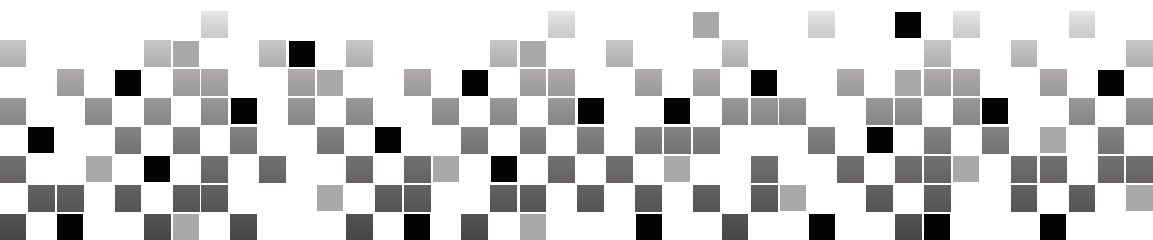


# DIGITIZING YOUR COLLECTION

PUBLIC LIBRARY SUCCESS STORIES

← SUSANNE CARO →

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY SAM MEISTER, TAMMY RAVAS, AND WENDY WALKER



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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY DIGITIZE?

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We are that public library ideal of a people's university and the way we are connecting with our public is changing, but I think the goals of that connection are no different.

—Eileen O'Connell, branch manager, Special Collections Library,  
Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Library, New Mexico

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Library patrons continue to expect more online content, and libraries are attempting to meet these expectations with article databases and e-book collections. According to a 2011 survey by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), libraries had 35 million e-books available.<sup>1</sup> Why should libraries invest additional time and funds to scan old paper documents, add metadata and store them in an accessible electronic collection when they are already providing access to databases? As your community accesses your collection online and uses more electronic content your collections can be hidden if they are not accessible online. Through digitization you can increase access and awareness of your unique collections, from fragile photographs to microfilm. The electronic versions act as surrogates, reducing handling of the originals, and can be used to preserve your valuable, tangible materials.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR COMMUNITY**

As digital technology becomes more ubiquitous in daily life it can be easy to forget that it was not always there. On library discussion lists such as Publibs, librarians often share head-scratching requests: people looking for film of Lincoln's assassination, photographs of George Washington or Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Technologies such as photography and film have existed for so long that people can forget that they have not always existed. Don't be surprised when a patron asks for a digital copy of a World War II document with the expectation that it should have been originally created in an electronic format.

These types of interactions will only increase over time. The Mindset List, published by Beloit College each year, provides insights into the experiences that have shaped incoming college freshmen. The class of 2015 has always had Internet access. The class of 2016 has always lived in cyberspace and prefers digital cameras, and the class of 2017 has always had access to the Global Positioning System (GPS). Soon there will be college freshmen who have always had access to e-books.

As more people are born into a world where most information is created digitally, the expectation for all library collections to be available electronically will continue to grow and users will expect that content to be available in a variety of formats and on multiple devices. The number of people with Internet access in the United States has increased significantly over the last ten years. In 2013 the U.S. Census estimated that 83.8 percent of households had a computer, and 73.4 percent had Internet access. In 2013 the Federal Communications Commission reported 86 million residential fixed-location Internet connections and 142 million mobile wireless service subscribers.<sup>3</sup> More people are now able to access your library's holdings from home or on a mobile device. Responding to the public's interest in digital content, libraries have increased the number of databases in their collections. Libraries are meeting the growing demand for electronic materials with historic newspaper databases, genealogy resources, and e-books.<sup>4</sup>

The desire to access materials online is part of a trend in libraries toward digital inclusion and providing a range of digital content and access options. Digital inclusion is described as having three to four aspects. A Pew Research Study looked at access, adoption, and application while the Digital Inclusion survey considered public access, digital content, digital literacy, and domain-specific services and programs.<sup>5</sup> According to the 2013 Digital Inclusion Survey, 100 percent of libraries offer public Internet access, 98 percent offer some form of technology training, and 62 percent report that they are the only source of free Internet access in their community.<sup>6</sup> Public libraries strive to meet the technology needs of their users, and as more people become accustomed to accessing e-books and online articles they will expect to find other library materials online as well. It is a good strategy to engage users by including digital versions of a library's unique holdings in addition to the latest best sellers or magazines.

