» "At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better." -PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

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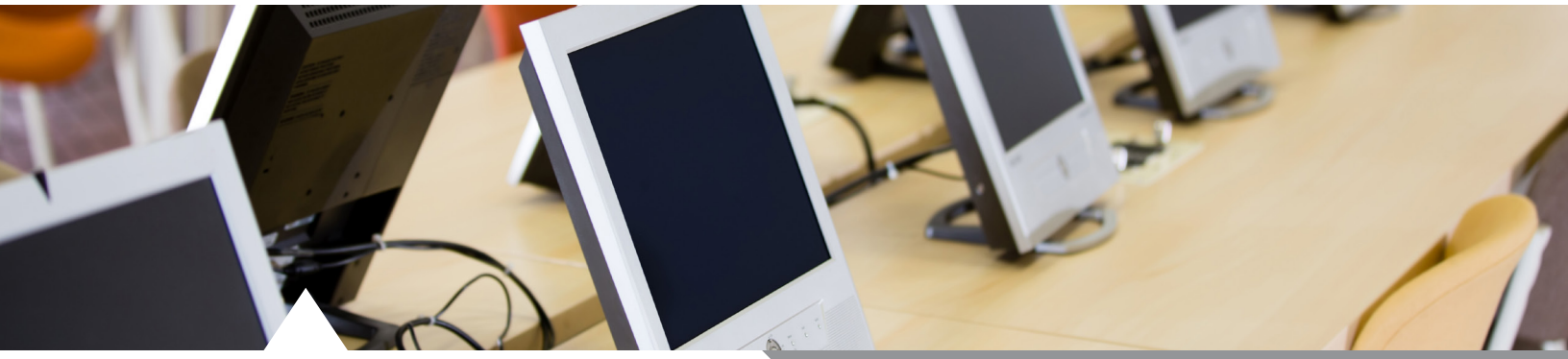


Issue 35 // January 15, 2017

# Implementing a Culture of Creativity

## » Pop-up making spaces and participating events in academic libraries

BY MEGAN LOTTS

In the 21st century, the academic library can be seen as laboratory or making space that can inspire and stimulate creativity within the scholarly community. As many academic libraries are feeling the economic crunch and constant challenge of having to prove their value, I believe that participatory activities engage patrons in new ways that can help the libraries further their impact within their communities. Making spaces are fun, can be affordable, and provide an opportunity for library employees to engage with each other, as well as with patrons. Making activities get patrons in the library doors but can also encourage partnerships and cross-disciplinary collaboration across campuses.

This article will discuss the importance of making events, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and using outreach and marketing skills to engage and educate one's community. Participatory programming is a means of looking outward and engaging patrons in a way that allows them to be creators and have their voices heard.

*An RUL edible book entry.*

### MAKING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

At the ACRL 2013 conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, Char Booth, Lia Friedman, Adrienne Lai, and Alice Whiteside spoke about the importance of building goodwill in the library from the inside out.[1] All of the projects presented on the panel were innovative, and many of them included a making aspect. Examples of events included in this presentation were button making at Claremont College, DIY photobooths at University of California-San Diego, My #HUNTLIBRARY at North Carolina State University, and re:book 2013 at Claremont College.[2]

On November 19, 2013, Theresa R. McDevitt posed a question to the ARLIS/NA electronic list asking for advice on how to help students use the library to de-stress during finals with activities that are cheap, easy, and non-messy. Some of the making events suggestions included jigsaw puzzles, graffiti walls, baskets of yarn and knitting needles, coloring, and origami.

Some additional making events that are happening in academic libraries include pumpkin decorating and snowflake making at Rutgers University Libraries (RUL); making bookmarks at Carl Sandburg College; confess your stress selfies as therapy photo booth at Virginia Tech; box making at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC); and edible books festivals happening at many academic libraries in the United States. The events described above can be referred to as participatory events, which essentially are pop-up making spaces, similar to a makerspace.

Makerspaces can cost a fair amount of money to create, be space-consuming, and need monitoring and sustainability funding. Pop-up making spaces can be easily put up, taken down, sent from one library to another, and they use little space for storing materials.

Implementing a climate of creativity with participatory activities within one's library can help patrons build good problem-solving skills and become lifelong learners and supporters of the library. Libraries can use making events as a means to spread the importance of learning and the power that libraries bring to the scholarly process. When one is having fun, one is more likely to learn and support the organization that is providing the ephemeral experience. As Erin Fisher states, "making provides opportunities for people to learn with their hands" and those are skills that are applicable when conducting scholarly research in an


*Sample card-making entry from RUL event.*

academic library.[3]

Below are descriptions of three making/participatory events coordinated by the author at RUL that will provide insight and tips in creating your own making spaces. The events included are edible books, holiday card making, and polynomiography. These events created a positive disruption within the library and can be a way of using outreach, engagement, and making as a means to connect with one's community as well as spread the importance of the role the library plays in the academic sphere.

## EDIBLE BOOKS

Many libraries have hosted edible books festivals since Judith A. Hoffberg and Béatrice Coron held the first festival in 1999.[4] In planning a successful edible books festival there are five mains tasks that need to be addressed: budget, judges, prizes, volunteers for day of event, and good publicity. But the most important issue that always rises to the top is, Will there be enough participants?

Acquiring a budget for edible books is dependent on many factors. The event can be considered successful with a budget of as much as $250 or as little as $100, with a little creativity: look for local sponsors to donate prizes, ask the library to support food and drink, use library printing services for forms for the day of event and any other printing, and use community news and electronic list blasts to support green-friendly, no-cost publicity.

Finding prizes, particularly if you are working with a smaller budget, can be time-consuming. However, many participants don't enter an edible books festival for the prizes but more for the glory that comes with winning Best in Show. The local university bookstore on the Rutgers University (RU)-New Brunswick campus provides the grand prize every year of an e-reader.

When it comes to judges, it's important to find good cross-disciplinary partners. At both RU and SIUC, head chefs from Dining Services were invited to participate as judges. Having the right judges for the event not only gives a wide perspective of "taste," as in aesthetics, but also can encourage future projects and crossdisciplinary collaboration. Having administrators who play an important role on campus as judges reminds them of the innovative and exciting work being done in libraries.

It's important to have volunteers at any public or making event. Volunteers not only support an event, but they have the opportunity to engage with patrons, including students, staff, and faculty from the campus community. Volunteers can provide talking points at events and also help spread the word about an event. RU is a large organization, so bringing volunteers together from across all of the libraries can help bring the library staff closer together.

To ensure that you have a large number of participants, partner with a class or local group within the community that's interested in your event. For the past two years, the RU Mason Gross School of Visual Arts Book Making class has made entering an item in the RUL edible book festival a course assignment. This involves going into the classroom to introduce the topic of edible books, talking a bit about the library, and then waiting to see the creations the day of the event. The local community media sources will often write positive stories about campus collaborations, which is good publicity for all parties involved.

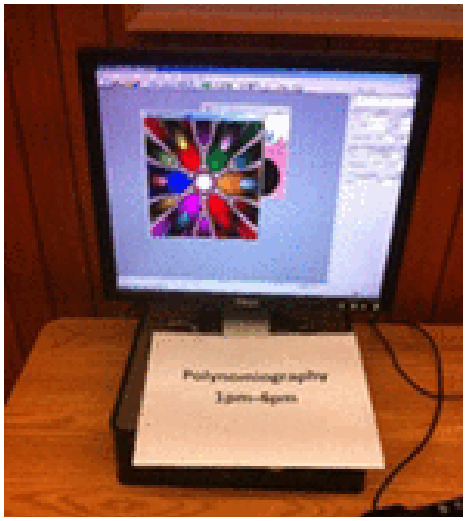
An edible books festival can be a creative, fun, and an educational event that can happen in any library. It can provide an opportunity to start conversations about the library and library issues. At a recent RU edible book festival, there was a conversation about the past, present, and future of the book, as well as how one might actually catalog an edible book.

## HOLIDAY CARD MAKING

The RU Kilmer Library holiday card-making space was implemented during finals week in the fall of 2013. This event gave participants the opportunity to make and mail a card to anyone of their choosing, as well as enjoy free coffee, cookies, and candy. This project was intended to be a low-budget making event that could be mobile and easily re-created at any one of the 27 RU libraries and centers.

To obtain the supplies for this project, roughly three weeks prior to the event, an email was sent to all the RUL faculty and staff asking for donations of crafting supplies, including adhesives, colored paper, stickers, wrapping paper, markers, colored pens, recycled magazines, recycled calendars, beads, and buttons. Within a week of sending the email, I had enough crafting supplies to host card making and other participatory crafting events on a regular basis.

For the event, RUL purchased $40 worth of stamps, $60 worth of candy and cookies, and used the library coffee pots to provide free coffee. (It's best to buy fewer stamps and invest in more cookies.)



