Format Requirements for Project Narrative or White Paper

Most digital projects designed to fulfill the requirements of a degree include a project narrative, white paper, or accompanying essay(s) in addition to the digital component(s). If your department has such requirements in place, follow the library’s format guidelines for textual dissertations, theses, and capstone projects when preparing your document. Additionally, include sections specific to digital projects as discussed below.

Preliminary Pages, or Front Matter

In addition to the requirements in place for all dissertations, theses, and capstone projects, the following sections are specific to works including digital or online components. Required pages must appear in the page sequence outlined in the next section.

Abstract

All dissertations, theses, and capstone projects must include an abstract; there is no length limit. The abstract will appear online with the descriptive information (title, author, program, etc.) associated with the work and may be reproduced and indexed in a variety of academic research databases and Google Scholar. The abstract must also be included within the deposited manuscript as page iv of the preliminary pages.

For digital projects, abstracts should describe the project scope and include relevant URLs for associated elements such as videos, websites, or code repositories (e.g., GitHub link); if applicable, describe what data has been collected.

Digital Manifest

All dissertations, theses, and capstone projects that contain digital projects must include a “Digital Manifest” in the preliminary pages. Formatted like a Table of Contents, this section provides a master list of all the components—print and digital—that, together, constitute the dissertation, thesis, or capstone project as it was submitted to your program for approval. List and briefly describe the project components to form an inventory or “packing list” for the deposit. For each component included in the deposit, indicate its file type, a brief description, and URL, if applicable (see Fig. 1). For example, a capstone project that is a website containing geospatial visualizations created using CARTO might deposit: an archived version of the website (submitted as WARC files), data files exported from CARTO (as CSV, Shapefile, KML, GeoJSON, or SVG files), and an accompanying white paper. All of these items would be listed in the Digital Manifest.
**List of Variables (if applicable)**

If the digital project is a database or includes code, a List of Variables must be included in the preliminary pages or as an Appendix (back matter).

If brief, the List of Variables should be located in the front matter, or preliminary pages; lengthier sections are more appropriate as an Appendix. Format according to Turabian instructions for lists of abbreviations, presenting information in two columns and in alphabetical order (see Fig. 2).

**Glossary of Functions (if applicable)**

If the digital project consists largely of code, a Glossary of Functions must be included in the preliminary pages or as an Appendix (back matter) to document the uses of functions and code. Formatted like a traditional glossary of terms, the Glossary of Functions should list important functions included in the software code alongside a brief explanation of what each function does. Format according to Turabian’s instructions for Glossary (see Fig. 3).

**A Note on Technical Specifications**

All dissertations, theses, and capstone projects that contain digital projects must include a “Note on Technical Specifications” in the preliminary pages. Use this section to provide an introductory note to readers that will serve as a high-level overview of the project’s components and technical specifications (see Fig. 4). Include here any information about components housed outside of the library deposit, such as GitHub repositories, and where to find the latest version of materials.

**References**

In your references section, include the platforms, software libraries, and code used in your project. These can be separated from other bibliographic citations included in your manuscript if desired. For guidance, consult the Software Sustainability Institute’s recommendations (https://www.software.ac.uk/how-cite-and-describe-software). Additional examples are collected in Alan Liu’s “Citing Bits: Sources and Suggestions for Citing Software, Platforms, Code, Corpora” (2017).
Required Page Sequence for Preliminary Pages

Title Page
Copyright Page
Approval Page
Abstract
Preface, Foreword, and/or Acknowledgements (optional)
Dedication and/or Epigraph (optional)
Table of Contents
List of Tables (if applicable)
Lists of Figures, Illustrations, Charts, Diagrams, etc. (if applicable)
Digital Manifest (required for all digital projects)
Lists of Variables (if applicable, unless submitted as an Appendix)
Glossary of Functions (if applicable, unless submitted as an Appendix)
A Note on Technical Specifications (required for all digital projects)
Body of Text (pagination switches to Arabic number 1)
Appendix or Appendices
References
Autobiographical Statement (optional)
Sample Pages

Fig. 1: Digital Manifest. This sample page shows what a Digital Manifest might look like for a digital dissertation containing a white paper, a project website, blog posts, a digital editions, and software code.

Fig. 2: List of Variables. This sample page shows a List of Variables for a capstone project that consists of a software application.

Fig. 3: Glossary of Functions. This page shows a Glossary of Functions for a capstone project that consists of a software application; note that only key functions are included.

Fig. 4: A Note on Technical Specifications. This section may be a prose paragraph or a list of specifications, depending on the nature of the project. Note how the sample walks potential users through the process of installing the project and putting it to use; this section is analogous to a “readme” file.
Fig. 1: Digital Manifest. This sample page shows what a Digital Manifest might look like for a digital dissertation containing a white paper, a project website, blog posts, a digital editions, and software code. List all components included in your library deposit. Source credit: Adapted, with permission, from the online documentation submitted by Amanda Visconti (University of Virginia) for “Infinite Ulysses,” a digital dissertation at the University of Maryland.
**Fig. 2: List of Variables.** List variables on the left in alphabetical order and the corresponding description on the right. This sample page shows a List of Variables for a capstone project that consists of a software application. *Source credit:* Adapted, with permission, from the documentation accompanying the DH Box project, submitted by Stephen Zweibel as a master’s capstone project at the Graduate Center, The City University of New York.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADMIN_EMAIL</td>
<td>The administrator’s email address in the DH Box database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMIN_PASS</td>
<td>The administrator’s password</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFAULT_HOSTNAME</td>
<td>IP address of the host server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMO_ENABLED</td>
<td>If True, will enable the demo page of DH Box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUTION</td>
<td>Will display this string on the front page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCALHOST</td>
<td>If true, will point URLs towards ‘localhost’ rather than ‘0.0.0.0’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECRET_KEY</td>
<td>Allows for protected sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQLALCHEMY_DATABASE_URI</td>
<td>Location and name of the DH Box database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESTING</td>
<td>If true, enables Flask’s testing tools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 3: Glossary of Functions. Formatted like a traditional glossary of terms, the Glossary of Functions should list important functions included in the software code alongside a brief explanation of what each function does. This page shows a Glossary of Functions for a capstone project that consists of a software application; note that only key functions are included. Source credit: Adapted, with permission, from the documentation accompanying the DH Box project, submitted by Stephen Zweibel as a master’s capstone project at the Graduate Center, The City University of New York.
Fig. 4: A Note on Technical Specifications. This section may be a prose paragraph or a list of specifications, depending on the nature of the project. Note how the sample walks potential users through the process of installing the project and putting it to use; this section is analogous to a “readme” file. Source credit: Adapted, with permission, from the documentation accompanying the DH Box project, submitted by Stephen Zweibel as a master’s capstone project at the Graduate Center, The City University of New York.