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At the University of Oregon Knight Library, the Division of Special Collections and University Archives and the Instructional Media Center have been carrying out a project over the past several months to digitize and make available on CD-ROM over 8,000 images from the Library's Doris Ulmann Photograph Collection. All aspects of the project, from the design of the database and its interface to the pressing of the CD-ROM, have been accomplished in-house, making use of available resources and staff support, without the aid of outside funding. The project has been feasible largely because of its collaborative nature and widespread support throughout the library. The initial results have been positive. Besides protecting and providing access to fragile collection materials, the project also has served as a pilot for how similar projects might be undertaken in the future, particularly in the current

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climate of shrinking federal dollars for grant-supported preservation and access initiatives.

The Doris Ulmann Collection is one of the library's primary photograph collections. Doris Ulmann (1882-1934) was an American fine art photographer whose major life work involved photographing rural people of the South. From the late 1920's until the time of her death, Ulmann traveled to remote areas of Appalachia, where she took thousands of photographs in isolated rural communities. Her photographs from these studies reveal the variety of mountain culture. Portraits feature images of preachers, craftspeople, musicians, and families. Doris Ulmann is also known for her portraiture of African-Americans, particularly the Gullah of the Sea Islands and tidewater areas of South Carolina. The collection is one of the Library's most well-known photograph collections (it is also one of the most frequently requested collections). For the past several years there has been growing interest in Ulmann's work, particularly in those images at the University of Oregon. The collection is used by researchers from a variety of fields and disciplines: art history, history of photography, women's studies, African-American studies, folklore, and sociology.

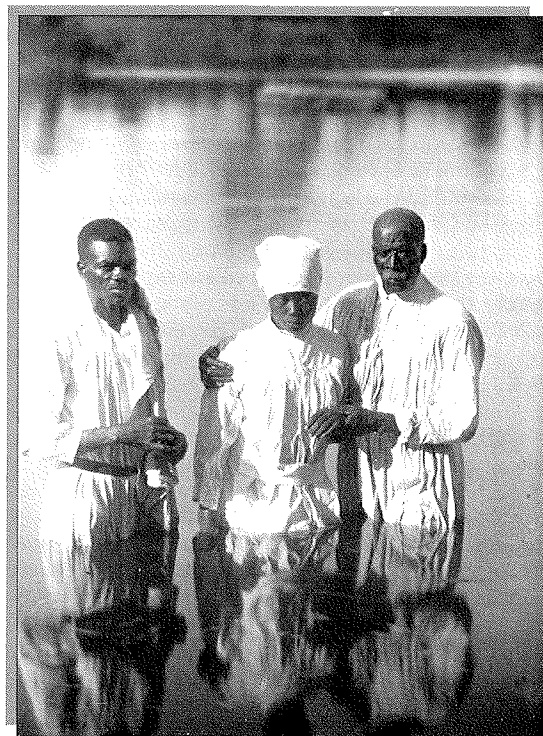
The project underway at the Knight Library is to scan over 8,000 Ulmann photographs from a series of valuable proof print albums and make the photographs available in an image database. The vast majority of these proof prints are the only known extant. Most of the prints have no negatives, nor do additional copies of these prints survive. The research value of the proof prints is enhanced by the fact that the assembled albums, in which the proof prints are mounted, contain notations and marginalia by Ulmann's associates and have artifactual value

in themselves. Digitizing the images and providing access to them through the CD-ROM will create a much-needed surrogate and will reduce the need for researchers to handle the original proof print albums.

The project to create an image database involves photography, but the basic approach and workplan could just as well be applied to other types of visual material: illustrations, brochures, advertisements, handbills, or other types of printed ephemera. From a general perspective, the project consists of three basic activities: scanning the photographs, creating corresponding text files, and designing the database and its interface. In the course of the project these activities were kept separate and distinct. The creation of the information and subsequent quality and authority control was the responsibility of the Special Collections staff; the creation of the screen designs and final construction of the database was carried out in the library's graphic arts department, a unit of the Instructional Media Center.

SCANNING

Scanning the photographs took place in Special Collections using a standard scanner. A student employee, trained to do scanning, created the initial digital image files. The photographs were scanned and saved in JPEG file format. The average size of each digitized image was 60K. Only minor adjustments were made to the scanned images. Because the tonal values varied from print to print, occasionally the digitized images appeared too light or too dark. In these cases, the contrast of the scan was adjusted as necessary. This occasional modification was the only alteration made to the digitized images.



The digital scans were carefully compared to the original photographs for quality-control. Finally, the scans were re-sized to a standard dimension of 5.5 inches in height or length, depending upon whether the image was vertical or horizontal. After several months, the scanning is nearly complete. All scanning activity was carried out by one part-time work-study student working ten hours per week.

CREATION OF TEXT FILES

A parallel activity in preparing the data was the creation of text files that would later be matched with corresponding images. A single document was created in a spreadsheet-style format to organize the basic data elements. The document consists of four data fields: a unique image number field; a caption information field; a personal name of subject field (the majority of Ulmann's photographs are portraits); and a geographic name location field. This document was also designed to serve as a basic item-level collection inventory. (In the absence of corresponding scanned images, such a document can provide basic intellectual control and be mounted on the Web as a finding aid). As these text files are completed, including the necessary authority control work, they are being merged with the corresponding digital files. With the completion of this activity, all of the necessary data will be in place for the caption information and indexing for subject searching.

DESIGN OF DATABASE AND INTERFACE

While the creation and management of the data elements was being carried out in Special Collections, the database and its interface were designed by the staff of the graphic arts department in the library's Instructional Media Center. One of the primary goals was for the database and its design to be as transparent and easy-to-use as possible. Both the search engine and the overall interface of the database were designed to be simple and straightforward. The project team attempted to create as few screens as necessary, making navigation through and among the screens as seamless as possible.

Following the title screen and copyright screens, both of which are automatic and dissolve within a few seconds, the main menu appears. At this point, the user is given the option to retrieve information about the collection, retrieve information about how to obtain prints, view the collection index, or search the images by way of a slide show option in which a series of images may be selected for viewing. The last two options are the heart of the CD-ROM. One search method allows for specific subject searching; the other accommodates users who may want to randomly browse the images. Recent uses of the collection support the importance of offering both search strategies. At each step of the way in navigating the screens, the researcher has the option to return to the previous screen or return to the main menu.

CONCLUSION

A cursory review of current reports on digitization initiatives and the creation of "digital libraries" often



gives one the impression that such projects necessarily require substantial commitments in terms of both funding and staff support. This impression, coupled with the shrinking pool of federal and state dollars for such projects (and increased competition among institutions for those limited dollars), might lead one to draw the conclusion that such projects are possible only at major research institutions. With the success of this pilot project, we have learned that digitization efforts are more feasible than one initially might think and that such initiatives do not necessarily require substantial outside resources.

For the purposes of protecting fragile collection materials and enhancing access to visual images, the Doris Ulmann CD-ROM thus far appears to be a useful surrogate and tool for providing access to visual images. Aside from the benefits of the CD-ROM for supporting both preservation and access, an important aspect of the project has been the learning process involved in how to make such a project a reality. The project has been and continues to be a collaborative effort, and could not have been accomplished without inter-departmental support. The results have been exciting, but it should be underscored that the project team did not invent anything or use a new technology. Simply by making use of existing technology and resources, the library has been able to develop a product that suits the interests of current and future researchers and promotes the long-term preservation of the collections. 