swissuniversities

Program SUC 2013-2016 P-2
"Scientific information: Access, processing and safeguarding"

Key focus area Publications, implementation actions EP-10, digitization

Adapted strategy and implementation actions

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SUK P-2 "Wissenschaftliche Information: Zugang, Verarbeitung und Speicherung"
CUS P-2 «Information scientifique: accès, traitement et sauvegarde»
SUC P-2 "Scientific information: access, processing and safeguarding"   **Digitization strategy**

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1   Preliminary note

This document defines the strategy and the implementation actions for SUC P-2 in the field of digitization. It replaces the explanations in the strategy section E-publishing and the implementation action EP-10 in the "White Paper for a Swiss Information Provisioning and Processing Platform 2020" of April 14, 2014.

The process and the considerations that have led to the present adjustment are explained in the document "Hauptstossrichtung Publikationen, Umsetzungsmassnahme EP-10, Digitalisierung: Analyse zur Anpassung der Strategie" ("Key area of focus Publications, implementation actions EP-10, digitization: analysis for adjusting strategy") of March 20, 2015.

2   Goal

Supporting digitization in SUC P-2 begins with today's existing platforms for disseminating and archiving digital objects. The implementation actions offer an invitation to submit projects that will further develop the platforms and services that have been built up in Switzerland in recent years, and that will open them up to new partners and clients. Project-related grants from SUC P-2 will support technological, quality-assurance and organizational projects that will make a contribution to the sustainable development of nationally available services.

3   Guidelines for funding

The framework conditions for SUC P-2 apply to funding here. The "Project application guidelines" offer information on applicability, how to enter application details and the evaluation process. The submission deadlines will be published on the website. The correct project application form is to be used to submit project applications.[1]

For the moment, the program will not provide any funding for retro-digitization projects (see section 6).

SUC P-2 will provide project-related grants from the federal government for start-up financing up to 50%. Funding for digitization projects must serve to stabilize, develop and expand existing services. Projects that are funded must prove that they are either limited in time or will be able to fund themselves in the medium term.

SUC P-2 will fund services that are "open to all participants." Applicants are prepared to open up their applications to new partners and clients, and will develop their offerings for the benefit of all Swiss science.

Subject-specific platforms will only be funded when they bring a transferable added value, for example:

- Results are transferable to other disciplines / environments.
- Generally valid findings may be derived from them.
- The project can help form structures for other disciplines.
- The project is exemplary in character.

The following description has been formulated for digitization projects, but applies similarly for all projects funded by SUC P-2.

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[1] See the program website: www.swissuniversites.ch/isci

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4 Projects funded

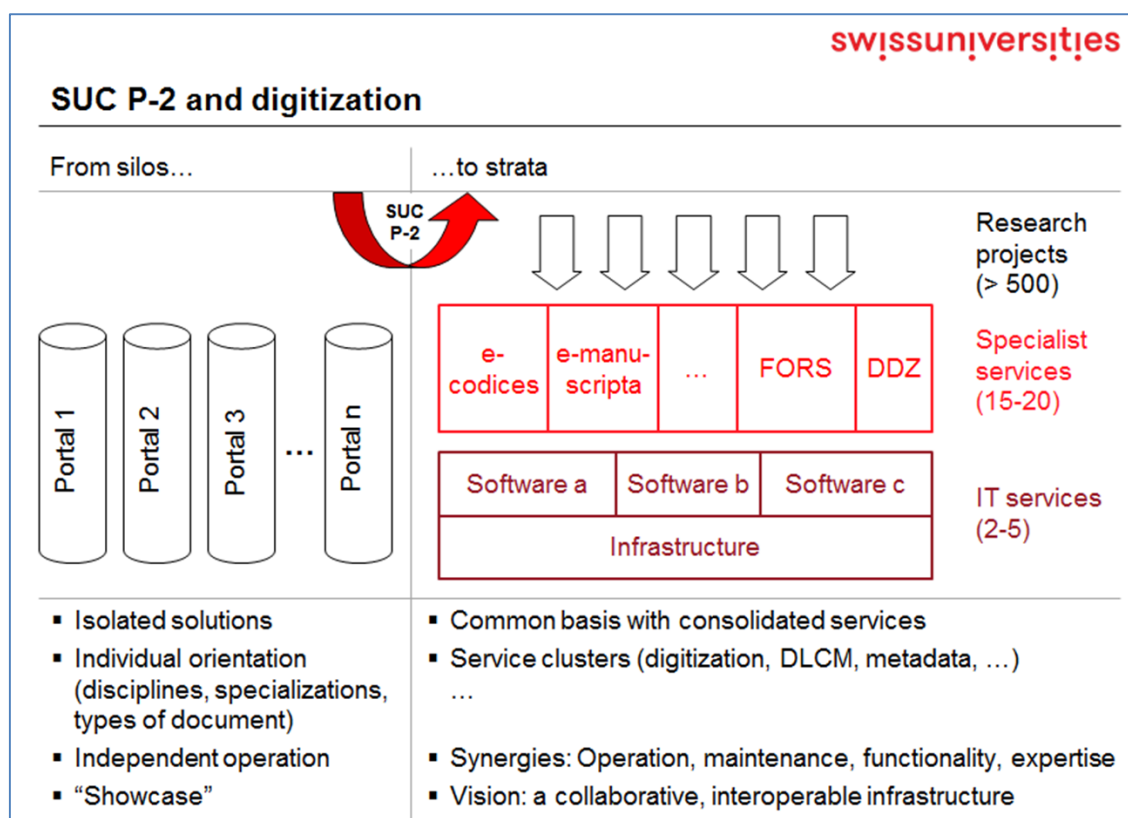## 4.1 Technological projects: "from silos to strata"

From a technical perspective, the **basic functions of digitization**, besides the physical apparatus (scanners), encompass the following four IT components:

1. Storage of the digital images and the metadata, with interfaces
2. Functions for access control and long-term preservation
3. Presentation (browsing, searches)
4. Processing tools

The first two components are independent of the concrete form of the analog original and the manner and means of its use. This is often also the case for components three and four: the basic software for presentation and searches and the processing tools. By standardizing and consolidating the platforms, synergies may be achieved.

