

At Risk Content: Born Digital Newspapers

Establish Value: A newspaper defines its community's identity, and the loss of even a few months of that newspaper creates gaps in that community's recorded history. The University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries' Digital Newspaper Program coordinates with multiple partners to preserve Texas historical newspapers and make them freely available online. Taking advantage of the fact that historical newspapers were first preserved by microfilming programs like USNP, UNT began digitizing from the microfilm as a partner in the NDNP program. High usage of the digitized historical newspapers demonstrates the value of this content to many user groups.

Recognize Opportunities: Now, newspapers produce a PDF printmaster to send to their printer. Most newspaper publishers neither preserve the PDF printmasters nor do they microfilm the issues, resulting in a loss of current newspaper content for future generations. Recognizing the value of this content, the UNT Libraries began creating a workflow for preserving newspapers that are born digital.

Target Audiences: These audiences share multiple levels of local, state, national, and international interest, but based on user feedback, discussions, and publications, the newspapers have proven of relevance to:

- Local communities: public libraries; newspaper publishers; genealogical societies; county and local governments; K-12 educators
- State-wide communities: Academic researchers; lay historians; university students and professors; archives
- National and International communities: Trending researchers; political scholars; economic analysts

Educating Stakeholders: UNT Libraries communicates the role that newspaper preservation plays in community history to stakeholders through multiple venues:

- Publishers: state press association conferences; trade shows; and presentations to publishing office staff and at publishers' meetings. Engage publishers as advocates of their own newspapers' preservation.
- K-12 educators: Involve them in creation of grade-specific lesson plans - public school conferences, presentations to university Education students.
- Public libraries: panel presentations with partner public libraries about working together on newspaper preservation; workshop presentations at district library association meetings; conference calls with public library directors.
- Historical researchers, professors, and students: Connect at historical association meetings and conferences; panel presentations at archivist society conferences; vendor booths, brochures, and flyers about newspaper preservation at relevant conferences.
- Standards: Follow digital preservation standards and provide education to stakeholders about the standards.

Obstacles and Risk Factors: Possible risk factors and obstacles in digital newspaper preservation.

- Publishers are uncomfortable giving permission to make newspapers available online.
- Public libraries and publishers do not always understand each other's importance.
- Funding for digital preservation may not be readily available.
- Since the shift to PDF printmaster, publishers no longer microfilm newspapers.
- PDF printmasters are not recognized by publishers or public libraries as being preservation master copies. However, PDF printmaster newspapers can be OCR'd, preserved, and made openly available relatively cheaply because they are in a digital file format.
- Grant-funded staffing is common in most digital newspaper programs across the U.S. right now, and funding any preservation project on grant support raises sustainability concerns.