Digitizing Historical Images
Evolving Wisdom & Standards

In the beginning, when digitizing came down from on high, there was chaos. And the word was to use the hardware and software of the day, to set the resolution (or degree of clarity) at whatever setting worked best, and to use whatever format (jpeg, tiff, or about a dozen others) worked best upon your computer.

And then came outmoded technology, incompatible hardware and software, the network crash, and the worm. And many an image had to slowly be rescanned.

In the second phase, it was proclaimed that you shall use TIFF alone, for it is the software program most faithful to the original, and maybe a jpeg for the web.

And the TIFF ate the remaining space in the computer, even unto the network, and required many additional feedings of space, and could not easily be mounted on the web, or tamed. And the need was also proclaimed to only have to digitize once.

And then came outmoded technology, incompatible hardware and software, the network crash, and the worm. And many an image had to slowly be rescanned.

In the third phase, was raised the standard of duality, saying you shall TIFF for historical posterity at 300 dpi, and JPEG for the web at 100-200 dpi. And it seemed good. And the need was proclaimed to only have to digitize once.

And in practice came the realization that images enhanced and clarified, while damned as impure and unfaithful for the historian or for archival purpose, was a boon for publicity and publication, while protecting exact form & ownership rights to the original. And a third form of image's image was borne, a tripartite view of the scan.

And then came outmoded technology, incompatible hardware and software, the network crash, and the worm. And many an image had to slowly be rescanned.

And then came the flash drive, to have and to hold, and to move images from computer to computer, & the age of terabytes of computing capacity, and better, more faithful and varied scanners.

And it shall come to pass that there shall be untold other phases, standards, shibboleths, and with each, outmoded technology, incompatible hardware and software, the network crash, and the worm. And the need shall be proclaimed to only have to digitize once, and great light shall be cast, once more, upon the original.