## **DIGITIZING TO IMPROVE ACCESS**

Digital access redefines a library community from geographically-based to interest-based. Individuals who no longer live in their hometown are able to

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access digital versions of their high school yearbooks. People who have never lived near your library can find your collections online and even volunteer or donate relevant materials. Researchers, historians, and school children from all around the world will be able to find and use your library's digitized collections. Users are already looking for information from their local and state governments. A Pew survey found that 35 percent of Internet users have used the Internet to research official government documents or statistics.<sup>7</sup> Town reports, vital statistics, planning documents, committee minutes, and more can be made available through the library's digital collections.

Online access can increase interest in your collections and the use of the tangible materials by increasing discovery and awareness of your holdings. According to librarian Julie Warren, images from the collection at Georgetown County Library have been used by *ABC Nightly News* and PBS for news programs and *Antiques Roadshow*. Library users value the ability to access digital collections and consider digitization to be an important service. Madison Library in New Hampshire surveyed the town to learn how the community ranked library services, including their digitization efforts. According to former director Mary Cronin, the results revealed that 78 percent of people felt it was important or very important for the library to continue to add to its digital collections. Online collections allow libraries to reach users outside of the physical library building and to meet user expectations for digital resources. Once a collection is online it is set free; it is available around the world at any time.

## **DIGITIZATION AS A PRESERVATION TOOL**

Preservation of original materials is another reason to digitize. Over time scrapbooks, photographs, audio, video, and other items can start to degrade. In some cases (consider deteriorating audiocassettes) digitization can prevent a total loss of content. For items such as photographs, digitization and subsequent digital restoration can help you make high-quality items available to your users without altering the original material. Some materials are more likely to be damaged by repeated physical use, such as brittle newspapers or yearbooks that have had photographs removed by former students. Digitization allows the materials to be used without the wear and tear of handling.

If you are digitizing purely for access, ask yourself what will happen if you lose your file. Will you be willing to re-create all the work? Will you still have access to the originals and will they be in a condition suitable for rescanning? Even if you are not considering using digitization to ensure continued access to material, you should consider best practices to protect the investment of time and money that goes into creating a digital collection. If you

are concerned about keeping your collection available for future generations, there are resources which can guide your process.

## Synopsis

The three main reasons why you should digitize are:

- **Expectation:** As more information becomes available electronically, your users will expect your unique collections to be available digitally.
- **Access:** Making your collections available online increases access within and outside of your community.
- **Preservation:** Some media like newspapers, photographs, and cassette tapes are already in a state of deterioration. Digitization can help preserve the content of these media for the future.

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# WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE DIGITIZING

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What is truly ours that's unique and what do we have an obligation to preserve?

—Frank Somers, Adult Services Librarian, Bethlehem Public Library, New York

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Something wonderful may be stored behind a locked door, in a filing cabinet, or in a basement at your institution. You know more people would like to be able to access this material but due to their condition or other issues it is only made available to patrons on request and cotton gloves may be required to handle the item. These materials could be a scrapbook with the photos falling out from use by generations of students or a bound newspaper that may crumble with one more turn of the page. It could be a series of handwritten letters or a collection of photographs that are completely unique to your library. Selecting the material to be digitized may be one of the simplest parts of the digitization process. Every library potentially has something that it wishes to share more broadly but for various reasons cannot. Digitization allows more patrons to see photographs from your collections, or a local history pamphlet, without the risk of damage or loss.

Every step of your digitization process will be determined by the collection. An important question to consider is whether or not the material is too rare to leave the library. There are some materials you may not be willing to trust with



the postal service or strangers at a company providing digitization services. It may be a Civil War diary, rare glass-plate photographic negatives, or a painting by a local artist. The item may be too large to safely ship, such as oversized atlases or even furniture. If you are afraid to let an item leave the library you will need to consider the equipment and staff available at your institution.

If your collection is large, such as long runs of newspapers, reports, or rolls of microfilm, outsourcing to a digitization vendor may be an option. Depending on the services offered by a vendor, your library may need to provide descriptive metadata, but scanning and even storage may be handled off-site from your library. Another important question to consider is whether you are willing to trade control of a collection in order to have another entity deal with management of the digital files. If you work with a consortium which hosts the files and provides access, you may not be able to alter metadata yourself. This may be a minor inconvenience when compared to managing the online access or paying for a content management system like CONTENTdm.

