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# Staffing with Students: Digitizing Campus Newspapers with Student Volunteers at the University of Minnesota, Morris

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Title: Staffing with Students: Digitizing Campus Newspapers with Student Volunteers at the University of Minnesota, Morris

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine the advantages and disadvantages to primarily utilizing undergraduate student volunteers for a long-term digitization project and to discuss methods to mitigate the disadvantages of student volunteer work.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper presents a case study of the use of student volunteers for the Historical Campus Newspaper Digitization Project at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

Findings: This paper describes the process of recruiting, training, and managing student volunteers for a digitization project. Both advantages and disadvantages to student volunteer work are discussed, including possible steps to mitigate the disadvantages of student volunteers.

Research limitations/implications: This paper is limited to one institution's experience utilizing student volunteers on one digitization project.

Practical implications: Librarians and archivists interested in new staffing methods for digitization projects can utilize this paper to better understand the benefits and costs to student volunteer labor before putting volunteer projects into practice.

Originality/value: This paper presents a unique case study of a digitization project staffed primarily with undergraduate student volunteers in an American academic library and archive.

Keywords: Digitization, Volunteers, Academic libraries, Archives, Newspapers, Digital collections

Paper type: Case study

## Introduction

Volunteers have been used in libraries and archives for decades to work on special projects, help with the general running of facilities, and perform tasks that regular staff do not have the time to accomplish. At the University of Minnesota, Morris Rodney A. Briggs Library, a group of undergraduate student volunteers began to digitize nearly sixty years of campus newspapers in the archives as the main workforce for the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project. As described in the literature, there are associated benefits and costs when utilizing volunteers, with additional advantages and disadvantages experienced when volunteers are the main workforce for a long-term digitization project.

The benefits of utilizing student volunteers on the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project were:

- (1) Additional workforce for no monetary cost
- (2) Increased visibility of archives and archives collections
- (3) Skills gained by student volunteers for their academic careers and professional futures
- (4) Increased collaboration between the library/archives and student organizations

Costs were also associated with staffing the digitization project with volunteers, including:

- (1) Additional staff time needed to recruit, organize, and manage volunteers
- (2) Lower quality of scans/metadata compared to professional work
- (3) Unreliability of volunteers in regard to working when scheduled
- (4) Difficulty of recruiting additional volunteers

After considering both the advantages and disadvantages of staffing a digitization project with student volunteers, it is clear that the benefits greatly outweigh the costs. The costs of the project were minimal, and many could be mitigated through additional training and communication. In addition, many of the advantages of the project clearly benefited the library and archives in a significant way. Using student volunteers has a monetary advantage, but the most important benefit to the library and archives was the increased outreach and collaboration with students on campus and the skills and abilities gained by the students volunteering on the project. Thus, after mitigating some of the costs of volunteer labor, utilizing volunteers for all aspects of an archives digitization project has proven to be a successful endeavor, leading to gains for the library and archives that would have been difficult to accomplish without such a project.

## Literature review

Volunteers have been used frequently in libraries and archives, and research on this subject tends to center around the benefits and costs associated with using volunteers. Rhonda Frevert discusses whether it is “worth the effort” to use volunteers in archives-- her list of advantages of volunteer work includes: increasing work output, bringing new perspectives to the archives, acting as advocates in the community for the archives, aiding collection development with donations, and contributing to the archives financially (148-150). Hewitt and Eve also list a variety of advantages to using volunteers, including: creating connections with the community, promoting library services, gaining local knowledge, and allowing libraries to begin supplementary projects that would be unattainable without volunteer labor (43). While some of these advantages do not apply to undergraduate student volunteers, particularly the financial contributions and collection development assistance, many of the benefits listed were seen during the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