*Polynomiography-making event.*

For the publicity aspect of the holiday card making space, the main focus was a digital campaign, including our regular campus partners who publicize our events on their Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, RUL website and social media, as well as all the RUL e-displays.

Volunteers were recruited for this event via the RUL electronic list to help pass out candy, coffee, and to engage with the participants. Most of the volunteers made a new friend and learned more about the needs of our students, faculty, and staff during the stressful time of finals.

Overall the students, faculty, and staff were thrilled with the opportunity to make and mail cards. Students were also delighted with free candy and coffee to get them through the stress of finals. The event caused a positive commotion in the library and also inspired students, faculty, and staff to take a break. This event also engaged participants and users of the library in a greater discussion about communication and how we currently engage or communicate within our own communities.

## POLYNOMIOGRAPHY

For Rutgers Day, April 28, 2013, and for Scarlet Knight Days, September 17, 2014, RUL hosted polynomial making events at the Art Library and the Library of Science and Medicine. At both events we used Bahman Kalantari's (from the RU Department of Computer Sciences) polynomiography software. Kalantari describes polynomiography as "algorithmic visualizations of one of the most basic and fundamental tasks in science and math: solving a polynomial

» When planning outreach events with a participatory aspect, it's important to make sure you know your audience. Find collaborators and partners outside of the libraries who share your interests and can help build your audience.

equation. Polynomiography is also a digital medium that can be used to encourage creativity, artistry and discovery, with tremendous appeal for playful learning."[5]

There was no fiscal cost to host the polynomiography events at RUL, with the exception of some "in kind" printing, library employee time to prepare for the event, and $60 to purchase cookies. Free coffee was served, and the library coffee pots were used to make the coffee. Prior to both events, library computers were temporarily reserved, and the software was loaded onto the computers. Volunteers were recruited to help with the event from RUL and the RU Department of Computer Sciences.

At both events, once an image was created it could be sent to an email of your choosing or printed out on one of the libraries color printers at no cost to the participant.

I created all of the publicity and circulated it digitally to keep fiscal costs down. One large-scale poster was printed, in kind, by RUL SCC and placed outside the events to entice visitors into the library to use the software.

Overall this project was successful at highlighting the intersection of the Arts, Science, and Mathematics and showcasing the work of Kalantari. Both events gave individuals the opportunity to physically create a digital polynomiography that they could share with others. Many participants left asking if the software was available for download, and a few K–12 math teachers approached Kalantari about the possibility of having his software integrated into their classrooms.

## SUGGESTIONS AND TIPS

When planning outreach events with a participatory aspect, it's important to make sure you know your audience. Find collaborators and partners outside of the libraries who share your interests and can help build your audience. Good partnerships can often produce fiscal support for events.

Make sure to get the word out. Create publicity email lists that you can continue to update and use for each event. Make friends with the media departments on campuses. They know where the students are, what they pay attention to, and are always looking for interesting stories and happenings on college campuses. If your library has a communications director or marketing team, often these individuals and groups can be helpful in promoting your events.

As seen from the three events above, pop-up making spaces can be fun, affordable, and relatively easy to coordinate. Making events can provide the libraries an opportunity to further engage with patrons and also build goodwill among the library staff. But, more important, they get patrons in the doors and give them the opportunity to take a break and let their hands do the thinking, while they learn about the possibilities in the library.

The next step is to explore more participatory events in academic libraries that encourage making within one's community. In the fall of 2014, the RU Art Library implemented a Lego playing station that provides students, faculty, staff, and community members the opportunity to think with their hands using the medium of Legos. This project includes a crowdsourced collection of images of Lego models made in the Art Library and will be incorporated into the curriculum of the Rutgers Landscape Architecture Program and the Rutgers School of Arts & Sciences Honors Colloquium.

## CONCLUSION

Participatory and making events can bring positive attention to the library and invite patrons to share their skills and talents. Creating a positive disruption can bring community together and inspire individuals to become creators and good problem solvers. The library has the potential to be the leader in showcasing dynamic scholarly research that is being created on college campuses. Collaborating with students, faculty members, and departments brings people together and can open up a multi-layer conversation that allows the exploration of ideas from many different perspectives. ■



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**FOOTNOTES:**

[1] Char Booth, Lia Friedman, Adrienne Lai, Alice Whiteside, "Love your library: building goodwill from the inside out and the outside in," SlideShare, www.slideshare.net/charbooth/love-your-library-building-goodwill-from-the-inside-out-and-the-outside-in. Google Scholar

[2] Ibid.

[3] Erin Fisher, "Makerspaces Move into Academic Libraries," http://acrl.ala.org/techconnect (2012).

[4] Books2eat, www.books2eat.com/.

[5] Bahman Kalantari, www.polynomiography.com/.

# Improving Reference Service with Evidence

## » How John Jay College of Criminal Justice increased student engagement

BY BONNIE R. NELSON

### SETTING

John Jay College of Criminal Justice is a senior college of the City University of New York (CUNY), serving a student population of approximately 11,000 FTE (full-time equivalent students). While John Jay now offers majors in a variety of fields, traditionally our focus has been on criminal justice, public management, forensic science, and forensic psychology. Our motto remains "Educating for Justice." Our students are typical graduates of New York City public schools, who often find the idea of writing a research paper using academic resources to be a challenge. John Jay's reference librarians aim to help students meet that challenge with library instruction in selected classes (especially first-year writing classes and research methods classes), outreach to faculty, and by providing reference desk service every hour the library is open. The Lloyd Sealy Library has a print collection selected to meet the needs of an undergraduate population as well as a research-level collection in criminal justice that serves the needs of a doctoral program and researchers around the world. Our online resources are very strong for a public college our size, owing to long-standing cooperative arrangements among CUNY libraries and support from the CUNY central office.

### PROBLEM

In December 2014, the Library Department Assessment Committee met to review the longitudinal statistics we had been maintaining as part of our participation in both the ACRL annual and ALS biennial library statistics reporting programs. The Library faculty of John Jay College of Criminal Justice have always taken these measures very seriously and been as assiduous as possible about maintaining both accuracy and consistency in counting methods. As a result, we felt we had fairly reliable numbers going back more than 20 years. We met to review these numbers to see what they could reveal about the work we had been doing and where we could improve.

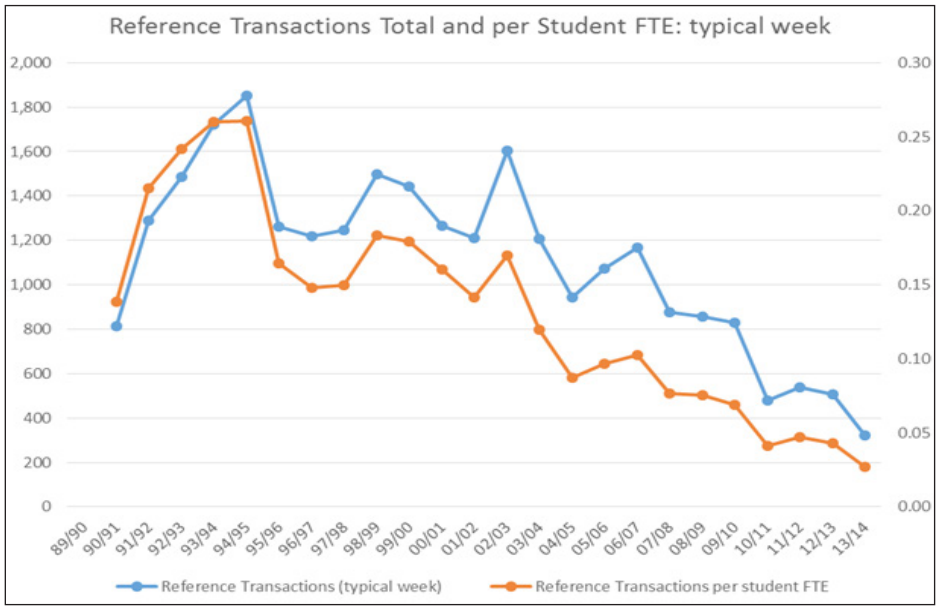


*Figure 1: Decline in reference transactions*

Many of the trends over this 20-24 year period were expected from our knowledge of the history of John Jay College and general library trends: John Jay College's full time equivalent (FTE) student numbers increased dramatically before leveling off and then dropping slightly; circulation of materials from the general collection declined as electronic journals and e-books became commonplace; both collection and total expenditures increased over time, but decreased when inflation was factored in and even more so on a per student FTE basis. The Library's gate count numbers, however, were somewhat erratic, most likely fluctuating in response to the use of space elsewhere in the College that resulted in more or less free space for students to study. But the gate counts never showed a serious decline in use and informal observation confirmed that the Library continued to be a popular place for students to study alone or in groups, with students sometimes sitting on the floor at the height of the semester.