## **WHAT IS THE INTENTION OF THE COLLECTION?**

The creation of your digital collection will be guided by the reason behind its development and the intended use. Asking yourself why you want to digitize and what you hope to accomplish are an important part of the pre-digitization process. If you are pulling together materials to celebrate an anniversary, subject, or event, your project may have a fixed date of completion with no intention to add to the collection beyond a certain point. You will not need to consistently find funding to add material on an ongoing basis. If the collection is opened with the intention of growing, regular funding, staff and ongoing equipment purchases need to be considered. Some libraries start with a limited plan but will expand to include more materials. Other libraries may be content to have a finished project.

Other considerations:

- If the intention is to improve access, how will users locate the collection?
- Will there be a link on the library's main page, in catalog records, or included within a subpage such as "local history"?
- What level of metadata will be included to make the materials more searchable, and will text documents have optical character recognition (OCR) allowing searching within the text?
- Do you have a plan to promote the collection before and after it is available?

- Will there be restrictions to access?
- If you are using digitization as a preservation tool, what kinds of digital files will you create and how will you maintain them?
- Does your intended audience require any special or unique presentation, access features, or functionality?
- Based on your intended audiences, what kind and how much metadata will you need to include for searching and discoverability?

## CHOOSING THE COLLECTION

One of the most important issues to consider when looking for a collection to digitize is if the material is unique, rare, or of strong local interest. Photographs, postcards, letters, journals, scrapbooks, newspapers, booklets on local history, high school yearbooks, and other materials may only be found in your library. If the materials were created by a member of your community, the chances are good that yours is the only library which has that material.

A collection is not just a stack of papers or a selection of objects, but also a connection to the community and a story waiting to be told. Strong candidates for digitization include materials that focus on something unique to your city or collection. Many libraries are digitizing materials that are important to the community and in doing so show how much the library values local history, stories, and people.

### Photographs

If you had to evacuate and knew there was a chance your home would be destroyed, what would you take with you? There are a number of lists compiled by government agencies that include radios, food, medication, and water, but what items are irreplaceable? Many people would include photo albums, and a camera or hard drive with documents and photos. Images are important links to the past, a way to leave one's mark, to document and capture moments fleeting in time. During the creation of a photograph the click of the shutter, the image exposed to film or translated to pixels suggests a level of fidelity. The image is expected to accurately portray the moment and the flaws. Eyes caught in mid-blink and the blur of movement reinforce this sense that the image is true. The interest in the image is enhanced if there is a personal connection. Family photo albums are cherished items, something to be rescued from fires and other disasters as irreplaceable. The value is personal memory caught on paper.

## **Digital Images Created to Reduce Handling and Improve Access**

A popular item or collection can be damaged by repeated use. Making the material available online can increase access while reducing the number of hands on the original materials, which can thus be kept more secure. According to Kathy Robins, library information systems coordinator at Billings Public Library in Montana, her best candidate for a digital project was a collection of photos of the “people who came here with the railroad: merchants and bankers and people who started businesses and ranches.” These original images capture the faces of people who came west in hopes of a better life, work, and riches in Montana. Users were required to request these images, which were kept under lock and key, and were then left alone with the photos in the Montana Room. Library staff did not believe they were losing many or any of the images with this arrangement, but they felt that this was not the most secure manner for handling these one-of-a-kind items.

Access to the library’s hundreds of images was limited to patrons who were physically present and knew to ask for them. The library felt the collection “should be available online and also by doing that we would be able to preserve them in case they disappear.” Once digitized, details in photographs can emerge as the viewer zooms in on faces, clothing, shoes, or other objects. Billings Public Library has made available over 600 photographs in the Montana Memory Project. In one photograph, an enlarged portrait of early resident Henry G. Williams reveals the pattern on his tie. In another, a portrait of Mrs. Williams shows a blouse with pleats, two different types of lace, and an intricate brooch studded with seed pearls. The images may be useful for those studying fashion and design, but they also reveal personal details. Fraternity pins often indicate social connections. The clothing or favorite pieces of jewelry likely held meaning for the wearer who chose those articles for a formal portrait. Jennie Appelman, an older woman with a heavily lined face and snow-white hair, sports a small jeweled brooch, a corsage of what may be violets and two strands of very small, narrow conical shells.<sup>1</sup>

The Billings Public Library has helped to preserve the original images by creating digital surrogates. This has improved access by allowing more users to directly access the materials online. This is reflected in the statistic for the collection which shows over 10,000 page views since the collection was made available. Furthermore, now students and researchers can enlarge images to see details and print their own copies.

