

Digital Readiness Case Study in Brief: Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

January 2021

About the organization

Since 1974, the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation has focused on advocacy for and education about Madison, Wisconsin's historic properties.

The organization is managed by a Board and one part-time staff member and has relied on a volunteer board of trustees and community volunteers invested in local history preservation. See the full Case Study online for more on the organization and the digitization initiative.

Digital Readiness Challenges and Opportunities

- *Creating and sharing resources and knowledge:* Initial project analysis and planning efforts helped inform additional grant applications. Documenting decisions, processes and data will make future grant applications easier and demonstrate how they will build upon previous successes.
- *Expanded access:* Madison Trust will provide public access to their digitized materials through Recollection Wisconsin, increasing awareness of their organization and collections. This step will require a more in-depth exploration of copyright status for some materials, publicizing the digitized collection and thinking about ongoing costs for collection maintenance and preservation.
- *Digital preservation and storage:* An analysis of digital preservation principles will be undertaken, along with how they apply to Madison Trust. For now, their digitized materials are stored on two external hard drives backed up by BackBlaze, a cloud-based backup and storage service.
- *Secure, stable funding:* The Trust is a small cultural heritage organization with a limited budget. Multiple small grants supported initial equipment purchases and staff but they hope to identify and secure more sustainable funding for this work.
- *Continued participation in the Digital Readiness Community of Practice:* This group provides a support network for local history practitioners to connect, support and learn from each other. Resources and recommendations such as these are also available in the Digital Projects Toolkit.

Lessons Learned

- Digitization projects serve many purposes such as supporting virtual reference service for organizations without (or unable to use) a public-facing space.
- Before you ever start scanning, there's a lot of work that goes into a digitization project, decisions and planning that help a project run smoothly and provide "proof of concept" and foundation information for funding requests.
- Small grants can be used to seed different project components. For example, small grants might pay for a scanner, support a few hours' scanning staff each week or provide for digital storage space on an external hard drive.
- Working with students and volunteers carries unique and gratifying challenges. Having clearly written guidelines and training materials will help facilitate the work and partnerships.

For more information about our Digital Readiness Community of Practice, visit <https://recollectionwisconsin.org/cop>.