

Digital Readiness Case Study in Brief: Door County Library

May 2021

DOOR COUNTY
LIBRARY



Inform. Instruct. Inspire!

About the organizations

Active since 1866, community libraries throughout Door County, Wisconsin combined in 1953 to become branches of the **Door County Library (DCL)**. Online, DCL hosts the [Door County Library Newspaper Archive](#), a free-to-the-public service sharing digitized newspapers encompassing the years 1862 - 1979. The **Door County Historical Museum** was founded in 1939 as a one-room exhibit and has evolved to a modern, multi-level facility in Sturgeon Bay. The **Door County Archives**, operating since 1988, are a special service of the Door County Library. Archival collections include church, business, and personal records, photographs, audiovisual materials, genealogy collections and research aids.

Digital Readiness Challenges and Opportunities

- **Door County Library: Early Adopter of Newspaper Digitization:** DCL Adult Services Librarian Laura Kayacan began a newspaper digitization project in 2010. Being an “early adopter” of any project type means navigating some unknown territory with minimal guidance. Kayacan’s approach included researching other newspaper digitization projects extensively and forming her own community of practice by talking to practitioners and organizations undertaking similar projects.
- **Copyright questions pose unique challenges:** Kayacan encountered a maze of copyright restrictions. While the newspaper pages themselves are not under copyright, some of the individual authors’ stories, artworks and photographs were subject to copyright and fair use rules. Kayacan has adopted a “one-size-fits-all” policy which is to limit their newspaper digitization efforts to those published prior to 1978.
- **Content creation in the archives:** The local history community is a driving force behind the [Door County Speaks](#) oral history project. County local history organizations sought easy-to-use resources and tools for conducting oral histories with their own residents. “Door County Speaks” seeks to make oral history more approachable, achievable and fun for library patrons while encouraging the use of best practices.

Lessons Learned

- **Don’t let copyright questions deter you.** Although Kayacan encountered many copyright restrictions on the digitized newspaper pages, she was able to make a project-wide decision about what to include. Ultimately, even a copyright violation would only result in a takedown request, so sometimes the risks are low for the high reward of increased community use.
- **An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.** The newspaper microfilm pages contained numbering and order errors, making processing the digitized images that much more difficult. Getting it right the first time helps save time in the processing phase.
- **Collaboration doesn’t happen overnight – but it’s worth it.** Collaborations between heritage groups, libraries, and other stakeholders can take years to bring about projects. Patience, relentless positivity, and being open to working together eventually bring mutual ideas to fruition.

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

