

# I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

## Step 1

### Map out your plan

Let's keep this simple. First, map out a plan that works for you and your institution. We see I Found It In The Archives as an opportunity for people to submit a short story of their quest for information and their success in finding it in your archives. The story – submitted either as a 400-word written essay or as a video recording of no more than two minutes – would tell their tale of discovery and show the result of their search.

Your contest will take place primarily online, so participants should submit their entries to a designated email address. (You could allow entries submitted by mail or “walk-ins,” but then you’ll need to scan them and post them online.) Written entries could be attached as a Word document or pasted into the body of the email; video entries could be shared via a popular video site such as YouTube. You can decide, based on your resources, whether your contest is limited to either essay or video submissions or includes both.

Your contest will culminate after several weeks (you determine your own schedule) with the selection of a winner and awarding of a prize. The prize should be kept simple but special – a back-of-the-house tour led by an archivist, for example.

We suggest that you roll out your contest as follows:

- Set the ground rules: Who can enter? Where will the entries go? How will they be judged? What is the timing? What is the prize?

- Be specific about what is expected of the entrant.
- Set a deadline for entries.
- Announce the contest online and wherever you are able to post information.
- Invite your users and, through them, their friends and family – anyone who wants to participate – to submit an entry. Exclude your co-workers and others who are closely affiliated with your organization (more on this later).
- Have an internal panel judge the entries and select finalists.
- Invite “the public” to vote for their favorite among the finalists.
- Announce the winner(s).
- Award a prize.
- Enter your winner(s) in the state-wide competition. (The deadline for submission in the state-wide competition is August 1, 2014.)

The state-wide competition will involve all winning entrants from local competitions being posted on the Society of Ohio Archivists' website for public voting in August. The winner of the state-wide competition will be announced in September. We'll celebrate the culmination of the contest at the OLHA/SOA joint fall meeting in Columbus in October, during the lunch plenary and in a special session about the I Found it in the Archives contest.

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Few of us are alike in our work or our institutions, so your contest should fit your organization. The state-wide competition will be based on entries that demonstrate the personal value that individuals have found in our archives. We will be looking for diversity, which should be a given considering the diversity of our collections! You'll want to solicit entries from people who have "used" your facility or your staff's expertise, including those who may have explored your collections via your website.

Be sure to exclude your staff and their families from entering, as well as people who are so closely associated with your institution that it would be awkward if they were to win. This would include board members, docents, vendors (such as an advertising or PR agency), and maybe even volunteers (you decide). Be specific regarding who cannot participate so there are no conflicts later when judging takes place. The customizable Entry Form outlines these exclusions.

**Submitting your video entry**  
For helpful tips on video sharing or to submit your local entry to the state-wide competition, visit [www2.archivists.org/i-found-it](http://www2.archivists.org/i-found-it)

## Step 2 Set the ground rules

Compose ground rules that can be posted and that explain clearly what is expected of entrants. Announce the dates on which the contest will start and end. (We recommend that you limit the entry period to three or four weeks so that you build a sense of urgency among entrants – and so that you have plenty of time for your preliminary judging and online public voting. Although holidays generally should be avoided for public relations activities, this may actually be a good time of year for your entries as folks gather with their families and have video cameras at the ready.)

The state-wide competition will run in August. Your local entry(ies) must be received by August 1 in order to compete state-wide. Therefore, you should set your deadlines to ensure that you've selected your winner(s) in time for the August 1 deadline.

All entries should be submitted to a specific email address that you have set up for this purpose. This will enable you to communicate easily with the entrants and, with their permission, you can add them to a database of people who are "friends" of your organization and communicate with them on an ongoing basis. If you choose to accept entries in other ways, do ask entrants for an email address.

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### Step 3

## Invite entries online, on site, and through media

The more people who know about your contest, the better – so use as many contact tools as you have at your disposal. First, create a page or section of your website where complete information on the contest appears. Promote it on your home page so that it is highly visible. Your goal in this step is to drive as many people as possible to your website and the contest rules page, so every promotional tool you use must include the URL (address) that takes prospective entrants directly to the information page.

There are many ways to promote your contest:

- Email your users, introducing the contest and providing a link to your website page.
- Post on your institution's Facebook page; tweet if you have an institutional Twitter account.
- Post and tweet using your personal pages and accounts. Ask employees of your institution to do the same and ask them to ask their friends to pass it along.
- Display posters or flyers throughout your institution.

- Post flyers in nearby shops or restaurants that people might pass en route to your facility.

- Post a video on your home page, your Facebook page, and/or YouTube to explain the contest and invite entries. (See tips here.)

- Issue a news release to local media, briefly explaining the contest and directing people to your website for full information. (For tips on media relations, see [www2.archivists.org/aam](http://www2.archivists.org/aam).)

- Be creative! Who uses your services? Students? Researchers? The local community?

They're your targets. Alert them by email or phone or place flyers where they're likely to see them. Don't stop with one post, tweet, or email! The path to going viral is to be present repeatedly with information. Posting daily isn't too much, but do try to be original with each message. You could promote the fact that you've received your first entry (or the 10th or 25th), that a video made you laugh out loud or that an essay was particularly poignant. Comment on creativity or a clever approach. Do a daily countdown to the close of entries.

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## Step 4

### Judge the entries

Judging can be a tricky business. First select an odd number of people (three or five is good) to serve on the judging panel. It's good to have a mix – both men and women, various ethnicities, different ages. The person in charge of the contest or the one who manages the entries should not be a judge; she or he will have a sense of who the entrants are, which could bias the judging.

