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Kelvin Smith Library's Digitization Lab: 2020 Report

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Featured Image:
The Forest City Fair

An advertisement placed in a 1914 issue of the Cleveland Bystander.

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Introduction

Kelvin Smith Library's (KSL) Digitization Lab is the central location for creating digital reproductions of unique materials for preservation, scholarship, and other academic and general interest purposes. The lab houses a PhaseOne Reprographic System, which trained staff use to digitize a wide variety of media formats, such as rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and negatives. The main objective of our digitization program is to digitize the unique collections of KSL's Special Collections and University Archives. Outside of KSL's collections, we also partner with other campus libraries, individual faculty and staff at CWRU, and various Cleveland-based cultural heritage institutions on special projects.

In order to grow and sustain an institutional culture that embraces sharing collections, research, and expertise, KSL's Digitization Program aims to do the following:

- *Mission:* To digitize the unique and rare collections of the Kelvin Smith Library, in an ethical and sustainable manner, to support current and future research.

- *Vision:* To systematically approach digitization for both access and long-term sustainability of physical and digital objects.

The success of KSL's Digitization Program requires a large quantity of labor that spans across multiple teams in the library. The following individuals make up the core of that labor alongside other colleagues not directly mentioned here:

- Roger Zender, Associate Director, Creation & Curation Services
- Jen Green, Team Lead, Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship
- Bill Claspy, Team Lead, Scholarly Resources & Special Collections
- Stephanie Becker, Digital Collections Manager, Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship
- Naomi Langer, Digitization Technician, Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship
- Andrew Mancuso, Preservation Officer, Scholarly Resources & Special Collections
- Eleanor Blackman, Special Collections Archivist, Scholarly Resources & Special Collections
- Anne Kumer, Electronic Resources Metadata Librarian, Acquisitions & Metadata

Digitization Priorities

KSL's Digitization Program is overseen by the Digitization Governance Committee which consists of KSL staff across multiple teams in the library. In the 2020 calendar year, the committee spent significant time establishing a process for collection evaluation in order to prioritize physical collections for digitization. In short, the committee created a rubric to score each collection based on numerous criteria such as use statistics, labor availability, and diversity & inclusion. Final scores were then used to determine collection priorities for the digitization program.
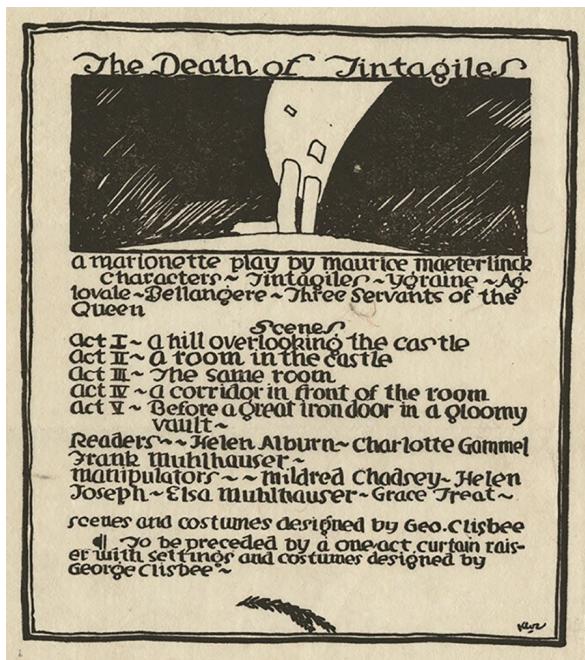
The collection that scored highest on the rubric and was agreed upon by the committee as the highest priority, is the production programs of the Cleveland Play House (CPH). This is a sub-collection of the larger CPH archive that consists of programs and playbills which are printed, or written lists of the acts, scenes, selections, or other features composing CPH productions, often including the names of performers and production dates. The programs span from 1916 - 2012 with 549 programs from 1916 - 1969 already digitized through a past digitization project. With the completion of the 790 programs from 1969 - 2012, KSL can provide online access to the full span of CPH programs through Digital Case. This priority project is slated to begin January 2021 and kicks off the first year in the committee's five-year priorities plan for digitization. Other collections on the five-year plan include CPH production photographs, set designs, and scrapbooks, CWRU yearbooks, magazines, and newspapers, and selections from KSL's rare book collection.

