Digitization in the Real World
Lessons Learned from Small and Medium-Sized Digitization Projects

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The Caprons of Paris: A Digitization Project in a Small Library System

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Abstract
The County of Brant Public Library set out with the goal of documenting the history of the founder of the town of Paris by digitizing a collection of his original papers. By building contacts within the community, the Library was able to successfully complete its initiative and open new avenues for future projects. The equipment and digitization methods used are described, with a special emphasis on the methods in which the Library was able to circumvent its small budget. The Library’s complementary local history wiki, and the project's methods of promotion, are also described.

Keywords: Digital collection, Digitization, Historical society, Local history, Marketing, Web 2.0, Wiki

Introduction
One of the key goals of the County of Brant Public Library is to act as a gateway providing the most accessible routes to information. The County of Brant Public Library Digital Collections was envisioned as a means by which local historical information which was currently unknown or inaccessible to most members of the community could be made easily and publicly available. The goal of this project was not merely to provide information, but to provide the means by which the community could interact with history and share information.
The County of Brant, located in southern Ontario, is a diverse collection of unique communities, each with its own history. It has a modest population of 34,415 divided among 30 distinct communities, formerly separate municipal entities, spread out over 843 km² (Statistics Canada, 2006). The Library has five branches spread throughout the County. It was impossible for a single project to document the County as a whole. This digitization project was designed as the first part of an ongoing digitization program which would eventually represent the entire “community of communities” that makes up the County. The short-term goal was to document the history of the town of Paris, the largest community in the County of Brant, through its founder Hiram Capron; the long-term goal was to build an ongoing program documenting all of the communities in the County, using the Capron project as a method to open doors and create momentum.

The keys to the success of this project have been technical flexibility and innovation, which enabled success within a modest budget, and community engagement, which provided the support, contacts, and materials necessary to grow a small project into a pair of ongoing initiatives.

**Project selection**

The Library evaluated a number of potential project partners when planning this project, from communities across the County. Unfortunately, for various reasons, we were not able to work with all of the local historical societies we approached.

Most importantly, we needed a critical mass of original materials – a body of materials large enough to form a hypothesis as the basis of a project. Local history is exponential – pursuing a sufficiently large collection of materials leads to new collections and new potential partners. While many potential projects had seemed promising, a number proved to be unsuited to this project on examination; some collections were small and lacked that force behind them which we felt was necessary to give us an “in” to the community, while others proved to contain many inauthentic items and reproductions which
were unsuited to this project, which was focused on original primary historical documents.

An ideal project was eventually found in the Paris Museum and Historical Society, whose archives hold a large body of original documents. Hiram Capron, the town’s founder, is an important figure in the history of Paris and is almost unusual in that his legacy is by and large authentically supported by the documents the museum holds. The museum was willing to consider a partnership, and provided the Library with open access to its Capron collection. At the time of the agreement, approximately 50 items were identified for digitization in the project. The “critical mass” criteria proved apt: at the time of writing (March 2010) the Library has digitized a collection of over 425 items, provided by the museum and by new contributors, as a part of the Hiram Capron project and further projects. By beginning with the founder of Paris, we have been able to broaden the perspective to provide a wide variety of materials about the town’s history and to forge partnerships with new donors.

Several historical societies have expressed concern of retaining ownership and control over their items. One of the necessary keys to developing partnerships was to show potential project partners that digitization could enhance the value of their collections and their services, rather than replace them. Our partners at the Paris Museum and Historical Society have reported that their visits have increased since the launch of the digital collections websites.

**Management and staffing**

The project involves three key members of the Library. The Library’s CEO, Gay Kozak Selby, originated the project and secures funding from outside sources; she performed initial project planning, research, and hiring with the library’s e-resource librarian, Christine MacArthur. Christine was also responsible for day-to-day management and co-ordination of promotion. Scanning, technical management, and design of promotional materials was the job of the professional archivist, Misty De Meo.
In addition, the project has made use of shorter-term student workers in order to handle particular extra tasks and features. In the summer of 2009, the Library employed a university student using funding from Young Canada Works to provide transcriptions of a large number of handwritten documents in the Capron collection in order to make the full text searchable online. Other projects of this nature are anticipated in the future.

