelity in images of maps? What equipment will be used for scanning? In particular, attention should be paid to the pros and cons of using high-end digital cameras versus flatbed and sheet-feed scanners. This page concludes with a short bibliography of articles on digital imaging issues, which should provide readers with the necessary background information for working with vendors.

List of Digital Imaging Service Providers:

The following is a list in alphabetical order of digital imaging providers and the equipment they use. The list is restricted to vendors that have the capability of imaging large maps (at least 36" wide) using scanners or high-resolution digital cameras. It excludes those who photograph maps and makes digital images from the negatives or transparencies (a widely available service). The list is doubtless incomplete, and will be updated as additional information is obtained. The inclusion or exclusion of particular vendors does not imply anything about the quality of their work. Also, no guarantees are made about the accuracy or completeness of the information provided here, and no recommendations are implied concerning particular vendors included in this list. Please send corrections and updates to David Allen (mailto:dyallen2@aol.com).

Backstage Library Works
1180 80 S. 800 E.
Orem, UT 84097
1-800-1316-BSLW
www.bslw.com (http://www.bslw.com)
Scans maps using either Vidar Titan Atlas Pro scanner or Better Light overhead camera

A Brief Bibliography on
East View Cartographic, Inc  
3020 Harbor Lane N  
Minneapolis MN 55447-5137  
(800) 477-1005, (763) 550-0965, (763) 253-0686  
www.cartographic.com  
(http://www.cartographic.com/) Uses Vidar Tru Scan Titan II Scanner

Luna Imaging, Inc  
3542 Hayden Avenue  
Building One  
Culver City, CA 90232  
(310) 452-8730  
www.luna-imaging.com  
(http://www.luna-imaging.com) Uses Fuji and Scitex scanners as well as digital camera backs

VTLS, Inc  
171 Kraft Drive  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
(800) 468-8857, (540) 557-1200  
www.vtls.com  
(http://www.vtls.com/) Uses Tangent 5480 XLS document-feed scanner

Digital Data Services  
Lakewood, Colorado  
(866) DDS-SCAN, (303) 986-6740  
www.usgsquads.com (http://www.usgsquads.com)  
Scans maps up to 50" wide using Contex sheet-feed scanners

JJT, Inc  
5555 North Lamar Blvd  
Austin, TX 78751  
1-508-747-9889  
www.jjt.com (http://www.jjt.com)  
Uses Sinar digital cameras

Old Maps, LLC  
Sedona, AZ  
1-928-282-3944  
www.oldmaps.com  
(http://www.oldmaps.com) Uses 36" Contex color scanner

Visual Information, Inc  
1031 13th Street  
Suite 300  
Denver, CO 80204  
(303) 825-0413  

Digital Imaging of Maps:  
Allen, David  

www.imagebase.com
Unable to obtain information about equipment


Shawa, Tsering Wangyal, "What is the Best Resolution to Scan a Map?," baseline: a newsletter of the Map and Geography Round Table, vol. 24 (6) December 2003: 6 ff.

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