(above) Cropped selection from a 1916 CPH program sheet for The Death of Tintagiler. This object was scanned in Special Collections prior to establishing KSL's current Digitization Lab.

Project Highlight:
Cleveland Bystander

The Digitization Governance Committee identified the Cleveland Bystander as a pilot project for KSL's new Digitization Lab, to begin while they worked on establishing program priorities. The goal of the project was to test camera functionality and imaging capacity, post production, file management, and metadata workflows, while simultaneously digitizing the collection in full, allowing for KSL's Scholarly Resources and Special Collections team to move the physical objects to an offsite storage facility. The collection consists of 80 bound volumes, with each volume ranging from 400 - 1,400 pages. Cleveland Bystander is a society magazine that ran from 1887 - 1934 and covered Cleveland art, politics, gossip, sports, theater, music, business news, automobile news, and more. The project began in June of 2019, paused from March - July of 2020 during KSL's closure for COVID-19, resumed, and will continue as a low priority project now that the committee has identified CPH production programs as a priority.
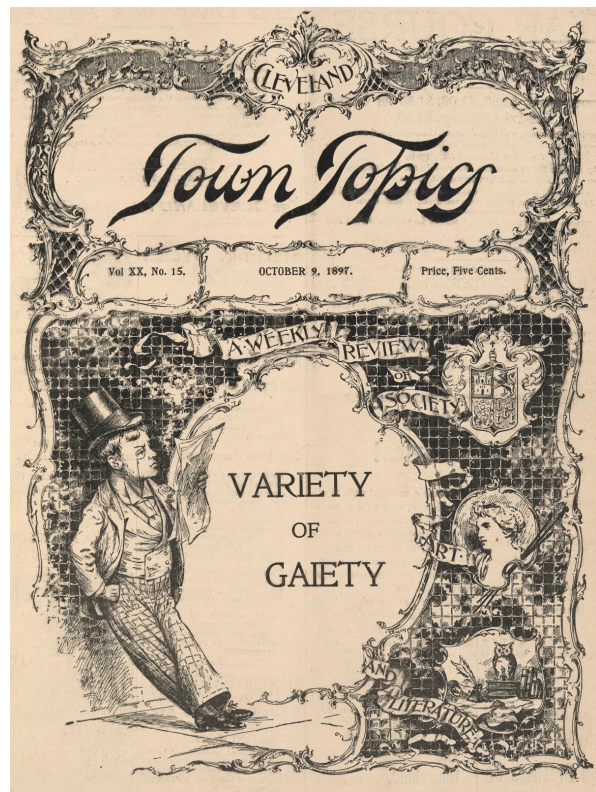
(*above*) *Cover of the October 9, 1897 issue of the Cleveland Town Topics (also known as the Cleveland Bystander).*

Patron Requests for Digitization

In the 2020 calendar year, we completed **28 on-demand patron requests** of materials from KSL's Special Collections. The following are a list of collections that patrons requested specific objects from to be digitized:

- *Cleveland Play House*
  - *(below) Production Photographs*
  - *Production Programs*
  - *Prompt Scripts*
  - *Office Files*
  - *Correspondence*
  - *Set Designs*
- *Rare Books*
- *Thomas F. Peterson, Jr. Telegraphy Collection*
- *Performance Art Festival*
  - *Programs*
  - *(right) Posters*
- *Howard J. Garber Letters*
  - *Autograph Letters*
- *Ernst & Young Founders Archive*

*(above) Promotional poster for the 1996 Cleveland Performance Art Festival*
(left) CPH production photograph from a 1944 performance of Hansel & Gretel

Collection Highlight:
Howard J. Garber Letters

Dr. Howard Garber, who donated the materials in the Howard J. Garber Letter Collection, is a former Clevelander and alumnus of CWRU. Between 1979 - 1993, Dr. Garber donated over 2,000 autograph letters, documents and books to KSL's Special Collections. Dr. Garber's interest in history, particularly British royalty led to his affinity for collecting manuscripts. The collection focuses primarily on political, historical and literary figures in Great Britain and includes signatures of all the Prime Ministers and First Lords of the Treasury. Letters from other notable figures include Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning, Thomas Hardy, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, King George III, and Virginia Woolf. In August of 2020, Special Collections received three separate inquiries into this collection, which resulted in digitization requests for remote access to specific objects in the collection.