## **Preserving Community Memories**

Digital copies can help reduce wear and tear on original photographs, but in some cases the digital version is created with the goal of saving an image.

The materials and processes used to create photographic images can lead to a number of preservation issues ranging from cracked glass-plate negatives to the breakdown of binders and emulsions, UV damage, tarnish, and acid damage from scrapbook papers, glue, tape, and humidity. In some cases there may be no way to arrest the deterioration. For libraries that consider themselves to be guardians of the past, digitization is a process that can be used to capture images for preservation purposes and safeguard local history when physical preservation methods no longer suffice.

The Georgetown County Library in South Carolina is in an area vulnerable to hurricanes, and there is a real danger that images and documents could be lost in a natural disaster. The library has a digital collection titled the “Georgetown County Hurricane Collection” documenting the destruction, including the two most destructive storms: Hurricane Hazel in 1954 and Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Flooded streets only recognizable by lines of trees, roofless homes, and beach houses cracked in half are testimony to the sudden violence of storms which have the potential to hit each season. With each storm there is a possibility of lost mementos and history.

The library recognized the preservation potential of digitization when it scanned the Morgan-Trenholm collection of photographs. According to digital librarian Julie Warren, Georgetown Mayor W. D. Morgan hired a photographer to document the community in the early years of the twentieth century and during a large exposition in Charleston. The images of new sidewalks and recently planted trees promoted Georgetown as a modern and attractive community. Images of everyday activities provide a brief glimpse of the lives of regular people. These photographs, once intended to promote a city looking to the future, now document the history of the Georgetown community, allowing users to see what has changed or remained the same over the years.

Looking beyond its own materials, the Georgetown County Library also works with local museums on projects where the community is invited to bring their family photographs to the library to be digitized. The efforts are intended to preserve copies of the images before disaster strikes. Photographs are returned to the owners in archival envelopes. This service creates goodwill in the community by demonstrating that the library values and invests in personal and community history. Julie Warren described one interaction where a regular patron brought some images to the library. Some of these were in scrapbooks, others were loose in a cardboard box. After scanning, these items were returned in archival boxes and the woman was “just thrilled” with the new packaging and the digital copy of her material. Warren considers this service to be mutually beneficial to the library and to the community. Should there be fires or floods those precious images which are stored by OCLC (Online

Computer Library Center) and the library both on- and off-site will still be available to families and friends. The library is considering additional storage locations outside of Georgetown for additional security. Warren jokes that should the community be hit by another hurricane she will have to flee with copies of the files, but the library is serious about keeping backups and doing all it can to protect Georgetown's history.

### **Collections to Honor and Remember**

Photographic images provoke curiosity, stir emotion, and are powerful reminders of the people and events in a community. One collection which shows the daily life of a town, the horrors of war, and the dedication of a local celebrity can be found at Flora Public Library, in a small town with a lot of community pride located 100 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri. When the library felt the need to develop a digital collection, the work of one man was the obvious choice, and the library developed the Charles Overstreet collection.

Overstreet lived in Flora for most of his life. He was a character and, in the 1970s, mayor and a local celebrity after the town garnered national attention with the creation of a rap video in a bid to have a prison constructed there.<sup>2</sup> Overstreet was widely respected in the community, and the librarians knew of his collection, part of which had been compiled into two books titled *Charley's Flora* (2000) and *More Charley's Flora* (2007). The librarians determined his work would be of local interest and of considerable historical value. Images taken during his service in World War II would also be in demand with the approaching anniversary of that war.