Many disadvantages to using volunteers in libraries and archives have also been expressed in the literature. Frevert mentions the following disadvantages: increased staff time to recruit and train volunteers, unreliability of volunteers, the possibility of a negative volunteer experience causing a PR problem, security risks, and the inability to critique a volunteer's work (150-152). Part of the burden of volunteer labor concerns the irregular schedules of volunteers, which "can be an administrative chore to plan around...and to coordinate work projects that involve multiple volunteers or volunteers paired with staff" (Leonard 316). An additional concern with volunteers in libraries is the possibility of unpaid volunteer labor replacing paid staff positions (Broady-Preston, 114). It is important to distinguish between volunteers who are providing additional services at the library and volunteers who are directly replacing paid staff who provide core library services. Other disadvantages include the difficulty of recruiting volunteers whose interests and abilities match the project and a possible lack of professionalism (Hewitt & Eve 43). Of these disadvantages, only a few applied to the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project, including increased staff time to manage volunteers, the irregularity of volunteer schedules, and the unreliability of some volunteers.

Recruitment and retention of volunteers is another key area of research on volunteers in libraries and archives. As discussed by Leonard, recruitment can often be difficult for archives, as knowledge of archives by the general public tends to be minimal (316). Throgmorton suggests building relationships with the community, matching projects to the interests and abilities of volunteers, and outreach as key aspects to successfully recruiting and retaining volunteers (43-44). Hewitt & Eve discuss an informal volunteer interview as integral to the recruitment process, with the interview allowing volunteers to "talk about their skills and interest in the project at [the] interview, and [receive] an appropriate introduction to the project" (46). Once recruited, the training and supervision of volunteers is a top priority. Hewitt & Eve recommend "professionally designed and delivered" training programs for volunteers, and Nicol & Johnson recommend an additional part-time or full-time manager to coordinate recruitment, training, and supervision processes (157).

Retention, in particular, is vital when working with volunteers, as "high retention decreases stress on a volunteer program, reducing staff time spent recruiting and training new volunteers" (Throgmorton 45). One way to retain volunteers is by providing recognition of the work they have done and time they have spent working at an institution. There are many ways to provide recognition, including things as simple as thanking volunteers to providing tokens of appreciation or a recognition event (Throgmorton 45). In addition, it is key to make sure that volunteers are not simply given unimportant or boring tasks, as volunteer's enthusiasm, and in turn their attendance, will wane if they are not given a task that they view as important or interesting (Leonard 318).

There has been little discussion on student volunteers in university libraries and archives, particularly student volunteers completing digitization projects. Libraries often have paid student workers scanning and creating metadata for digitization projects, but it does not appear that many libraries staff a digitization project completely with student volunteers. Gainer & Mascaro state that 24-57% of academic libraries use student workers to create metadata (9-10). Thus, there is significant precedent for having students perform this type of work. The case study presented here will demonstrate that utilizing student volunteers can be just as effective as using student workers to create metadata for digital projects, and many of the same concerns and needs apply.

## Background of the project

In August 2016, a student approached the director of Rodney A. Briggs Library with a request to digitize the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) student newspapers to improve access to these materials outside the limited hours of the UMM Archives. During the initial meeting with the student, it became apparent that there was a campus need for better accessibility of UMM's historical campus newspapers, including the ability to search the full text of the newspapers.

The question then came down to staffing the project. While it would have been possible to request a grant to digitize the campus newspapers and have them outsourced to be professionally scanned, the student who requested the newspapers be digitized hoped to play an active role in the digitization process. The student was the co-president of the campus History Club and an editor of *The University Register*, one of the current campus newspapers. He indicated that the History Club students were interested in being part of the project, and that many would volunteer if the opportunity arose. The library staff and archivist determined that providing students the opportunity to explore archival campus materials and learn new skills during the digitization process would greatly benefit the students involved. In addition, the project allowed for collaboration between the library and a student group, increasing the visibility of the archives and creating a conduit from the archives to the campus community. Thus, it was decided that student volunteers would be the main workforce for the digitization project, including scanning and creating metadata.

The Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project still needed a staff coordinator, the library's Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator, who provided promotion of the project, training and scheduling of volunteers, quality checks of the volunteers' work, and the final upload of images and metadata to CONTENTdm, UMM's digital collections platform. These tasks represented a significant increase in the workload of the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator. Still, the project was extremely successful, with 14 student volunteers scanning 180 newspaper issues and completing metadata for 155 issues between November 2016 and May

2017. Plans to continue and expand the project will be implemented by the Rodney A. Briggs Library and UMM Archives for the 2017/2018 school year.