The most troubling and glaring trend observed by the Assessment Committee was the long-term, steep decline in the number of reference questions asked. The decline was in absolute numbers, as well as in questions per FTE student **(see Figure 1)**. The Sealy Library faculty had often discussed the proper staffing of the Library Reference Desk, prioritizing this service as perhaps the single most important way to help students succeed, but these numbers made us question the wisdom of staff hours devoted to reference service. Experienced reference librarians pointed out that although the questions were fewer in number, they tended to be complicated and required more time to sort through the students' needs. Still the decline in numbers was so steep and troubling that it became the one statistic the Assessment Committee chose to focus on **(see Figure 1)**.

A month-long discussion ensued involving the entire Library Department. Several librarians noted that the library literature indicated that the decline in reference questions was ubiquitous in academic libraries (Stevens, 2013) and that recent ethnographic studies had shown students' reluctance to ask librarians for help (Green, 2012) (Miller & Murillo, 2012). These studies, plus librarians' own observations, showed that students

frequently needed the help of a skilled librarian even when they did not ask. Therefore, we challenged ourselves to increase the number of reference questions answered beginning with the Spring 2015 semester.

## EVIDENCE

Two recent changes in statistics collection made it possible to measure the effectiveness of our efforts. First, after years of relying on a "typical week" mode of counting reference questions, in August 2013 we had switched to a locally-developed, simple means of counting every reference transaction. This was developed primarily as a means to evaluate how fully to staff the reference desk, but it also allowed us to see what kinds of questions we were getting and other trends.

Secondly, in September 2014 we re-instituted a chat reference service using LibraryH3lp (Nub Games https://libraryh3lp.com/). The Sealy Library had previously used QuestionPoint (OCLC http://www.questionpoint.org/), but dropped the service after concluding that it provided insufficient benefits to our students. For the previous few years we had been relying on email reference and infrequently-used texting to service off-campus users. After our disappointment with the earlier chat experience, the new chat service was launched with muted expectations but a desire to provide online reference service to students in John Jay's first online master's degree program, which also started in September 2014. We were able to provide the new service during peak hours of reference desk use, from Monday-Thursday, 11:00a.m. – 5:00p.m. We announced the new service in our Library news blog, and added a chat widget to both the Library home page and to the "Ask a Librarian" page. Otherwise we did not publicize the service. LibraryH3lp provides excellent statistics on duration of chat, IP address of questioner, and URL of the page where the chat initiated.

Looking at reference statistics in isolation, however, would not necessarily provide a complete picture. The number of reference questions asked is also related to the number of FTE students, the number of classes we teach (since those students tend to be heavy library users), and the number of students entering the library, among other things, so we needed to look at reference questions in relation to the other statistics we keep.

## IMPLEMENTATION

We took several steps to try to encourage the asking of more reference questions.

To increase in-person reference:

- Signage identifying the reference desk was reviewed and improved
- Reference librarians were encouraged get up from behind the desk and walk around to be more approachable
- Reference librarians were encouraged to actively approach students who looked like they might need help
- Student staff at the circulation, reserve, and library computer lab desks were reminded to refer patrons needing help to the reference desk

To increase chat reference, we:

- Added four chat hours per week, from 5:00p.m. to 6:00p.m. Monday-Thursday
- Added a chat widget to our EZproxy login error page
- Added a chat widget to the results page in all our EBSCOhost databases
- Added a link to our "Ask a Librarian" web page (where a chat widget is located) on ProQuest databases
- Added a chat widget to some of our LibGuides

## OUTCOME

A review of reference statistics at the end of the Spring 2015 semester[i] indicated that our interventions were successful **(see Table 1)**.

Without implementing our chat reference service in Fall 2014, total reference questions asked from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 would have continued their long-term decline; the addition of chat reference reversed that by a very modest .96%. However, we took more aggressive steps for Spring 2016 (discussed above) and the number of reference questions asked increased by nearly 11% compared to the previous Spring. Even without the chat service, the increase would have been a respectable 5%.

A look at the other statistics we keep indicated that such an unexpected increase in usage was not reflected elsewhere **(see Figure 2)**.

From Spring 2014 to Spring 2015 there was actually a small decrease in the number

# Table 1: Change in reference transactions, 2013/14 to 2014/15

| | Total reference questions | Chats | Total without chat | Change with chat | Change without chat |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2013 total | 5744 | | 5744 | | |
| Spring 2014 total | 4547 | | 4547 | | |
| Fall 2014 total | 5799 | 167 | 5632 | | |
| Spring 2015 total | 5040 | 250 | 4790 | | |
| | | | | | |
| Change Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 | | | | 0.96% | -1.95% |
| Change Spring 2014 to Spring 2015 | | | | 10.84% | 5.34% |

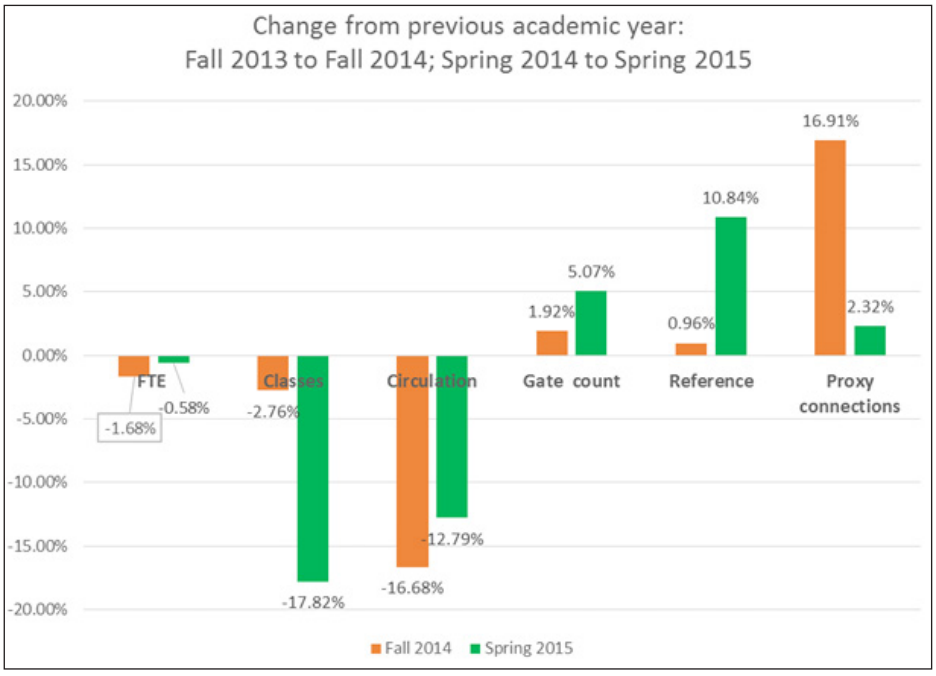


*Figure 2: Change in library activity: by Fall and Spring semesters*

of students at John Jay. There was a sharp decline in the number of library instruction classes taught, the usual driver of students to the reference desk. There was a 5% increase in the number of users passing through our security gates. However, in prior years, when we used the "typical week" method of estimating usage statistics, there was little relationship between gate count and reference questions. In those years gate counts went up and down, but reference questions consistently dropped. Use of our electronic resources, as measured by proxy server connections, showed a much bigger increase in Fall than in Spring.

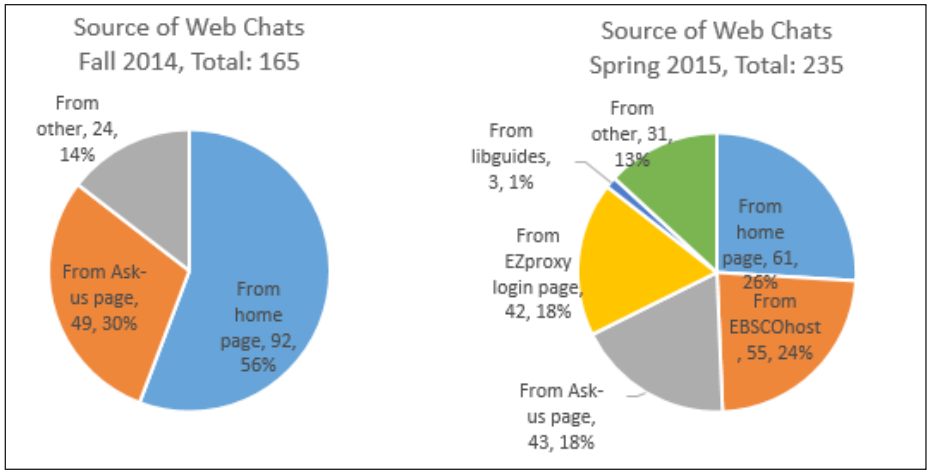


*Figure 3: Source of web chats: Fall 2014, Spring 2015*

## REFLECTION

The effectiveness of both our traditional and our chat interventions needed to be examined. The chat question was fairly easily answered by looking at the source of the chats, as shown by our LibraryH3lp logs **(see Figure 3)**.