1. A Curatorial Researcher at the Clark Art Institute identified letters in the collection's finding aid available through ArchivesSpace. They are researching Algernon Maudsley, a two-time Olympic gold medalist in sailing, and his connection to artist Anna Alma-Tadema. With information on Maudsley being scarce, the researcher has been working to locate as much data as possible on Maudsley from various sources. The Garber collection contained letters between George Frampton, a British sculptor, and Maudsley, which the researcher found to be a valuable asset to their research.

2. A British doctoral candidate from the University of Nottingham is compiling letters from the Scottish romantic poet, Thomas Campbell for their research *(above)*. Campbell was also the
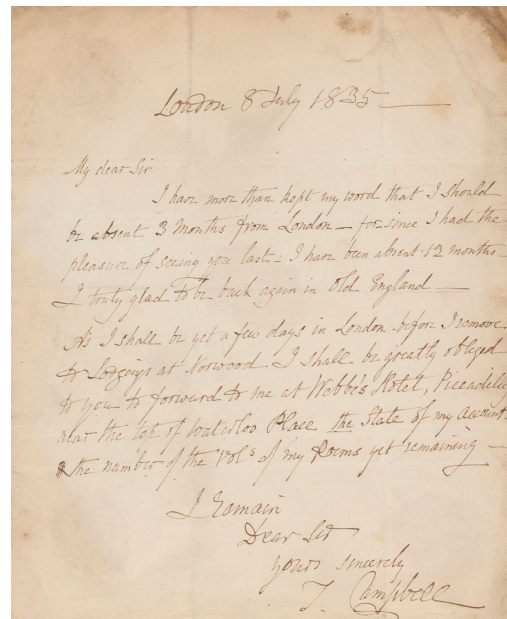
founder and first President of the Clarence Club and co-founder of the Literary Association of the Friends of Poland. The researcher identified five letters from Campbell in the collection's finding aid to request for digitization.

3. A researcher from New Delhi who is an active Member of Parliament and previously served as India's Minister of Rural Development, identified four letters in the Garber collection by Sir Edwin Arnold to request for digitization. The letters will be used by the researcher for their upcoming biography on Arnold, a 19th-century English poet and journalist.
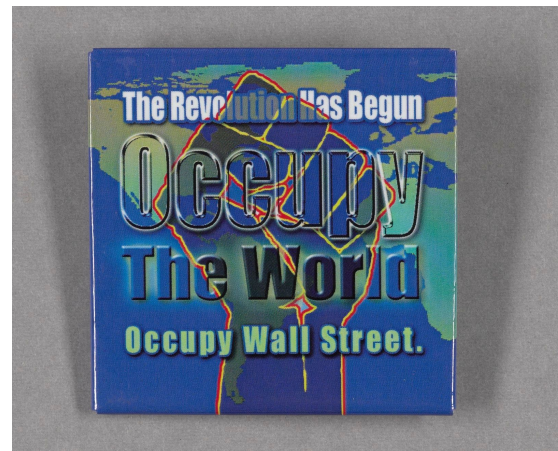
The objects from all three patron requests were photographed in the Digitization Lab and added to CWRU's open access institutional repository, Digital Case. There, the researchers could freely access the objects they had requested and download the image files and accompanying descriptive metadata records. Each letter in Digital Case also includes a plain text transcription available for download so that researchers can easily read and refer to the contents of the letters. Unlike the handwritten letters, the plain text files are indexed in the repository, furthering search and discoverability of the collection.

