

Digital Readiness Case Study in Brief: Lake Mills Aztalan Historical Society

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About the organization

Since 1941, the Lake Mills Aztalan Historical Society (the Museum) has been dedicated to preserving and sharing local pioneer and ancient Native American history. Lake Mills Aztalan Historical Society's Museum comprises seven pioneer buildings. Robin Untz serves as the Museum Board president and curator. See the full Case Study online for more on the organization and digital readiness initiatives.

Digital Readiness Challenges and Opportunities

- *Intellectual control:* When Untz was appointed Board President in 2013, the Museum's physical and digital collections were scattered in various locations and with multiple external vendors. She facilitated the return and organization of the materials; accurate and up-to-date inventories will help ensure continued intellectual control over the collections.
- *Digital readiness plans:* A holistic approach to digital readiness will focus on creating an accurate inventory of digitized content, organizing and renaming digital files, and documenting and implementing digitization best practices. These activities will set the stage for future digitization projects. Tools and templates are available in the Digital Projects Toolkit.
- *Building a community of practice:* Previous positive experiences in connecting with other local history practitioners inspired Untz to join Recollection Wisconsin's Digital Readiness Community of Practice. Her main goals for participation are to help build and share with her Board members and volunteers, a network of contacts and resources to support their ongoing digital work.
- *Sustainable leadership:* Increasing learning opportunities for volunteers will empower them to more fully engage with digital collections projects and remain engaged with the Museum as they move into leadership roles. Access to a wider network of practitioners and training materials will help their organization recruit, engage and hopefully retain skilled volunteers.
- *Documenting decisions and procedures:* Creating and sharing project plans and key decisions, workflows, file-naming standards, and/or file storage plans may help future staff and volunteers understand past decisions and continue the work with greater ease.

Lessons Learned

- The initial planning stage of any digitization project should always include figuring out where previous projects may have left off by connecting with past project leaders and volunteers, tracking down project documentation, and locating the digital files.
- Digitization projects serve many purposes, including creating digital content to increase online engagement but also an opportunity to build community engagement around shared local history.
- Planning for future projects means empowering others to learn and participate in digital work so they are ready to step in and take the lead.
- Untz's experience leading the Museum in a volunteer capacity is a good reminder that this work is sometimes slow, never finished, and always worth it. Incremental progress is still progress.

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