Whereas the source of over half of our web chat sessions in the Fall was our home page, in the Spring, after adding additional chat access points, the home page accounted for only 26% of our chats while 43% of our chats came from these new sources. Also, 13% of our chat sessions came from the hour added between 5:00p.m. and 6:00p.m. It should be noted that we did not do any additional publicizing of the chat service, although word of mouth and repeat users may account for some of the increase. Randomly selected chat transcripts confirmed that the questions coming from EBSCOhost were indeed questions from users confused about how to search for information, or how to interpret what they were finding. This insight, along with the increased usage, confirmed what we believed to be true: that we are improving our services to students by adding our chat widget to all possible locations.

Ironically, in mid-Fall 2015, after this study, we realized that most of the questions coming from the chat widget on the EZproxy login error page were from students incorrectly entering their usernames. We have attempted to revise our login pages to eliminate confusion. If we succeed we will improve service but reduce our chat counts. This is a paradoxical result but a reminder that the numbers we collect can never tell the full story.

Whether or not we were successful in our attempts to increase in-person reference was less clear. A 5% increase in in-person reference questions asked (over the previous Spring) would have been unlikely had it not been for the proactive approach on the part of the librarians, particularly in light of the sharp decrease in library instruction classes. But it was certainly possible that our department-wide discussion of reference statistics resulted in more assiduous recording of the activity, rather than greater efforts to engage our students. To attempt to answer this question, the writer asked all John Jay reference librarians to fill out a simple two-question survey, asking whether they were aware that we were trying to increase the number of reference questions asked and whether they had changed their behavior in any way in order to elicit more questions.

Out of 19 reference librarians, 15 responded. Ten were aware of the program, but seven librarians felt they did nothing different last spring and five said that they recorded the reference questions more assiduously. However, three said that they walked around the reference area to be more approachable and six said that they directly addressed students who looked like they needed help. In comments, two of the librarians indicated that better signage might have been the primary reason for any increase in the number of reference questions. It is clear that at least some of the reference librarians took actions that resulted in more students getting the help they need.

## CONCLUSION

We found that a decrease in the number of reference questions is not inevitable and that both in-person and remote questions will increase if librarians reach out to connect to users where they are, whether sitting in the library being puzzled or working at home with a database they find confusing. This conclusion seems obvious and almost trite, but it was only by looking at the evidence of decreasing reference use that we were motivated to make changes. And, hopefully, seeing how effective these actions have been will encourage us to expand on these changes even further. ■



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[i] All statistical comparisons are Fall to Fall and Spring to Spring, since experience has revealed that library usage changes dramatically every year from the Fall to the Spring semester.

# Forums Facilitate Important Community Conversations

## » Sno-Isle Libraries' successful Issues That Matter programming series

BY CHARLES W. PRATT

This past summer my library system, Sno-Isle Libraries, held a series of four community forums on the topic of teen suicide throughout the two-county library district we serve in western Washington; this was the 12th topic around which we'd created a series of forums as a part of our Issues That Matter programming series. The Issues That Matter series has been a regular part of the programming in our library district since 2010, and its purpose is to facilitate important community conversations on high-profile, current event topics.

Issues That Matter provides a forum for civil, open discussion with the guidance of expert panelists and facilitators, connecting citizens in the communities we serve with local experts, stakeholders and community leaders. Sometimes the topics chosen are in conjunction with a local ballot measure, such as marijuana legalization or marriage equality. Other topics may be less controversial, you won't find a lot of folks taking a supportive stance on bullying, for instance; but topics like these are selected to provide an opportunity to learn more about problems we're experiencing in western Washington that have a negative impact on our communities, and ways that citizens can support each other and work toward solutions to these issues.


*Panelists at the June 23, 2016, Teen Suicide Forum at Snohomish Library were (l to r) Rena Fitzgerald, Crisis Chat Senior Program Manager, Volunteers of America Western Washington; Dr. Gary Goldbaum, Health Officer and Director, Snohomish Health District; Megan LaPlante, Miss Washington High School America 2016 winner and Monroe High School student. Photo courtesy of Sno-Isle Libraries.*

### PROGRAM FORMAT

The format for a typical program in the series is pretty simple. After a brief welcome and explanation of Issues That Matter and why we do this type of programming, the evening's moderator is introduced. The moderator offers some brief opening thoughts on the topic and then explains how the remainder of the event is organized. An Issues That Matter event is essentially a two-part program; the first section is a series of seven- to ten-minute opening statements given by each member of a panel of three to four experts, followed by a 45- to 50-minute Q & A exchange between audience members and the experts sitting on the panel. After these two core pieces are complete, the panelists are given the opportunity to make brief closing remarks of one to two minutes before the moderator closes the event. Everyone also has a chance to mingle for 15 to 20 minutes before going home.

### MAKING THE CASE

When we decided that our library district wanted to pursue this type of programming, we knew there would be questions asked. We anticipated receiving questions like, "Libraries check out books, why are you holding community events on ballot measures or social issues like teen suicide, drug abuse and sex trafficking?" Indeed, we did hear that question along with several similar ones, and understandably so; this was uncharted territory for our library system.

It became apparent early that it was very important that everyone in our organization be aware of why we chose to engage in this type of programming and to be able to explain that decision effectively to our customers and community partners. In my library system, building civic engagement to address community issues has been and remains a strategic organizational priority. Factoring in that one of our core services is to "present programs addressing community needs and interests" made this type of programming a no-brainer at Sno-Isle Libraries.

Communicating that message to our staff and customers was critical, but once they heard the message and saw how this type of programming aligned itself with both our core services and our priorities, it all made a lot of sense. Your library district's priorities might lie elsewhere, but if one or more of them are similar to ours, then you may want to give some thought to hosting similar programs, either as a one-time event or as part of an ongoing series similar to Issues That Matter.

### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

If you decide to move forward with hosting an Issues That Matter style event, there

are a few things you should consider when planning. Allow yourself a minimum of three months lead time to properly plan the event, locate and secure participants, and follow through on all the logistical concerns necessary to host a successful forum.

Selecting a topic is very important, but how do you know what to choose? We use several methods, one of which is asking the staff members on our programming team to make a conscious effort to follow local news sources with an eye toward multiple instances of stories on the same topic. Canvassing local elected officials for information on current projects or initiatives and asking if they can share information on concerns they are hearing from their constituents is another possibility. You could survey customers in your community libraries.

In recent years, we have built up enough brand recognition that many people in our communities are aware of the Issues That Matter programming series, so we now send out a press release each year to local news sources soliciting suggestions from the public for the coming year's topics. As the person whose inbox receives all of the replies from that press release, believe me when I say that once the word gets out on what you're doing, you will not be left wanting for input from the community.

After gathering all of this information, our committee sits down and evaluates all the information and suggestions we've collected to determine the two to three topics we'll select for the year's programs. As an example of why we chose teen suicide as our most recent topic, it was one of the most frequently received suggestions from the public, it aligned with one of the major priorities in the largest county in our district's Community Health Improvement Plan, and through local news stories we had seen a rash of teen suicides and suicide attempts in our communities. One of the communities selected to host an event had experienced three suicide deaths at the local high school in the past two school years; another had seen four occur in a similar time span.

*An attendee asks a question at the Oak Harbor Library Teen Suicide Forum on July 21, 2016. Photo courtesy of Sno-Isle Libraries.*

## FINDING A MODERATOR AND PANELISTS

Once you have your topic selected, you need to identify and approach panelists and a moderator. This part of the process seems much harder on the surface to complete than it often actually turns out to be. Knowing good sources of potential moderators and forming a partnership with those people and organizations is key, as moderators can often be more difficult to locate than panelists. In the past we've worked with the League of Women Voters and local media outlets to provide a moderator comfortable leading a discussion. Local elected officials are another good resource; more than one mayor in a hosting community has been excited to serve in this capacity at one of our forums. Alternately, if your library is invested in the idea of a continuing series of events, it might be worth having a staff member receive training on moderating events; this person could then serve as the moderator at any future events held.

As far as panelists are concerned, I've found that outreach is often an important part of many professionals' jobs, and, surprisingly enough, they often don't receive a lot of invitations to speak at events. It may seem odd or scary to "cold call" people or send out unsolicited emails about participating in a library program, but it's often as simple as identifying a few key agencies in your community, and simply making the effort to tell them about your planned event,

*The room at the June 23, 2016, Teen Suicide Forum at Snohomish Library. Photo courtesy of Sno-Isle Libraries.*

*Each event includes time for panelists and attendees to mingle; here patrons talk after the Teen Suicide Forum at Rosehill Community Center on July 13, 2016. Photo courtesy of Sno-Isle Libraries*

asking if they want to send a representative to participate.

