

# Statement of Shared Practice

## AI Training Requests and Unique Cultural Collections

*Version 1.2 – March 2026*

Libraries, archives, and other institutions that steward unique cultural collections are receiving increasing requests for access to materials for AI model training. These institutions hold materials that in many cases exist nowhere else, often entrusted to them by donors, communities, and predecessor organizations for preservation and access. That relationship of trust carries obligations. AI foundation model training is a disposition decision, not an access decision: with current training methods, broad AI model training absorbs collection materials into model weights irreversibly, severing the provenance that connects knowledge to its origins and eliminating the institution's ability to govern subsequent use. The question before us is not whether to engage with AI, but on what terms, for what purposes, and with what protections for the communities and collections we serve.

This statement establishes a shared set of principles and definitions for participating institutions evaluating new requests for AI training access to collections owned or stewarded by the institution. It applies for a period of 12 months.

## Shared Commitments

- 1. Shared definitions.** Classify requests as retrieval, fine-tuning, general model training, or evaluation. Require requesters to specify which category applies and how they will maintain that boundary.
- 2. Separate digitization from AI use.** In new agreements, evaluate digitization funding and AI training rights as distinct agreements with distinct terms.
- 3. Require provenance and transparency.** In new agreements governing AI training access, determine whether the proposed system will maintain traceable connections between its outputs and the source materials, and whether the institution's materials can be removed from the system.
- 4. Prefer retrieval-based approaches.** Favor methods where source materials remain under institutional control and can be removed.
- 5. Apply heightened scrutiny to broad training requests.** For broad commercial training where provenance and meaningful control are not realistic, each institution will independently apply heightened scrutiny and a presumption against approval. Participating institutions are not obligated to refuse any specific request and retain full independent authority over all access decisions.
- 6. Share information and preserve the ability to do so.** Contribute to a confidential shared ledger recording, at the category level, the types of requests received and the general structure of terms proposed. The ledger excludes pricing, financial

terms, and compensation structures. Each institution independently decides what to share. Entries may be anonymized. Institutions are encouraged to avoid entering into confidentiality agreements that would prevent this category-level information sharing. Existing confidentiality obligations are respected.

## Scope

This is a voluntary professional commitment, not a legal contract between signatories. Each institution retains full independent authority over its own collections, agreements, and access decisions. Nothing in this statement constitutes an agreement to refuse to deal with any party or to set prices or licensing terms. Each institution independently evaluates each request under its own policies and authority.

The commitments in this statement apply to new and prospective requests for AI model training access to collections owned or stewarded by the institution. They do not retroactively govern existing contractual relationships, legacy digitization partnerships, or agreements entered into before an institution endorsed this statement.

The statement covers archival, manuscript, rare, and special collections, including materials held by libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies. It does not cover widely held published works available through standard library acquisitions.

It is not a moratorium on AI use. It establishes a floor for responsible practice, not a ceiling. Nothing in this statement limits an institution's ability to advocate for fair use or other legal doctrines. The statement addresses institutional stewardship choices about the terms of access to collections, not the legal rights of any party.

## Duration

12 months from April 3, 2026. Participants will reconvene by February 2027 to assess whether to extend, revise, or conclude. The statement expires unless affirmatively renewed.

## Participation

Open to any institution that stewards unique cultural collections, including academic libraries, independent research libraries, public libraries with special collections, state and national archives, historical societies, and museum libraries. Endorsement requires the signature of the institution's senior leader (dean, director, university librarian, state archivist, or equivalent). Institutions may join at any time during the 12-month period. Withdrawal is permitted at any time by written notice.

## Coordination

Leo S. Lo, University Librarian and Dean of Libraries, University of Virginia Library, serves as coordinating contact. Resources, including the UVA Archival AI Protocol (<https://doi.org/10.18130/5dqf-9w86>) and Adoption Kit (<https://doi.org/10.18130/jbeg-a995>), are available under CC BY 4.0.