Maintaining digital platforms in the long term can as a rule only be guaranteed by strong university service providers (such as the large university libraries in collaboration with the computing centers and SWITCH).

SUC P-2 funds projects such as opening up platforms for different types of digital objects, decoupling IT components, expanding into a multi-client infrastructure, and uniting existing platforms or securing long-term operations.

"From silos to strata": simplified depiction of the funding goals

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4.2 Projects for quality assurance and promoting interoperability

An **environment for digital objects** can be regarded as a "set of services" from which workflows for different user environments can be defined and that can communicate with each other.

A **digitization project** will encompass the following six elements:

1. Technical standards in the digitization process
2. Standardized, complete metadata (technical, administrative, structural, descriptive)
3. A stable addressing system
4. Long-term preservation and archiving
5. Clarification of user rights
6. Open, standardized interfaces (as in LOD and TEI).

SUC P-2 will support existing platforms to introduce or further develop one or more of these elements.

4.3 Organizational projects: integrating further participants

Smaller institutions or research projects are often not in a position to prepare and initiate digitization projects of their own accord. Furthermore, already existing platforms for digital objects and their services should increasingly be opened up to serve the needs of collections, research projects, research environments, subject portals or data centers. Integrating new, smaller and financially weaker participants should be supported.

SUC P-2 will fund initiatives to integrate new partners and clients into existing platforms, such as creating long-term costings and developing partnership models and business models.

The program will accept applications for it to take on the project costs of new clients to initiate digitization projects. The costs of retro-digitization and data preservation must be provided by the applicants themselves.

5 Preliminary project for a digitization competence center

Digitization projects are pending in the humanities in particular. Against the background of the dissemination of IT-supported working methods (the digital humanities), there is a need for better networking of the expertise of research centers, IT service providers and memory institutions (archives, libraries and collections).

Advisory services with regard to digitization technologies, object environments, standards, best practices and fundraising have hitherto been made visible more or less on an ad hoc basis by the platform providers and by the Swiss National Library via Digicoord (http://www.digicoord.ch). The offerings have primarily reached the digitization specialists in libraries and archives. It would be advisable to expand the advisory services and coordination of digitization projects to include project heads in research (research support) and collaborations with specialists in subject portals, research environments and data centers. These should make it easier for researchers to inform themselves, to buttress the quality of projects in the eyes of sponsors, and reduce total outlays.

SUC P-2 will accept applications for a preliminary project (along the lines of a feasibility study) to create a competence center that will meet these criteria.

6 Study for creating a fund for retro-digitization

In view of the increasing use of IT working methods in the humanities (e.g. in editions), and the restricted lifetime of image and audio carriers, we must assume that there will be an ongoing need for retro-digitization.

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The "national strategy" of SUC P-2 propagates increasing easily accessible digital content by means of licensing, promoting open access and retro-digitization.[2] The evaluation process of SUC P-2 will assess the technical fundamentals and the organizational framework for such projects, but not the relevance of digital content in itself.

In the field of licensing, the Consortium of Swiss University Libraries means there is a mediator that can offer a broad assessment of the relevance and the conditions for licensed content, while efforts exist to establish binding policies and to provide funding for implementation in the field of open access; however, in the case of retro-digitization there is no intermediary that might be able to assess the relevance and quality of retro-digitization projects across several platforms. Furthermore, it would be difficult to set up boundaries between those responsible for the program (the universities) and other funding institutions involved in cultural heritage – especially the federal government and the cantons.

SUC P-2 will assess setting up a fund to support retro-digitization projects together with further partners (SAHS, SNSF, Memoriav, the federal government, the cantons and memory institutions). A study should be conducted to investigate digitization projects, the need for digitization, the financial structures, and to propose a possible basis. The program will invite proposals for how to proceed.

7   Implementation actions

The implementation action EP-10[3] will be replaced by the following implementation actions:

No.	Implementation action	Priority (1-3)	Phase (1-3)
Key focus area Publications:			
EP-10a See section 4.1	Projects to enable the technology for opening up or developing existing platforms, e.g.: • Opening them up to include different types of digital objects, • Decoupling IT components, • Expanding a multi-client-capable infrastructure, • Uniting existing platforms, • Ensuring long-term operation	1	1
EP-10b See section 4.2	Projects for quality assurance and to promote interoperability: • Safeguarding standards in the digitization process, • The provision of standardized, complete metadata, • A stable addressing system, • Ensuring long-term preservation and archiving, • Clarification of user rights, • Providing open, standardized interfaces.	1	1

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[2] "Combining Efforts to Manage Scientific Information"), pp. 8-9 (key focus area 1: Publications).

[3] CRUS SUC P-2, White Paper of April 14, 2014, sections 4.3 and 5.3.

No.	Implementation action	Priority (1-3)	Phase (1-3)
EP-10c See section 4.3	Projects to integrate further partners in an existing platform or to expand the client base, e.g.: • Developing business models • Project costs to set up digitization projects for new partners or clients (the costs for retro-digitization and data preservation must be brought by the applicant as own resources)	1	1
EP-10d See section 5	Preliminary project (feasibility study) for a competence center to offer advice, coordination and initial support for digitization.	1	2
EP-10e See section 6	Study to set up a fund for retro-digitization: proposal for how to proceed	1	2