Digital archives have two main duties:
* Providing long-term storage and sustainability
* Maintaining immediate access

When preserving images, the largest possible versions are stored, such as TIFF or JPEG2000 files. However, these are not the best formats for access. Since web browsers cannot view or work with them easily, there is a gap between sustainability and accessibility.

Viewing large archived image files requires an image service. Low-resolution versions—which can be used with browsers and mobile devices but not for archival purposes—are therefore necessary. The solution to this challenge of providing both preservation and access to digital images is an image server that takes the original image files and generates images in different resolutions and formats, like JPEG or PNG, spontaneously and on demand.

TextGrid offers a Virtual Research Environment (Laboratory) and a Repository for humanities research data.

To both work with and preserve image files, it offers the digilib image service.

For interoperability between different repositories the IIIF image and metadata API was implemented on top of the repository. This allows users to work with distributed images and metadata in a combined working environment.

One example of this type of interoperable software is the web based Mirador viewer.