

## Arkansas History Commission

# Stage One Digitization

## Final Report June 2001

**SOD beginnings.** In 1998, Arkansas State Library (ASL) Deputy Director of Information Resources, Jenelle Stephens, arranged for the ASL to sponsor AHC Photo Archivist Lynn Ewbank's attendance at the Western Council of State Libraries' conference *Planning for Digitization: Bringing Down Another Barrier to Access*. Held at the Denver Public Library, the conference was an opportunity to see the library's widely acclaimed Western History Photodigitization project first hand. So when Richard Davies, director of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, invited AHC director Dr. John L. Ferguson to apply for an Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council grant, Ferguson, at Ewbank's suggestion, targeted increased access and preservation through digitization, a choice fully supported by Davies.

Following application, the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council at its May 1999 meeting granted \$255,976 - the full amount requested - to the Arkansas History Commission for a Stage One Digitization (SOD) project. Lynn Ewbank (grant administrator) with fellow archivists Jane Hooker (fiscal officer) and Paula Taylor and museum curator Michael Lewis became the digitization team. With a main goal of increasing access to Arkansas History Commission historical materials SOD had three elements or steps, 1) To evaluate digital technology, 2) To conduct a test digitization of selected AHC photo collections and 3) To create a comprehensive digitization plan for AHC primary source materials.

**Step 1 - Evaluation of digital technology.** SOD began July 1, 1999. The first step was to locate a digital consultant. Because of his vast experience, Raymond Clark, head of the Western History Photodigitization Project, was chosen and approved by the Arkansas Legislative Council in August 1999. Through four trips to the AHC (Sept. 28-29, October 26-27, December 1-2, 1999 and March 6-7, 2000), Clark was instrumental in helping us evaluate digital technology and apply it to our own specific situation. A major aspect was a SIRSI software demo hosted for SOD by the Arkansas State Library (ASL). SIRSI Unicorn with WebCat is the high-end library online public access catalog (OPAC) software used by the ASL to enable patrons located on or off site to search the library's holdings via the Internet.



George Washington Donaghey (rear left) and William Jennings Bryan (rear right) with Judge Hays (front seat beside the driver) and Mr. Terrell during initiative and referendum special train campaign stop at Camden, Arkansas, 1910. (G0204 02)

It was determined that SIRSI products could meet the needs of the project.

While evaluation under Clark's guidance took longer than originally anticipated and necessitated requesting an extension on the grant, it resulted in the determination that higher choices in the areas of cataloging and public access were possible within the existing budget.

**Step 2 - Application of digital technology.** During the evaluation period, SOD members clarified three aspects that would make up the actual test project - digital images, MARC bibliographic catalog records and an online public access catalog (OPAC) that would provide access to both.

*Digital images.* Time restraints, as well as the inability to identify a suitable space in our existing quarters in which to create a digital lab, led to the determination that in-house scanning was not feasible for the SOD project. The next step was to develop and issue - through the Office of State Purchasing - a Request For Proposals (RFP) based on technical criteria in addition to price. The bid process was successful and resulted in the selection of a top quality vendor, John R. Stokes, JJT, Inc. of Austin, TX, whose impressive client list includes the Library of Congress American Memory project and National Geographic. His bid was \$83,895, an amount higher than originally budgeted, yet still affordable because of budget modifications. After a testing and calibration process, scanning began in June 2000 with the first of eight shipments of approximately 1660 images each. The final shipment was completed in March, 2001. The SOD team conducted quality control (QC) of the digital images using guidelines developed with the assistance of Kit Arrington Peterson of the Library of Congress QC staff.

<b>SOD Digitization criteria:</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Example</b>
C1 - Appeal to AHC patronage	Genealogists, historians
C2 - Currently lack a sufficient level patron access	Negatives
C3 - Present preservation issues	Nitrate
C4 - Offer ease of digitization	Processed collections of materials similar in size and type



Pilot wearing microphone receiving helmet and power generator for radio telephone, Eberts Field, Lonoke, Arkansas. (G4594.19)

AHC SOD digital images are housed on a web server maintained by P&T's Management Information Systems. Thumbnails and low-resolution service JPG files are available online, while high-resolution files will be used mainly for high quality photographic reproduction and eventual migration. Backup files stored on CD's and magnetic tape are kept in secure storage. As with all other AHC images, AHC digital images are available for use in any published form including books, exhibits, films, CD-ROMs and websites as long as the following credit line is used: *Courtesy, Arkansas History Commission*. While patrons can make prints from low-resolution JPG files using their own equipment, photographic prints and high-resolution JPGS are available from the AHC at reasonable prices.

*Catalog records.* The second aspect of the test phase was upgrading current finding aids for photographs selected for the test project to MARC (machine-readable catalog) records. This necessitated the hiring of two photo-cataloging assistants (PCA) - Neil Dillard and Wendy Perkins - as well as a UALR graduate assistant from the Public History Program, Jessica Fulbright. On February 29 - March 3, 2000, SOD brought in a MARC specialist from Amigos, our Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) supplier, who trained the SOD team, as well as the AHC archival manager and librarian. MARC record creation for the project materials began March 15, 2000, under the supervision of Janet Berry, head of Arkansas State Library (ASL) cataloging and her assistant, Michael Klossner.

