

Appendix A: Selection of Newspapers for Digitization

Select newspaper titles with historical or community significance.

Newspapers should be published prior to 1923 (in the public domain) or the digitizing institution should have written permission from the copyright holder to digitize and present the newspaper.

The newspaper should be available on microfilm. It's more efficient and less costly to digitize microfilm than paper issues.

The master negative microfilm of the newspaper should be available for duplication. A duplicate negative for scanning should be made from the master. This will ensure a better image than scanning positive microfilm that has been used by researchers and the public.

Some libraries, historical societies, city governments, and newspaper publishers store the master negatives of local newspapers. It is more common, however, for the master negatives to be stored, and often owned, by commercial microfilming agencies. The California Newspaper Microfilm Archive at UC Riverside (<http://cnma.ucr.edu>) contains newspaper negative microfilm acquired from the three largest California microfilm companies: BMI (AKA Bay), Custom, and Data. UC Berkeley and the California State Library also own large collections of newspaper negatives. The California Newspaper Project database (<http://cnp.ucr.edu>) provides information on location of newspaper negatives and the CNMA database will be completed by the end of 2012. Proquest/UMI and Heritage Microfilm have the largest out-of-state commercial microfilm vaults.

Besides the content of the newspapers, the quality of the original filming and the quality of the physical microfilm have to be considered in the selection process.

The paper should have been collated before filming so the issues and sections of issues are in order on the film.

If bound volumes of newspaper issues were filmed, there should be no text loss in the gutters because of tight bindings.

The run of the newspaper on film should be as complete as possible, with a minimum of missing issues, missing pages, and cutouts.

The reduction ratio on the film should be 20x (20:1) or below; lower is better. The reduction ratio is often given on an information target at the beginning of a reel. If it's not, a microfilm technician can determine the reduction if the dimensions of the original issues are known.

Resolution should be 5.0 or higher. Targets with resolution patterns are often missing on older newspaper microfilm. A microfilm technician can estimate resolution. If the detail and clarity of the newspaper pages is good, the resolution should be acceptable.

Density readings should be in the .90-1.20 range and variations should be no more than 0.2 within images and between exposures. The newspaper images should not be too light or too dark or have a mix of light and dark on one page or from page to page.

Some of the above criteria can only be determined by a microfilm technician at the time the master negatives are recalled for evaluation. When library staff review positive film at the beginning of the selection process, they should be looking for newspaper page images that are in order, complete, undamaged, have legible text and even lighting, and are in focus.

When masters are recalled, the microfilm technician will also have to determine their physical condition, to make sure they haven't deteriorated too much for digitization. Acetate masters can be brittle, torn, blemished and warped.

Good images are necessary for browsing and for successful optical character recognition (OCR), which allows keyword searching.