I've experienced panelists who will help refer and/or arrange colleagues for panels quite frequently. Often people are so excited that there are more available speakers than there are spots on the panel, and that's okay, too. Extra stakeholders often sit in the audience and participate in the Q & A, frequently supplementing the answers given by the panelists themselves.

One panelist at our teen suicide events, who was extremely excited about participating and after being asked immediately committed to all four events scheduled, reported that "in 20 years, I have not been approached to speak at an event before the library asked. I've always had to ask organizations if I could come talk to them!" Not surprisingly, she did an amazing job and has since gone on to do other programs in our library system at additional locations to help educate communities on what they can do to lessen the risks of teen suicide and support the youth in their communities.

## PROGRAM COSTS

You can often create some amazing partnerships simply by not being afraid to reach out to others. Also of note, we do not offer a speaker's fee or honorariums to panelists or moderators, and this has never been an issue in six years. We do provide a light meal beforehand as a courtesy and to encourage speakers to arrive early to chat with each other and to do a sound check with our recording equipment and microphones. We also offer mileage reimbursement, but we've only ever had two participants take us up on that! The Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation supports the events by covering these costs, along with equipment rental, if it is needed. These are the only costs incurred during our Issues That Matter programs. People want to support their communities, they want to work with their libraries, and they want to help others ... they just need to be asked to do so!

## EVENT LOGISTICS

Before the day of the program you will want to connect your panelists with each other and the moderator so they get a chance to discuss what each will be focusing on in their opening statements. They appreciate a chance to avoid making overlapping statements, and often want to discuss how certain potential questions might be addressed and by whom. A few emails are usually enough to accomplish this. I also share links to recordings of past events along with an itinerary.

A typical program schedule looks like this:

3:30-4:00 p.m. Staff arrive at event site to set up microphones, stage and audience area, and recording equipment if we are recording video of this event.

5:00-5:10 p.m. Light meal is served; panelists and moderator may begin arriving.

5:45 p.m. Requested deadline for participants to arrive in order to prep for final sound check.

6:00 p.m. Sound check and final equipment tests.

6:30 p.m. Event begins, welcome by library leadership (typically our library director/deputy director and a board member).

6:35 p.m. Moderator introduced and gives opening remarks.

6:40 p.m. Panelists give opening statements.

7:05-7:10 p.m. Q & A session.

7:55 p.m. Closing remarks from panelists and moderator.

8:00 p.m. Event concludes and audience and participants are encouraged to mingle for 15 to 20 minutes.

## ADVICE FOR BEGINNERS

Keep your communications lines open and your event will be a success. You don't have to know all of the answers before embarking on this type of programming adventure. We certainly did not have them all when we had this idea and decided to move forward, but rather learned many things through the process each time we took on a new series of events, constantly tweaking things like the format, stage layout and presentation.

Surveying attendees after the event (both audience members and participants) was also important in helping us continue to improve the series, something we still do each time we tackle a new topic.

We also rotate staff who are committee members and the leadership on the Issues That Matter team regularly in order to keep the ideas fresh, the staff excited and to promote diversity in viewpoints. I was the second committee lead for Issues That Matter and will be cycling off the committee after we tackle the topic of Homelessness Here in early 2017.

I am excited to see this important programming series continue to grow and improve under the leadership of a colleague who has worked closely with me over the past year and has her own vision and ideas to help Issues That Matter continue to educate and connect members of the communities in our library district, and have an impact on the lives of our customers. I encourage you to consider doing something similar in your library! ■

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# Too Late Now: Libraries' Intertwined Challenges of Newspaper Morgues, Microfilm, and Digitization

BY RICHARD L. SAUNDERS

Many major newspapers once produced and distributed different editions of a newspaper for different markets on the same day. This publication arrangement lasted for about a century, from the Gilded Age of the 1880s until business consolidation happened in the news industry during the 1970s and 1980s.[1] The contents of the editions of the same newspaper could vary widely. The existence (and disappearance) of simultaneous newspaper editions represents one of the greatest documentary challenges facing present and coming generations of genealogists, local communities, and social historians. This article provides an argument to pay attention to three interrelated issues facing librarians today: first, an overlooked collection issue related to newspapers and special collections librarianship; second, why newspaper microfilm may not be an adequate substitute for print; and third, why digital options may not be adequate substitutes for newspaper microfilm.


'Buy Rights—Buy Right' Campaign Continues
'Iron City Next!'—GPIL, Tavern Owners
CITY EDITION
THE PITTSBURGH Courier
Industrial Preview For 1961
WE WANT A POLICE INSPECTOR NOW!
Mayor Requests Study of City Job-Hiring Policy
YOUR CITY GOVERNMENT!
ORDER NEXT WEEK'S COURIER TODAY!
Atlantic, Esso Cooperating With Philly Ministers
In Georgia and Tennessee
FEDERAL COURTS BLAST EDUCATIONAL ROADBLOCKS
SOUTHERN EDITION
The PITTSBURGH Courier
Willie's in Hiding Thinking It Over
It's No. 8 For Dinah!
Kennedy Tells Wilkins:
'I'LL FOLLOW UP ON MY PROMISES'
Bishops Wire Ike:
'DO SOMETHING IN TENNESSEE'
JFK Names Geo. Weaver

*Front pages from two editions of the Pittsburgh Courier, both dated 14 January 1961: City (left) and Southern (right). The edition is indicated directly to the left of the masthead. Despite identical titles and issue dates, content often varied widely between multiple editions (Reproduced courtesy of ProQuest and the Pittsburgh Courier).*

This is a situation that has evolved over time and rests on more than newspaper publication practices. As custodians of the material from which the local and national past is told, it is now very much a practical matter for libraries today. The story involves choices made when newspapers were microfilmed and involves libraries again as microfilm becomes the platform for creating new digital resources. Since microfilm is a widely trusted medium in libraries, and since digital access to increasingly large and detailed databases is being similarly adopted, why would either newspaper microfilm or digital databases be a potential issue of concern to special collections libraries? Truthfully, it may not be. This article is not a systematic study of a general problem. It is, rather, a description of interrelated premises and choices that libraries face to maintain newspaper morgues and newspaper microfilm collections, as well as adopting databases as a replacement for historic newspapers.

To understand the interrelated issues (no newspaper pun intended), we have to explore the beginning of the problem, almost to the beginning of special collections libraries and modern academic library departments in the 1930s and 1940s. Anyone who has watched Orson Welles' film Citizen Kane recalls one of the film's premises: that newspapers are a business. They put out a product on a weekly or daily basis and, like most businesses, expanded and contracted their product line where consumer interest translated into sales. As the Industrial Age progressed and printing presses got both larger and faster, the time needed to print a single issue declined even as circulation numbers increased. An idle press is not a cost-effective investment, so one means of increasing the return on investment for many large newspapers was to create for readers different options in their product line. One early example is the Deseret News,

published in Salt Lake City since 1850, which was originally a weekly newspaper. The News became a daily newspaper in the 1870s for a growing urban market but continued the weekly edition for distribution in outlying towns. By 1900, the company also published a semiweekly issue, plus a railroad edition for distribution on transcontinental trains. Its chief competitor, the Salt Lake Tribune, began as both a daily and a weekly edition. Another newspaper might choose differently. In Nashville, Tennessee, the Tennessean's market solution was to publish both the Tennessean for morning delivery and the Evening Tennessean.[2]

Prior to the digital age, newspapers functioned as the Internet of the day, a hard-copy combination of news feed, social media, and pop-up advertising. Even so, one size did not fit all. Publishing various editions represented a manual means of generating salable data for diverse readerships. As newspaper printing plants and distribution networks expanded in the late nineteenth century, the number of editions a large newspaper printed often expanded and specialized as well. The Pittsburgh Courier is a good example from the mid-twentieth century. The Courier is a major resource for the history of black America because the paper(s) employed and published the reportage of traveling correspondents and because its editions published local-item news far afield from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Catalogue records from the Library of Congress, the basis of most libraries' records, states merely "Numerous editions." In fact, according to contact information in its own masthead and editorial pages at various times, the newspaper was published and distributed in no fewer than eight editions for separate but overlapping regional markets: National, Southern, Georgia, Louisiana, Ohio, New York, Northeastern, and Midwestern editions, plus a Local (later City) edition for Pittsburgh and the surrounding area. It was also dressed in separate urban editions for Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. markets—all editions distributed to newsstands and subscribers in individual locales under the same newspaper title.[3] Check any of the same-date issues from two editions and most of the content, page layout, and advertising is guaranteed to be different. In practice, the article duplication between the City and Southern editions of the Courier might total two stories, one of which is severely edited for length. I have not yet found an example of outright duplication between the editions. In practice, more than a dozen different newspapers were published by the firm, each with a high percentage of content unique to its circulation market. In its heyday, the Pittsburgh Courier may have been distributed and read more widely and by a larger population than its better-known competitor, the Chicago Defender, which published its own multiple editions.

