

# PAGING THROUGH THE PAST: KENTUCKY'S NEWSPAPERS ON THE NATIONAL NEWSSTAND

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The National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress. The program builds on the success of the United States Newspaper Program's (USNP) microfilm collection by creating digital page images of historic newspapers using a primarily microfilm-to-digital methodology. NDNP's twenty-year mission is to fund and make available online these historic newspapers from all fifty U.S. states and U.S. territories. States are selected incrementally, chosen every two years in "Phases." Each Phase is defined by a date range. Phase I (2005-2007) limited content to a single decade 1900-1910; Phase II (2007-2009), the current stage in operation, includes content from 1910 back to 1880; and Phase III (2008-2010) opens the field even wider to include dates 1860 through the copyright ceiling of 1922.

The University of Kentucky Libraries was one of only six institutions selected for NDNP Phase I, along with University of California-Riverside, University of Florida—who has since dropped out of the program—New York Public Library, University of Utah, and Library of Virginia. With Phase III awardees recently selected, the contributing states now equal fifteen: Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Kentucky, Nebraska, New York, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. In addition to being the program's data repository and online portal, the Library of Congress acts as an awardee by adding Washington D.C. newspapers to the national collection as well as permanently storing each awardee's digitized print master microfilm as a hedge against catastrophic loss.

All of the awardee content is accessible

through the Library of Congress online interface *Chronicling America* <http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/home.html>. Moreover, NDNP allows each awardee to display its state's content via its own interface. In Kentucky, the newspapers are available through the Kentuckiana Digital Library (KDL) <http://kdl.kyvl.org/> which is managed by the University of Kentucky Libraries in partnership with the Kentucky Virtual Library (KYVL).

The first Kentucky newspaper titles were chosen to represent the six geographic regions of the commonwealth equally. Each title is also supplemented with a short essay addressing its historic significance to the state, region, or nation. The KDL includes titles that do not currently qualify for NDNP inclusion, such as papers digitized from positive microfilm (Washington County's *Springfield Sun* and *News-Leader*), foreign language papers (Louisville's German language *Omnibus*), or those not considered "newspapers" by Library of Congress cataloging standards (*Afro-American Mission Herald*). To date, nearly 700,000 digital newspaper pages are available in *Chronicling America*. Of those, 106,661 pages from 36 titles have been produced by the University of Kentucky Libraries. In the KDL that number swells to 110,000 pages from 40 titles. When Phases II and III are complete, the University of Kentucky Libraries will have added another twelve titles totaling 52 title—the most from any awardee. (See complete list at the end of this article.)

*Chronicling America* also offers a directory of every United States newspaper entered into the OCLC database from 1690 to the present. Even though this is a comprehensive tool, uncataloged newspapers are still being discovered partly as a result of NDNP. During Phase

I alone, Kentucky found and digitized three previously uncataloged "orphan" newspapers: *Ohio Valley Worker*, *Kentucky Vindicator*, and *Afro-American Mission Herald*. Records now exist for each of these titles, and more unknown papers are expected to be found as digitization continues.

It has been some thirty years since the last formal newspaper survey was conducted in Kentucky. There is no funding available for another, but that doesn't preclude a call to individuals, historical societies, libraries, and archives around the state for papers not yet filmed or cataloged, including missing content (pages or issues) for those titles already digitized and available online. Perhaps, now that Google has announced plans to move its mighty machine into newspaper digitization, more attention to these undiscovered historic papers will be directed to institutions like the University of Kentucky, where preservation of the hard copy documents and, more specifically, the digital surrogates, is a top priority. Those willing to make such treasures available for microfilming and future digitization should contact Rebecca Ryder, Head of Preservation Services at the University of Kentucky Libraries [rjryde0@uky.edu](mailto:rjryde0@uky.edu).

It was no small affair for the commonwealth, or for the University of Kentucky, to be included in the first phase of NDNP. Only one institution from each state or territory is, or will ever be, responsible for NDNP content submission. Inter-state partnerships are permitted, even encouraged, to assist in adding content, whether through the sharing of microfilm and source documents or in some other way.

One such instance is the collaboration between the University of Kentucky Libraries and the University of Louisville to find and microfilm missing issues and pages from Kentucky's paper of record, Louisville's *Courier-Journal*. The *Courier-Journal* was identified as the pre-eminent Kentucky newspaper in 2005 by Kentucky's NDNP Advisory Council that is made up of archivists, historians, genealogists, and newspaper professionals. The University of Louisville holdings supplement the existing University of Kentucky hard-copy collection of *The Courier-Journal*. The goals of the collaboration are to make high-quality preservation microfilm of *The Courier-Journal* once and for all, make keyword-searchable digital access possible, stabilize the rare color pages, and make a collaborative decision about long-term disposition and storage of the hard copy.

