

History, Philosophy and Newspaper Library (HPNL) FY13 Annual Report

An overview of the major activities and accomplishments of the unit in FY13 (July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013) as well as history and scope of some projects

Information and instructional services

HPNL has been producing a series of highly regarded instructional videos used in undergraduate history courses (primarily, but not exclusively, for the capstone courses for history majors, History 200: Introduction to Historical Interpretation, and History 498: Research and Writing Seminar, each of which meets in multiple sections every semester), entitled “Analyzing a Topic” and “Search Queries in Library Databases.” The goal of these videos was to provide online tutorials and allow HPNL staff to reach a much larger number of history students in the online environment. The videos were designed to convey the material HPNL staff previously presented in the classroom.

In 2011, Mary Stuart, head of HPNL, applied for support from the Robert E. and Kay E. Merrick Family Endowment Fund and received full finding for a project to begin a series of video tutorials on “Understanding Historical Newspapers.”

Another award for the project was received in 2012, which allowed us to extend the project through June 2013. The grant proposal describes the main goal of the project as follows: “until recently, historical newspapers were the preserve of scholars, doctoral students, and genealogists--researchers willing to visit far-flung repositories, and patient enough to sit at a microfilm reader for hours on end. Digitization has made this source material more easily accessible to patrons who formerly would have been reluctant users. Many of these patrons, however, lack the necessary skills and knowledge to use this material successfully. Too often, they simply apply to historical newspapers the same search strategies and interpretive heuristics they use when working with 21st-century newspapers. As a result, there exists an unmet need for

reference assistance and instruction in using digitized historical newspapers. To address this need, the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library is developing a series of video tutorials that will help patrons better understand and use historical newspapers. These videos will describe and illustrate “news” as it was construed, published, and disseminated in the past, and will demonstrate strategies for successful keyword searching. The videos will also attempt to recreate the materiality of historical newspapers for a generation of patrons whose only experience of these artifacts will be through a computer screen. The tutorials will include extensive supplementary material, such as bibliographies and virtual exhibits. The project promotes accessibility through the presentation medium (streaming video) and the use of subtitles.” Since receiving the Merrick Endowment grant, we conducted the historical research, wrote the scripts, located the images for use in the videos, and obtained permissions from copyright holders for use of the images. We hired an academic hourly employee to produce the videos, and he completed the following parts of the tutorial (American Newspapers 1800-1860). They can be accessed as the YouTube video at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m97wGSHMXTI&feature=youtu.be> the Introduction to American Newspapers 1800-1860 Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQpZTeewHKw&feature=youtu.be> the City Papers Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCWCOMZn1Po> the Country Papers Video

The videos can also be accessed from the HPNL’s Web site at:

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/hpnl/guides/index.html>

HPNL permanent and academic hourly staff instrumental in the development of videos included Geoff Ross, HPNL Collections and Services Specialist, Mary Stuart, now retired HPNL Head, and Chris Hampton, academic hourly video producer.

Illinois Digital Newspaper Project Work to Date – History and Scope

HPNL, as part of the UIUC Library, has been actively participating in the National Digital Newspaper Program. First Project Director was Mary Stuart, Head of HPNL. Following her retirement in 2012, she was replaced by Adriana Cuervo, Assistant Archivist for Music and Fine Arts. Adriana left for another job at Rutgers and her responsibilities were taken over by Marek Sroka, Interim Head of HPNL, in July 2013. During our first award as a state partner in the National Digital Newspaper Program (2009-2011) we had 100,030 pages accepted for *Chronicling America* by the Library of Congress, for the titles *Chicago Eagle*, *The Broad Ax*, *The Day Book*, and initiated the digitization of the *Cairo Bulletin*. We received a second award in 2011 which allowed us to continue the digitization work, and roughly three-quarters through this funding cycle we have submitted 35,994 pages from the remaining issues of the *Cairo Bulletin* (May 31, 1876-December 31, 1884), the *Rock Island Argus* (January 2, 1889-June 30, 1915), the *Ottawa Free Trader* (May 23, 1840-August 2, 1890), and the *Joliet Signal* (January 2, 1889-June 30, 1915). By the end of the 2011-2013 funding cycle we will have submitted twelve batches totaling 99,483 pages of these four historically significant Illinois newspapers.

During the first cycle we worked with our Advisory Board and Consortium members to finalize a list of desirable titles to digitize under the grant. We also had the opportunity to negotiate a large purchase of print negative microfilm of Illinois newspapers from ProQuest at very favorable terms. We conducted an RFP process for our duplication and digitization vendors, evaluated bids, and awarded contracts to Backstage and iArchives, respectively. After receiving training from iArchives we established a workflow that has remained stable since its inception with the 2009 award. For each batch submitted we inspect the microfilm, perform the collation, ship the film to the digitization vendor, conduct quality control on the digital assets provided to us by the vendor, perform error correction, and submit the digital assets to the Library of Congress. We also hold weekly conference

call with our vendor. We also conduct extensive research on the selected titles and draft our essays. In addition, we will be promoting the IDNP work and Illinois-specific content in *Chronicling America* at the 2013 Illinois History Symposium, hosted by the Illinois Historical Society on February 20-March 2, 2013.

With the UIUC Library as the lead institution, the Illinois Digital Newspaper Project (IDNP) was awarded funding under the National Digital Newspaper Program in 2009 and 2011.

In July 2013 we received a third award, which would allow us to continue the digitization work and to extend the project from 9/1/2013 through 8/31/2015.