**Funding**

Funding was provided through the Library Strategic Development Fund, an ongoing grant operated by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture with the goal of assisting innovative projects and community development. The Library was one of the recipients for the 2008-2009 grant, receiving $18,405. This grant was critical to the success of the project; it could not have gone forward without external funding. It provided for equipment costs, the hiring of a professional archivist to supervise and perform digitization, and some of the project’s operating costs. The total operating budget was $35,000, with the remainder of the budget paid by the Library. Summer student work has been funded though Young Canada Works, a program operated by Canadian Heritage. The Library’s primary website was provided by a grant from Knowledge Ontario.

**Content Management System**

A number of factors influenced the selection of the content management system used by the host for the digital collection. These included ease of use and intuitiveness of user interface; advanced user interface features; searchability; and accessibility through external search services, such as Google. While the Library holds a license to use SirsiDynix Hyperion, we felt that it was insufficient for our needs after evaluating a neighboring institution which had used it (King Township, 2008). Its interface is somewhat cumbersome and simplistic; we decided that its “look” would turn off a large number of visitors. It also lacks advanced features for object descriptions or supplementary viewing options, such as contextual maps or
“zoomable” image views. Perhaps most importantly, its results are not available through Google – we recognize that most of our potential visitors will be using tools other than our own built-in search engine to discover content, and so leaving our content out of Google needlessly keeps our content away from interested visitors.

In the end we selected a website toolkit called VITA created by the Our Ontario division of Knowledge Ontario, a local organization which provides a variety of digital services and content. Our Ontario, which focuses on providing access to digitized historical materials, provides grants to small organizations and so we were able to obtain use of the software and hosting free of charge.

Our visitors have generally been impressed with the advanced features VITA makes available. One of the most popular features is its Google Maps integration. Each item can be tagged with a set of coordinates that will cause a Google Maps widget to display below the item. We have used this extensively with items such as historical maps, which allows us to display a modern image of the town centered on the same location as the map. Another popular feature is the integrated “Zoomify” software, which allows the user to zoom in to an oversized item at greater levels of detail, or to pan and rotate. An item which demonstrates both of these features is available at http://images.ourontario.ca/brant/details.asp?ID=68322

VITA is also designed around modern Web 2.0 search methods; consequently, in addition to its own built-in search, it makes all of its content available via Google and permits material access and sharing through RSS and social networking sites (Knowledge Ontario, 2009). Thanks to this, our VITA site features prominently on the first page of Google results for key terms such as “Hiram Capron”. Our site makes significant use of user-interaction features, encouraging users to comment and contribute information. Many items contain “mystery questions” inviting users to submit information that is missing about an item.
Our Brant: local history, local voices

The project, as originally planned, comprised only one digital history site displaying primary documents. Since then, we have made the decision to launch a second local history website at the same time as our primary site, currently available at http://ourbrant.wikia.com/ As materials and contributions for our primary site were being prepared, it became clear that a great deal of information would not be appropriate for inclusion in the primary site. As is almost certainly the case with most established communities, much of the history of Paris has by this time become a matter of tradition which is not entirely substantiated by the remaining documentation.

The goal of the primary Digital Collections site was to provide original historical documents, photographs and other items in a digital format, both for the purposes of historical research and to allow people to learn about the town’s history. For this second audience, it was especially important to provide peripheral materials which slotted each item into the “narrative” of historical events in order to build understanding, which was achieved both through item descriptions and through explanatory photo essays. However, because the site is focused on the documents and historical evidence more than the story, it has been considered very important that the narrative presented is not at odds with the historical documents and that it does not make assertions which are not supported by the documents. We were further interested in enhancing interaction with our users and clients; we felt that the Web 2.0 style interactive features in the VITA website software was one of its greatest strengths, and we looked for further opportunities to enable this kind of interaction within our communities.