Overstreet regularly gave talks about his experiences in the war to school children and was seen at most community functions with his camera. His love of photography may have begun during his service in the war when as a corporal and army photographer he documented his experiences in Europe. His photographs from that time period show the people he served with, the crumbling ruins of bombed-out buildings, and the massacre of prisoners at the German prison camp Gardelegen. Deploying in 1943 with the 252nd Field Artillery Battalion, he left his new bride, Catherine, behind. On October 9, 1944, his unit landed on Omaha Beach in France, and from there he would travel through France, Belgium and finally through Germany with the Ninth Army.<sup>3</sup>

The variety of photos, spanning decades and covering both the war in Europe and life in Flora, meant Overstreet's images would likely be of interest to a wide audience. Dona Cory, director of the Flora Public Library, explained that "it wasn't just a Flora collection, it was something that people everywhere

could be interested in.” The materials in the Overstreet collection were so far reaching that the librarians felt it would give them a great chance to secure grant funding. The need to digitize the materials was also influenced by the pressure of time. The librarians knew they would need Overstreet’s knowledge of the photos’ subject matter to create and compile accurate metadata. Perhaps even more importantly, they wanted Overstreet to be able to see his collection online and experience how much the community appreciated his many years spent documenting life in Flora.

The World War II segment of the collection has received international attention. A man in Germany contacted the library after he found a photo of his grandparent’s home. A woman from Wisconsin who had accessed the collection online contacted the library after finding a picture of her father who served with Overstreet. Other images are heart-wrenching, such as documentation of the overt horror and inhumanity at Gardelegen. Captured in stark black and white, these may be some of the most accessible images showing the remains of over 1,000 people murdered by Nazis as U.S. troops advanced to the prison camp. Flags were lowered in Flora when Overstreet passed away in 2010. Flora lost Charlie Overstreet, but his collection remains available to the community and to the world. With the anniversary of World War II, and the loss of veterans, these images are of increasing interest and importance.

### **Current Images and Cultural Expression**

At the Nisqually Tribal Library in Olympia, Washington, there is a photograph collection documenting a modern event. The Canoe Journeys started in 1989 with “Paddle to Seattle” and has continued with 60–80 canoe groups participating each year. A local photographer, Allen Frazier, had photographed the journeys for eighteen years and was willing to work with librarian Faith Hagenhofer to determine which images could be digitized and to provide metadata.

The Nisqually Tribal Library was awarded a grant for the collection to be added to the Washington Rural Heritage Project (WRHP), which is managed by the Washington State Library to provide a platform for the collections of small, rural libraries and cultural institutions. Coordination activities, scanning, and metadata entry tasks were all performed by library staff. The description of the collection from the WRHP site states: “The Tribe’s pride of place and history are once again enriching the lives of young and old alike. The Nisqually Canoe family has learned and taught many of the older skills, and these practices are once again taken up by community members.”<sup>24</sup> The event and collection are important to the community. One of the advantages of

making these images available online is that they can be shared with outsiders who cannot attend or may have never heard of the event. The Canoe Journeys are a combination of cultural, social, political, and spiritual practices, and portions of the event are not intended to be shared outside of the community. What images are shared depend on the mindful and respectful curation of the material. Hagenhofer and Frazier selected images that represented the event, but also excluded images intended to be viewed only by tribal members.

According to Hagenhofer, in creating this collection the library has altered its image from one of a place that collects information to one which also actively engages in creating content from a Nisqually perspective. This content reflects and increases awareness of the importance of local events. This was a very intentional decision on the part of the library. The Canoe Journeys were determined to be different from other collections currently available online, and Hagenhofer wanted more than a collection of materials relating “to known historical events. We really wanted to start with something that was locally really important but not necessarily well known.” Awareness of the event has grown since the first journey. According to Fawn Sharp, president of the Quinault Nation, the event is seen as “a touchstone gathering for the tribes of the Pacific Northwest—one of the largest traditional gatherings of indigenous people anywhere in the world.”<sup>5</sup> Now, thanks to the efforts of the Nisqually Tribal Library and the generosity of Allen Frazier, the world can see the canoes and people involved in this wonderful celebration.

## **Yearbooks**

You open the book and see rows of smiling faces. Hair, glasses, and clothing give a quick clue about the age of the photographs. You are looking at a high school yearbook, a record of students, fashion, and a time capsule for a single year. Yearbooks are great local records that are often found only in schools, public libraries, and the collections of former students. They are excellent examples of unique, high-interest items found in many public libraries.

