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## Preserving Local Documents: The UO Library's "Scholars' Bank" Project

Tom Stave  
*University of Oregon*

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# Preserving Local Documents:

## The UO Library's "Scholars' Bank" Project

by **Tom Stave**  
Head, Document Center,  
University of Oregon Libraries

For many years the University of Oregon Library has collected the essential planning documents for Oregon cities and counties. Our paper collection of comprehensive plans, development codes, sub-area and special purpose plans from the 1960s to the present now numbers in the thousands. (To see what we have from your community, you can visit our catalog at <http://janus.uoregon.edu/search/X>, and do a search like this: "keizer and planning"). Although these documents are collected for the use of Community and Regional Planning program faculty and students, they are also available for anyone else to use on-site, or to borrow through inter-library loan.

We have noticed, however, that paper has become passé—the Web has emerged as the preferred publication method for the information of local governments. When we ask Centerburg for a comprehensive plan or development code, they're more likely to give us a Web address than to send us a paper document. For a library like us—who wants to maintain a comprehensive archival collection—this poses some real challenges and opportunities. Our opportunity is that we can now serve up these invaluable documents electronically, so that our patrons can use them wherever it's convenient, and take advantage of the power and flexibility of digital formats. The challenge consists in finding them in the first place, capturing them in a usable form, preserving them permanently, and making them easily available for users.

Many libraries are trying to solve the problem of "gray" digital literature. A solution being tried by the University of Oregon Libraries is an innovative use of the UO's institutional repository, Scholars' Bank <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/dspace/>. Scholars' Bank is an open access archive for UO scholarly output, which uses a digital asset management software called dSpace, developed by MIT Libraries and Hewlett Packard (Jenkins et al, nd).

While Scholars' Bank is used primarily for the digital archiving and dissemination of UO scholarship, it also suits our purpose perfectly. We have established two categories in Scholars' Bank, one for Oregon cities, and another for counties. Within each of these "communities" is a set of sub-categories for major types of planning documents: comprehensive plans, development codes, sub-area plans, strategic plans, and a growing number of other varieties. We are in the process of filling out these categories with documents captured from local government Web sites.

Once we have identified a candidate Web document, we capture it and deposit it in the appropriate Scholars' Bank collection. Regardless of its original format, we capture the document as a PDF file. Internal links from the original documents are retained, but we disable external links (such as to the department's home page). Each file is accompanied by a set of metadata, which describes the essential features of the document (date, authorship, subjects, original URL, etc.), and enhances its likelihood of being found by internet search engines. We plan to check routinely for revised or newly-published documents.

To view a set of these documents, try browsing through the set of comprehensive plans for cities:

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/dspace/handle/1794/1271/browse-title>. Similar plans for counties are at <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/dspace/handle/1794/1419/browse-title>. As of this writing, we have mounted such plans for 30 cities and eight counties. If your community's plan is missing, it may be because we are waiting for some action to be completed, such as State or judicial review. In most cases, however, we could not find the plan on the city's Web site, or the file was too complex and multi-layered to capture easily. In such cases, we may contact the local



government directly and request an alternative file type.

Local governments produce such a bewildering variety of information that we cannot predict what any given jurisdiction might have authored. The UO's project focuses initially on those categories that are required by federal or State statutes, regulations or programs, and can therefore be reliably expected of every jurisdiction. Once we have these fundamental documents under control, we plan to branch out to less standard fare. Here is a listing of the categories currently being addressed:

*Comprehensive plans.* A comprehensive plan is a document stating the general, long-range policies that will govern a local community's future development. These plans are required of each city and county by Oregon legislation.

*Development codes.* Development codes are ordinances implementing a local government's comprehensive plan. They generally include two components: a zoning ordinance and a subdivision ordinance.

*Sub-area plans.* These are often officially adopted as subordinate parts of comprehensive plans, for smaller units of a city, such as neighborhoods, downtown areas, or commercial and industrial lands; or for unincorporated urban areas of counties. These documents may also be called "refinement plans" or "community plans".

*Transportation system plans (TSP).* An Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development rule requires a TSP as an element of a community's comprehensive plan. These are typically published as separate documents.

*Consolidated plans.* A consolidated plan is a document describing the housing needs of the low- and moderate-income residents, outlining strategies to meet the needs, and listing all resources available to implement the strategies. This document is required to receive HUD Community Planning and Development funds.

*Strategic plans.* Strategic plans report the results of a comprehensive long-range governmental planning process, and typically address major planning themes through vision statements, goals, and concrete action steps. They are often referred to by titles such as "Economic and Community Development Plan."

Other types of documents, optionally produced, are more specific in their thrust and are of particular interest to academic programs at the UO, but have potentially broad appeal outside the University. These will be addressed in later phases. Examples include:

*Historic preservation documents.*

These include inventories, surveys, and preservation plans for historic areas, districts, sites, landscapes, and buildings. Titles vary widely, and may include cultural resources inventories and archeological investigations.

*Environmental protection documents.*


These can include studies or officially adopted plans for the protection of such areas as wetlands, open spaces, riparian areas, and the Willamette Greenway.

*Natural hazard mitigation plans.* In developing this collection the Libraries will be working with the UO's Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup (ONHW).



*Park and recreation plans.* Nearly every jurisdiction has a parks master plan, and often adds specific plans for individual parks or activities.

This is not a complete list, but represents the categories of high interest to UO programs and, we believe, to many Oregonians. We are interested in working together with partners in the State to identify valuable documents, and to coordinate our efforts with other activities, in order to create a lasting archive of public information for both current and historical research. Contact the author at [tstave@uoregon.edu](mailto:tstave@uoregon.edu) to discuss ideas for collaboration.

The collection owes its historical depth to the legacy of the reports of the UO's now-defunct Bureau of Governmental Research and Service (BGRS); and to the largesse of libraries throughout Oregon who, when pondering their old local documents, thought of us as they did little Mikey in the old Life cereal commercial: "Give it to Mikey—he'll eat anything!" 

**References**

Jenkins, B., Breakstone, E. and Hixson, C., no date. Content In, Content Out: The Dual Roles of the Reference Librarian in Institutional Repositories. (In press) <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/dspace/handle/1794/704>

**Virtual Documents Repository**

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The beta test model of the repository will go into effect in February 2006. State Library staff will continue to work with libraries and agencies to ensure that the system works effectively and provides the services that each partner needs. This ongoing conversation has been critical to the success of the project so far and will continue to be. The repository will go live in July 2006. 