As a result, it was decided to add a second site to the project. The goal was to provide an appropriate location for people from the County to document the area’s history as they personally understood it. With a focus less on hard historical facts and records, it would provide an appropriate place to record these popular anecdotes of local history. Hence, we defined the primary goal of this site as
providing a place for anyone from the county to share their personal histories.

Based on this goal, we decided to provide spaces for the following types of content: (1) Personal memories and life stories; (2) Family histories; and (3) Profiles of notable local residents, buildings, and organizations.

The wiki format was judged to be most appropriate for this application due to the ease with which it facilitates collaboration and open contributions with a relatively low barrier of entry for new users. The wiki format was also judged appropriate due to the abundance of services which provide free hosting, such as Wikia (http://www.wikia.com/), as this would eliminate a financial barrier to the creation of the site.

While we have found other local history wikis during the planning process, we have not found another site with the same focus and consequently much of Our Brant’s design is entirely original. Many sites we have found focus on locations as grounding points for memory, such as Placeography (http://www.placeography.org/) and Zurbu (http://zurbu.net/), while a few others, such as the Wagga Wagga Local History wiki (http://waggalocalhistory.wetpaint.com/), focus on events. Furthermore, a number of these wikis are not open to the public for editing, such as the Alexandrina Local History Wiki (http://alexhistory.pbworks.com/) or the Montana History Wiki (http://montanahistorywiki.pbworks.com/). Our Brant differentiates itself from these other services by providing open access for editing to any registered or anonymous users, and by placing a strong focus on individual history and personal memory rather than using the anchors of locations and subjects.

**Input Methods**

Ease of editing was considered to be one of the most important features. Many of the residents in Paris and the County who are interested in sharing local history are not very comfortable with computers. Despite the familiarity of Wikipedia, it is not simple to create pages without using a special markup language (Baker, Hoover & Rose, 2009); given our probable audience, this was not considered
acceptable. While Wikia includes a rich text editor which abstracts markup language from the user on individual pages (“Rich Text,” 2009), it does not automate elements such as page structure or link structure. We chose to adopt the forms-based input system used by Baker et al. on Placeography, which presents the user with a simple set of input boxes and checkmarks using software called Semantic Forms. Once submitted, the result is an attractive, professional-looking page without requiring the user to employ any markup language.

Another benefit of the Semantic Forms software, and the Semantic MediaWiki software on which it is based, is the ability to perform queries on the information entered in form fields (Semantic MediaWiki, 2009). Our Brant uses this extensively to build the index pages which allow users to browse the site’s content. Because these indices are based on queries, they update in real time to include newly added content; this has simplified page creation by eliminating the need for users to create links to their pages (e.g., see Figures PARIS-1 to PARIS-3).

The community pages provide the central browsing interface to the site’s content, using queries to aggregate together all content which is marked as belonging to this community. Each community page also contains links to the forms for creating new pages, and each individual page contains an “edit with form” link which allows it to be altered using the same form interface.

**Participation**

Baker, Hoover and Sherman (2009) note the importance of building a community in order to create a successful wiki, and we took their lessons to heart when preparing Our Brant. We approached local community members about contributing to the site prior to its launch; these included the president of the historical society we partnered with as well as stakeholders in the area’s history, such as the owner of the historic Asa Wolverton House in Paris. In addition, we drew on our own resources and digitized transcripts of oral history interviews that the Library had conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. This allowed us to present the site at launch with a significant amount of content to attract users and to provide examples of what they could contribute.
The Caprons of Paris

Asa Wolverton House

Asa Wolverton emigrated to Paris in the 1810s from Capron, New York. The house is owned by his great-granddaughter. The house was designed and built by the Caprons of Paris. It is the only remaining house in the south end that still has a ballroom. The house was once a part of a larger estate and was originally used as a summer retreat. It has been restored to its original condition and is now a popular destination for tourists visiting the area. A large front porch and gable roof add to the charm of the house. The house is a perfect example of the architecture of the period and is a great example of the craftsmanship that went into building these homes.