An exciting discovery in *The Courier-Journal*—undetectable in microfilm—was that many front pages and comics were printed in color. The paper will be microfilmed according to today's preservation microfilm standards for



But new discoveries don't come from digitization alone. The University of Kentucky Libraries often receives historic newspapers from private donors, too. Four such titles arrived recently, in fact: the *Carrollton Democrat*, 1878 & 1882; the Louisville daily *The Dime*, March-Sept 1843; three 1925 issues from the *Louisville Times*; and, the *Bath County Outlook*, 1895-96.

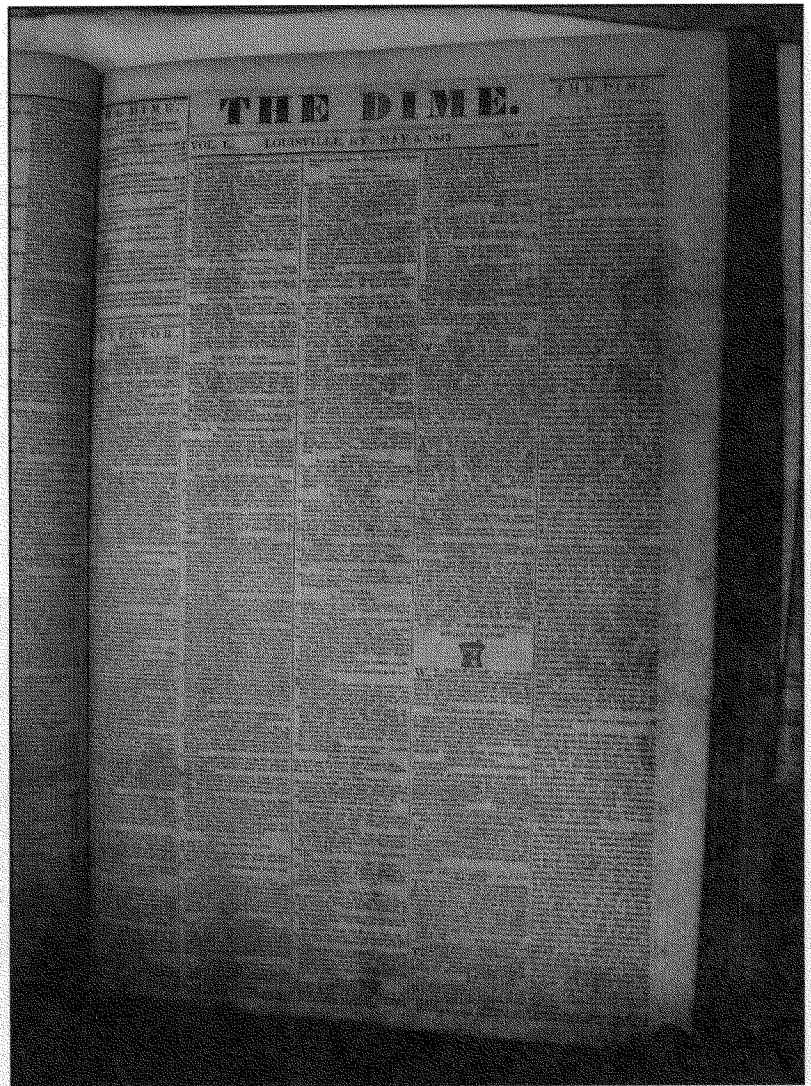
In the meantime, old papers, like those mentioned, continually filter into collections around the state as people pass and attics are



more tactile user experience. Based on the anticipated date range, the *Gazette's* earliest content—first issued in 1787—won't be permissible in NDNP until 2010 or later, although it will be available in the KDL in its entirety from the start.

Since large-scale digitization began at the University of Kentucky Libraries, researchers have been asking, "When are you going to digitize newspapers?" Most people believe all that's needed to digitize *anything* is a flatbed scanner and a computer. That is hardly the case, especially where newspapers are concerned. Unlike books, whose text is primarily left-to-right reading of the page format, newspapers are much more complex because of their column structure and because articles often continue between

pages. For newspapers it's not simply a matter of digitizing the artifact, whether from the newspaper itself or from microfilm. Online accessibility requires robust IT infrastructure, and the searchability of that paper is possible only with OCR (optical character recognition) generation. The NDNP specification is densely structured to accommodate the copious metadata collected from each microfilm reel, newspaper title, and corresponding digital surrogates. The mandatory grayscale files can be incredibly large, upward of 80M for a single page image. In addition, each page image is delivered to the Library of Congress in four file formats: TIF 6.0 (the preservation master), JPEG 2000 and PDF (used for online access), and the corresponding XML (with all pertinent metadata). Multiply that by just one 600-800 page image microfilm reel, and the storage, even the file transfer, needs become staggering. Every aspect is intricate, complex, and technologically ever-changing.



