

A local newspaper collection goes online

A suburban Chicago library gives direct access to community history through the Web



Situation

Two things convinced Rose Faber, Head of Adult Services at the Barrington Area Library, to digitize the library's community newspaper collection.

The first was to find a better way to handle inquiries that required access to the Barrington Review archives. "We've seen requests from as far away as France," Faber says. "Each time, we have to get out the microfilm and make copies to send."

The second reason came from Faber's personal experience. To research her family tree, she had to travel to Wisconsin to search newspaper archives. That trip gave her an idea. "I started looking for a way to make our local paper accessible for everyone," she says.

Faber wasn't sure where to begin. She had never been involved in this type of project, let alone one for more than 100 years of worth of microfilmed newspapers. When she talked to OCLC, she began to see the possibilities.

Solution

The first step in the project was to determine the feasibility of scanning the microfilm. Faber sent 10 rolls to the OCLC Preservation Service Center in Bethlehem, PA. They determined that the film was badly scratched and that text recognition for the earliest editions, dating back to 1890, wasn't achievable. OCLC advised Faber on which reels were best suited for digitization and recommended use of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to facilitate full-text searches.

Step two was securing a grant from the State of Illinois to fund the project. The proposal was for OCLC to scan and

AT A GLANCE

Barrington Area Library, Barrington, Illinois

- Serves 42,127 in suburban Chicago
- Barrington Review Newspaper Collection 1914–1930
- <http://contentdm.barringtonarealibrary.org/>

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digitize a portion of the collection, starting with the oldest editions possible. While OCLC prepared the collection, the Barrington Area Library staff would implement CONTENTdm® at their location. The staff would then load the fully indexed repository with prebuilt compound objects into CONTENTdm for access via the Web. Within just months of the initial evaluation, the grant was awarded and the project was underway.

As a key step in the project, staff at the OCLC Preservation Service Center built the CONTENTdm indexes for the Barrington Area Library. The incorporation of the library's birth, marriage and death records into the indexes enables researchers to conduct name searches and locate obituaries and birth and marriage announcements for which OCR application was unsuitable.

Results

The Barrington Area Library's online newspaper collection, powered by CONTENTdm, is a major success.

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Continued



Papers from 1914 through 1930 are available for viewing and searching through the library's Web site. And praise continues to roll in.

"I found the Barrington Review yesterday," reads one e-mail. "I was on that site all day. It was great! I found my dad's birth announcement, my great-great grandmother's obit, three great aunts' wedding announcements and many other tidbits of info related to my family...I thoroughly enjoyed every small discovery I found."

That's exactly what Faber had hoped for. "I'm very happy with how we've been able to make our collection accessible to people with roots in the area and who live here now."

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For more information about CONTENTdm Digital Collection Management Software, visit www.oclc.org/CONTENTdm/, call **1-800-848-5878, ext. 4301** or send e-mail to contentdm@oclc.org.