## Recruiting volunteers

To begin the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project, it was clear that students would need to be recruited to volunteer. The co-presidents of the UMM History Club discussed the project with their members, and gave the incentive of a gift card to the university bookstore to those that volunteered for a certain number of hours. However, it soon became clear that the History Club volunteers alone would not be sufficient to make any real progress. The Briggs Library Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator decided to promote the project in a variety of ways, in the hopes of attracting students to the volunteer opportunity, including:

- (1) sending out all-campus emails promoting the project;
- (2) hanging up flyers in public spaces on campus;
- (3) putting out calls for volunteers on the Library social media page;
- (4) visiting history classes to introduce the project and encourage volunteer sign-ups;
- (5) working with professors to provide extra credit for project volunteers.

In addition, the History Club set up a table during meal times near the dining hall to describe the project and encourage fellow students to sign up to volunteer. From these methods, 14 dedicated student volunteers were brought to the project.



Figure 1: Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project flyer

The most effective methods of recruitment were those that had a more personal touch. Visiting classes and sending around a sign-up sheet was particularly effective, as was the History Club's table at the dining hall. It appeared that students were more willing to respond to volunteering if they were asked by their peers or if the project was presented to them in an academic setting and the professional skills they could gain were clearly described. According to the UMM Coordinator of Community Engagement, connecting a volunteer opportunity as closely as possible to academics is the most successful way to recruit student volunteers, at least at the University of Minnesota, Morris. However, hanging up flyers was also effective, as it attracted students who were not history majors/minors, and so were not informed of the project through classes or through the History Club. As discussed by Winniford, Carpenter, and Grider, the motivations for college student volunteers is multifaceted, and can include both altruistic and egoistic motivation (134). Thus, volunteers were sought out by both appealing to the altruistic nature of the project (increasing the accessibility of campus history, helping the archives and the library) and the benefits to be gained by the individual volunteering (possible gift card from the History Club, extra credit in class, and skills that could be included on a resume).

## Training volunteers

Once volunteers were recruited, they had to be trained on proper scanning and metadata creation techniques. Unlike Hewitt & Eve suggest, no volunteer interviews were performed, as all students with an interest in volunteering were accepted for the project, no matter their level of skill or knowledge (46). One of the reasons to staff the project with volunteers was to provide students a chance to gain new skills, so it was important that no student was excluded from the project. A 30-minute archives introduction and step-by-step scanning tutorial was created by the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator for all student volunteers to complete before they began to scan for the project. While training is crucial for the effective use of volunteers for archives projects, the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator decided not to overload students with hours of training before they could begin working on the project. The 30-minute tutorial provided enough information for student volunteers to feel comfortable performing the scanning process and to create high quality work, while also allowing them to begin work on the project on their first day in the archives. This appeared to be an excellent approach to retain student volunteers--students were excited about the progress they made on their first day, leading to only 1 student volunteer not being retained after their training (out of the 14 volunteers).

Most students easily picked up the training and the skills needed for scanning. As the student volunteers had typically used a scanner before, they intuitively knew how to orient the newspaper and verify that the newspaper was not skewed. The most challenging aspect of the training for most students was file naming, as a very specific system for identifiers was created for the project to efficiently organize and prepare the files for upload to the UMM Digital Collections.

After students had finished the walkthrough to the satisfaction of the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator, they began scanning newspapers with minimal supervision. Documentation was available at the workstation for student volunteers, which provided all the information needed to scan newspapers. It included written steps, as well as screenshots, photos, and tables to provide an additional aid to the student volunteers. Further, the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator remained in the archives working on other projects while volunteers were present in order to be completely accessible to answer questions or address concerns. During the training, the volunteers were encouraged to ask questions at any time. Many of the volunteers did ask questions throughout the project, and the accessibility of a staff member to answer their questions led to fewer mistakes and problems.