What did the existence of multiple newspaper editions mean to libraries? Maintaining a print newspaper collection in a library has always been difficult and expensive, at best. Their sheer size complicates housing and use. The folded sheets of newsprint are inconveniently large, have no covers to reinforce or protect them, and accumulate alarmingly. Issues also came out with rapidity, were used intensely for a comparatively short period, and then became so much old paper. Newspapers' value as a social and historical record often required the passage of years or generations. Meanwhile, housing and preserving newspapers was expensive. Acquiring and housing multiple editions of the "same" newspaper only multiplied libraries' budgets and space challenges arithmetically. Within a few decades of the twentieth century, it was clear that bound library collections of print newspapers were unsustainable in terms of both growth and physical preservation. For example, by 1939, the University of Illinois newspaper library held merely 455 titles but over 20,000 oversize bound volumes.[4] "Permanent" newspaper collections threatened to expand to the point of being unsustainable. As a result, most institutional collections tended to bind and house only a few newspapers. Of local newspapers, libraries tended to keep what was most important to a branch, a city, or that end of the state.

## NEWSPAPERS AND MICROFILM

Fortunately, by 1939 a new technology—microfilm—looked like a timely solution to shrinking available space that seemed to resolve the concerns about maintenance and space costs that made preservation of print newspapers problematic. Large institutions and state libraries began converting print newspaper holdings to microfilm in the late 1930s almost as soon as the technology was developed. Faced with swelling newspaper collections that filled shelf and floor space with alarming speed, microfilm was a means to consolidate, inventory, and eventually replace newsprint spilling off shelves and out of basements and closets. For libraries that did not maintain print newspaper collections, microfilm was an inexpensive option to acquire important documentary records. Tattered volumes, rolls, and bales of historic newspapers filled the basements of universities, courthouses, and local libraries across the country, and by 1940 professionals were already talking about microfilm as an adequate, accessible, and perhaps preferable library substitute for collections of print newspapers.[5] Libraries made the change fairly quickly, and microfilm essentially replaced binding for current and even historic, often unique, newspaper files by the 1950s.

Microfilm is not a consumer product, but it is a commercial retail product. With the possible exception of a very few scholars, microfilmed newspapers (and manuscripts) were sold almost exclusively to libraries. Libraries, therefore, had to buy their microfilm as duplicates of what film negatives were available. Microfilm made it possible for libraries to make available much more histori-

source material than they could have owned and housed economically in print. From the 1950s to the 1990s, microfilm was a booming library business—and it was a business. In the midst of adopting microfilm as a storage/access medium, mid-century librarians were aware of the challenge that multiple-edition newspapers posed to preserving newspapers as historical sources, but they were not the only decision makers involved in the process. We should remember that commercial microfilming was a business venture, and reducing overhead and eliminating low-demand products are measures to maintain solvency—not judgments about objective documentary integrity.

In local microfilming services in almost every state (which was sometimes the state library), with few exceptions the most expedient filming policy was to reduce the investment of microfilm by limiting microfilming to one of the last editions of the day for a given newspaper. Most often the edition chosen was the day's "final" edition, the last edition produced during a day for an afternoon newspaper. We could guess that it was simply a decision of expedience—what edition of a newspaper a filming firm could get delivered to their market by basic subscription. In reality, there are probably no recorded justifications for why or how any given microfilm firm chose particular editions for filming, but the choice has long consequences for researchers who use them.

Occasionally, a newspaper itself or a library might preserve or pay to buy the film of multiple editions. One example is the Brooklyn Daily Eagle from the New York borough of the same name. The commercial microfilmer produced separate negatives for the First Edition, M-X, Wall Street, and Sports Final editions.[6] Microfilming all editions of a newspaper usually seemed like an expensive and unnecessary investment for microfilming companies and for their institutional patrons. That small fact is important: once a microfilm company limited their commercial output to one out of a newspaper's several editions, the likelihood that individual libraries could or would retain other editions, or that another microfilm service would even film them, dropped dramatically.

## IMPLICATIONS OF MICROFILM

In the moment, however, choosing to film a broadly distributed state edition (because a state edition would likely be the most widely read) or "final" edition seemed a reasonable enough measure. In a day before news feeds and desktop computers kept everyone connected to the world beyond their door, work settings were isolated islands. Workplace radios and television were uncommon. The afternoon or evening newspaper was the first opportunity for working men to see what the day had brought. Thus, microfilm companies and librarians were partly correct—but they overlooked what was not in the pages; like the NBC Nightly News, final editions tended to summarize national and international news wires. Librarians did not seem to realize that most late-edition newspapers were titled "final" chiefly because they contained closing-bell reports from national financial markets, not because the reportage in them was cumulative. Worse, while various editions of a newspaper often shared some common content, most articles—especially local stories—appeared uniquely in only one edition, or were shared between only two or three regional editions, usually under different titles and invariably edited to fit the available column space.[7] Editors culling the most important community news for the daily "final edition" preferred business, political, and infrastructural news—the types of things of interest to businessmen returning home from the workday. Local stories tended to be viewed as less significant than "big picture" stories from the newswires.

That detail is important to present-day librarians and researchers for two reasons. First, it means that these types of "big picture" stories in final editions are also the most likely stories to appear in other newspapers on the same day, lessening the importance of any one final-edition newspaper as a means of portraying (and preserving) what was happening within a community itself; front-page and first-section content became fairly standard, since newspapers tended to report the same national and international stories, especially if the paper relied on newswire releases. That makes the general newspaper content of "final editions" neither unique nor important, merely newsworthy. Second, it means that final-edition content tends to be the most regionally ephemeral news, of little value beyond the moment. In terms of their collections, librarians concluded that buying microfilm of a newspaper by title was enough to preserve an "entire" newspaper; or it meant they consciously decided (after careful comparison, one would hope) that variant editions did not have enough unique content to merit the expense and space of another set of microfilm. Unfortunately for today's researchers, that means that most of the really valuable social documentation in local and regional newspaper editions—those that concentrated uniquely on news with the greatest value to readers of later generations—were well-intentionally ignored in microfilming. Most never made it to a library collection and are known chiefly and ephemerally from scrapbook clippings.

By the 1960s, libraries and librarians had seemingly forgotten about newspaper editions or were resigned to accept the premise of unavoidable loss that was the foundation of newspaper microfilming. Not a single article in indexed professional library literature challenged the assumption that microfilming one edition of a newspaper sufficiently preserved a newspaper's varied record of its editions. Not everyone


tar
HOME EDITION
change.
PRICE FIVE CENTS
NO. 190
ys He Handed
Schoolfield
tar
FINAL EDITION MARKETS
Thursday.
PRICE FIVE CENTS
NO. 189
esses Tell
00 'Fix'

*Front-page edition statements on two issues of the Memphis Press-Scimitar from January 1958. Newspapers could make edition statements in code as well, such as "Red-Diamond Edition" or "Three-Star Edition" (Courtesy of University of Memphis Special Collections).*

» As we move into a new century, the problem worsens. Outright errors in catalogue records lay a foundation for a new series of ill-informed collection decisions. For instance, OCLC's WorldCat database includes records for several editions of the Courier.

accepted the premise, however. It was clear to professional indexers that best practices for newspaper microfilm unavoidably failed to preserve valuable, often unique stories that appeared in editions that were not microfilmed. As early as 1965, New York Times Index editor John Rothman noted that microfilming practices preserved only part of the content of the several editions that his firm produced.[8]

There are isolated exceptions to that general loss. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle is unique in that most or all of its editions were captured by a single microfilm service. Occasionally—very occasionally—separate editions of a newspaper might have been microfilmed by different services or institutions, a rare circumstance that both enables and complicates the survival of multiple editions. Despite what OCLC holdings records state, most of the Pittsburgh Courier editions seem to have disappeared entirely from libraries and from history, casualties of their ephemerality and of the tradeoffs necessary to maintain collections within library budgets and walls. If a newspaper title was commercially available on film, why pay to have the local subscription microfilmed separately? In the Pittsburgh Courier's case, the Microfilm Corporation of Pennsylvania filmed the City edition, a task later assumed by UMI. Then it also handled the National edition, which was microfilmed to the end of 1960; thereafter the paper's Southern edition was filmed (a fact that is not noted in catalogue records I have found). That's all. Most of the baker's-dozen editions of the Pittsburgh Courier—and their broad documentation of regional black America—are gone. Therein lies the cautionary lesson for modern libraries: unless a microfilmer captured more than one edition, or in the unlikely event that multiple microfilmers captured different editions of a newspaper, microfilming condemns multiple-edition newspapers to oblivion. In other words, check your microfilm carefully because it may be unique.

