Digitizing the Cincinnati Subway and Street Improvement Projects Photographs

Developing & Promoting Digital Archives: a Case Study

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THE PROJECT

- 1-year photographic digitization project funded by a grant through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the State Library of Ohio

- Collaborative effort between UC Libraries’ Digital Projects and the Archives & Rare Books Library (ARB)
Digitally preserve and make freely accessible on the web a collection of historically significant photographs representing Cincinnati’s urban development from 1920 to 1957

Coordinate the removal and safe disposal of a deteriorating hazardous material – cellulose nitrate film – from the archive to ensure the safety of the repository as a whole

GOALS

- Increase availability of collection to advance research and scholarship
**COLLABORATION**
**DIGITAL PROJECTS**
**AND**
**ARCHIVES & RARE BOOKS LIBRARY**

- Co-authorship of grant proposal
- Shared goal of capturing visual data

- Dual oversight of project
  - Photographic service selection
  - Project digital archivist selection
  - Budget and schedule tracking
SIGNIFICANCE

- Visual record of the construction of a subway and resulting changes made to infrastructure

- Comprehensive record of Cincinnati’s growth and urban development at a specific period in city’s history

- Documents the development of the city’s transportation system, from canal to street cars to interstate highway
**DIGITIZATION**

- Collection assessment
- Record identification and tracking
- Transfer to Robin Imaging
- Transcription of photographer notes

- Digital collection building for Digital Resource Commons and LUNA
- Identifying geo-coordinates for mapping
- Weekly blog posts in LiBlog
- Physical and online exhibits
University of Cincinnati Collections
- Architecture and Urban Planning Collection
- George Catlin: The Printed Works
- DAAP Digital Image Teaching Collection
- DAAP Library Visual Arts Collection
- Robert A. Dasheen Courthouses Collection
- Phil Foster Collection
- McKenna and Holly History of the Indi...
- The Spanish Antiphoner
- C. Siewidzki: The North American Indi...
- Terrace Plaza Hotel
- Twenty-Fifth General Hospital
- Alice Weston Grant House

LUNA Commons Collections
- A. D. White Architectural Photographs
- Beyond the Taj
- Billie Jean Isbell Andean Collection
- Birkbeck History
- Boynton Collection of Early Claremont...
- Catena-Historic Gardens and Landscapes...
- City of Claremont History Collection
- Claremont Colleges Photo Archive
- Cornell University PoliticalAmericana...
- David Rumsey Historical Map Collection
- Estate Collection
- Fairber Greaves Collection
- Folger Digital Image Collection
- Hoover Institution Poster Collection
- Howell Icelandic Collection
- Inscriptions of Eleusis
CHALLENGES

- The good, the bad – and vinegar syndrome!
  - Cellulose Nitrate
    - Safe handling
    - Transfer to cold storage
  - Acetate
    - Scanning warped negatives
    - Refolding

- Contracting Vendor
  - Scanner “hicups”
  - Transcription validation

- Survey of collection
  - Original order and missing folders
  - Naming inconsistencies
**SUCCESSES**

- All negatives scanned
  - Visual data saved
- Photographer’s notes transcribed from negatives and prints
  - Used to create metadata
  - Photographers identified
- Location coordinates plotted in Google
  - View the [Subway Route via Google Maps](#)

- Identification of nitrate negatives for removal
  - Separation of nitrate from acetate
  - Transfer to cold storage after scanning
- Increased accessibility
- Greater awareness of collection
  - Cincinnati Magazine May edition
  - University Libraries Spring Newsletter
  - Weekly blogs on University Libraries’ Facebook page
- Physical exhibit installed in Archives & Rare Books Library
- Online collection building in Digital Resource Commons and LUNA
- Archives & Rare Books Library and Digital Collections web pages under construction
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