Yearbooks are often some of the most popular items in a library, especially among alumni and genealogists. When Geoff Kirkpatrick, director of the Bethlehem Public Library in Delmar, New York, considered a number of different items for a digital collection, he was looking for something that couldn't be found anywhere else. The library has a number of older books but these materials were not unique, and as Kirkpatrick explained, if the collection was destroyed they could “call Baker and Taylor and say, ‘give us a new book collection’ and most of it would be replicated very easily, but there are some things that just aren't and you need to focus on that.” He also considered large



books of county property records. The documents themselves were physically impressive, large volumes of county plats, but again, these were not unique since the county clerk also had a copy. For Bethlehem Public Library there were two important factors under consideration; what materials were unique and what the library had an obligation to preserve. Two items stood out as being hyper-local and of strong interest to genealogists and the community: a newspaper titled *The Spotlight*, and a collection of high school yearbooks.

The library had several copies of most years of the local high school yearbook, the *Oriole*, going back to 1929. The project at first seemed overwhelming in size, but for several years volunteers have been scanning and indexing one volume at a time and now there are over sixty years' worth of the books online. The yearbooks are searchable by name, and search results are linked directly to the pages where the name appears. Users who once would have needed to browse through years of books can now locate their own image or that of family or friends within a few seconds. This has been of great use to those who no longer live in the area or state. One woman had been hoping to find a photo of her father who died when she was a child. She didn't live in the state and was unsure of when he worked for the school. Before the collection was digitized the library staff had been unable to locate the correct book. Once the documents were scanned and described, however, she was able to quickly locate his photo.

### **Free Yearbook Scanning**

Scanning documents can be expensive, but a number of libraries are now using a service from the Oklahoma Correctional Industries (OCI) to scan their yearbooks. This department of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections employs 1,499 offenders in a number of industries including metal fabrication, furniture, clothing, and records conversion and scanning. The scanning service is offered for free to schools and libraries to assist in the preservation of local, historic documents. The service showcases the work done by OCI and generates goodwill. OCI pays for shipping the books to and from the Oklahoma facilities and ensures the materials are returned to the library in the same condition as received.

Carolyn Tremblay, a reference librarian at Dover Public Library in New Hampshire, learned about OCI's Yearbook Project from the *Swiss Army Librarian* blog where an e-mail had been posted outlining the services OCI offered, including free digitization and the creation of digital files that the library was free to use however they wished.<sup>6</sup> The Dover Public Library established contact with OCI and put the digitization project in motion. The library received



packing labels, packed the books with inventory lists, and sent them to OCI. Around five weeks later the books were returned in the same condition along with ten DVDs containing the digital copies. As a result of this program the library was able to offer the community digital access to a popular collection at limited cost to the library and without adding to the workload of an already busy staff. The paper collection was also less likely to be targeted by former students, armed with scissors, seeking to remove their photograph from specific yearbooks.

The Nicholas County Public Library in Kentucky has a collection of newspapers it scanned itself with a micro-format scanner, but the library also took advantage of OCI's services. Although originally hesitant about the free service, the library did send its yearbooks and has made the resulting files, dating back to 1948, available through its website. The collection is presented as a series of files organized into a range of years.

The files are not searchable but are available for browsing. Each page is a separate file and each image is in color with enough detail that the texture of the paper and the pores of real leather and fabric of the fake leather covers is presented. Although some websites may be more visually appealing or more complex, this library's web page offers a simple form of digital access to users.

## **Newspapers**

Local newspapers are an important source of information for current and future researchers. If your collection is only available as original paper in either bound or loose form, it can be damaged as the paper becomes brittle over time or it may suffer from patrons who remove articles. Microfilm created before 1980 can also degrade over time, it is more difficult to use compared to electronic documents, and its use is limited to institutions with micro-format readers.

Digitization can be part of a larger strategy (with micro-formats) to preserve and improve access and discovery of the detailed depictions of daily life found in local newspapers. In January 1960 a boy stole twenty-nine light bulbs from an outdoor tree; a color film of an all-girl safari was shown at Bethlehem Central Junior High school to support multiple sclerosis research; a new library card program was being implemented at the library; and a 1956 Ford cost \$895. These details of town life were found in the January 7, 1960 volume of *The Spotlight*.