As we move into a new century, the problem worsens. Outright errors in catalogue records lay a foundation for a new series of ill-informed collection decisions. For instance, OCLC's WorldCat database includes records for several editions of the Courier. However, in the public screens, OCLC displays the same aggregated holdings record for each edition's record, displaying a message (as of March 2015) "Displaying libraries 1–6 out of 334 for all 34 editions." At first glance, displaying the aggregated holdings makes it appear that any one local/regional newspaper microfilm is held much more widely than it actually is, and that the different editions are, in fact, available to researchers when they may not be. In other words, the largest resource-sharing tool and a large number of cataloguers have inadvertently created the illusion that the ephemeral regional editions of the Pittsburgh Courier are widely available.[9] Based on those holdings, informed retention decisions for a microfilm collection could be compromised.

## IMPLICATIONS OF NEWSPAPER DIGITIZATION

The Pittsburgh Courier provides another cautionary example, as the preservation of social and economic history in newspapers is being further complicated by the newest rush to new technology: digital image databases. The modern analog to the creation and adoption of newspaper microfilm in the 1930s is the creation of databases as commercial products in the 2000s. Libraries are now rushing or being pushed toward commercial digital services as born-digital newspaper imaging is aggregated in databases rather than being run to microfilm. Like its microfilm predecessor, digital platforms are often considered a suitable, even desirable replacement for ephemeral and often increasingly fragile matter like print newspapers and for microfilm collections nearing the end of their usable (and legible) lifespans. In digitizing historic newspapers, commercial database vendors tend to capture page images from microfilm rather than from bound volumes (and yes, there are exceptions). In the case of the Pittsburgh Courier, the digital edition presently available through the ProQuest database is a filming of the City edition, which has virtually no content from beyond Pittsburgh itself.[10] A library anywhere other than Pittsburgh that expects to replace its microfilm of the Courier (which is almost certainly the National or Southern edition film) with database access would do future students a disservice. Other than an occasional clipping and the National/Southern and City edition film, once available from the Microfilm Company of Pennsylvania negatives, none of the reportage from other Pittsburgh Courier editions survives on either edition's film; it is therefore not in the modern newspaper database. In changing access to historic newspapers from scattered microfilm reels to singlesource digital platforms, it is quite possible that the working assumptions of "completeness" and "preservation" may work against users of particular newspapers. Large digitization projects like the Library of Congress's Chronicling America and commercial newspaper databases like the Newspaper Archive may in fact encourage a second round of American newspapers' disappearance.[11]

## CLIPPING MORGUES

If microfilm and digital databases are not adequately preserving the varied content of newspaper editions, what else might preserve the unique contents of twentieth century newspapers? Budget-weary and space-crunched library administrators typically don't like the answer: it may be that the few bulky, messy, fragile, and deteriorating clipping morgues are perhaps the last remaining option for preserving variant-edition newspapers, and they are a scarce option, at that. This is not an option to broaden access or regain what has already disappeared; what is gone is gone, but there are sound reasons to plan carefully to preserve the few morgues that have survived.

Large newspapers (like the Memphis Press-Scimitar or Los Angeles Examiner) often maintained an internal clipping morgue for at least part of their history. Morgues acted as manual databases. Files of dated

clippings allowed a newspaper to break its very chronological product (newspaper issues) into thematic parts (individual stories) for collocation and later retrieval. Morgue clipping files provided quickly retrievable background for reporters working on current stories. Until digital technology populated every desktop with a computer, clipping morgues often provided the only practical method for access to a newspaper's past subject content. Only the largest newspapers, like the New York Times, could afford to assemble and distribute an index.

Unfortunately, the economics of the news industry have been such that clipping morgues have not survived well at all. As circulation declined and newspapers consolidated and folded during the 1980s (newspaper pun intended), both a newspaper's bound morgue, if it had maintained one, and its clipping morgue were often discarded. Only occasionally were they transferred to a local institution like a public or academic library. Still later, librarians sometimes assisted in destroying the few remaining bound-newspaper morgues—which might have preserved the content of multiple editions—in favor of microfilm (again, often because of pressing space issues), which left posterity with only a title, not content. If a clipping morgue does survive in an institution, it is likely more significant than either librarians or users may realize. Let me illustrate with a first-hand experience how significant a clipping morgue can be, and how morgues can reflect the practice of multiple newspaper editions and libraries' collections of newspaper microfilm.

Several years ago I was using the Memphis Press-Scimitar clipping morgue at the University of Memphis. The newspaper, long one of the region's major documentary records, had closed in 1983 after six decades of publication. While divesting its assets, a clipping morgue of more than five hundred cartons ungently crammed with subject-organized clippings and a detailed card index were deeded to the university. The card file was the only means of locating subject contents in the newspaper and in the morgue files. A few days after the visit, I needed to confirm a detail in one article from a morgue file clipping; and, since the newspaper staff had thoughtfully dated each of the clippings as it was filed a half-century earlier, I had the article title and date. Checking the microfilmed issue of the newspaper at my own institution, I found the article was not there. Checking a few other dated references on other clippings revealed similar inconsistencies: some of the articles from the morgue appeared in the microfilm, but not often. If I did find them, the articles on microfilm edition of the newspaper were typically shorter—often much shorter—than what I had found in the morgue clipping. Complicating things, they were almost always titled or laid out on the page differently from the clippings that existed in the morgue.


*Some, but not all, large modern newspaper publishers still produce multiple editions. Deseret News' Local (left) and National (right) edition front pages from 24 May 2015 (Reproduced courtesy of Deseret News Corp).*

The morgue files had a few full pages folded up into their files that allowed me to compare full pages from the morgue with the microfilm on another visit. The few samples I could compare were completely dissimilar—almost another publication. In fact they were: there was more than one Memphis Press-Scimitar published every day, and the contents in the different editions did not seem to overlap much.

It turned out that the microfilmed newspaper available to users in libraries was the "Final edition," while most of the clippings in the morgue files were from either the regional "Midsouth" or the city "Home" editions. Additional research and some calculations generated a grim estimate: it looked like only about 25%–30% of the stories in morgue clippings appeared in the microfilmed newspaper in any form at all.[12] That meant 70%–75% of the five hundred cartons of clippings were the only copies of those stories extant. In other words, the ratty, well-thumbed folders filled with jumbled and torn newspaper clippings were absolutely irreplaceable—and the newspaper microfilm was a wholly inadequate documentary substitute.

## INTERRELATED CHALLENGES

Pulling together the themes of this article—newspaper publishing practices, twentieth-century microfilming, migration to digital formats, and the fortunate but scattered survival of clipping morgues—in retrospect, it seems that libraries' effort to preserve twentieth-century community and family history in newspapers have run aground on the law of unintended consequences. Newspaper editions with greatest value to the local communities they served have mostly disappeared in the first one-size-fits-all solution of microfilm; the few that did survive now risk disappearing under renewed broad expediencies of collection management or access. As a long-time archivist/special collections librarian and academic library administrator, I understand those realities; as a practicing historian, I am profoundly

grateful that the local-history material supporting one facet of my work exists in a clipping morgue. Other researchers are not as lucky. Often only a single edition of most large newspapers exist for most readers, and the few newspaper clipping morgues that have survived are physically imperiled by use (both because they are acidic newsprint and because they tend to be handled ungently).

Clipping morgues are big and messy, and the contents are virtually impossible to police adequately, even in the supervised setting of a special-collections reading room. Their existence tends to be further threatened by a general lack of administrative understanding of just how precious morgues are, despite being large, unwieldy, and seemingly duplicative of microfilm. Newspaper morgues have been discarded all too often, and special collections risk becoming further perpetrators of this historical tragedy. Now the surviving record faces a new challenge. OCR technology and the ability to search digital content at the word level make voluminous and tattered subject-file clipping morgues seem obsolete. If newspaper content is retrievable at the word level, the reasoning goes, then the bulky files of deteriorating paper should be irrelevant.

