

Bringing the Past to the Present

by John Herbert and Karen Estlund

Newspaper digitization is exploding. As we move through the first decade of the 21st century, the number of digital newspaper initiatives is growing rapidly, which brings the past firmly into our electronic present. This phenomenon isn't limited to the U.S.—the International Coalition on Newspapers (ICON) cites more than 40 countries with digital newspaper projects (<http://icon.crl.edu/digitization.htm>). In the U.S., the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP), launched by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) with assistance from the Library of Congress (LC), has created great interest in digital newspapers among academic and public institutions, as well as numerous commercial entities (www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/ndnp.html).

The J. Willard Marriott Library at The University of Utah, partnering with Brigham Young University (BYU) and Utah State University (USU), runs a pioneering statewide program that has changed the face of newspaper research. Since its inception in 2002, the Utah Digital Newspapers (UDN) program quickly became a model for other institutions across the country. We have been and remain on the leading edge for newspaper digitization, especially within the public sector.

Our program presents digital images and searchable text of historic Utah newspapers to the general public through our website (<http://digitalnewspapers.org>). Anyone with an interest in history can search by keyword or browse by title and date, from any computer. UDN is easily accessible, easy to use, and free of charge, and it is beginning to make reading Utah newspaper microfilm obsolete.

HISTORY OF THE UTAH PROGRAM

In 2001, the Marriott Library received a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to digitize 30 years of three weekly newspapers. With that funding, we launched the UDN website in December 2002, with 10,000 pages each from the *Wasatch Wave* (Heber City), the *Times Independent*

(Moab), and the *Vernal Express* (Vernal). This initial implementation proved an immediate success.

In 2003, the library received a second LSTA grant to continue digitizing newspapers. The library hired a project director and added 106,000 pages. Later in 2003, in a watershed event, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded the library a 2-year, \$1 million grant. With this grant, we demonstrated that newspapers could be digitized and served over the internet to a wide audience on a large scale. We added more than 268,000 pages, distributed content to BYU and USU, and expanded coverage to include 27 of Utah's 29 counties.

Several Utah public libraries, assisted by UDN, donated funds and/or obtained other LSTA grants to digitize their local newspapers. These are just a few of those libraries: In 2003 the Weber County Library provided \$50,000 to digitize the *Ogden Standard* and its predecessors; between 2004 and 2006, the Park City Library and Historical Society raised \$15,000 for the *Park Record*; and in 2007, Myton City with the Duchesne County Library raised \$28,000 to digitize nine titles from Duchesne County. The Davis County Library established a relationship with the *Davis County Clipper* to fund the *Clipper's* inclusion in UDN. The library continues to fund its digitization narrowing the gap to the present day issues.

In total, we have raised \$2.5 million over the past 5 years. We have been and will remain an entirely soft-money program.

NATIONAL DIGITAL NEWSPAPER PROGRAM

In 2005, the University of Utah was one of six institutions across the country to receive a 2-year grant for NDNP Phase 1. The program aspires to eventually include content from all states and territories hosted at the LC's Chronicling America page (www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica). The scope of the project is English-language papers, primarily scanned from microfilm, dating from 1836 to 1922. For states that participated in the NEH-sponsored United States Newspaper Program (USNP), which cataloged and

preserved newspapers on microfilm, this is a natural transition. States that did a majority of their microfilming during the USNP process generally benefit from more recent and higher quality microfilm images. Microfilm remains the preservation medium for NDNP, although we provide "preservation" quality—high-resolution, digital images—to NDNP as well. The catalog records created during USNP are available on the Chronicling America site, which is a great resource to track down where newspaper titles are available, whether in print, microfilm, or digital form. The NDNP content we generate will be available on the UDN website, but Utah content digitized from other projects will not be available from Chronicling America.

In Phase 1 we added 105,000 pages dating from 1900 to 1910. Today we are one of eight awardees in Phase 2 of the NDNP, in which we will process another 100,000 pages dating from 1880 to 1910.

CURRENT HOLDINGS

At this writing, UDN houses 602,000 newspaper pages containing more than 6 million articles. It holds 50 titles, including the first issues of the *Deseret News* (1850) and the *Salt Lake Tribune* (1871), which today are the two leading newspapers in the state. The time period covered in the various papers is 1850–1969.