Figure PARIS-1 Sample form for creating a page for a building

Figure PARIS-2 The result page
This proved to be a success; when examining our statistics, we found that visitors had discovered our site even before the launch and were sharing links to our content online (Qua, 2009). In addition to complete content, we have also seeded the site with a large number of “stub” pages – short articles with only a minimum of content, which contain invitations to the reader to complete them.
In order to help promote usage of the site to an audience that may not have access to the internet, we have also started a program to accept site contributions on paper; this ensures that those who do not own computers or who do not feel comfortable with computers can still contribute to the site.

*Digitization standards*

Our digitization standards were based on those recommended by a number of sources, primarily the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (2004), and the Canadian Museum of Civilization (2007). Due to the size of our organization we were not able to completely adhere to these conditions; very specific standards pertaining to digitization room design and monitor calibration are not realistically achievable using the budgets of most small organizations. Our standards include both a web display format and a preservation format, which is meant to remain accessible and usable in the long term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preservation masters</th>
<th>Display copies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-bit TIFF (from scanner)</td>
<td>8-bit JPEG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNG camera raw (from camera)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600dpi (from scanner)</td>
<td>Minimum 1000 pixels along longest end; higher when necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colour space</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sRGB IEC61966-2.1</td>
<td>sRGB IEC61966-2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We selected the Digital Negative (DNG) format as a master format for camera images instead of TIFF because of the increased flexibility it offers (Adobe, 2009). While proprietary “raw” formats are archivally unsound, because of their closed specifications, DNG offers a manufacturer-neutral format for this data. Adobe has made the specification publicly available, which ensures that it can be supported by future software. There is no archival consensus on the use of DNG as a preservation format (Hess, 2009), but we feel that its benefits outweigh any risks. When storing preservation copies on media
without significant limitations on storage space, such as the County’s central hard drives, we also store uncompressed TIFF copies of camera images.

Our standard workflow is as follows:

- Import image from scanner or camera raw into Photoshop as 16-bit RGB, using the sRGB profile
- Perform any necessary colour correction and cropping
- Convert image to 8-bit colour depth
- Enlarge image by 0.5 inches or 1 inch
- Type item number in lower right corner, and partner information (if appropriate) in lower left corner
- Save preservation TIFF
- Resize item to display size and perform sharpening
- Save web JPEG

Books

A special note should be made of our standards in digitizing books. Many digitization projects, such as Google Books, use computer processing to flatten pages, remove bindings, and recolour pages to a bitonal, or pure black and white, format. We chose to use a different presentation method. This digitization project is primarily archival in nature, and most of the bound material selected was chosen for its archival qualities as much as its informational qualities. A guiding rule of archives is that context is as important as content in reading meaning from an item (Van Ballegooie & Duff, 2001), so our standards are designed in order to ensure that the context of a book’s usage is evident in our digitized version.

A good example of this is our digitized copy of Frederic A. Holden’s 1859 *Genealogy of Banfield Capron*, a family history of the Caprons. The copy available to us was Hiram Capron’s personal copy, which was later owned by a succession of other Caprons who have made extensive annotations and additions to the book.
The Caprons of Paris

SARAH M. CAPRON, daughter of Otis and Polly, was born August 22, 1796, and married Samuel Boyden, July 19, 1824.

CHILDREN. — VI. GENERATION.

