

WPLC Local & Historical Collections Committee Notes

April 14, 2022 12:00-1:00PM

Via Zoom

Attendees (bolded): **Jill Fuller (Bridges Library System)**, Alison Hoffman (Monarch Library System), **Robert Jaeger (Milwaukee Public Library)**, **David Kranz (Southwest Wisconsin Library System)**, **Nate Pflager (Winding Rivers Library System)**, **Tamara Ramski (South Central Library System)**, Bradley Shipp (Outagamie Waupaca Library System)

Project managers: **Emily Pfothenauer, Jennifer Chamberlain, Laura Damon Moore (WiLS)**

1. Welcome

The committee introduced themselves and shared information on local digital projects.

The committee has been on hiatus in large part because the historic newspaper access project has been on hold. This meeting is intended to share an update on that work, and then discuss where we see this work heading.

2. Project Update: Newspaper metadata and file processing (LSTA)

E. Pfothenauer provided a brief update on the status of the newspaper metadata and file processing project.

A 2019 LSTA grant is supporting the creation of METS/ALTO metadata files for each scanned newspaper page by a third-party vendor, Digital Divide Data (DDD). This is a key step because it converts existing content into a more portable and standardized form, allowing it to be migrated to an alternate access platform and enabling it to be ingested into a long-term preservation environment. SWLS was the fiscal agent/recipient for the LSTA grant.

Pfothenauer has been creating title-level metadata and working with the DDD project manager (based in Laos) and Wisconsin Historical Society staff to coordinate this work. As batches are completed, DDD delivers them to WHS; WHS verifies the data and moves it into storage. As of today, just over 400,000 pages have been fully processed and either delivered to WHS or are ready to be delivered. Approx. 150,000 remaining pages are ready for WHS to transfer to DDD. We are on track to complete the project by the end of this calendar year.

T. Ramski asked how specific newspaper titles were selected for this work. Pfothenauer reported there were pulled from titles that were already digitized in the Archive of Wisconsin newspapers. Pfothenauer confirmed that adding new newspaper content is still on hold in terms of getting digitized and uploaded to the Archive.

Full list of content and status:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1e7hBmsSgagoExjrZxkWdjxaPUvvydyfEtic4qrS-wk/edit?usp=sharing>

3. Project Update: Archive of Wisconsin Newspapers – access platform

Pfothenauer provided a recap of where things were left off pre-COVID.

In late 2018 this committee began to investigate alternative platforms for providing improved centralized access to digitized historical newspapers. WPLC Project Managers also began conversations with the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding potential collaboration around a shared access platform. In June 2020, we shared a preproposal with the WPLC board recommending they consider the use of R&D funds to launch a new platform, Veridian.

Forward movement on the proposed plan was pending commitments from WHS. Due to pandemic-related closures and changes in leadership at WHS, these conversations were put on hold through 2020 and into 2021. In 2021, J. Chamberlain and Pfothenauer had conversations with the new Head of Library and Archives at WHS; she has since left this position and it remains vacant. No decisions are forthcoming from WHS until new leadership is in place.

J. Fuller expressed gratitude that these conversations have happened to help build the relationship and project understanding between the WPLC and WHS.

WiLS project managers continue to get requests from libraries on how they get their newspapers digitized and where should they turn. Pfothenauer shared a draft document of messaging for interested libraries which helps address concerns about libraries doing this digitization work independently as well as outlining the benefits of doing this in a centralized access point. Review draft doc:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1K1l6nDjFxcSBnbMO8O3eTs6V41HWO5G_YtVFPk-3g3o/edit

E. Discussion: Possible next steps for providing access to historical newspapers

- Options are:
 - 1) Continue with current approach of adding content to WNA Archive
 - 2) Wait – keep project on hold (for one more year?) until forward movement at WHS
 - 3) Stop – end the project and turn over fully to WHS (remove WPLC as middle person)
- Budget implications for options 1 and 2 – need WiLS project management time to continue work or continue planning conversations

WiLS project managers would like the committee's recommendation on how to move forward on the access platform project given the circumstances. Kranz confirmed that the metadata work continues until the LSTA money runs out. Yes, these files will be held at the WHS until a new platform is identified. Kranz also added that the WPLC is currently engaged in budget discussions, so now is great time to submit any budget requests if this committee feels there will be FY23 budget implications.

The committee discussed the various options for the newspaper access project.

- Ramski inquired if the project could continue with the current approach of adding content to WNA archives? There is a cost involved and Ramski has seen the cost be a barrier to some libraries. General consensus from the committee and project managers is that it does not make sense to have libraries pay to upload content in the WNA as it may not be a long-term solution. That work should be on hold for the time being.
- Fuller added that if we suspend WNA uploads, libraries will probably seek out a 3rd party solution. The obvious concern is having things get out of the desired pipeline. Kranz shared that in SWLS he has seen interested libraries signing on to Newspapers.com because of the free digitization services.
- Chamberlain asked if a better use of the committee's time is to refocus efforts on bringing key stakeholders together: WHS, DPI, WPLC – state of historic newspapers and access issues. The problem of leadership vacancies at WHS is still an issue, so it seems prudent to wait until key positions are filled.
- Kranz added that DPI has been an interested and supportive partner in this project over the years, and he feels there are future opportunities to solicit additional funding to support further developments in

historical newspaper access. Not all libraries have an archive, and for some libraries digitized newspapers is the one archival service they can offer.

The committee agreed to recommend the suspension of work on the project until WHS has filled key positions. No project management time will be spent on moving this project ahead until we hear from WHS that the time is right to continue the conversation.

Question – what will we do next as this committee if the newspaper project goes on indefinite stalled status?

Adjourned at 1:12 pm.