

Final Performance Report: July 1, 2008 – August 30, 2015

NEH Grant Number: PJ-50039-08

Title of Project: National Digital Newspaper Program in Ohio

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Grantee Institution: Ohio History Connection (formerly Ohio Historical Society)

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Narrative Description

Project Activities

Newspaper Digitization

Since joining the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) on July 1, 2008, the Ohio History Connection (OHC) has digitized about 318,000 historic Ohio newspaper pages for *Chronicling America*. The National Digital Newspaper Program in Ohio (NDNP-OH) was funded for three grant cycles and concluded on August 31, 2015.

In accordance with NDNP guidelines and the NDNP-OH project work plan, project staff convened an advisory board comprised of librarians, archivists, curators, historians, journalists and educators 12 times throughout the grant period. The board's primary task was to select newspapers to be included on *Chronicling America* by applying the NDNP content selection criteria to a list of negative microfilm newspaper holdings available at OHC and Bowling Green State University (BGSU). To aid this process, project staff developed a worksheet used to evaluate and score each newspaper on research value and historical significance; geographical coverage; chronological coverage; and status as an orphan work.

Ten of the 18 board members represented specific geographic regions around the state and worked with local stakeholders for input on which newspapers should be included on *Chronicling America*. This allowed NDNP-OH to have increased collaboration and "grassroots" involvement in the selection process. During the newspaper selection meeting of each grant cycle, regional advisory board members presented their top choices to the remainder of the board and final selections were made as a group with attention to representing the diverse voices of Ohio history.

After selection, project staff created a production schedule in consultation with staff at the Library of Congress (LOC). During the first and second grant cycles, project staff issued a request-for-proposal (RFP) to select a vendor for microfilm conversion and metadata creation. OHC selected iArchives based on their experience, quality of work and competitive pricing. The third grant cycle did not involve an RFP process as OHC chose to work with iArchives prior to submitting the grant application. OHC worked with BGSU for microfilm duplication services, which strengthened an in-state partnership. In addition, BGSU's quick turnaround time on duplication orders was essential for meeting monthly deliverable goals.

Each grant cycle involved the production of a sample batch before full-scale production began. This gave project staff the opportunity to familiarize themselves with technical requirements and production environments on a small scale. Working with BGSU, iArchives, LOC and NEH, project staff developed workflow practices that ensured the successful and efficient production of compliant project deliverables throughout the remainder of the grant cycle. Workflows incorporated critical steps such as microfilm review and duplication, metadata collection, quality review, and newspaper essay research and writing. As staff became more experienced, workflows were updated to further increase efficiency. For example, in the third cycle, iArchives allowed project staff to access their production environment in order to review content prior to final batch delivery. Most, if not all, batch errors were caught during this stage, saving time on rework and redelivery and keeping the project on schedule.

Project staff also developed a script that pulled predicted word accuracy from page-level XML documents to easily identify to which pages optical character recognition may not have been applied due to processing errors. In addition, project staff incorporated tools created by other awardee institutions, such as NDNP_QR by the University of North Texas, to further increase accuracy and efficiency in post-digitization review of images and metadata.

Nearly all project goals and objectives were met on or ahead of schedule. Vendor processing errors caused some delay in project deliverables during the first year of the second grant cycle, but all deliverables were still sent to LOC prior to the end of the grant. At the end of each grant period, project staff sent duplicate negative microfilm to LOC per grant requirements. The Non-NDNP Digital Newspaper Archive Surveys were also completed and submitted prior to the end of the grant period in both the second and third grant cycles, when this deliverable became a requirement. The project coordinator position was held by only two people, and this consistency allowed for continuity and high quality project performance within and between grant cycles despite multiple changes to the project's support staff (quality control technician) position.

Outreach

A major component of NDNP-OH was to educate Ohioans and other stakeholders on how to use *Chronicling America* and digitize newspapers using the standards and best practices established by NDNP.

During the first grant cycle, efforts focused on spreading the word about *Chronicling America* and NDNP through presentations to other OHC staff and at a statewide professional conference. Surplus funding supported a series of workshops around the state toward the end of the grant cycle. These were geared toward library professionals and educators to increase awareness about the project and its application in the classroom.

During the second and third grant cycles, outreach efforts were continued through presentations for various audiences at local, state and regional conferences, workshops and meetings. In all, project staff presented on newspaper digitization and/or *Chronicling America* at about 70 events. As proposed in the 2010 and 2012 grant applications, project staff also presented two webinars geared toward specialized audiences: the first was for History Day teachers and coordinators, and the second was for genealogists. Both events were well-attended and taught more people how to use *Chronicling America* for personal and professional research.