The hope is that readers see that digital tools may provide speed and "access" but cannot index or recreate material that was not initially preserved or no longer survives. Unfortunately, the loss of history and source material in discarded newspaper morgues multiplies and threatens to expand with the eager adoption of digital imaging as a replacement for microfilm. The root problem is not with digital access per se, but with the idea that what little original material that does survive is no longer necessary because "we have digital access." A digital platform is a suitable replacement for either a run of microfilm or a clipping morgue only if the database includes all editions of a newspaper that are accessible in film or a morgue. The question of preservation and access is compounded, rather than simplified, when database vendors make expedient or uninformed choices about what newspapers to include in their products. At least in the case of newspapers, the rush to adopt digital resources renews a challenge to libraries as cultural and historic institutions, a challenge that repeats an earlier age and its rush to microfilm. "Sadly," writes Barbara Quint, "no matter what new policies and procedures may emerge in response to the dramatic changes in publisher practices in these challenging times, web-based content for the last half of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century from established, high-quality publications has been lost forever."[13]

## OPTIONS FOR LIBRARIES

So what do libraries do with racks of microfilm and the few newspaper and clipping morgues that remain? First, libraries should set aside the digitize-at-all-costs mentality that seems to have infected our profession. Libraries should acknowledge that physical media, both microfilm and morgue, may well be irreplaceable historical resources and not merely ratty, old, or outdated junk. If an institution houses a newspaper clipping morgue, it is almost certainly irreplaceable by any commercially available digital database or microfilm. Discarding it would be a breach of trust.

Second, if an institution houses a bound newspaper morgue, the library should invest time and effort to check morgue editions or clipped holdings against microfilm or digitally duplicated newspapers. Confirm whether or not all bound volumes are of the same edition, usually requiring no more effort than checking for an edition statement in mastheads and looking for an edition code, like a pattern or number of stars printed in the corners of interior pages. If the morgue is a clipping rather than bound morgue, spot-check extensively (perhaps with attention paid to sampling) to see that clippings are exactly those found in microfilm or digital resources. Fortunately, many morgue clerks used a date stamp to ensure clippings retained a publication date. That can provide a point to begin a search.

Third, if a clipping morgue does prove to contain a percentage of unique material, begin planning and budgeting for the preservation and conservation measures (and expense) that will eventually be required. Clipping and bound newspaper morgues are expensive to house, describe, and maintain—but it is difficult to put a price on "irreplaceable."

Fourth, short of mass deacidification and clipping-by-clipping repair, a project to digitize the unique morgue contents and retiring the original clippings from use—not discarding them—is a good way to maintain the resource while minimizing use damage to already fragile clippings. Creating a digital simulacrum is no adequate substitute for taking care of the original item. As digitization proceeds, an easy way to set digitization priorities is by tracking the files that users request and then by capturing the files digitally before they are refiled.

## CONSEQUENCES

Very rarely, a librarian finds at least a few issues of a regional newspaper edition that no other library holds and no researcher has used. Driving through a rural community east of Memphis, three years after my disturbing discovery about the loss of newspaper editions, I stopped at a consignment/antique store. Sitting on a chair inside were three bound volumes of the Memphis Press-Scimitar, three scattered but complete months of the newspaper's Home edition dating from the Second World War. The bindings showed that they had come from the newspaper's own bound-volume morgue, which had not gone to the University of Memphis with the clipping morgue. Looking through the pages, it was clear that the volumes were invaluable records, documenting home-front activities and providing data that did not even occasionally appear in the end-of-the-day news summary of the Press-Scimitar "Final edition." They were due to be offered in an Internet auction that evening. I tried to buy them outright or persuade the manager to postpone the sale for a guaranteed price, but they refused to budge. They were sold at auction; there is no record of where they are now. Sometimes libraries' and librarians' best efforts to preserve newspapers as documentary records are still subject to mischance. ■



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**FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES:**

[1] Newspaper editions are not gone. Digital technology allows publishers to produce and send files for print distribution to other markets. The New York Times, for instance, still produces multiple editions for regional markets. The challenges of capturing and preserving digital-only formats like news blogs is an entirely separate issue with similar challenges.

[2] J. Cecil Alter, Early Utah Journalism (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1938), 300–06, 352–60; Wendell J. Ashton, Voice in the West: The Biography of a

» **Clipping morgues are big and messy, and the contents are virtually impossible to police adequately, even in the supervised setting of a special-collections reading room.**

Pioneer Newspaper (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1950); O.N. Malmquist, The First One Hundred Years: A History of the Salt Lake Tribune, 1871–1971 (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1971). The Tennessean published an evening edition between 1918 and 1937. The film of the morning and evening editions is available at the Tennessee State Library and Archives and Nashville Public Library—but the existence of multiple editions is not well understood since none are noted in the master list of state newspapers (see **www.tn.gov/tsla/history/newspapers/paper-n.htm**).

[3] Not all editions were simultaneously or continuously published over the lifespan of the newspaper, which is still actively publishing. An edition could circulate for a few years before being dropped as the market shifted.

[4] L.L. Qualls, "Newspapers in the University of Illinois Library," Illinois Libraries 24 (1942 May): 71–77.

[5] A.F. Kuhlman, "Administration of Serial and Document Acquisition and Preparation," in W.M. Randall, Acquisition and Cataloguing of Books (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1940), 95–116; C.S. Paine, "Microfilm in the Small College Library," C&RL 3 (June 1942): 224–29 provides cost comparison figures for print and microform (in 1942). Nicholson Baker, Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper (New York: Random House, 2001) controversially but pointedly addresses libraries' handling of newspaper collections specifically, reprising in much more specific and updated terms a classic indictment by Randolph G. Adams, "Librarians as the Enemies of Books," Library Quarterly 7 (1937): 317–31. I strongly encourage readers to familiarize themselves with Baker's arguments.

[6] The Brooklyn Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library retains separate film of each edition (personal communication, Oct. 15, 2014).

[7] This is an experience-based observation and is difficult to document adequately on the scale it occurred, since each newspaper handled editorial policy, publication standards, and editions independently. Documenting exactly why and to what extent duplication and nonduplication existed would be impossible, because every newspaper had its own editions and there was no uniform policy. The balance of the paper includes a few comparative examples as illustrations.

[8] John Rothman, "Preserving the News That's Fit to Print," Saturday Review, Sept. 13, 1965; reprinted, Indexer 5, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 39–42.

[9] For instance, at least in the public screens the system initially displays an aggregate list of institutional holdings records, no matter what edition of a newspaper is chosen. I confirmed the holdings of three editions: New York, Georgia, and St. Louis—but, other than the Pennsylvania Newspaper Project, none of the institutions I contacted to confirm the holdings actually had film of any of the three editions their record showed they held; the film was typically the National or City film on the shelves. The OCLC link option to "Show libraries holding only this edition or narrow results by format" will restrict records to entered holdings of specific editions, but a check of the libraries suggests that holdings records have, for whatever reason, not been appended carefully. For instance, some editions with holdings appended do not appear in the catalogue of any institution that has attached a holding record to the edition. My point is simply that there is no adequate way to document exactly what regional editions exist with current tools, short of a reel-by-reel, institution-by-institution search to confirm what the film actually shows—which is utterly impractical unless institutions recheck and update their own holdings in OCLC.

[10] The weekly Pittsburgh Courier is digitally accessible through ProQuest's Historical Newspapers, Black Historical Newspapers, and Black Studies Center; it is cited as an example, not an indictment, of ProQuest's product. The City or Local edition (through various title changes) is captured between 1911 and June 1981; after July 1981, content is from the National edition. As of the publication of this article, no Courier edition is included in the Newspaper Archive (see **http://newspaperarchive.com**).

[11] The literature on the shift to digital in newspapers is voluminous and cannot be surveyed adequately here. The move to digital is already affecting newspapers' key elements as a documentary record. cf. Keith Greenwood, "Digital Photo Archives Lose Value a Record of Community History," Newspaper Research Journal 32, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 82–96. In discussing newspaper digitization projects, Patrick Reakes and Marilyn Ochoa, "Noncommercial Digital Newspaper Libraries: Considering Usability," Internet Reference Services Quarterly 14, no. 3/4 (2009): 92–113 note specifically that "Preliminary results from the small sample group surveyed indicate that for a variety of reasons testing is often underemphasized" (abstract). As nearly as I can tell, checking for the accessibility of variant editions is not included in the "Guidelines for Preservation Readiness of Digital Newspapers." cf. Nick Krabbenhoeft, Katherine Skinner, Matt Schultz, and Frederick Zarndt, "Chronicles in Preservation: Preserving Digital News and Newspapers," Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture 42, no. 4 (Nov. 2013): 199–203.

[12] Most Press-Scimitar morgue files hold less than a one-inch stack of clipped material, stuffed into number-coded manila file folders and/or envelopes. I was using a rather unusual single file number that amounted to nearly an entire records center carton of clipped material, about 1.5 lin. ft., dating between 1956 and 1980. The estimate given here is based on what I found (and did not find) in that file and attendant microfilm, with spot checks from about a dozen other topical files in the morgue. This is a very small and nonrandom sample of a positively massive collection. Because every newspaper and every clipping morgue was published and filed differently, not every morgue would necessarily reflect the same ratios.

[13] Barbara Quint, "Where Have All the Archives Gone?" Information Today 26, no. 7 ( Jul./Aug. 2009): 1–39.

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