When NEH called for newspaper digitization proposals in 2005, the University of Kentucky Libraries had many assets to bring to the NDNP program. We have in our vault an enormous microfilm collection with some 28,000 master negative reels of Kentucky newspapers. We know the state's newspapers extremely well, having been an original participant in the United States Newspaper Project—of which NDNP is a sibling—in addition to of microfilming newspapers 30 years prior to that and continued microfilming of 172 current Kentucky newspapers. Moreover, we have the technological know-how and infrastructure to manage such a large-scale digitization program, including a full-service microfilm lab, an increasingly rare commodity these days.

The University of Kentucky Libraries was the only awardee to propose newspaper digitization using an entirely in-house microfilm-to-



**Kentucky newspapers available in *Chronicling America* and *Kentuckiana Digital Library***

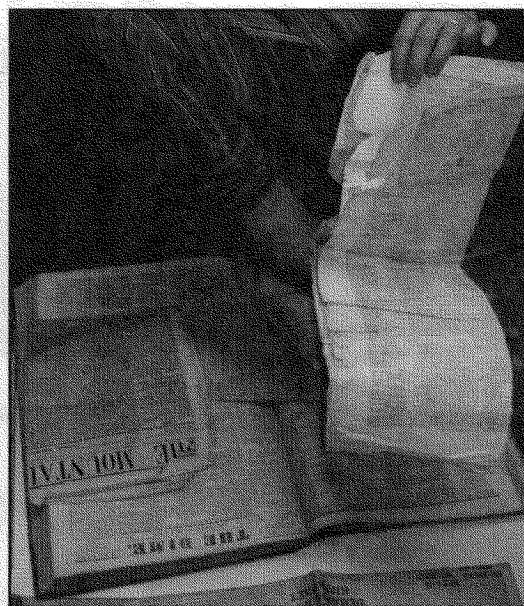
|  |   |                                |                                     |
|--|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Adair County News</i>                 | <i>Frankfort Weekly News &amp; Roundabout</i> | <i>Kentucky Irish American</i> | <i>Paducah Sun Weekly Edition</i>   |
| <i>American Baptist Bee (Earlington)</i> | <i>Hartford Herald</i>                        | <i>Kentucky Reporter</i>       | <i>Paducah Weekly Sun</i>           |
| <i>Blue Grass Blade</i>                  | <i>Hartford Republican</i>                    | <i>Kentucky Vindicator</i>     | <i>Paducah Evening Sun</i>          |
| <i>Bourbon News</i>                      | <i>Hazel Green Herald</i>                     | <i>Liberty (LaCenter)</i>      | <i>The Sunday Chat</i>              |
| <i>Breathitt County News</i>             | <i>Hickman Courier</i>                        | <i>Mount Vernon Signal</i>     | <i>Record (Greenville)</i>          |
| <i>Breckenridge News</i>                 | <i>Hopkinsville</i>                           | <i>Mountain Advocate</i>       | <i>Richmond Climax</i>              |
| <i>Central Record</i>                    | <i>Kentuckian</i>                             | <i>Mt. Sterling Advocate</i>   | <i>Semi-Weekly Interior Journal</i> |
| <i>Citizen (Berea)</i>                   | <i>Interior Journal</i>                       | <i>Ohio Valley Worker</i>      | <i>Winchester News</i>              |
| <i>Clay City Times</i>                   | <i>It</i>                                     | <i>Owingsville Outlook</i>     |                                     |
|  |   | <i>Paducah Sun</i>             |                                     |

**Newspapers exclusive to *Kentuckiana Digital Library***

|                       |                    |                |                        |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <i>Afro-American</i>  | <i>News-Leader</i> | <i>Omnibus</i> | <i>Springfield Sun</i> |
| <i>Mission-Herald</i> |                    |                |                        |

**Titles Earmarked for NDNP Phases II and III digitization**

|                         |                             |                           |                            |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Big Sandy News</i>   | <i>Daily Public Ledger</i>  | <i>Herald Ledger</i>      | <i>Middlesborough News</i> |
| <i>Courier-Journal</i>  | <i>Evening Bulletin</i>     | <i>Logan County News</i>  | <i>Spout Spring Times</i>  |
| <i>Crittenden Press</i> | <i>Frankfort Roundabout</i> | <i>Middlesboro Record</i> | <i>Weekly Roundabout</i>   |



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