Partner Projects

In the 2020 calendar year, we worked on **3 projects with researchers and partner institutions.**

1. *Heather Hurwitz, PhD* was a member of the 2019-2020 Freedman Fellows cohort. She is a Lecturer of Sociology and a Core Faculty member in the Women's and Gender Studies interdisciplinary program at CWRU. Dr. Hurwitz's Freedman Fellows project was to digitize ephemera from the Occupy Movement and facilitate online access to the digitized materials. While most objects were scanned by research assistants in the Freedman Center, a number of 3-D objects posed challenges for flatbed scanning. Instead of attempting to scan these objects, we transferred the identified materials to KSL's Digitization Lab where our Digitization Technician, Naomi Langer, photographed buttons *(above)*, t-shirts, face masks, and even a toy kazoo. The photographs were included in the archive's online access point, which illustrates the significance of the Occupy Movement through movement ephemera.

2. The collections of the *Cleveland Police Museum* (CPM) cover the entire history of the Cleveland Police Department, from its beginnings in the mid-1800s to modern day. Some collection highlights include information about Eliot Ness and the gruesome Torso Murders. Since the museum has limited resources, CPM staff reached out to the Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship Team to assist with digitization projects. While CPM's audiovisual materials were digitized in KSL's Digitization Annex by our Creative New Media Officer, Jared Bendis, a collection of fragile glass lantern slides were photographed in the Digitization Lab. The slides included crime scene photographs and instructional information from police training sessions.

Digitization Technician, Naomi Langer, photographed the slides and created a file naming structure for CPM staff to easily review the materials and manage the digital files for future use and preservation.

3. *Daniel Goldmark, PhD* is Director of the Center for Popular Music Studies and a Professor in the Department of Music at CWRU. Goldmark wanted to digitize a rare book in his personal collection in order to share the unique object online. The book is a receipts ledger dated 1845-1847 from a local Cleveland music store *(right)* and therefore holds significance for music historians, especially those located here in Cleveland. The receipts tell us what music was valued enough to be purchased and sold during this time period. It also reveals personal connections to those active in the Cleveland music scene. Given the fragility of the object and its historical research value, our team decided to digitize the book in the Digitization Lab and share it through Digital Case.
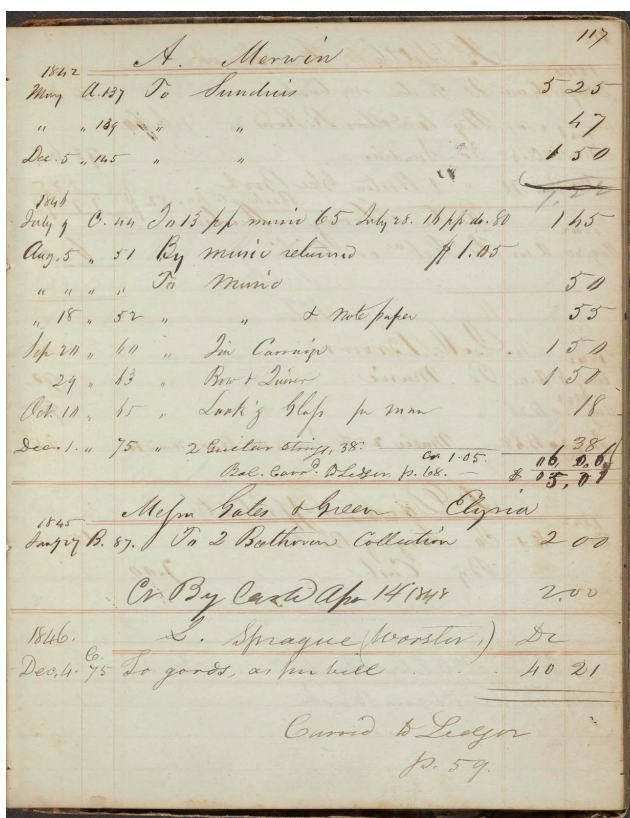
Lab Functionality, Maintenance, & Management

When digitizing KSL's unique collections, our goal is to create digital surrogates that are exact representations of our physical objects. We do not make any image adjustments within our post-production process and instead make any necessary adjustments within the camera, before capture. Sharing high quality digital resources is vital to the integrity of our digitization program and aids in establishing trust with our broader research community. Researchers who cannot make it to our physical reading room, must feel confident that the digital images they're looking at accurately reflect our physical objects. This is especially important for researchers who are investigating the materiality of an object alongside its content. The digital images we take also serve as documentation of what an object looked like at the time of imaging. This is valuable data we can use in regards to preservation of our objects and noting degradation over time or even documenting a physical treatment process.