977 Samuel Boyden, Jr.; born May 28, 1825; died young.
978 Sarah Curtis; born August 7, 1827.
979 Martha Maria; born November 11, 1829.
980 Samuel, Jr.; born April 28, 1831.
981 Benjamin Franklin; born September 4, 1833.
982 Mary Elizabeth; born May 24, 1835.
983 Edmund Capron; born September 1, 1838.

SAMUEL BOYDEN, Jr., son of Samuel and Sarah, married Ellen L. Morse, October 17, 1855.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BOYDEN, son of Samuel and Sarah, married Maria Louise Kingsbury, November 28, 1857.

JUDITH CAPRON, daughter of Otis and Polly, was born Dec. 18, 1801. She married Nicholas Cook.

CHILDREN. — VI. GENERATION.

984 Lucina Cook; married Alvin Cass.
985 Polly; married Amos Ingalls.
986 Martin; married Mary Martin.
987 Hannah; married George Randall.
988 Martha Jane; married Lovell Tickering.
989 Nicholas, Jr.
990 Judith.
These annotations are as important for our purposes as the original book. They identify some of its owners, and provide contextual information on how this family history was used and why it was important to them. For that reason, we have chosen to digitize these archival books in full color with any annotations or additions, maintaining the full size of the page and bindings.

**Metadata**

To simplify metadata collection given our resources, the Library has focused on using the VITA software’s metadata for our digitized items. Metadata is entered at the time a record is prepared for display in VITA, and is preserved by saving local copies in the VITA and Dublin core formats. VITA’s metadata is stored in an XML-based format, which allows translation into other formats as needed in the future. Metadata is standardized using a number of mandatory and preferred fields, and supplemented with any additional relevant fields per item.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Preferred:</th>
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<td>Earliest Year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Latest Year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Preservation**

Both the preservation master copies and the web copies are preserved, along with metadata and any OCR/transcription data. Two physical copies are created on archival quality DVDs; one set is kept
by the Library, and the other by our project partner. In addition, supplemental preservation copies are stored on the County’s servers.

**Equipment**

The original project plan called primarily for the digitization of flat documents, which consisted primarily of single pages or a small number of pages, and the project’s equipment and software was purchased with these types of documents in mind. The original equipment purchased for this project consisted of one computer workstation, with Adobe Photoshop CS4 software; two scanners; and general archival supplies.

**Scanners**

The Epson GT-20000 (Epson), the first scanner purchased, is advertised primarily as a workgroup scanner, and its primary purpose is scanning large size documents. It supports documents of a size up to 11.7" x 17", at a resolution of 600dpi. It was purchased on the recommendation of our partners at Our Ontario.

The V500 (Epson) is intended primarily as a photo scanner; it was purchased as a secondary unit. It supports resolutions as high as 6400dpi, with documents up to 8.5" x 11.7" in size, and unlike the GT-20000 it is able to scan photo negatives – this was the primary reason it was chosen. Both scanners support colour depths of up to 48-bit colour.

**Book scanning**

As the project progressed, new material came forward and it became clear that bound books and book-shaped materials would also need to be scanned. The majority of these items were Hiram Capron’s personal account ledgers dating back to 1828, and were very fragile. It was clear that their brittle spines would not survive the bending necessary to flatten the book for use in a flatbed scanner. In addition, the natural curvature of ledger and book pages when laid out flat on a scanner would produce sub-optimal images, especially when performing OCR (Clements, 2009). Another concern was the scanning of oversized objects, as many items in the collection included elements
which were larger than the 11.7" x 17" size that the largest scanner could image.

We decided to use photographic imaging for these items, which would free us from physically fitting items into a flatbed scanner. While we were familiar with commercial book scanning cradles, such as those produced by Atiz (Atiz) and Kirtas (Ristech), our equipment budget for this project did not permit a purchase of this expense. Consequently, we constructed our own simple cradle at a low cost.