Training for the metadata creation portion of the project was conducted in a slightly different manner, as not all of the volunteers were interested in the more intensive process. Volunteers were asked if they were interested in metadata creation, and those interested were given a separate training. However, all volunteers were trained on scanning newspapers first, in order to acquaint them with the collection and project, and provide them with some of the background knowledge they needed to efficiently and accurately create metadata for the collection. Once again, documentation was created for the metadata input, which included a table of all the metadata elements required for each issue, along with examples and notes on the content and formatting for each element. The library staff decided that the volunteer students would not be including detailed subject headings for the content of each newspaper. Rather, the volunteers used static subject headings for all the newspapers in the collection. This greatly reduced the training needed for metadata creation, as students did not need to learn how to search and implement a controlled vocabulary. Instead, the volunteers were instructed to transcribe the major headlines of each paper into a “Headlines” field to allow for better access to the content in each newspaper. The student volunteers quickly grasped what information was supposed to be entered into each field, and they performed this task with relatively few errors. However, many student volunteers did struggle with the formatting of the metadata, including the date format (YYYY-MM-DD), name format (Last name, First Name), capitalization and use of delimiters in the Headlines field, and capitalization and use of brackets in the Title field. Many students required additional training or follow up by the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator in order to keep the metadata as consistent and accurate as possible.

## Managing volunteers

As discussed by Frevert, the management of volunteers often takes more time than managing paid staff, which was the case for the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project (151). The management of the student volunteers was performed completely by the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator. The management tasks performed for the project included:



scheduling, quality checking work and retraining if necessary, answering questions and being available during volunteer hours, preparing files for upload, and uploading files and metadata to CONTENTdm. The scheduling of student volunteers was difficult, as a staff member had to be present in the archives when volunteers were working, and the archives hours at the University of Minnesota, Morris are extremely limited. Having a staff member present resolved the potential security or liability problems of having student volunteers working in the archives alone, and allowed a staff member to be on hand and available to answer questions and gain rapport with the students. However this was made difficult because students often wanted to volunteer during nights and weekends, at which time the archives were never open.

Flexibility is key to retention of volunteers, and having hours available on the nights and weekends was integral to the success of the project (Throgmorton 45). Thus, the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator conducted a survey of the interested student volunteers and created a schedule of possible days and hours during which the students could work, including mornings, afternoons, two weekday nights, and 1 Sunday a month. The Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator voluntarily shifted her work schedule to accommodate and be present during those times. Students were not expected to volunteer for the same shift on a weekly basis, as most students indicated in communications with the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator that they were involved in a variety of campus activities and could not commit to one day/time every week. This flexibility in scheduling allowed significantly more students to volunteer for the project. Instead of fixed days and times, students signed up for hour segments on a Google Doc, where they could add or remove their name easily and could access the sign-up sheet wherever they were. Most student volunteers were extremely reliable, and it was stressed to the volunteers that if they signed up for a volunteer shift, it was expected that they would show up. However, there were a few instances when students simply did not show up for their assigned shift. Being volunteers, there were no real repercussions for the students for not showing up. Still, most of the students did consistently show up for their shifts, or would let staff know that they would be absent.

While the initial training for the student volunteers was generally sufficient and led to high quality work, some students needed retraining or additional help to create acceptable work for the project. One potential disadvantage to using volunteers is staff not feeling that they can criticize the volunteers' work (Frevert 152). Without this criticism or some kind of discussion of problematic habits, the project can be bogged down by clean up projects or unacceptable images or metadata. Thus, it was extremely important that each volunteer's work was quality checked shortly after they volunteered and before they volunteered again, to determine if there were any problem areas or methods that needed to be retrained. If retraining was necessary, the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator discussed the problematic work with the student in a non-critical and positive way. When working with the students, it was important not to focus on what

was done wrong, but rather focus on how the student could better follow the best practices for the project.