Project staff developed and recorded several video tutorials on using *Chronicling America* as well. The "Using *Chronicling America* Podcast Series" was released in 2012 and provides an overview on browsing and searching the website for all audiences. Over the third grant cycle, project staff released four "*Chronicling America* Search Strategy Videos" which gave advanced search tips while highlighting interesting topics reported on by the website's newspapers, such as the death of Ray Chapman and how to find household and cooking tips. These videos not only teach viewers more ways to search the website, but they provide them with insight on the type of information that can be found in historic newspapers. All videos are freely available via OHC's YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/ohiohistory.

During the final grant cycle, project staff worked with a representative from the OHC Educational Outreach and Partnerships Department to develop a lesson plan and activity for the eighth grade supplement of OHC's online social studies textbook, *Ohio As America*. This was added to the textbook for the 2014-2015 school year.

Other outreach efforts included:

- regular contributions to the OHC Collections Blog and other social media tools, announcing newly available newspapers and highlighting interesting content;

- promotion via local and state media outlets in collaboration with the OHC Marketing & Communications team;
- development and maintenance of a project wiki to document the project;
- development and maintenance of program web pages via *Ohio Memory*, the statewide collaborative digital library of OHC and the State Library of Ohio;
- creation of 58 topic guides providing information, search tips and sample articles on Ohio subject matter on *Chronicling America* (modeled after *Chronicling America's* Recommended Topics provided by LOC);
- creation of six interactive activities (crossword puzzles, scavenger hunts and word searches) that require searching and browsing *Chronicling America* to find answers;
- design, production and distribution of poster advertising Ohio's newspapers on *Chronicling America* (supported by OHC funding);
- design, production and distribution of rack card advertising Ohio's newspapers on *Chronicling America* and *Ohio Memory* (supported by OHC funding); and
- presentation of prize for best use of *Chronicling America* and/or *Ohio Memory* at Ohio History Day's state contest (supported by OHC funding).

Through these efforts, many Ohioans around the state learned about NDNP and *Chronicling America* and have consequently begun to use the resource for their various research interests. Advisory board members were essential to the success of NDNP-OH's outreach through local promotion of *Chronicling America* and NDNP. They also helped project staff identify presentation and other outreach opportunities geared toward both existing and new stakeholders around the state.

Accomplishments

As mentioned in the previous section, NDNP-OH achieved each of its goals and objectives. The project digitized at least 100,000 pages each grant cycle, exceeding the requirements of the grant. The statewide collaborative efforts of the advisory board allowed Ohio's *Chronicling America* collection to represent a variety of viewpoints, time periods and areas of the state. Papers representing Democratic, Whig, Republican, Know-Nothing, abolitionist, temperance, German, communist and labor groups are included. Content spans 1836-1922, and 58 of Ohio's 88 counties are represented by at least one of the 70 titles/title families on the site.

NDNP-OH outreach efforts have been particularly strong and to some degree, have served as a model for other states participating in NDNP. All projects proposed in grant applications were completed (see previous section for more information about webinars and video tutorials). As of August 31, 2015, the video tutorials had received about 6,000 views and are still being accessed regularly.

Over 1,600 people have been reached through conferences, workshops and webinars. These included groups such as: Academic Library Association of Ohio; CONTENTdm Midwest Users Group; INFOhio; Midwest Archives Conference; National Council for Social Studies, Great Lakes Region; Ohio Center for Law-Related Education; Ohio Educational Library Media Association; Ohio Genealogical Society (state and local); Ohio Library Council (state and regional); Ohio Local History Alliance; Ohio Newspaper Association; Ohio Valley Group of Technical Services Librarians; OHIONET; Palatines to America (national); and Society of Ohio Archivists. About 80 press releases and blog posts were written by project staff to promote project, and another 25 were written by external stakeholders such as members of the media or project advisory board.

Audiences

Numerous audiences are served by this project. Newspapers themselves have a broad reach due to their diverse content. Among the groups using Ohio content available through *Chronicling America* are:

- Genealogists and family history researchers
- K-12 students and teachers
- College and university students and faculty
- Casual historians
- Public librarians and patrons
- Local history organization staff and patrons

Perhaps the most interested group is genealogists and family history researchers who rely heavily on newspapers to provide insight into and information on their families' pasts. As OHC already has an existing relationship with the genealogy community through its extensive archives/library holdings and participation in state, regional and national genealogical group conferences, participation in NDNP was well-received. About 460 genealogists attended live presentations or webinars throughout the course of the grant.

