

CREATING CITIZEN HISTORIANS

JOHN HERBERT AND KAREN ESTLUND

Historical newspaper research has become increasingly straightforward with digitization and has allowed historical research to be more accessible for the general public. The Utah Digital Newspapers program is a seminal project that has led the way for libraries and archives to digitize their historical newspapers. With over five million newspaper articles online, first-hand reports of historical events are at the fingertips of anybody with an Internet connection.

NEWSPAPERS ARE THE FIRST DRAFT OF HISTORY, primary sources of historical information used by scholarly and lay researchers alike. Researchers typically access historical newspapers in central locations like libraries, and they must be diligent enough to browse reels of microfilm or read aged originals. With time and effort, these methods can be effective, but they have never been efficient. They simply are too slow and tedious to create a broad audience for newspaper research.

The advent of digitized newspapers, available and *searchable* on the Internet, is fundamentally changing this paradigm. With a growing number of historic newspapers coming online, anyone with an Internet-connected PC can conduct thorough newspaper research. Consequently today, in the twenty-first century, newspaper digitization is exploding.

The J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah (U of U), partnering with Brigham Young University (BYU) and Utah State University (USU), runs a pioneering state-wide program that is changing the face of newspaper research. Since its inception in 2002, the Utah Digital Newspapers (UDN) program quickly became a model for other academic libraries across the country and federal agencies in Washington, D. C. We have been, and remain, on the leading edge for newspaper digitization, especially within the public sector.

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Figure 1. Park (Park City, UT) Record, describing "Park City's Awful Fire" on 25 June 1898. This article can be found in the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library's Utah Digital Newspapers Collection at http://udn.lib.utah.edu/u/park_39400.