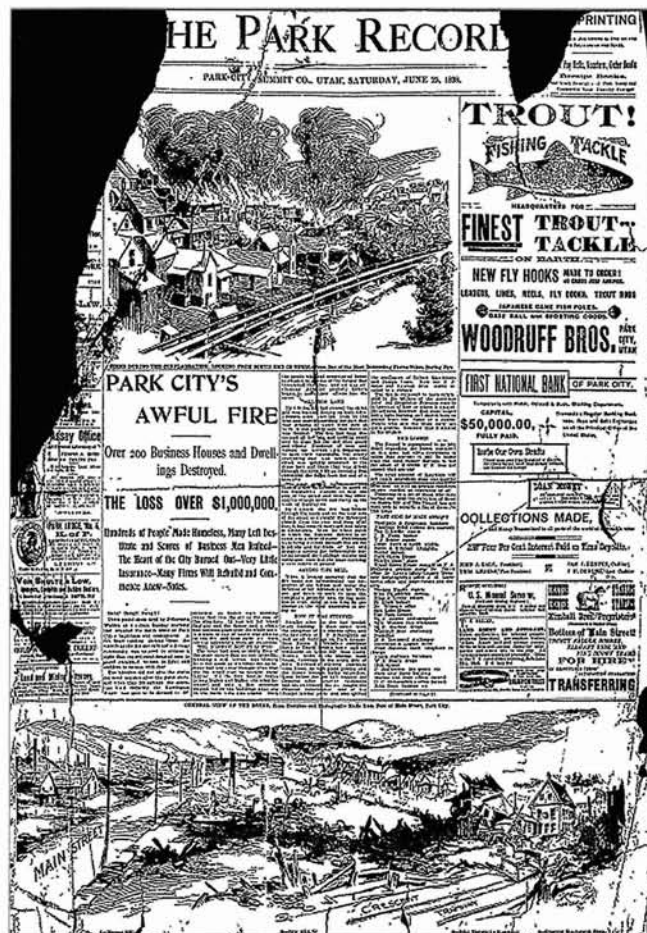
Website usage increased fourteenfold—from 60 visits per day in 2003 to 830 in 2006, when the program grew for 11 consecutive calendar quarters. It is amazingly popular with those who use it; 88% of readers rate us as "good" or "excellent." As you might expect with online content, 42% of our users are from outside Utah. A sampling of spectacular issues includes the following:

- *Park Record*, describing "Park City's Awful Fire" on June 25, 1898
- The many exploits of Butch Cassidy, one of which is related in the *Ogden Standard*, July 5, 1902
- *Eastern Utah Advocate*, Nov. 26, 1915, reporting on the death and burial of Joe Hill
- *Manti Messenger*, April 19, 1912, misreporting that on the Titanic "Three Thousand Passengers Have Narrow Escape From Watery Grave"
- *Vernal Express*, Dec. 11, 1941, declaring "Japan Attacks US" on page 3 (this just happened to be the paper's extravagant Christmas edition)

You can find the *Broad Ax*, an African-American newspaper run by Julius Taylor around the turn of the 20th century. Taylor later moved the *Broad Ax* to Chicago, where he earned some national acclaim. Also included is the *Topaz Times*, the newspaper from the World War II Japanese internment camp near Delta, Utah.

USING THE UDN WEBSITE

Accessing content is as simple as connecting to our website. The entire collection is full-text searchable on the



Park Record description of "Park City's Awful Fire" on June 25, 1898

homepage. Individual titles can be searched or browsed from their own webpages. The user can browse by publication year, view all births, marriages, and deaths announcements, and perform specialized searches. One of the best and most popular ways to find regional news is with our county map. The user can view a map of Utah and select available titles in each county.

In April 2008, keyword searches found 10,170 results for **suffrage**, 8,422 results for **statehood**, and 161 results for **Butch Cassidy**. Users can perform exact phrase searches and limit to different fields or a particular group of titles. Searching for prohibition and either **women** or **ladies** in Davis County papers produces 202 results.

Readers increasingly use UDN as a source for various types of research. Val Holley, who lives in Washington, D.C., recently published an article titled, "Leo Haefeli: Utah's Chameleon Journalist," in the spring 2007 issue of the *Utah Historical Quarterly*. He listed 40 references to articles in UDN. Roy Webb, a staff member at the Marriott Library, presented the history of Utah soccer at the 2007 Utah Historical Society annual meeting. He based his research in UDN.

Genealogists make up our biggest group of readers. One of them, Thomas Billis, from West Jordan, found an article

BUTCH CASSIDY IN A TRAIN ROBBERY

Utah Outlaw Believed to be a Member of the
Kid Curry Gang That Held Up the
Rock Island Express.