The only supplies required for the cradle itself were:

- Two white foldout foam presentation display boards: Presentation boards proved to be ideal because they are segmented and naturally fold out. This allowed the longest ends to be raised at a 90-110° angle from the surface of the table, providing the surface for a V-shaped cradle.
- Weights to hold the boards in place: The boards need to be held in place using physical weights of some sort, both to provide support to hold the body up at an angle and to prevent slippage from the weight of the book or artifact being digitized. Weights were easily produced from salvaged supplies. Binders were initially used, but these proved insufﬁciently heavy to guard against heavy objects slipping. Boxes of books from storage were ultimately the ideal solution, and certainly plentiful in any library.
- One camera, with an SD card: A discussion of the selection of the camera is contained in the next section.
- One tripod
- One plate of glass to hold down pages (optional): The use of glass permitted curling pages to be held flat while being photographed. However, because a polarizing filter was not available, glare prevention is a challenge. The plate of glass was taken from an unneeded spare picture frame.
- Two large sheets of black paper, providing a scanning surface for items to rest on
The total cost of the supplies needed came to less than $700, and many of the supplies were already available at the Library. The only parts which needed to be newly purchased were the camera and its memory card, at a cost of approximately CAD $550.

The photograph above depicts how the setup functions. The book or artifact being digitized is placed in the centre of the cradle. Next to it, the camera is placed on the tripod and angled facing down at the page. Because only one camera was used, only the even or odd pages are digitized at a time; after completing one pass, it is necessary to flip the book and photograph the other pages. After photographing, the
images can be transferred to the computer for processing. The use of a consistent angle and book positioning means that the images can be automatically processed using Photoshop batch processes, so it is not necessary to manually crop individual pages.

The cradle provided significant advantages when compared to other options. It allowed books and ledgers to be digitized clearly and legibly while providing pages which are flatter in appearance than those scanned using a flatbed scanner. The use of a camera also meant that capturing each individual image was significantly more efficient than using a flatbed scanner, because camera imaging is much faster than flatbed scanners. In addition, the use of presentation boards meant that the size of documents could be very large – as large as 36" x 24". The greater limit on item size was camera resolution. The use of such a large surface meant that the cradle was also useful for digitizing other oversize archival records which could not fit in the flatbed scanners.

When selecting a camera for use with the cradle, a number of criteria were considered. The criteria which guided our decision were:

**Resolution.** While most high-end digital cameras have more than sufficient resolution to digitize average-sized books and items, the collections being digitized included some very large objects containing fine-grained detail such as a 19th century atlas that measured 15" x 17.5". These items necessitated a camera with a very high megapixel count in order to produce legible images.

**Raw compatibility.** The “raw format” is a type of “digital negative” (Toborg, 2009), which allows cameras to record information exactly as received by the sensors; this enables more advanced post-processing (Canon, 2008). The most valuable feature this permits is quick and accurate colour correction.

**Cost.** Any camera selected had to fit within the equipment budget remaining for the project, which eliminated DSLR cameras of a high resolution.

**Compatibility with professional book digitization equipment.** If a future budget permitted the purchase of professional book digitization equipment, it would be most beneficial
to be able to use the camera which had already been purchased in order to reduce costs.

DSLR (Digital Single-Lens Reflex) cameras are popular choices for book digitization (Torborg, 2009), particularly because of their high imaging quality and higher dynamic range (Wan, 2008). However, for this project another camera was selected which better met our needs. In particular, the requirement of a high megapixel count ruled out most entry-level DSLR cameras. Based on these criteria, we selected the Canon PowerShot G10, at the time the highest-end “prosumer” Canon PowerShot camera available. With its 14.7 megapixel sensor\(^1\) (Canon, 2008), it was capable of capturing sufficiently fine detail in large items such as the atlas. It also met the other criteria because it supported the raw format. There were no DSLR cameras within the budget available with a comparable resolution; the resolution was considered an acceptable trade-off for image quality and benchmarks indicate that, for the purpose of this project, the G10 is within an acceptable quality range compared to similar DSLRs (DxO Labs). It provides excellent image quality for digitizing books and documents even in non-ideal lighting conditions.