OHC coordinates Ohio History Day and other programs geared toward K-12 students and educators. Staff working with these audiences promoted *Chronicling America* and worked with project staff to develop resources and identify presentation opportunities that increased awareness of the website and demonstrated how to incorporate it into classroom activities and projects. About 225 students and educators attended live presentations or webinars throughout the course of the grant. Additionally, through the establishment of a History Day prize at the state contest, hundreds of additional students have been exposed to *Chronicling America* and more are incorporating it into their projects each year. In 2013, two students applied for the prize, and in 2015, ten applied.

Public and academic librarians as well as local history professionals were also interested in NDNP and how to get involved in newspaper digitization outside the program. Over 700 people from these groups attended live presentations or webinars throughout the course of the grant. Academic institutions have also harvested our data from *Chronicling America* and *Ohio Memory* for text analysis and data mining. The Digital Convergence Lab at Northern Illinois University, for example, used our Civil War-era Columbus papers, the *Daily Ohio Statesman* (on *Chronicling America*) and the *Ohio State Journal* (on *Ohio Memory*) to explore and create a practical introductory library resource guide on text mining technologies and applications.

Evaluation

This project did not require formal evaluation by OHC, but informal feedback gathered from stakeholders shows that the public responded positively. Kim Kenney, curator for the McKinley Presidential Library & Museum, stated the following about *Chronicling America*: "So easy to use, and what a wonderful resource! [...] exactly what I had hoped it would be!"

OHC has benefited greatly from participation in NDNP through its provision of unprecedented access to OHC's historic newspaper collection, enhancing resources available for target audiences, such as genealogists, educators and students. *Chronicling America's* online availability and keyword search feature also allowed OHC to connect with these and other audiences in a new way, and users appreciate access to newspapers without needing to visit the Ohio History Center as well as the research time

saved through keyword searching. Instructional webinars, YouTube videos and live presentations have also elicited positive feedback from our target audiences. One webinar attendee stated “I love that you did live searches to show us specifically how to do it. The presenters were very thorough in explaining all of the options on the pages. I learned about so many other resources and about search options that I hadn't considered. This was very valuable. I wish I had known about this resource before this month. Fantastic.”

LOC provided yearly usage statistics on *Chronicling America*: from July 2009 through June 2010, over 122,000 Ohio newspaper pages on the website were viewed. From July 2014 through June 2015, over 966,000 Ohio newspaper pages were viewed. The statistics also showed that in that year, over 130,000 visits to the website originated in Ohio, and Ohioans viewed nearly 1.7 million pages. These figures show the impact this resource has on Ohioans. OHC will continue to promote this resource in presentations, social media and other methods to encourage ongoing and increased use of *Chronicling America*.

Through NDNP, OHC has also gained valuable experience in managing large-scale digitization projects. Support and training from LOC, NEH and the digitization vendor helped project staff to consistently meet the technical guidelines and produce viable digital products for ingestion in *Chronicling America*. Project staff relied heavily on tracking mechanisms and workflow documentations to ensure that all project deliverables were created correctly and on time. These items were refined as staff gained more experience and knowledge and updated work processes accordingly. Few problems were encountered throughout the project, and most were caused by circumstances beyond staff control, such as processing errors or delays by the digitization vendor. Through ongoing communication with the vendor and LOC, however, these issues were easily and quickly resolved.

Continuation of the Project

Participation in NDNP allowed OHC to establish its own statewide newspaper digitization program. Using the tools and knowledge learned from the program, OHC has digitized over 158,000 pages of Ohio newspapers for *Ohio Memory*. This has involved partnerships with five libraries, and the program is actively growing. OHC is committed to supporting *Ohio Memory* and its newspaper digitization program through the provision of funding to maintain current collections and add additional collections. OHC will also continue to seek partnerships and other grant funding to support additional newspaper digitization.

In order to increase the opportunities that Ohio's cultural heritage institutions have to digitize newspapers following current standards and best practices, OHC developed a tiered structure for its newspaper digitization services. Two different methods for processing digital newspaper images allow institutions to create the archival quality digital files and associated metadata that allows users to search within *Ohio Memory* newspaper collections. Institutions without sufficient funding to support full-NDNP level digitization still receive a high-quality product that can be upgraded in the future. As part of the services to Ohio's cultural heritage institutions, OHC also helps them to identify resources and methods to find funding to support their newspaper digitization projects.

Institutions around the state recognize OHC as a resource for newspaper preservation and digitization expertise as well as services. This is evidenced by at least one contact per week from an outside institution interested in learning more about microfilming, digitization and/or participation in *Ohio Memory*.