Finally, recognizing the student volunteers for the work they were doing was a key component of managing the volunteers, and, as mentioned by Throgmorton, aided with volunteer retention. Emails were sent to the volunteers thanking them for the work they had accomplished. Small recognition gifts were given at the end of the fall semester before finals, including candy, fruit, and other snacks. At the end of the spring semester, a recognition dinner, to which all student volunteers were invited, was held at the archivist's house. In addition to these more tangible acts of recognition, the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator made sure to thank student volunteers for their quality work at the end of each volunteer session. Recognizing the student volunteers in these ways made students feel like they were appreciated and did seem to help retain volunteers.

## Discussion

### *Advantages of student volunteers*

There were significant benefits to using student volunteers for the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project. The most apparent benefit was having additional students to work on the project at no monetary cost to the library. However, "lack of adequate resources should not be the only or primary reason a repository ultimately decides to use volunteer workers" (Frevert 148). There should be other benefits guiding the decision to use volunteers for projects and tasks. For the University of Minnesota, Morris library and archives, the primary reasons for creating a volunteer-driven digitization project was to increase the visibility of the archives, promote collaboration between the library/archives and the campus community, and provide the student volunteers with additional experiences and skills applicable to their academic and professional lives. All of these benefits were seen during the volunteer-based digitization project.

The students completed scanning for 180 issues and metadata for 155 issues of the newspaper in a total of 124 volunteer hours. Without the student volunteers, this project would not have been feasible for the library, and the project would have been much slower if paid student workers had been used. In addition, it would not have been possible to hire fourteen students to work on the project, and each of the student volunteers brought unique perspectives and fresh ideas to the library and to the project.

Having fourteen students working in the archives and interacting with library staff and archives materials led to more visibility of the UMM Archives. Student volunteers discussed the project with friends and in the History Club, which promoted a better understanding of the archives and

its collections on the part of the students. Even the recruitment of student volunteers led to increased visibility of the archives, as the emails, flyers, and social media posts presented a reminder that the archives existed and housed interesting collections. Social media posts describing some of the newly added newspapers to the Campus Newspaper Collection provided additional visibility of the UMM Digital Collections to students and campus community members. After the UMM Campus Newspapers collection was first debuted in February 2017, the collection received very high usage compared to other digital collections hosted by the University of Minnesota, Morris, and a slight increase in usage of other UMM digital collections was seen in the months of March-June, as indicated by CONTENTdm’s views statistics (See Figure 2)<sup>1</sup>. This indicates that the digitization project was effective in increasing the visibility of UMM’s archival digital collections.