<b>Arkansas History Commission Photograph Collections Chosen for Stage One Digitization</b>			
Collection title	Dates	# images	Criteria
<b>Arkansas Inactive Barbers Photographs</b>	1937-1997	2748	C1, C4
<b>Ernie Deane Photographs</b>	1930's-1980's	7077	C2, C4
<b>Shrader Negatives: Arkansas Legislators</b>	1935-1967	1413	C1,C2, C3, C4
<b>Persistence of the Spirit Negatives</b>		560	C1, C2, C4
→ <i>Occupied Arkansas</i>	1863-1865	124	C1, C4
→ <i>Donaghey/Bryan campaign tour</i>	1910	23	C1, C4
→ <i>UCV Reunion at Little Rock</i>	1911	115	C1, C4
→ <i>Eberts Field</i>	1918-1919	71	C1, C2, C4
→ <i>Little Rock Travellers</i>	1920-1922	32	C1, C4
→ <i>Strong, AR, tornado</i>	1927	15	C1, C4
→ <i>Wilson Farm</i>	1939	205	C1, C2, C4
→ <i>Little Rock Central High School Crisis</i>	1957-1959	26	C1, C4
→ <i>AHC Portrait Gallery</i>		101	C1, C2, C4
→ <i>Arkansas in Stereoscope</i>		177	C1, C4
<b>Total # images</b>		<b>12687</b>	

SOD lost Fulbright at the end of her assistantship in May 2000. SOD also lost fellow employee Taylor (who resigned from the team in October 2000), Dillard (to another position in December 2000) and Perkins (to Army Reserves training in February 2001). SOD was able to fill these vacancies by hiring Lynda Suffridge (a former employee of the AHC), Julienne Crawford (a student in the UALR Public History Program) and Rita Henry (a professional photographer to assist with QC).

The bibliographic records for the *Arkansas Barber* photographs were completed in August 2000. The *Ernie Deane* records were completed in March 2001. Cataloging on the *Shrader*, *Persistence of the Spirit* and *General Photograph File* images was concluded in May 2001. Upon completion of these original catalog records, Berry uploaded them onto OCLC (a nationwide database), then downloaded them into the SIRSI OPAC.



*Interior of Orvil Warbritton's Barber Shop, Croses, Madison County, Arkansas. (BA2064)*

*Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC).* The third aspect of the test phase was identifying and obtaining library access software. On April 18, 2000, SOD entered into an agreement with the Arkansas State Library to exist as a consortia library on their system. The ASL SIRSI system is under the administration of ASL Library Network Services - Sallye Hawkes, coordinator, and Darrell Fitts, system administrator. Our basic contract with SIRSI included Unicorn software licensing, education and documentation, policy configuration, data loading and indexing. Special negotiations to fill needs specific to the AHC SOD situation included the conversion of the *Library of Congress Graphic Materials Thesaurus* subject terms and genre and physical characteristics terms into MARC authority files records. These records will help provide consistency in cataloging for staff members as well as searching for patrons.



*The John Spencer Polk house and family, ca. 1910. From the left are Ben, Arthur, Lillian, Pearl, Emma, Frances, Annie, Ellen and John Spencer Polk.. (PS08.03)*

This AHC/ASL consortia arrangement saved the project nearly \$28,000 in software costs alone. The Arkansas Legislative Council approved our contract with SIRSI on September 15, 2000. The contract was implemented shortly thereafter and following the thirteen-week timeline was completed in December 2000.

**Step 3 - Creation of a comprehensive digital plan.** Although developing a comprehensive digital plan for AHC primary source materials is mainly an in-house decision, the SOD team wanted to offer an opportunity for digital experts, those with archival or computer responsibility and experience and those who are simply archival materials users, to add input. So, Clark and SOD team leader Ewbank met with various individuals including Parks & Tourism director Richard Davies and Dr. Littlefield of the Native American Press at

UALR as well as representatives of Parks & Tourism MIS, the Information Network of Arkansas and the Arkansas State Library. In addition, the Central Arkansas Chapter of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators had an opportunity to meet Clark on their October 26, 1999, tour. Then on December 2, 1999, Clark spoke to the seven-member board of the Arkansas History Commission.

SOD has given the Arkansas History Commission a clear idea of digital possibilities through existing financially feasible technologies. It has shown us what resources in technology, money, staff and time are required. So while the current SOD plan only concerns photographs, the comprehensive plan for the future recommends examining the possibilities of online access to AHC finding aids, card catalogs and/or indexes to other historical Arkansas materials in the possession of the AHC, including manuscript collections, books and newspapers.

**Conclusion.** Though SOD took two years, the good news is that SOD was been able to make higher choices within the confines of the original funding. The final result is a project that not only increases access to historical materials while at the same time enhancing preservation, but also is among the first of its kind in scope, context and content in the country.

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