It Takes A Village: Resource Sharing and the Historian
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INTRODUCTION
This poster reviews the processes developed and implemented at George Mason University to support the research needs of and continued assistance for patrons with visual impairments.

ABSTRACT
Historians require access to primary sources for analysis. These resources have always been problematic for resource sharing because few libraries hold them, and often they are only available in print or microform. Mason Libraries faced a subtle, yet important, new challenge: a future historian with a visual impairment, working on a dissertation at George Mason, needed access to a rare, not locally held newspaper that was only available in microform. The student’s research needs increased to more than a dozen specific newspapers. This poster illustrates the collaborative model developed across the George Mason University community to deliver the needed resource. It also documents the steps developed and implemented to provide assistance and continuing support. Ultimately, this poster demonstrates that robust initiative and collaboration across a campus can provide scholars access to the sources they need.

CONSULTATION AND SOLUTION
In Summer 2016, a George Mason University doctoral student with a visual impairment met with George Oberle, History Librarian. During the research consultation, they identified several core newspaper resources that were needed—both in print and microfilm. Due to its Grant-in-Aid of Education and Research (GIER) funding, Mason Libraries was able to acquire microfilm copies of the Newspapers. Screening access to key sources was a significant step forward, and the student’s work gained valuable access to some of the most relevant documents in support of his research. This ongoing project required Mason faculty and staff to develop, implement, and refine collaborative workflows for the patron’s effective and productive use of the resources.

WHY IT MATTERS
Mason Libraries observe the ALA Code. The libraries provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and useful organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests. Mason’s Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI) is committed to ensuring equivalent access to individuals with disabilities in the Mason community, following the standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and WCAG 2.0.

STEPS

Request Made
• ILL contacted potential lender
• Lender supplied the material
• Student received the material
• Mason ATI Office was contacted; staff trained to use microfilm machines
• Project scope became much larger than anticipated; student needed:
  • Specific content from more than 12 individual newspapers
  • Specific keywords found in specific time periods in each paper

Solution / Continuation
• OSCAR Fellows sponsored by Professor Kelly Schrum
  • Fellows trained on equipment and process
  • Doctoral student provided specific keywords/timeframes to search
  • Fellows read material for instances of the specified keywords in specified timeframes
  • Fellows physically scanned “hits” and saved for doctoral student use
  • More than 100 hours scanning the requested material
• Project continues: doctoral student researching and writing for at least another year

Challenges
• Due dates / Shorter time periods
• Multiple sets of reels
• Time and Funding

FURTHER DISCUSSION
What are the next steps or new questions for this project?
• Discussed complications with process.
• Mason Libraries, in collaboration with other campus departments, need to systematize this process to improve customer service.
• By systemizing and streamlining the process, we can better deploy resources more effectively and improve turn around time for the user’s request.

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IMAGES
2. Ramos L. (2017, September 27) [Demonstration of microfilm machine].
3. Ramos L. (2017, September 20) [Screenshot of initial ILLiad request].