Digitizing Local History on a Shoestring

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NHLA Digital Summit, June 1, 2012
Why digitize?

- Uncover hidden gems unique to your town or library
- Help present day and future historians
- Strengthen community connections
- Establish (or reinforce) library's role as content producer as well as provider
- Provide project-based hands-on technology training for your community
Where to start?

Think BIG, but start small.

- Identify web space for initial phase of digital collection
- Start with a collection unique to your library
- Inventory resources on hand, identify resources needed to start project (people, equipment, know-how)
Budgeting

TIME is more precious than money.

TIP: If possible, make sure staff time is included in budget

- Scale grant requests to projects that can be completed in about a year
- Ask for funding from local grant organizations and/or community partners
- Ask for donations or sharing of equipment before buying
- Include volunteers in description of project
Finding Volunteers

- Talk about your plans to everyone
- Ask for volunteers to help find volunteers, network with other local organizations that use volunteers
- Publicize project plans and volunteer opportunities in local media
- Recruit volunteers who are engaged in the idea of your project
- Don't be surprised if volunteer interest pushes project beyond its initial scope
Working with Volunteers

How to accommodate a variety of skill sets, interests, and available time to commit?

Develop distinct, finite projects:

- Transcribing letters, manuscripts into text documents (or proofreading transcriptions)
- Scanning photographs or documents
- Indexing obituaries, vital records
- Talking about project to local community groups to gather support in funds or additional volunteers
Develop and Refine Workflow

- Managing volunteer tasks and pulling completed work together seems to take more time than actual digitization.
- Devote a set time to meet with volunteers about project, but let volunteers set their own schedule for doing tasks.
- Be flexible. Expect enthusiasm to ebb and flow.
Find Training for Digital Projects

NEDCC Training and Webinars  http://nedcc.org/education/training.calendar.php


All about digital formats  http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk

Look at other institutions' examples:

- UNH  http://www.library.unh.edu/digital/about/imaging-guidelines
- Maine Memory Network  http://www.mainememory.net/
- Lycoming College Women's History Collection  http://www.lycoming.edu/library/lcwhc/
Our digital project

Groundwork: Moose Plate Preservation grants

- First was for assessment of collections - 2009, critical step for future grants
- Second was for rehousing selected collections into acid-free files and making preservation photocopies of fragile paper documents - 2010
More photos: http://www.flickr.com/photos/madisonlibrary/sets/72157623352880304/
See index created by volunteers
Our digital project continues

Pequawket Foundation grant, $714.00 - 2011
- Kick-off for digitization of local history
- Paid for OCR software, hard drives for file storage, digital recorder for oral histories

Publicity about this grant and the project has resulted in:
- Donations of items for the archive
- Historical Society participation
- More interested volunteers
Our digital archive goes live!

Just getting this off the ground!

- Right now, using Wordpress as CMS for project http://www.madisonlibrary-nh.org/madisonhistory/
- Also experimenting with an Omeka version
Looking ahead and beyond

Findability in world of digital collections

- Follow DPLA conversations
- Explore forming a larger group/consortium for hosting digital files, i.e. Duracloud, Internet Archive, ContentDM (Wordpress and Omeka both have file size limits)

Sustainability of local digital collections

- Create digital files sized for online access as well as for archival storage (JPG/TIFF)
- Make a plan to migrate old formats to new