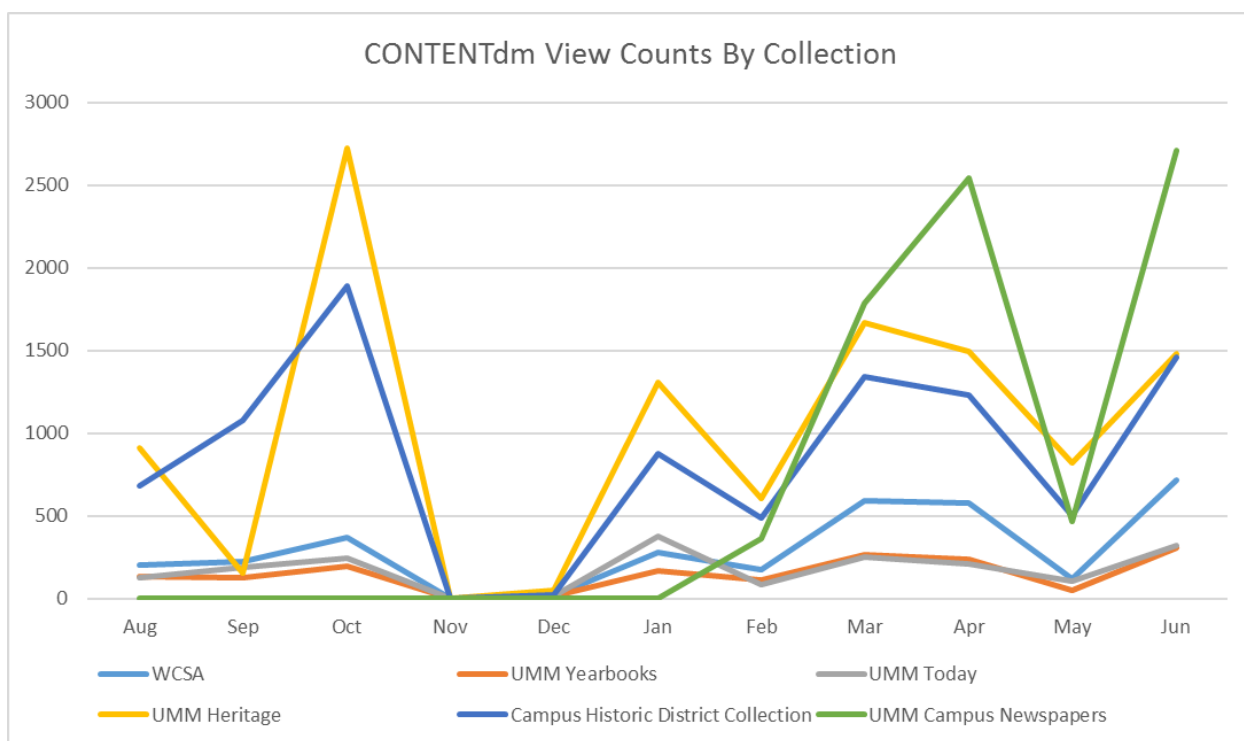


Figure 2: UMM’s CONTENTdm View Counts by Collection

The library and archives were also able to use the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project to increase and promote collaboration between the library/archives and the campus community, particularly student organizations. As discussed above, the digitization project was a collaboration between the library/archives and the History Club, with the History Club

<sup>1</sup> UMM’s CONTENTdm statistics for October through December appear skewed, with October having extremely high view counts and November/December having extremely low view counts. The high October view count could be due to high traffic during Homecoming. In addition, some of this data may be compromised by the University of Minnesota, Morris’ switch to a hosted CONTENTdm site during this time. However, it does appear that the statistics for UMM collections overall tended to increase after the creation of the UMM Campus Newspapers collection.

providing inspiration for the project, volunteers from the club interested in digitizing, and additional recruitment of their peers. Directly due to the positive experience of the History Club during this project, other campus groups and community members have come forward to instigate collaboration with the library and archives to digitize other collections, including a project already underway to digitize historical Saddle Club records in the archives and a pending project to digitize alumni newsletters. Collaborating with students and other campus community members is an important aspect of providing the quality service for which the University of Minnesota, Morris strives, and this project has led to growth in collaboration with a variety of campus groups.

The project not only benefitted the archives and the library, but also the student volunteers themselves. In addition to the gift cards or extra credit received by some, the student volunteers gained valuable skills during the project that they can use in the future. In particular, the student volunteers interested in archives, public history, or librarianship as careers were able to add an important line to their resume to help them apply to graduate school. For one of the student volunteers, this opportunity in the archives led to a career decision to pursue librarianship and archives management. For this student, additional opportunities, including co-presenting at a library conference, were obtained due to her hard work volunteering on this project. Another student, the one who initiated the project, was asked to give a public presentation on the digitization project at an annual Briggs Library Associates event. Two other volunteers indicated that the experience led them to have a more focused interest on public history and that the experience has helped them in determining their future career paths. For another three student volunteers, their quality work volunteering led to paid positions elsewhere in the library and archives. Thus, many of the student volunteers benefitted in real, tangible ways, and their participation on this project led to additional opportunities at the University of Minnesota, Morris and beyond.

In addition to the tangible benefits to student volunteers, volunteerism and service-learning has been shown to increase retention of college students. According to Gallini and Moely, “students who are more academically and socially engaged in their colleges and communities are more likely to continue study until graduation” (5). The digitization project allowed students to engage with the UMM Archives and connect with the university, hopefully aiding in retention of those student volunteers. In addition, important soft skills are often seen to be improved by volunteering and are tracked for many community volunteer projects at the University of Minnesota, Morris by the Office of Community Engagement (Manolis). Some of these skills include communication, critical thinking, and problem solving; students for the digitization project used all of these skills during their volunteer hours. While the possible increase of retention and the acquisition or improvement of soft skills are not as easy to track as the tangible benefits mentioned above, it is clear from the literature and interactions with the student

volunteers that the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project benefitted the students in a significant way.