In order to achieve this high standard of imaging, we use a PhaseOne iXG 100MP camera on a copy stand with accessories to support a variety of material types such as a book cradle and a transmissive light box. This equipment setup ensures the highest resolution, lowest noise levels, most accurate colors and minute details, crucial for the accurate reproduction of our collection objects. Our camera system is integrated with CaptureOne software which allows for efficient imaging and post-production workflows.

Our digitization equipment, physical collection objects, and digital files require continued maintenance and oversight to ensure the longevity and integrity of our work. This is a collaborative effort taken on by many individuals in the library. Stephanie Becker, Naomi Langer, and Andrew Mancuso make up the core group of individuals that carry out this work.

Preservation

KSL's Preservation Lab is conveniently located next to the Digitization Lab and allows for easy collaboration between the two workspaces. Digitization Technician, Naomi Langer and Preservation

Officer Andrew Mancuso work together on every item that comes through the digitization workflow. They assess objects to determine if physical treatments are needed before digitization, and if there are concerns, they develop a project plan to address them safely. Much of the time, this deliberation is to ensure the object's physical safety by customizing a support system for the object to rest on during the imaging workflow. One example of this is a custom mylar strap *(below)* Andrew constructed and added to our book cradle in order to hold heavy pages up and out of the way at an acute angle due to the nature of specific objects in our digitization queue.

Another example of their collaboration was to find a way to complete our digitization pilot project (Cleveland Bystander) at a faster clip. The last 10 volumes in the Bystander collection were significantly larger in depth compared to the rest of the objects. This made it prohibitive for Naomi to photograph and so they worked with Bill Claspy, Team Lead of Special Collections and Scholarly Resources on a plan to disbind the remaining volumes and then cut them in half to a more manageable size. Andrew carried out this approved plan and boxed each volume with their original bindings so that no parts of the objects were lost and no new catalog records had to be made. Naomi has since had an exponentially easier time handling these materials as well as achieving an increased throughput of images taken per day. The continued collaboration between Andrew and Naomi ensures the safety of our physical collections and facilitates ease within our overall digitization workflow.

Advanced Imaging Techniques

In addition to our archival reproduction setup, the Digitization Lab has space and equipment for both traditional studio photography and advanced imaging techniques such as reflectance transformation imaging (RTI), photogrammetry, and multispectral imaging to support digital scholarship projects at CWRU. These techniques involve lighting and camera manipulation in order to reveal details of an object that cannot be seen by the human eye. We use these images to make digital models of artifacts that give researchers more information than can be obtained just from observations of the physical object.

One of our goals for the Digitization Lab is to establish a program for working with CWRU researchers interested in these investigative imaging techniques to further their understanding of collection objects. Such a program for photogrammetry already exists within the Freedman Center, but the ability to develop something similar in the lab would allow us to digitize, share, and preserve 3D objects in KSL's Special Collections. In 2020, a team of KSL staff began experimenting with RTI using KSL's Romain Coin collection as a pilot project. RTI is a computational photographic method that

captures an object's surface shape and color and enables the interactive re-lighting of the object from any direction. This is achieved by taking a series of photographs of an object shot from a stationary camera. In each photograph, light is projected onto the object from a different direction *(left)*. Lighting information from the photographs is mathematically synthesized to generate a model of the object's surface, enabling a researcher to interactively re-light and examine the object's surface on a screen. The enhancement functions of RTI reveal surface information that is not disclosed under direct examination of the physical object. After some initial testing, we successfully created a model of one Romain Coin.

Unfortunately, our work on this initiative came to a halt during Ohio's 2020 stay at home order in response to COVID-19. While staff have resumed in-person work from the library building, social distancing requirements prohibit more than one individual from working in the Digitization Lab. Since developing an RTI program is a highly collaborative effort, this work has been put on hold and will be resumed when it is safe to do so.