When the Bethlehem Public Library was considering digitization of *The Spotlight*, theft was a significant issue. According to Frank Somers, adult services

librarian, “When the newspapers were on the public floor people were going to the bound volumes and cutting out articles and pictures . . . and we wanted to protect them from that.” As the only repository for these papers, the library felt responsible for preserving and providing access to the newspapers. Preserving *The Spotlight* required scanning of the paper for a microfilm copy and the creation of an electronic version. This required special equipment the library did not have. The scanning work was outsourced and paid for through funding from the Friends of the Library and from a local nonprofit organization that dissolved and donated its remaining funding to the library. *The Spotlight* is still a functioning newspaper and the owners supported the library’s efforts.

The newspaper, which started in the mid-1950s as a circular, had been of interest to local genealogists and historians. For years the obituaries, wedding announcements, and articles were used but had never been digitized and *The Spotlight* was not available in any database. With no other copies in existence, the need to preserve these materials was strong.

*The Spotlight* is now only published in digital format and the library still works to preserve access. Regarding the new format, Somers found the publisher happy to send PDFs of the current paper and “they maintain the copyright but they were very willing to let us share the newspaper.” The publishers understand that there may be people who do not respect their copyright, but they feel the risk of sharing the content online is acceptable if it results in the community having access to an important historical resource. The library is providing access to current issues of the newspaper up to one year after the original publication date.

The materials chosen for digitization are unique to the Bethlehem Public Library, and as Library Director Geoff Kirkpatrick stated “there is no one else who is going to preserve these hyper-local resources.” These efforts are appreciated by users inside and outside of the local community, including the newspaper’s owners, who appreciate the access and the publicity that comes from working with the library.

### **Newspaper Partnerships**

The Bethlehem Public Library was able to work with the owners in a manner that has allowed the library to continue to preserve the newspaper while respecting the copyright and distribution needs of the owners. Newspapers and magazines published after 1923 may still have copyright limitations or may have been digitized by another institution. A number of libraries have participated in the Library of Congress’s Chronicling America project, which

includes newspapers from around the country spanning the years 1836 to 1922. Users can access 1,770 newspapers on the Chronicling America website. The collection is produced by the National Digital Newspaper Program and the Library of Congress. Funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It should be noted that this is not a complete collection of American newspapers, and while participating libraries are given funding to digitize 100,000 pages, there are many papers and date ranges that are not included. An important feature within the Chronicling America website is the newspaper title directory of over 140,000 titles created through a national program to locate and create records for newspapers held by libraries around the country. The directory offers information on digitized and non-digitized papers and the libraries which house the materials. A directory of the U.S. Newspaper Program Participants provides information on the digitized material, the library that received the grant, and the amount of funds received.

Many states have “memory” projects where libraries collaborate to create an online repository of materials. Most of these projects are hosted by state-level agencies such as archives, universities, and collaborative library groups. These should be referenced before starting a newspaper digitization project. In many states successful newspaper digitization projects are the result of collaboration with multiple agencies or institutions, but there are many public libraries which have a collection which is not attached to a larger project, such as the Jefferson Parish Library’s collection of the daily French language newspaper, the *New Orleans Bee* (1827–1925).<sup>7</sup> Other resources to search before beginning a newspaper digitization project are the Digitization Projects Registry (a Federal Depository Library Program resource), Internet Archive, and Google News Archive. The Google News Archive will now only search news for the last thirty days, but there is also a list of hundreds of digitized newspapers from *L’Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orleans* (1862–1870) to the *Youngstown Evening Vindicator* (1891–1893). This list of resources is an index of digitized newspapers from free and subscription sites compiled by Google and unveiled in 2006.<sup>8</sup> These newspapers are no longer searchable through the general Google News search box but can be accessed by entering the URL ([news.google.com/newspapers](http://news.google.com/newspapers)) or searching for “Google historic newspapers.”

## **Oral Histories**

People in your local community are also wonderful and unique sources of local history, and many libraries are including oral histories in their digital collections by either converting older recordings on cassette tapes to digital media or recording new oral histories. If the condition of cassettes or reel-to-reel oral histories

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