The Helen Keller Archive: Teaching a Fully Accessible Digital Archive

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Society of Ohio Archivists
Disseminating Helen Keller’s Archive

Helen Keller testing a new braille writer at AFB headquarters, 1954.
The Helen Keller Archive

80,000 items in the Helen Keller Archive
Why Are We Doing This?

- Life and legacy of an American icon
- History of advocacy for those with vision loss
- Document a century of social change
- Preserve the collection
Challenging Stereotypes

- Embolden others
- Create an archive that can be accessed by everyone
Road Map

Accessibility

Digitization

Tour the Archive: Browse and Search functions

Curricula creation
What Is Accessibility?

The design and development of a website that allows everyone, including people with disabilities, to independently use and interact with it.
Why Make Your Archive Site Accessible?

• Disability is not an “edge case”
• Laws require accessibility of some websites
• Helen Keller Archive is of particular interest to people with disabilities
• Making an inclusive site is the right thing to do!
How Does Accessibility Improve Your Site?

• Cross-browser and cross-device compatibility
• Better discoverability
• Correct markup improves search engine placement
The Power of Text Equivalents

• Text descriptions of images are **searchable**, while images are not
• Video and audio transcripts can be **indexed** by search engines
• Transcripts also make multimedia **usable** for archive visitors who cannot hear or see
Accessibility Basics

Valid HTML = “good bones”

• Use headings
• Well-labeled forms
• Alt text for images
• Sensible descriptions
• Use W3C tools to check!
Keyboard Navigation

• Use **Tab** to move through the links
• **Shift-tab** to go backwards
• **Enter** to select a link or button
• **Alt+left arrow** to go back a page
• Avoid popups or dialogs!
Helen at the Empire State Building
Assemble a Diverse Team

- Hire people with disabilities!
- Flexible and open thinking will:
  - Save time
  - Allow issues to surface sooner
  - Foster innovation and creativity
Input from Real Users

• 19 usability testers

• Archivists, general public, students, writers, historians

• Wide range of disabilities

• People of all ages
What We Learned

- People don’t know what an archive even is
- Over-emphasizing search led to frustration
- Home page should guide users to browsing options
- Read order was hindering discovery of the “refine search” features
Questions?
Digitization – With Accessibility in Mind

One page at a time!
And then there was braille!
Metadata Queen
Transcription Volunteer Team

Onboarding process for volunteers

How to monitor volunteers
Results of Our Hard Work

www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchive
Browse Function

Browse by Series

Series 1: General Correspondence
Series 2: Writing about/by Helen Keller - Expanded

- Box 210: Bibliography, Biographer, Book Burning, Publishers
- Box 211: Publishers
- Box 212: Speeches: 1903 - 1932
- Box 213: Speeches: 1933 - 1951
- Box 214: Speeches: 1951 - 1955
- Box 215: Speeches: 1956 - Misc.

Box 230: Writing by HK, S - T
Box 231: Writing by HK, T - U - Expanded

- Folder 1: Writing by Helen Keller: Teacher, 1955
- Folder 2: Writing by Helen Keller: Teacher, 1955
- Folder 3: Writing by Helen Keller: Teacher, 1955
- Folder 4: Writing by Helen Keller: Teacher, 1955
- Folder 5: Writing by Helen Keller: Teacher, reviews, 1955-1956
- Folder 6: Writing by Helen Keller: This I Believe, 1945-1953
- Folder 7: Writing by Helen Keller: Three Days to See, 1933-1981 - Expanded

Helen Keller's essay "Three Days to See" outlining her plans if she had sight for three days
Helen Keller's essay "Three Days to See" published in The Atlantic Monthly
Letter from the Editors of The Atlantic Monthly to G.E. Pfehler about Helen Keller's "Three Days to See"
Letter from Ida Hirst-Gifford to Nella R. Henney with legal questions about "Three Days to See"
Today, according to the terms of the fanciful gift, is my third and last day of sight. I have no time to waste in regrets or longings; there is so much to see. The first day I devoted to Nature and the friends of my own life, animate and inanimate. The second revealed to me the history of man and Nature. Today I shall spend in the workaday world of the present, amidst the haunts of living men going about the business of life. And where can one find so many activities and states of men as in New York? So the city becomes my destination.