**Lessons learned from the cradle**

While the cradle has been very successful for imaging documents unsuited for flatbed scanners, determining the best shooting methods has been an ongoing process and both materials and practices have been amended as the project progresses. We have switched to a carefully configured camera setup instead of its uncalibrated default settings, and have improved the cradle’s design.

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\(^1\) The G10 has recently been replaced by the Canon PowerShot G11, which has a significantly reduced resolution of only 10 megapixels – a 33% reduction (Butler, 2009, p. 1). While the reduction in resolution was for the purpose of reducing the amount of noise in images and increasing detail at lower resolutions (p. 17), the G10 performs better and produces more detail at the lowest film speed (pp. 11, 14, 19) used in digitization. While the G10 was a suitable replacement for a DSLR for this project, the G11 would not be.
There have been some minor tweaks to its physical construction, which have helped to significantly improve quality. The presentation boards work very well as an inexpensive, readily available material. White presentation boards were initially used because they were the most readily available medium. However, the Canadian Museum of Civilization (2007) recommends using black or neutral grey backgrounds for photography. In our testing, we determined that using a black background does produce superior results, with lower noise levels and a superior contrast ratio.

More detailed accounts of our findings, and those of others, can be found at the DIY Book Scanner website at http://www.diybookscanner.org/ and at the archivist's personal blog, located at http://www.mistydemeo.com/.

**Software processing**

As Wan (2008) notes, the G10’s image tends to be noisy direct out of the camera, and this is especially noticeable when the camera is shooting in its JPEG mode. In our experience, noise can be minimized and detail maximized by shooting using the raw format in well-lit environments; using appropriate exposure settings; using the lowest ISO (“film speed”) level available; and by using Adobe’s Camera Raw software for noise removal (included with Photoshop) in place of the Canon Digital Photo Professional software bundled with the camera. As with the white balance settings, software noise correction processing can be automated and hence does not adversely add time to the processing workflow.

**Promotion**

Both of our sites have been promoted using a variety of methods, including traditional methods such as print and through special events, and through non-traditional online methods.

**Online**

Our passive advertising methods have been primarily focused online and have centered around findability – ensuring that both of our sites can be located using search engines such as Google, and in
other places where users may be looking for related information. Our sites are linked and indexed in a variety of relevant locations, including our primary library site and the sites of local historical societies. These have helped to increase its Google ranking, ensuring that key terms such as “Hiram Capron” and the names of individuals for whom we have memories appear among the first search results. As well, we have included links on highly trafficked online resources which do not contribute to our Google ranking, such as the Wikipedia articles for Hiram Capron, Paris, County of Brant, and others. Our statistics show that, in the month of November, approximately 10% of our visits came through Wikipedia and 20% came through search engines.

Interlinking between our two sites has also helped to direct visitors to our other materials; 25% of our visits on one site in the month of November came through links from the other.

Press

Press releases were distributed to the local media at various stages of the project, beginning shortly after the digitization work began; a new press release was distributed every month or two months. They provided ways of announcing the project and providing the community with short updates on progress, and also provided ways to communicate project events to community members. A week prior to the project’s official launch, we also purchased a set of advertisements in all of the area newspapers.

Local community newspapers were the most amenable to working with us. All of our press releases were printed by the local County newspapers, and the community newspaper from Paris sent out a photographer to document our Digitization Days event. Unfortunately, obtaining coverage and advertising in the larger newspaper from a bordering city proved more difficult; not all of our press releases were printed, and advertising space was substantially more expensive.

We have found that the rumors of the death of the newspaper are greatly exaggerated. Print was one of our most effective advertising methods. Through informal questioning, we determined that most of
those contacting us about the project had read about it through newspapers. Our advertising space has also proven to be effective. Our Google Analytics report on the site’s first week available to the public showed a substantial spike of traffic, representing our highest daily visits to date, immediately after our newspaper advertisements were printed.

