



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Narrative Section and Work Plan of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and work plan of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Preservation and Access Programs application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/national-digital-newspaper-program> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Boston Public Library – National Digital Newspaper Program

Institution: Boston Public Library Foundation, Inc.

Project Director: Tom Blake

Grant Program: National Digital Newspaper Program

National Digital Newspaper Program Proposal (2021-2023 NDNP Cycle)

Boston Public Library Foundation, Inc.

Description

Boston Public Library will digitize a minimum of 100,000 pages of newspaper microfilm published in Massachusetts between 1690 and 1963 for inclusion in the National Digital Newspaper Program.

Narrative

HISTORY AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Summary: History and Significance of Newspapers in Massachusetts

As one of the first colonies in North America settled by European migrants, Massachusetts has one of America's oldest and deepest traditions of newspaper circulation. The city of Boston, Massachusetts can legitimately claim to be the birthplace of American journalism as the home of the country's first-ever newspaper, *Publick Occurrences*, initially published in 1690. Massachusetts boasts a complex and diverse history as an economic hub and major center for political, academic, and religious thought and activity – the newspapers born of this culture reflect the significance of Massachusetts and provide an unrivaled historical perspective on American life from the 17th century to the present day. As such, Massachusetts newspapers offer substantial content aligned with National Endowment for the Humanities' "A More Perfect Union" initiative, including works examining foundational documents in United States history, historical objects, and the places, traditions, events, and persons who collectively shaped the formation of Massachusetts and the United States.

The Massachusetts newspaper record includes titles that range from the extremely local, such as the *Jamaica Plain Gazette*, which covers only a single neighborhood in Boston, to regional and nationally significant publications like the *Boston Globe* and international newspapers like the *Christian Science Monitor*. There are also many examples of ethnic newspapers like the *Hellenic Chronicle*, religious newspapers like the *Catholic Sentinel*, and political issue newspapers like the *Massachusetts Spy* which were constantly on the verge of being suppressed by the government. Boston was the birthplace of the first French-language newspaper in America, *Courier de Boston* (1789); the first Methodist Episcopal newspaper, *Zion's Herald* (1823); the nation's oldest Roman Catholic newspaper, the *Pilot* (1829); the first Greek-American newspaper, *New World* (*Νέος Κόσμος*) (1892); and the first English-language Jewish newspaper, the *Jewish Advocate* (1902). Collectively, the scope of Massachusetts newspapers provides unparalleled insight into the pluralities of American democracy, comprising the full

spectrum of U.S. cultures from those of the most privileged to those too often under-represented.

Of particular note are Massachusetts newspapers' contributions to the American Women's movement. Boston witnessed the first female daily newspaper editor, Cornelia Wells Walter of the *Boston Evening Transcript* (1842-1847); the first female publisher of a major daily, Mary Baker Eddy of the *Christian Science Monitor* (1908); and the first African American woman journalist, Maria W. Stewart of the *Liberator* (1831). Boston's *Woman's Journal* (1870-1931) was the first national newspaper to be staffed by and aimed solely at women. The *Una* (1855), the first U.S. newspaper dedicated to solely covering women's rights, was published in Boston, as was the *Remonstrance* (1890- 1920), the first anti-suffrage American periodical. The first female foreign correspondent, Margaret Fuller of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, started her career in Boston by editing the Transcendentalist journal the *Dial* (1840-1844). And in 1885, the New England Woman's Press Association was founded at the offices of the *Boston Herald*.

Of equal importance is William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, the *Liberator*, published in Boston beginning in 1831. Perhaps the single most influential abolitionist paper in the history of the nation, its pages offered uncompromising advocacy for the immediate emancipation of American slaves, rejecting the notion of a more gradual abolition of the abhorrent practice. The *Liberator* was published continuously until 1865, ending only after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery. The Boston Public Library holds a full run of this publication, Garrison's personal copy.

On the other end of the spectrum, Massachusetts newspapers have included many prominent citizens among their editorial staff, demonstrating the interconnectedness of state and press in the power dynamic of American life. Some of the most notable dignitaries include: Benjamin Franklin (U.S. Founding Father), *New England Courant*; Curtis Guild (Governor of Massachusetts), [Boston] *Commercial Bulletin*; Hugh O'Brien (Mayor of Boston), *Boston Shipping and Commercial*; John F. FitzGerald (Mayor of Boston), the *Republic*; Alexander Bullock (Governor of Massachusetts), [Worcester] *National Aegis*; William E. Barrett (Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives), *Boston Evening Record*; Samuel Adams (propagandist, Governor of Massachusetts), *Boston Gazette*; and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (President of the United States), *Harvard Crimson*.

