



Newton Free Library

The door to your imagination

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In order to increase the discoverability and accessibility of the City's historic resources and to enrich the collective knowledge and experience of researchers from City planners to history enthusiasts, the Library, the City Clerk and Historic Newton have embarked on a project to make historic materials available on the World Wide Web. This program has recently culminated in *Digital Newton*, an online resource for exploring and using materials digitized through the project. The initial phase of the project was funded through multiple sources – a Newton CPA grant, a MA Board of Library Commissioners grant and the Library's municipal appropriation. Project activities in developing Digital Newton included 1) Selection, digitization and (if necessary) preservation-conservation of materials 2) Describing materials in a structured metadata system 3) Posting digitized materials online 4) Developing a publicity plan for the *Digital Newton* program.

Selection of historic materials for the project was collaborative. Library staff work closely with the City Clerk and staff at Historic Newton to select those that fit into the project's initial theme (19th and Early 20th Century Newton) and provide value to our target audience.

The combined CPA/LSTA/Municipal budget for preservation-digitization activity allowed for the making of a vast breadth and depth of historical materials available to the public. Formats included city and other informational directories, manuscripts, glass plate negatives, lantern slides, handwritten and printed journals, letters, diaries and notebooks, maps and historical and biographical publications.

Selecting a method for capturing and managing the metadata surrounding the project's materials followed a process that included staff attendance at Digital Commonwealth conference workshops, a workshop at the Northeast Document Conservation Center, online workshops, personalized consulting with staff at the Boston Public Library and internal planning. Ultimately, the free and open source digital library collection software Greenstone was selected as the means by which the Library would capture metadata and the Library embarked on the process of gaining a domain of knowledge about how to use Greenstone. The use of Greenstone allows the Library to capture metadata in a Dublin Core compatible format, creating a rich, flexible and extensible metadata store for use in current and future digital library projects. Throughout the Spring and Summer of 2011 the staff at the Library actively populated the Greenstone database with records as digitized materials were processed.

Library staff also spent the Summer of 2011 posting digitized and metadata-described materials to the web. When the original means for presenting digitized materials, the Digital Commonwealth, proved inadequate, new methods for posting materials were considered. By that summer the Library had a new resource at its disposal in LibGuides, an online information sharing service. LibGuides held the promise of a) presenting materials in ways that the Digital Commonwealth could not and b) providing the statistics-gathering and commenting features that would be crucial for project

assessment. Thus, the Library set about developing a LibGuide to act as the centerpiece of the project, uploading and arranging digitized materials starting mid-summer.

The development of a LibGuide to showcase Newton's historical materials resulted in *Digital Newton*, a launchpoint for accessing all of Newton's digitized historical content. Plans to promote *Digital Newton* included an article in the Library's October 2011 Newsletter, a press release sent to over 30 news agencies including the Newton Tab, promotion of the collection on the Library website homepage, Facebook and Twitter promotion through the Library's official accounts, promotion of *Digital Newton* through the Library's email newsletter service, a video segment filmed for NewTV that featured the Assistant Supervisor of the Reference Department, John Walsh, discussing the development of *Digital Newton*, Bookmarks handed out at circulation desks featuring the service, and a December 2011 exhibit showcasing Digital Newton in the Library's Main Lobby. The Library's Reference Staff was also trained on how to use the collection so as to promote and encourage patrons to use it.

Project Outputs: Over 1,000 items have been digitized, have a corresponding record in Greenstone and are uploaded to the *Digital Newton* LibGuide and/or the Digital Commonwealth repository. The project officially launched on October 1, 2011. In all, the project gives the public access to over 30 unique collections of historic materials. The LibGuide can be found at:

<http://guides.newtonfreelibrary.net/digitalnewton>

Items can be found with full metadata description on the Digital Commonwealth's repository at

<http://repository.digitalcommonwealth.org/handle/10240/1966>

Reaction: Digital Newton has been well received. The site's collection materials have been viewed and / or downloaded over 4,500 times.

Future: Digital Newton will continue to grow as more and more items are selected and budget allows. Current in-process materials include more photographs from the Engineering Department photos collection, the digitization of which was funded through the Newton CPA.

Report prepared by Ryan Hanson, Assistant Library Director