

# Digitizing Local History on a Budget

## A PLA Talk Table

### ***Barriers to Digitizing Local History***

- No time.
- Too confusing.
- Lack the necessary technical skills.

### ***Why Digitize Local History?***

- These materials are not widely held.
- Making local history available has always been a library mission.
- Access to non-digital documents may be limited due to their condition, scarcity.
- National and state projects will never do it for you.
- Pick the low hanging fruit; don't let the perfect be the enemy of the possible; ready, fire, aim.

### ***Use Other People's Money***

- Small amounts (\$2,000 or less) can have large impacts.
- Digitization is an allowed use of LSTA funds.
- Local foundations will support this kind of project.
- Outsourcing = set price, deadlines, professional product. Easy to sell and administer.
- Outsourcing = different standards, contract confusion. They will (usually) do what you specify.

### ***Use Other People's Time***

- Existing digital documents, newly created documents and conversions.
- In-house, at home or partner organizations.
- Free can involve a lot of staff time.

### ***Make it a Low Priority***

- Not a core task, but a small part of the library's mission.
- Involve lots of people and spread the work around.
- Equipment, materials and most of the expertise are at hand.

### ***Reap Your Reward***

- High tech / high touch with a local angle.
- Promote your projects nationally as well as locally.
- Metadata. Local search engine.
- Publish to web site, local network, CD-ROM.
- Build on your successes, bury your failures.

### ***Reaching for the Golden Apple***

- Some projects are more difficult, but worth undertaking.
- Expands the library's capabilities.
- Must have a big payoff to justify the time and effort involved.

## **Some Sample Projects**

### **Other people's money**

- LSTA - History of Wood County, Wisconsin (1923) - [http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/wood\\_county/index.html](http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/wood_county/index.html)
- Local foundation - Grand Rapids directory 1911-12 - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/directories/1911.html>

### **Other people's time**

- Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High School Graduates, 1904-2001 (a flat spreadsheet) - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/history/lincoln.html>
- Portage County projects (several on-line databases) - <http://library.uwsp.edu/pcl/online.htm>

### **Low priority projects**

- A Short History of Wisconsin Rapids (retyped document) - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/history/shorthistory.html>
- Centennial Story 1890-1990: McMillan Memorial Library (Scan, OCR and proof) - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/history/library/index.html>
- Bonnie Young Postcard Collection (scan and post) - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/history/postcards.html>
- Wood County Centennial (scan to PDF) - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/history/centennial.html>

### **Reaching for the golden apple**

- Wood County place names - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/history/placenames.html>
- Tom Taylor Book - <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/taylor/index.html>

## **Resources**

### **Where to promote digitized documents:**

- Internet Public Library Online Texts Collection - <http://www.ipl.org/reading/books/>
- On-Line Books Page - <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/>
- ARL Digital Initiatives Database - <http://www.arl.org/did/index.html>

### **Libraries with Digital Collections:**

- McMillan Memorial Library - [http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/local/local\\_history.html](http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/local/local_history.html)
- University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point - <http://library.uwsp.edu/depts/gen/gen.htm>
- Colorado - <http://coloradodigital.coalliance.org/>
- Illinois (North Suburban Library System) - <http://www.digitalpast.org/>
- Bridgeport (CT) Public Library - <http://www.bridgeporthistory.org/>

### **On-line programs and tutorials**

- Content That Counts – <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/programs/digitize.ppt> (PowerPoint) or [http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/programs/digitize\\_pla.htm](http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/mcm/programs/digitize_pla.htm) (web based).
- Acrobatics : A Tutorial on Adobe Acrobat and the Portable Document Format (PDF) - <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/addserv/toolkit/enduser/archive/1997/euc-9712.html>
- PDF Zone.com – <http://www.pdfzone.com>.
- A Few Scanning Tips - <http://www.scantips.com/>

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