### *Disadvantages of student volunteers*

There were costs to completely using student volunteers for a digitization project, but many of these costs can be mitigated by additional training and communication. One cost that likely cannot be mitigated is the additional staff time needed to recruit, organize, supervise, and quality check the work of the volunteers. This time commitment was substantial, and in order to maintain high quality work, it was vital to the project's success. Other costs, such as the lower quality of the scans and metadata compared to professional work, the unreliability of volunteers to work during their scheduled times, and the difficulty in recruiting additional volunteers can all be alleviated with training, communication, and effective recruiting tools and techniques.

The staff time needed to recruit, schedule, and manage the student volunteers was considerable. In particular, having a staff member available in the archives during more flexible hours (nights and weekends) to encourage recruitment was taxing. A way around this would be to allow student volunteers access to the archives during closed and unsupervised times or to offer volunteer hours only when the archives was open, though this might lead to fewer volunteers being able to work on the project. Due to the extra work of the project, some other nonessential tasks and projects performed by the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator were set aside to allow for more time to be spent on the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project. If an organization was interested in supporting multiple or very large volunteer projects, hiring a staff member just to organize, recruit, and supervise volunteers might be advisable. Another area that took considerable time was the quality check of the volunteers' work. This quality verification could be performed by other volunteers, as peer quality checking systems have been used successfully by other digitization projects (Gainer & Mascaro 15). One of the benefits of peer review is that students are then able to see examples of other students' work, thus creating more consistency in the quality of the scans and the metadata created. On the other hand, bad habits could be reinforced and spread using peer review, rather than having a trained staff member reviewing and retraining student volunteers based on errors found during the quality check process. Other aspects of the project that took time included creating project documentation and training, scheduling volunteers, planning recognition events, and recruiting volunteers. Many of these took a lot of work in the beginning of the project, such as project documentation, training, and the creation of recruitment materials, but can be reused in further semesters and years and will not require as much time once the project has been started. Future years of the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project will likely require much less staff time, and many of the materials and documentation made for this project can be used as templates for future volunteer-driven digitization projects.

An additional cost of using volunteers for a digitization project instead of professional staff was a lower quality of scans and metadata. Some student volunteers were not as capable at scanning as others, and some images were not straight, had black space around the image, were scanned using the wrong specifications (color instead of grayscale, wrong DPI, etc.), or were given the wrong identifier. Fixing these issues took additional time, and sometimes led to whole issues needing to be rescanned. However, because the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator reviewed student volunteer work quickly after the work was done, she was able to discuss these problems with the student who had made these errors, and retrain the student on scanning and the proper techniques if necessary. In turn, most students did not make the same error twice. Still, if a professional or a student worker with more knowledge on digitization techniques had been hired instead of student volunteers, less time would have been spent quality checking, fixing errors, and retraining. Similar issues appeared with students creating metadata for the collection, with some student volunteers making many errors in the formatting of metadata. Once again, after a student had been made aware of the mistakes they had made, they did not often repeat the same mistake again. Another way the metadata was impacted by using volunteers rather than paid staff was that the library staff determined that it would be easier and lead to less metadata errors if student volunteers did not use a controlled vocabulary to create issue-specific subject headings for newspapers. Because of our student volunteers' lack of experience with controlled vocabularies and the subjectivity and difficulty of assigning subject headings based on articles in each newspaper issue, student volunteers simply typed in the headlines of each article in the newspaper rather than using subject headings. Unfortunately, this does mean the metadata for the collection is less complete than it could be, and if paid or professional staff had been used for the project, it is likely that a controlled vocabulary and issue-specific subject headings would have been used.