Chicago, July 5.—That members of the Kid Curry band of bank and train robbers, wanted for alleged complicity in the recent Union Pacific hold-up, perpetrated the robbery of the Rock Island express train at Dupont Thursday night, it is believed probably by detectives, one hundred of whom are working on the case today.

Charles Nessler, the boy who was stealing a rifle on the train when it was

stopped, described the men to detectives today and his description is said to tally with photographs and descriptions of Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid, alias Harry Longbaugh, alleged members of the Kid Curry gang. It was officially stated by an officer of the United States express company, that the robbers secured only \$50 worth of jewelry. They carried away a package of worthless vouchers and other papers but overlooked a package containing \$100,000.

The many exploits of Butch Cassidy, one of which is related in the Ogden Standard, July 5, 1902

about himself from 1930, when he was 5 years old and got lost in a canyon near Price, "seeking body of lion." An Australian academic researcher used UDN for researching the early cement industry. Community theater guilds read advertisements to see popular fashions from the time periods their plays are set in. Even commercial firms use our collection—a food industry representative used UDN to research the history of tofu and soy food production in the West. The interesting uses of UDN grow every day.

CONTENT SELECTION

With an estimated 8 million to 10 million pages of newspaper content in the state to digitize, content selection is paramount. The more practical considerations are availability, quality, and format of the source materials. UDN has an advisory board composed of librarians, historians, journalists, and publishers that help guide content selection. Some considerations include the following:

- Rural or metro—To be truly statewide, the project should extend widely to include content from all areas of the state. We have had great success generating broad interest by processing titles from rural areas first. In fact, there is so much interest across the entire state that many local areas are now raising their own funds to extend the collections we did initially with grant funds.
- Daily or weekly—Daily papers provide more news coverage and generally have a broader audience, while weeklies allow you to process a longer run. To put it another way, dailies are much more expensive to process because they have so many more pages. In our earlier stages, we preferred to focus on weeklies because, with a given amount of money, we could cover a longer time period and cover a larger geographic area of the state.

HILLSTROM IS BURIED; FUNERAL TYPICAL ONE

CHICAGO, Nov. 21.—They're burying Joe Hillstrom tomorrow. It's a big event in Chicago's "rebel" ranks.

The ghetto, the slums, the lodging house quarters and the manufacturing districts are buzzing with preparations for the funeral of the Industrial Workers of the World song writer who was executed in Utah after conviction of murder. Anarchists, nihilists, saboteurs and secret organizations whose existence is based on opposition to present social and economic systems, are taking part in the honorary rites over the body of their dead comrade.

Handbills in a dozen different languages have been circulated, urging large attendance at the West Side Auditorium at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. Today hundreds of persons passed into the undertaking rooms and viewed the body of the poet whose full name was Hillstrom.

An Industrial Workers of the World band of forty pieces will furnish funeral procession music. The Russian mandolin club will provide music during the services. Hillstrom's own songs will be sung and played.

Black bordered handbills tied with cord in the organization color of red and black have been circulated with the program for the exercises. In black type on the front of one is the inscription:

"In memory of Joe Hill, murdered by the authorities of the state of Utah, November 19, 1913. He died that men might live. We never forget."

O. N. Hilton, attorney of Denver, who defended Hillstrom and who represented the defense in the Haywood, Pettibone and Moyer trials, will deliver the funeral oration, which will be followed by addresses by James Larkin of Dublin, the man who led the dock workers' strike in England, and William D Haywood.

Eastern Utah Advocate, Nov. 26, 1915, reporting on the death and burial of Joe Hill

- Length of run—The trade-off here is whether to have more titles with shorter runs or fewer titles with longer runs, and each approach has merit. In Utah we have tried to strike a balance between the two by digitizing approximately 10,000 pages the first time we select a title. For an eight-page weekly, this provides a 24-year run, while for a 16-page daily, it provides only 2 years.
- Editorial policy—Historic newspapers, like papers today, present varied editorial views. Our advisory board helps identify the editorial policies of new titles, supporting opposing views to help create a balanced collection.

ORIGINALS VERSUS MICROFILM

When selecting content, another dimension to consider is whether the scanning source material will be original newspaper or microfilm. The principal reason we prefer using originals is that they produce new, high-quality digital images. This eventually leads to better online viewing and more accurate keyword searching. (For a more detailed discussion of paper versus film and the related optical character recognition (OCR) issues, see Kenning Arlitsch and John Herbert, "Microfilm, Paper, and OCR: Issues in Newspaper Digitization," *Microform and Imaging Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2, spring 2004, pp. 59-67.) Approximately half our volume is from originals.

One prerequisite for using originals is to find them in good enough condition to be transported and scanned. In