Close to the time of our launch and after it, growing interest in the project has enabled us to take part in local television and radio; this has helped promote the project and generated further interest.

**Advertising handouts**

In addition to our print materials, we prepared a number of advertising materials to distribute to our partners and directly to community members.

To advertise our website and specific events, we designed three eye-catching posters. Two are permanent posters, designed to generate ongoing interesting the project, while one is a one-time poster intended to advertise a specific event.

The permanent posters were created to advertise both of our websites. The primary poster was intended as a project-neutral advertisement for the site; consequently, it was designed to avoid specific references to the Capron or Paris projects and image selection was necessarily constrained to images which were not distinctly Parisian. The second poster is intended to solicit contributions to the Our Brant site, and specifically targets an audience which is less familiar with computers. In both cases, we were able to draw from photographs in the collection in order to obtain attractive design elements which could generate further interest in the collection itself.

Due to the expense of having posters professionally printed, we opted not to design complex posters for most one-time events such as the Digitization Days event. However, we judged our launch to be important enough to warrant a professionally printed poster. In addition to relatively wide distribution to generate interest in the launch event, it was especially valuable for the purpose of distribution to the agencies which provided our grant.
The three posters were displayed in all of the branches of the Library. In addition, they were also distributed widely to project partners and other locations such as local genealogical societies, museums, and businesses.

We also produced a set of promotional postcards to be distributed directly to Library patrons. Both the front and backs of the cards contain information on the websites with their URLs. The cards are prominently displayed at the circulation desks of all Library branches as well as our project partner, and clients are invited to take as many as they would like.

**Events**

The Library has held two special events in order to help build interest in the project. The first was a community event called Digitization Days, which was held on November 13th and 14th, 2009. It was conceived for the dual purposes of sounding out any additional material for our project which might be held by community members, and project promotion by digitizing individual families’ photographs and documents to build interest in digitization and our website. During this event, community members could bring in their personal photographs or documents to be scanned and, for a small fee, could take home the scans on an archival CD.

Much to our surprise, we found that the majority of the contributors were not interested in taking home any personal digital copies of the photographs they had brought to be digitized. They had brought their material specifically for the purpose allowing it to be included on our website. In total there were eight contributors over the two days of the event; of these, five brought material specifically for our website, and one other was willing to allow his photographs to be posted after its purpose was explained. A total of 22 new items were obtained for our two websites during the event. The largest number of contributions came from one family who brought 15 original historical land leases, 9 of which have been included on our website.

This revealed a flaw in our planning. While volume of contributions had been considered, it had seemed very unlikely that
there would be a surfeit of relevant materials for inclusion on our website. Consequently, our planning had focused on limiting the number of contributions per person. Fortunately, contributors were evenly spread across the day; in the future, we will ensure that all relevant material can be digitized in the event that the number of contributors exceeds capacity.

The Digitization Days event proved to be a success. The most valuable outcome was a new contact who owns a large untapped collection of original historical documents.

Our project’s launch event was held on December 6, 2009. We invited members of the community to attend and see an introduction to our two digital collections websites. As entertainment, we provided a slide show with photographs from the collection. In addition, the president of the historical society we partnered with came in full 19th century costume in character as “Hiram Capron.” We sent Victorian-styled invitations to a wide variety of recipients, and attracted visits from our Member of Provincial Parliament and the County’s mayor.

**Conclusion**

While the two Digital Collections sites have now officially launched, development is very much ongoing. The materials available have acted as catalysts for community interest and involvement. Based on the current interest the project has generated, the Library has continued its work with the Paris Museum and Historical Society for additional projects and partnered with new organizations to document the history of other communities in the County. By digitizing the wide body of materials described, and opening doors within the community, the Capron project has helped lay the foundation for a digitization program which can document the history of all of the County’s communities.

**References**