All entries should be blinded – no name, age, or address – when they are presented to the judging panel. Both essays and videos should be reviewed and winnowed down to a manageable number – 10 to 15 in each category if you are going to have 5 finalists in each. Judges should work independently, but each judge should read/view all entries, scoring them (1 to 5) in quality. The entries with the highest combined points make it to the semi-finals. Judges can now work as a group, with independent scoring following a discussion of the merits of the entry. Because the finalists will be posted online for a public vote, it is important that their presentations are articulate.

Be sure to take another step before deciding on finalists: Talk to them personally. A screening phone call is a very important step. You want to ensure that each person is okay with being a finalist; that each agrees to having his or her entry posted and voted on; and that each is willing to compete state-wide and is able to travel to Columbus alone or with a companion in October 2014.

You can also use the screening phone call to assess how individuals might promote their selection as a finalist. Can they harness their friends and families to participate? Are they okay with any other promotion you have planned?

You can decide the number of finalists you select according to the results of this final step in the judging process. Better to have three articulate and enthusiastic finalists than to have four or five including a couple who are lukewarm about the possibility of winning.

#### Make your posts enticing

Twitter limits you to 140 characters – and that's good news if you're trying to drive people to your website for complete information. So make that tweet or Facebook post vague and interesting.

And make sure you mention that magic word "win"! It's one of the most intriguing words in the English language....

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A goal of this contest is to drive people to your website so that they can see firsthand what archivists are all about. Public voting can accomplish this many times over.

Post the finalists on your institution's website or Facebook page and invite the public to vote. Here are two posting methods on your website and on Facebook::

On your website place the finalists' essays and links to their videos on your site. (To publish your video finalists on your website, upload the videos to a YouTube or Vimeo video-sharing account and use "embed" tools to copy and paste HTML code directly into your organization's website page[s]. No advance scripting is necessary. For tips and guidelines on how to do this, visit [www2.archivists.org/i-found-it](http://www2.archivists.org/i-found-it).) Unless you already have interactive capability, ask voters to email you their vote, using the same email address that you used for the contest entries. If you do have interactive capabilities built into your website, work with your IT department to activate a voting mechanism. And if the notion of an "IT department" doesn't apply to your institution, you might consider incorporating a service like Polldaddy (<http://polldaddy.com/features-polls/>) to tally your votes.

Polldaddy has good reporting features and is not difficult to use.

## Step 5

### Public voting

To set up a simple poll or contest on your Facebook page:

1. Create a photo album with the title of your contest. You can add text describing the contest or the rules onto the album description.
2. Upload a photo for each contestant.
3. Add a description or caption below the photo. You could put the essay here or hyperlink to the essay on your website.
4. Promote the contest with a link to the photo album and instruct voters to "LIKE" their favorite entry.
5. People can vote for each contestant only once, but they can vote for more than one contestant.

To generate votes, start with your finalists – and everyone who entered your contest. For most, you won't have to ask twice for them to alert family and friends to go online and cast their vote. "Family and friends" can have a ripple effect on the order of a chain letter.

You can also announce the opening of the public vote through your normal communication tools:

- Send an email to everyone in your database.
- Mention it in your newsletter, e-newsletter, and other publications.
- Post it on your website home page, your Facebook page, and other social media platforms.
- Tweet if you have a Twitter account.
- Alert your family and friends and ask them to pass it along.
- Work with your local media to generate stories on the contest, the finalists, and the vote.

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From then on, it's a matter of tallying the votes and choosing your winner(s).

Your awards ceremony can be as elaborate or as simple as you'd like to make it – fireworks and a band or a phone call and a welcoming event at your institution. Same with the prize. The scope is up to you, but do make it meaningful.

And be sure to include your winners' (and finalists') essays and videos on your website and Facebook page. Your contestants will be delighted with the public recognition and your institution benefits from the "real-life" testimonials.

The best prize is one that you simply can't get anywhere else. It need not cost a cent. Remember that the people who enter a contest tied to your institution already have found value in your archives. Give the winner(s) – or the winner(s) and runner-up – a chance to go behind the scenes and experience something that isn't open to the public at large.

## Step 6

### Announce the winner(s), Award the

For example, give a private tour led by an individual on your staff who has special expertise or holds a high office; allow something rare to be viewed; plan something outside of your institution that ties back to your collection – a neighborhood walk, for example. The "extra" that goes along with your prize is the opportunity to compete state-wide and win a trip to the OLHA/SOA Joint Fall Meeting in Columbus in October 2014. SOA will host the state-wide winner at the lunch plenary session.

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All local winners will be eligible for a state-wide competition sponsored by SOA.

We'll generate voting with a promotional campaign and work with you to gin up support with your constituents as well.

## Step 8

### Tallying our success

As always, we'd like to try to measure our success with this I Found It In The Archives! campaign. To that end, we ask that you track, to the best of your ability, the numbers that indicate what you achieved:

- How many people did you "touch" directly with your information through your database of users and others?
- Number of entrants.
- Number of hits on your website page dedicated to the contest.

## Step 7

### Going on to state-wide competition

We'll also be asking you for background information on your local winner(s) – what you learned in your screening interviews and in meeting them when you awarded your prize. We want to be certain that we have a good sense of who our finalists are as we promote them and their experience with media and others.

Submit your entries by August 1, 2014, to [kgrossi@oberlin.edu](mailto:kgrossi@oberlin.edu).

- Number of media impressions. (This is measured by the circulation of the print media or the audience of the broadcast outlet.
- Any other statistics that you can collect.

Please collect these numbers as you go along so that when you receive a survey from SOA, you can easily fill in the blanks and we can see what kind of impact this campaign has had.