Reference Services, Bibliographic Instruction and Course Teaching

HPNL Interim Head, Marek Sroka, provided customized bibliographic sessions to different classes taught by the History Department faculty. The subjects varied and included topics such as “Social History of Chicago” (taught by Prof. Jim Barrett); “Western Image of Africa” (taught by Prof. James Brennan); “Natives and Newcomers in Early America” (taught by Prof. Robert Morrissey), etc. In addition to reference questions relating to history, philosophy, Native American studies, religious studies, and Afro-American studies, HPNL receives a large volume of questions through its Web form or e-mail with respect to newspaper collections. Questions range from a personal family history to advanced historical research conducted by graduate students, doctoral students, and faculty. “Newspaper” questions are handled by HPNL staff almost on a daily basis. Geoff Ross, HPNL Collections and Services Specialist, answered 550 reference questions in addition to the questions answered by other HPNL staff members.

Tom Weissinger continues to provide reference services in the area of African American Studies & Philosophy. Recognizing his distinguished scholarship and expertise the UIUC Department of African American Studies is offering the Afro 102 course, Researching the African American

Experience, in the Fall 2013 semester. Tom has developed and will teach the course. Afro 102 will focus on research and documentation of the African American experience. The course examines significant repositories of African American culture in public libraries, historically black colleges, and predominantly white universities. The course also acknowledges the associations of influential bibliophiles (book collectors) and their contributions in establishing unique and rare collections of African American literature and history

Circulating Collection and Collection Management

As part of reviewing our circulating collection HPNL staff transferred 2,642 titles to the Oak Street Library Facility. This also allowed for more shelving space for incoming new books. HPNL circulated 15,569 items in FY13 (the second largest circulating statistics in the Main Library, excluding Main Stacks and Undergraduate Library)

Digital content creation and digital humanities

Kirk Hess, Digital Humanities Specialist, and his team have been working with serialized fiction within digitized newspapers. Starting with the Olive ActivePaper Archive of the Farmer's Wife newspaper and an index of serialized fiction within that title, our team has combined over 100 serials into a new Omeka-based repository. As part of the project we experimented with a few different methods of crowd-sourcing the transcription/OCR correction the content, including Islandora, FromThePage, before settling on Omeka with the Scripto plugin. Serialized fiction presents a challenge for digital libraries because it is difficult for patrons to find complete stories with simple keyword searches because of OCR errors and the lack of links between the parts of

the serial. The serialized fiction project will greatly enhance access to those digitized collections.

Collection Development

HPNL continues to acquire digital collections. The latest acquisitions include two new digital collections supporting the study of American popular culture. The first, titled the *Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive*, will, when complete, include complete runs of 26 American and British consumer and trade magazines, from their inception to the year 2000. Influential trade titles include *Variety* and *Billboard*. The second collection, titled *American Popular Entertainment*, is a project of the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library, and will include entertainment industry newspapers and trade journals published between 1853 and 1929. The collection currently contains the *Vaudeville News*, the *Player*, and the *New York Clipper*, with the *Dramatic Mirror* soon-to-be-added.

Preservation

HPNL staff has been re-boxing microfilms replacing old acetate boxes with new acid-free ones. So far, more than 22,000 microfilms have been put into new boxes. This is an ongoing preservation project conducted by HPNL staff in microfilm stacks in the Main Library. HPNL staff has also been involved in preservation reformatting of newspapers. In FY13 a newspaper reformatting workflow for brittle newspapers requested by patrons was developed by Head of Preservation and Conservation, Jennifer Teper, and Interim HPNL Head, Marek Sroka, and HPNL Collections and Services Specialist, Geoff Ross. The workflow identifies the areas where cooperation between HPNL and Preservation and Conservation is required. These include the

identification of newspapers in potential need of reformatting; the review process; vendors and payments; shipping, quality control; cataloging and digitized content.

HPNL Personnel

On June 30, 2012, Mary Stuart, long-standing head of HPNL, retired after many years of exemplary service to the University of Illinois Library. Mary returned on a part-time basis as an academic hourly in the fall to help with reference and collection development. She finished her appointment in June 2013. Marek Sroka took over the management of HPNL, as interim head, on July 1, 2012. Current HPNL personnel includes, in addition to Marek, Tom Weissinger, Afro-American Studies Librarian (African American Research Center), Geoff Ross, Collections and Services Specialist, Kirk Hess, Digital Humanities Specialist (Kirk also works with the Library IT unit), Marie Till, Senior Library Specialist, and Glen Martin, Senior Library Specialist. In FY13 Carl Lehnen held a 25% graduate assistantship in HPNL. His main responsibilities included assistance with reference questions as well as circulation duties, updating existing research guides and assisting Interim HPNL Head with the development of new research guides such as: Polish-Jewish Studies (<http://uiuc.libguides.com/Polish-Jewish-Studies>) and World Cultural Assets: Ownership, Loss, Recovery, and Protection (<http://uiuc.libguides.com/World-Cultural-Assets>).

HPNL in FY14

HPNL plays a critical role in serving not only the local students and faculty of history, philosophy, religious studies, and Afro-American studies, but a wide state and out of state population of researchers especially interested in the HPNL's vast newspaper collections. Although the emphasis will remain on the development of online tutorials and videos,

customized and individual in-person instructional sessions will still be offered as well as basic library orientation for new undergraduate and graduate students.

Respectfully submitted by Marek Sroka, interim head of HPNL, on July 30, 2013