

Smithsonian Institution  
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum  
Digital and Emerging Media Department

**Official Announcement:  
Digital Collection Materials Project**

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum is pleased to announce it will begin its first major initiative to address the conservation needs of digital materials in 2017. Supported by the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, the Digital Collection Materials Project will serve to set standards, practices, and strategies related to digital materials in Cooper Hewitt's permanent collection. Of the more than 210,000 design objects in the collection, it is estimated that roughly [150 items](#) incorporate information conveyed in a digital form. Many of these objects are [home and office electronics](#), [personal computing](#) and [mobile devices](#), and [media players](#) with interfaces that span both hardware and software. Among the 150 items, there are also born digital works—examples of design that originated in electronic form that are saved as digital data. These include both creative and useful [software applications](#), as well as media assets, such as [videos](#) and [computer-aided designs](#).



*Digital Project, Ten Thousand Cents, 2007–08; Designed by Aaron Koblin and Takashi Kawashima; USA; processing, adobe flash cs3, php/mysql, amazon mechanical turk, adobe photoshop, adobe after effects; Gift of Aaron Koblin and Takashi Kawashima; 2014-41-2; [Object Record](#)*

The first phase of the Digital Collection Materials Project will be the design and execution of a collection survey. The second phase will be case studies of select objects. The final phase will synthesize the survey results and case study findings in order to determine recommendations for a strategic plan of care, preservation, and responsible acquisition of digital materials for the collection.



*SketchBot (USA), 2012; Industrial Design by Universal Design Studio (United Kingdom); aluminum, plastic, assorted electrical components, javascript, html, css and python source files; H x W x D: 137.2 x 137.2 x 137.2 cm (54 x 54 x 54 in.); Gift of Google Inc.; s-g-1; [Object Record](#)*

The historical core of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum's collection is comprised of objects selected by the museum's founders, Sarah and Eleanor Hewitt, to document outstanding technical and artistic accomplishments in the decorative arts. Established in 1897 as an educational resource for The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, Cooper Hewitt's collection continues to expand to encompass a range of materials exemplifying the broad category of human ingenuity and artistry that today we call design. The diversity of the museum's collection exemplifies the core institutional belief that design is best understood through process, a framework that fosters understanding of human activity as it intersects with many materials and technologies, including the important fields of interface design, interaction design, and user experience design.



*One Laptop Per Child XO Computer, 2007; Designed by Yves Béhar, Bret Recor and fuseproject; injection molded abs plastic and polycarbonate, printed rubber, liquid crystal display, electronic components; steel, copper wire (power plug); H x W x D (closed): 3.5 x 22.9 x 24.1 cm (1 3/8 in. x 9 in. x 9 1/2 in.); Gift of George R. Kravis II; 2015-5-8-a,b; [Object Record](#)*

The Digital Collections Materials Project will help preserve long-term access to digital materials in the collection while maintaining the integrity of the designs they express. It will also allow Cooper Hewitt to move forward responsibly with acquisitions in the exciting realm of digital design. Since digital materials are especially vulnerable to the deleterious effects of technological obsolescence and decay, which can lead to inaccessibility and information loss, there is an urgent need to address the conservation needs of digital materials in the collection. It is with an eye to these materials' cultural significance and vulnerability that the museum moves forward with the Digital Collection Materials Project.

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