I start from my home in the quiet, homely little suburb of Forest Hills, Long Island. Here, surrounded by green lawns, trees and flowers, are neat little homes, happy with the voices and movements of wives and children, havens of peaceful rest for men who toil in the city. I drive across the busy structure of steel which spans the East River, and I get a new and startling vision of the
Listen to an Item

Transcription of the selected image

Why may this text contain mistakes?
Correct this text

11 - Three days
I must miss, and how much pleasure you seeing ones can derive from watching and hearing the interplay of speech and movement in the unfolding of a dramatic performance! If I could see only one play, I could vision more pleasurably the action of a hundred plays which I have read or had transferred to me through the medium of the manual alphabet. So, through the night of my second imaginary day of sight, the great figures of dramatic literature crowd sleep from my eyes. Next morning, I greet again the dawn, anxious to discover new delights, for I am sure that for those who have eyes which really see the dawn of each day is a new revelation of beauty. Today, according to the terms of the fanciful gift, is my third and last day of sight. I have no time to waste in regrets or longings; there is so much to see. The first day I devoted to Nature and the friends of my own life, animate and inanimate. The second revealed to me the history of man and Nature. Today I shall spend in the workaday world of the present, amidst the haunts of living men going about the business of life. And where can one find so many activities and states of men as in New York? So the city becomes my destination. I start from my home in the quiet, homey little suburb of Forest Hills, Long Island. Here, surrounded by green lawns, trees and flowers, are neat little homes, happy with the voices and movements of wives and children, havens of peaceful rest for men who toil in the city. I drive across the lacy structure of steel which spans the East River, and I get a new and startling vision of the power and ingenuity of the mind of man. Busy boats chug and scurry about the river, racy speed-boats, stolid, snorting tugs. If I had long days of sight ahead, I should spend many of watching this delightful game of the busy boats.

Read Full Transcription of this Item

Contents of this item


Metadata

Information about this item

Series 2: Writing about/by Helen Keller
Box 231: Writing by HK: T - U
Folder 7: Writing by Helen Keller: Three Days to See, 1933-1981
Item No 1
Language English
Format of Original 9 x 11 inches
Subject Writing by Helen Keller; Blindness
Description Helen Keller's essay "Three Days to See" outlining her plans if she had sight for three days
Subject Person Keller, Helen; Keller, Helen A.; Keller, Helen Adams
Folder Start Date 1921
Folder End Date 1981
Holding Institution American Foundation for the Blind
Contact Information 2 Penn Plaza, Suite 1102, New York, NY 10121, (212) 502-7600
Information about the selected image

Format of Original Type Typewritten materials
Browse by Subject

- Aboriginal
- Astrology
- Activity - checkers
- Activity - chess
- Activity - cooking
- Activity - dancing
- Activity - flying
- Organization - Lions Club
- Organization - Lions Club International
- Organization - Library of Congress
- Organization - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Organization - National Institute of Arts and Letters
- Organization - Rotary Club
- Organization - Salvation Army
- Organization - United Nations
- Organization - United Nations - UNESCO
- Organization - United Nations - UNICEF
- Organization - World Peace Council
- Organization - YMCA
- Park

Letter from K. R. Pandolfo to Helen Keller asking her to write an article for the Lions Club of Malad-Bonvi's bulletin "LionTime," with letter

Correspondence from Thomas C. Layton requesting photos of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan for a Town Hall Museum display.

Correspondence regarding sending Shutaro Sawada a copy of Helen Keller's speech to the Lions International Convention in 1965.

Speech by Helen Keller to the Lions Club International Convention, Ohio, asking for support for AFB.

Lions International Resolution of Sympathy after the death of Helen Keller, June 29, 1968.
Viewing an Item

Helen Keller’s speech at the Lion’s Club International Convention, Cedar Point, Ohio, 1925.
Refining a Search
The Item

Helen Keller speaking in Dayton, Ohio, 1924

https://www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchives/a=d&d=A-HK05-B291-BK01-001.1.6&srpos=5&e=------192-en-20--1--txt--Ohio-Press+clipping------3-7-6-5-3-------------1-1
Statement of Receipts for April 8, 1933 meeting at Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
Questions?
Curricula Project

We started with the questions:
• Who uses the archive?
• Who do we want to reach?
• How do we teach the next generation about disability history?
• What do teachers need?
Lesson Plans Launch!

Lesson One: Introduction to Digital and Physical Archives

- Before Teaching
- Resources
- Lesson Plan
- Activities, Materials & Presentations
- Curriculum Standards
- Download Lesson Plan [PDF format]

Before Teaching

Main Idea

Archives are facilities that house physical collections, where records and materials are organized and protected. Archival materials are used to write history. Through the internet, digital archives make those records more accessible to students, researchers, and the general public.
Lesson Two: Primary and Secondary Sources

- 1-2 class period lesson plan
- Includes supplementary worksheets and curriculum standards
- Pilot-tested at M.S. 447 in Brooklyn by a technology class
What’s Next?

www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchive
Epic Journey!
Contact Us

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Helpful Resources

www.AFB.org/webaccessibility

www.AFB.org/consulting

www.w3.org/WAI/

www.WebAim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

www.afb.org/NationalHistoryDay