With a continuous history of newspaper publication since 1704, there exists a plethora of achievements in Massachusetts journalism that would provide a fuller picture of both niche and broadly impactful subjects for the National Digital Newspaper Program, including:

- Of the 14 journalists who were indicted under the 1798 Sedition Act, five were from Boston, more than any other city: Thomas Adams and Abijah Adams of the *Boston Independent Chronicle*, John Daly Burk of the *Polar Star* and *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and John S. Lillie and John Vinal of the *Boston Constitutional Telegraph*.
- *Boston Gazette* editors coined the term "gerrymandering" (1812) to describe the practice of politically motivated congressional redistricting.

- The *Boston Post* was the first newspaper to print the now-ubiquitous acronym “O.K.” (1839), and its reporters were the first to uncover Carlo Ponzi’s financial scheme (1920).
- J. Daniel Craig of the *Boston Daily Mail* pioneered the practice of sending news dispatches to his paper using carrier pigeons (1847), at least one year before Paul Reuter started his legendary Aachen-Brussels pigeon service.
- Boston’s *Youth’s Companion* magazine was the first to publicize “The Pledge of Allegiance” (1892), composed by Francis Bellamy, a *Companion* staff member.
- During World War II, the *Boston Herald* (1942) was the first American newspaper to officially participate in the war effort by starting a “Rumor Clinic” aimed at collecting and debunking Axis propaganda and rumors.

Extent of Newspaper Digitization in Massachusetts

As of January 2021, efforts to digitize Massachusetts newspapers have been limited in both scope and accessibility. Apart from the extensive collections at the Boston Public Library, other major holders of newspaper collections include the American Antiquarian Society, Harvard University, Boston Athenaeum, Massachusetts State Library, and the Essex Institute. Each entity maintains their own newspaper collection according to the emphasis of the institution, such that there currently is no centralized, standardized, free-to-access newspaper repository in Massachusetts.

The largest newspaper digitization effort to-date comes from the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. However, this collection is limited to pre-1876 content and is licensed to a for-profit company that charges a fee for access to digitized newspapers. Some small-scale digitization of local newspapers has occurred at individual public libraries across the state, but these efforts are geographically limited, dependent on periodic funding, and contain varying levels of imaging and metadata quality.

METHODOLOGY AND STANDARDS

Access to Master Negative Microfilm

Boston Public Library holds the largest collections of master negative newspaper microfilm among public libraries in Massachusetts. The collection contains more than 20,000 reels, comprising millions of newspaper pages, including hundreds of titles covering dozens of municipalities. A substantial portion of this collection falls within the 1690-1963 date range and is thus eligible for inclusion in the National Digital Newspaper Program. The Library also has access to thousands more reels of master negative microfilm through collaboration with New England Micrographics, which can supply copies of master negatives to the Library for a fee.

The master film held at both the Boston Public Library and New England micrographics was created as the result of the Library's involvement with the United States Newspaper Program. As such, most of this film will be compliant with relevant microfilming guidelines. In cases where this cannot be confirmed via target frames or other documentation, the Library is confident that the desired result of accurate OCR and visual legibility can be confirmed via other means.

In 2015, the Boston Public Library was approached by MyHeritage.com, a commercial genealogy software company. Since the Library holds such an extensive, license-free collection of master negatives of Massachusetts newspaper content, MyHeritage was interested in gaining access to these films. The Library agreed to give MyHeritage non-exclusive access to the films in return for copies of the image files. An MOU was signed between the two parties granting the Library permission to use the image files from MyHeritage on any distribution platform, website, and/or database of the Library's choosing. These image files are unrestricted, free of charge, and open access. As a result of this collaboration, the Library has access to approximately 7.4 million page images that qualify for inclusion in the National Digital Newspaper Program.

The Library will ensure that it selects newspapers from the public domain that can meet the criteria of National Digital Newspaper Program. This will be accomplished by focusing on the early portion of newspaper runs from major daily newspapers published before 1963, when copyright renewal and declaration of such was required. This method will ensure any selected content qualifies as public domain and eliminate the potential for the inclusion of so-called "orphaned works."

Applicant Experience & Vendor Selection

The vast majority of the administration of this grant will be performed by the Boston Public Library. The Library may choose to consult with New England Micrographics, MyHeritage, or another third party for information about imaging, microfilming, or other elements of technical consideration as such informational needs arise. The Library will issue a Request for Proposals to select a vendor(s) who will perform METS/ALTO conversion of the Library's existing microfilm catalogue in order to comply with Library of Congress standards for selection in the National Digital Newspaper Program. The Library's vendor selection process will follow standard procedure as prescribed by the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General's Rules for Procurement. In anticipation of this project, the Library's Project Director solicited estimates for vendor services from several prospective vendors including Hudson Archival, New England Micrographics, Veridian, and others. Please refer to Attachment 6: Appendices for sample estimates from solicited vendors.