The unreliability of volunteers was listed by many in the literature as being one of the main problems with using volunteers in a library or archive. Unfortunately, there were a handful of cases of student volunteers not showing up for their assigned shifts, some of them longer shifts or during the special evening and weekend hours the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator was working in order to better accommodate volunteers' schedules. The Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator allayed this problem in two ways:

- 1) Emailing student volunteers at the beginning of each week with the days/times they had agreed to volunteer, and
- 2) Making it clear that the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator was working extra hours to accommodate volunteers' schedules and that other volunteers had not been able to sign up for those hours due to the limited number of workstations.

The additional reminder of what days and hours the student had agreed to volunteer was helpful to students with very busy schedules and greatly increased the reliability of student volunteers. Most of the occasions when students failed to show up for their volunteer shift was due to the volunteer either forgetting that they signed up or a confusion about what day/time they had

signed up, which was greatly reduced when volunteers received a weekly reminder. In addition, making it clear to the volunteers that there was a negative effect to the project by them not showing up and that their missed volunteer hours were noticed seemed to hold the student volunteers more accountable, and most students were very considerate about informing library staff if they could no longer make their assigned shift. According to the UMM Coordinator of Community Engagement Argie Manolis, setting these expectations of the importance of volunteer reliability at the beginning of the project is key to increasing the dependability of volunteers.

Finally, the difficulty of recruiting additional volunteers was seen at the beginning of the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project, but was relieved by the additional recruitment tactics implemented at the beginning of the spring semester. The first semester of the project, recruitment was done completely by the History Club, and they only recruited club members to volunteer for the project, leading to only five volunteers coming forward. While these volunteers were very dedicated and put in a lot of volunteer hours, it was clear after the fall semester that only five volunteers would not be sustainable for the project. After the concerted effort of the Metadata & Technical Services Coordinator and the History Club to recruit additional volunteers, a total of fourteen volunteers had worked on the project by the end of the spring semester. The problem of recruiting volunteers was solved by using multiple methods of recruitment, including emails, flyers, social media, face-to-face communication, class visits, and advertisement of the project in a course for extra credit. These methods were quite successful, and could be expanded in the future (e.g. visiting more classes to talk about the project, etc.).

Thus, the greatest cost to utilizing student volunteers concerns the extra staff time needed to recruit, train, and manage the volunteers. However, if paid student workers had been used for the project, they also would have had to be trained and managed, though not to the extent of volunteer workers. Related to this, volunteers are often less reliable as workers than paid staff, either not showing up or only volunteering once and never returning. For the Historic Campus Newspaper Digitization Project, unreliability was mitigated by additional communication. Only three of fourteen student volunteers on the project did not put in at least five hours of volunteering, and so retaining student volunteers was not a noticeable problem for this project. The work done by student volunteers was lesser quality than if it had been done by professional staff or outsourced, but it did all conform to the standards set by the library staff before being uploaded to the digital collection. Recruitment of student volunteers can also be difficult, but with additional time put in by library staff and communication with the campus community, enough student volunteers were recruited for the digitization project. In conclusion, most of the main disadvantages experienced during the project and discussed in the literature were able to be alleviated, allowing the project to be a resounding success.

## Conclusion

Volunteers have been used for decades in libraries and archives, but rarely to completely staff a long-term digitization project. While there are costs to using student volunteers over paid and professional staff at an academic library or archive, many of these costs are outweighed by the benefits experienced by the student volunteers and the library or archive coordinating the volunteer efforts. In addition to completing an extra project, the library or archive also benefits from the project in ways that are often difficult to achieve, including additional visibility and increased collaboration with the community. Volunteer projects can also lead other campus organizations to come forward to collaborate with the library or archive, leading to better connections between the campus community as a whole. The main cost of utilizing student volunteers is the additional staff time needed to coordinate the project, and there does not appear to be a way to mitigate this cost without sacrificing the quality of the work produced or negatively affecting the volunteer experience. Thus, before beginning a project using primarily student volunteers, particularly for long-term digitization projects, it is important to determine whether there is enough staff time to properly manage a volunteer-based project. If there is, student volunteers may be the correct choice for a digitization project, leading to successful interactions with the campus and the betterment of both student volunteers and the library or archive.



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