Long Term Impact

OHC has established a local newspaper digitization program which provides services for Ohio's cultural heritage institutions, including newspaper digitization, consultation and public programs. OHC staff will continue to work with institutions around the state to educate them about newspaper digitization standards and best practices through one-on-one meetings and larger local, state, regional and national conferences. Staff will also continue to educate Ohioans on how to use digital newspaper collections such as *Chronicling America*. The Ohio Digital Newspaper Program falls under OHC's Outreach Division and as such, a significant component of this effort is working directly with the public.

OHC has several staff members dedicated to working with and providing resources for educators and students from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary education. Already the use of *Chronicling America* has been incorporated into lesson plans and activities for *Ohio As America*, OHC's dynamic online fourth grade textbook (www.ohioasamerica.org). OHC coordinates Ohio's History Day program and *Chronicling America* is frequently promoted as an excellent resource to those involved in that program. To encourage those efforts, the OHC Digital Services Department offers a prize at the state History Day contest for the best use of *Chronicling America* and/or *Ohio Memory* resources in both the Junior and Senior Divisions. This supports NEH's prize for best use of *Chronicling America* at the national level, and in 2014 the Junior Division winner of the national prize was from Ohio.

In 2012, OHC was awarded funding from the State Library of Ohio to microfilm and digitize the *Ohio State Journal*, Ohio's paper of record for much of the 19th century. This project was made possible through Library Services and Technology Act funding, and OHC's experience in NDNP and application of the program's digitization standards made this a successful project. Over 62,000 pages of historic Ohio newspaper content was added to *Ohio Memory* as a result.

NDNP-OH and its local version, the Ohio Digital Newspaper Program, continue to excite the public about OHC's activities. OHC staff are regularly contacted by institutions and individuals interested in learning more about the resources already available and how more can be added to *Chronicling America*, *Ohio Memory* or other websites. OHC will dedicate staffing and funding to this program to meet Ohioans' need for more digital newspaper resources. OHC will also rely on the exceptional network of colleagues, tools and knowledge that was developed through NDNP as it digitizes content outside of this project. Participation in NDNP has helped set the course for the Ohio Digital Newspaper Program and its current and future successes.

Grant Products

Using matching funds, NDNP-OH produced a poster and rack card promoting Ohio's digital newspapers and increasing awareness of *Chronicling America*. These items were distributed throughout the state through the project's advisory board and through conference attendance. Several articles written by project staff were published in newsletters and journals, including the Ohio History Connection's *Echoes*, the Ohio Local History Alliance's *Local Historian* and the Society of Ohio Archivists' *Ohio Archivist*. As mentioned in the Project Activities section, a lesson plan was written and published in the eighth grade supplement of *Ohio As America*, the Ohio History Connection's e-textbook. Copies of these items are attached to the end of this report.

The project has several web presences as well. The NDNP-OH Project Wiki (<http://apps.ohiohistory.org/ondp/>) documented the project and its activities. Visitors can find information about the advisory board, newspaper selection, presentations, video tutorials, webinars,

lesson plans, project newspapers, press releases, reports, schedules and events through this website. The site also links to Ohio's newspapers on *Chronicling America*.

Project staff also added information to the Ohio Memory website (www.ohiomemory.org) about Ohio's digital newspapers (www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/newspapers). This provides visitors with another way to identify and access newspapers available through *Chronicling America*, as well as those available through *Ohio Memory* and additional external websites that were identified through the Non-NDNP Digital Newspaper Archive Survey deliverable. *Ohio Memory* links to the video tutorials (available via OHC's YouTube Channel, www.youtube.com/ohiohistory) as well as the Ohio-based Topic Guides and interactive activities (see Project Activities section for more information). These are available from the Educational Resources page on Ohio Memory (www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/resources). All web presences will be available beyond the grant period so that they can continue to serve those seeking information about Ohio's digital newspaper collections.

Appendix – Grant Products

Grant products are attached in the following order:

- “Ever wonder what Ohioans thought of the Wright Brothers when they launched their aeroplane?” poster.
- “Ohio Digital Newspaper Program” rack card.
- “Newspaper research becoming faster and easier.” (2011). *Echoes: Membership newsletter of the Ohio Historical Society*, 50(10), 1.
- “From film to digital part I: The National Digital Newspaper Program in Ohio.” (2013). *The Local Historian*, 29(4), 5.
- “From film to digital part II: Newspaper digitization standards and best practices.” (2013). *The Local Historian*, 29(5), 5.
- “From film to digital part III: Launching your own newspaper digitization project.” (2013). *The Local Historian*, 29(6), 5, 12.
- “Getting ‘history’s first draft’ online: The National Digital Newspaper Program in Ohio.” (2014). *The Ohio Archivist*, 42-46.
- “Research skills: Finding and evaluating newspaper articles” *Ohio As America* lesson plan for eighth grade supplement.