Boston Public Library has over 15 years of experience and existing infrastructure for digitizing microfilm. For example, the Library oversees most of the digitization for Digital Commonwealth, a "statewide consortium of libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies" whose website provides public access to digital materials including "photographs, manuscripts, books, audio recordings, and other materials of historical interest" (<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org>). Over 450 partners have contributed content to Digital Commonwealth via the Library's statewide digitization programs. The Library is also a service hub for the Digital Public Library of America, a national network of libraries and cultural organizations that "make millions of materials... available to all in a one-stop discovery

experience” and “provide a library-controlled marketplace and platform for libraries to purchase, organize, and deliver ebooks and other e-content to their patrons”

(<https://dp.la/about>). Additionally, as described above, in 2015 the Library collaborated with MyHeritage to image over 8,000 reels of Library-held master microfilm, representing over 7.4 million pages.

Moreover, the Library has direct experience implementing Federally funded projects. The Library was a co-awardee of an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant (LG-70-17-0043-17) that produced an open source Hydra (Samvera) plug-in capable of handling newspaper content at the page level based on the METS/ALTO schema. Content files for this platform would comply with the National Digital Newspaper Program technical standards and thus be compatible and shareable with the *Chronicling America* suite. The Library will build on the institutional knowledge gained from these collaborations in its performance and execution of the National Digital Newspaper Program grant.

Selection Criteria

Under the oversight of the Advisory Board established per this grant, Boston Public Library will develop and implement selection criteria according to the principles for applicants seeking their first National Digital Newspaper Program award as described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for this grant application. These principles will include: (1) Titles that reflect the political, economic, and cultural history of Massachusetts; (2) Titles recognized as “papers of record” at the state or county level that contain public legal notices, news of state and regional governmental affairs, and announcements of community news and events; (3) Titles that

provide statewide or multi-county coverage of the majority of the population areas in Massachusetts; and (4) Titles with broad chronological span.

During this first grant cycle, the Library will prioritize the digitization of newspapers cited in the “HISTORY AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT” section, above. The Library will also draw from its collection of approximately 7.4 million digitized pages of newspaper generated during the collaboration with MyHeritage, as well as from the thousands of other page images that have been created by the Library’s in-house digitization services over the past ten years. The Library will select at least 100,000 pages that meet the criteria described above and that comprise significant, complete runs of “papers of record” for broad geographic coverage of Massachusetts.

Work Plan

Boston Public Library will undertake all the tasks needed for the continued development of *Chronicling America* as described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity associated with this application. As a first-time applicant, the Library will work in partnership with National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress to become proficient in newspaper digitization production workflows and standards. Over the course of the grant term, Boston Public Library will endeavor to produce a minimum of 100,000 pages of digital newspaper according to the technical guidelines outlined by Library of Congress.

Boston Public Library's tentative work plan includes 17 primary project tasks. Roughly, these tasks have been scheduled to allow for the majority of preparatory work to occur during grant year one and the majority of image delivery to occur during grant year two. Please refer to Attachment 2: Work Plan for a detailed description of the below summary, including supplemental information on planned promotional outreach to be conducted by Boston Public Library and the Boston Public Library Fund in tandem with project deliverables at regular and appropriate intervals throughout the grant term.

Project Tasks & Timeline

1. *Annual Workshop Attendance (September 2021 & September 2022)*
2. *Colocation of Available Title Lists & Page Count Estimates (September 2021 – November 2021)*
3. *Convening Selection Committee & Preliminary Selection (December 2021)*
4. *Vendor Selection for Imaging & OCR/METS-ALTO Processing (January 2022 – March 2022)*
5. *Examination & Evaluation of Source Material (December 2021 – January 2022)*
6. *Selection Refinement (February 2022 – March 2022)*
7. *Delivery of Pre-Digitized Image Files to OCR/METS-ALTO Processing Vendor (April 2022 – May 2022)*
8. *Master Negative Duplication and Delivery to Imaging Vendor (April 2022 – June 2022)*
9. *Hard Copy Preparation & Delivery to Imaging Vendor (April 2022 – May 2022)*
10. *Updating WorldCat and CONSER Records for Selected Titles (June 2022 – August 2022)*
11. *Imaging (June 2022 – May 2023)*
12. *Metadata Preparation (February 2022 – September 2022)*
13. *OCR/METS-ALTO Processing & Validation (July 2022 – August 2023)*
14. *Delivery of Sample Files to Library of Congress (August 2022)*
15. *Authoring Title Narratives (June 2022 – August 2022)*
16. *Adjustment of Files as per Library of Congress Feedback (September 2022 – November 2022)*
17. *Delivery of Final Files (September 2022 – August 2023)*