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## Reflections on Digitization, Outreach, and the Value of Ephemera in Special Collections: A Case Study

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### Cover Page Footnote

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Gordon Daines III, Marisa Snyder, Scott Eldridge, Michael Whitchurch, Maggie Kopp, and Ryan Lee of Brigham Young University for their assistance on various points in this paper. He also expresses gratitude for his patient wife who helped him work through this paper, and to his father for his advice and counsel throughout the writing process.

# Reflections on Digitization, Outreach, and the Value of Ephemera in Special Collections: A Case Study

Gregory K. Seppi

## ABSTRACT

This case study describes the process L. Tom Perry Special Collections used to create and promote a digital collection of ephemera on Internet Archive. It follows the process from selection to uploading, discusses how decisions related to digitization were made, and how the collection was promoted following digitization. This paper establishes the value of digitizing ephemera related to topics known to be of interest to patrons and demonstrates one approach to special collections outreach. Data gathered during the creation of this case study demonstrates that even small efforts to promote digital collections can significantly improve usage of niche ephemera collections and improve relationships between institutions and researchers.

## Introduction

Curators at L. Tom Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University are responsible for growing and promoting their collecting areas.<sup>1</sup> As the curator of the 19th and 20th century Americana book collection, I am responsible for organizing projects related to that collection. LTPSC has a well-established digital lab and digitization process, and curators have organized dozens

1. Hereafter, I shorten L. Tom Perry Special Collections to LTPSC; Harold B. Lee Library to HBLL; and Brigham Young University to BYU. I also use IA as shorthand for Internet Archive, [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org). LTPSC curators are responsible for smaller subdivisions within our (still increasing) collection of 300,000 rare books, 11,000+ manuscript collections, and 500,000 photographic images. These divisions include: Mormon and Western American Books, Mormon and Western American Manuscripts, Victorian Literature, Rare Literature, Film Archive, History of Cinematography, History of Photography, University Archives, Folklore, Music, and Yellowstone. For more details about these and other collections, see <https://sc.lib.byu.edu/>.

of digitization projects since the mid-1990s when the HBLL first began putting content online.<sup>2</sup>

This case study describes the process and methods LTPSC used to create a new online collection of Mormon-related ephemera, including how decisions related to digitization were made, the process for uploading digital materials, and how the collection was promoted afterwards. The purpose of this study is to establish the value of digitizing ephemera as part of an outreach strategy to a particular community, and then to highlight how LTPSC's digitization process functioned. In my conclusion, I evaluate the relative success of the project and consider how the process might be improved.

In mid-2016, I learned that many ephemeral items in our Americana Vault collection, which holds many of the most valuable rare materials owned by BYU, were not available online. To test our patrons' desire for digital materials related to Mormonism and to promote a little-used area of the collection, I identified 252 Utah and Mormon-related ephemeral pieces in the Vault that could be easily digitized. These items date from 1836 through the late 1920s and include items in English, French, German, and Danish, mostly written or produced by men but also including two pieces written by women. The items in this sampling are scarce and ephemeral, and the immediate audience for each piece is limited to historians and other scholars of the Mormon experience. However, engaging this audience is important because they are one of the core user groups served by LTPSC.

After considering the relative value of digitizing these materials, I arranged to have them scanned and uploaded to Internet Archive.<sup>3</sup> The initial group of 252 scanned items can be found at <https://archive.org/details/mormonutahephemera>.<sup>4</sup> This collection of items was chosen for three reasons. First, LTPSC serves a large community of scholars interested in Mormonism, so this project had an immediate potential audience. Second, ephemeral items often have a visual quality that makes them excellent for social media posts. Finally, they were arranged together in boxes

2. In addition to scanning hundreds of major Mormon-related books and periodicals, including both the *Young Woman's Journal* and the *Woman's Exponent*, and over one hundred manuscript collections related to Utah and Mormon history, BYU has engaged in many digital projects not related to Mormonism. A list of collections scanned by BYU and available on IA is located at [https://archive.org/details/brigham\\_young\\_university](https://archive.org/details/brigham_young_university). Another list of digital collections on the HBLL's CONTENTdm database is found at <https://lib.byu.edu/collections?q=tag:digital>. There is some small overlap between the two lists since the list includes some links to Internet Archive, but as a general rule, all manuscript collections are uploaded through our CONTENTdm database and all books scanned since at least 2012 are uploaded to IA.
3. The process for digitizing LTPSC materials intended to be uploaded to the Internet Archive is found in the third section of this paper.
4. Once it became clear that there was considerable interest on the part of some researchers, I organized a project to add another 352 pieces of ephemera related to Mormonism to the online collection, so this collection should be expected to grow and change over time.

under the same Dewey class, 094 (Rare Books). This meant that they could be scanned more quickly, making this project low-impact in terms of its effect on staff time and resources. In this article, I refer to the items digitized during this project as the “Vault 094s” for convenience.

The term “ephemera” encompasses a broad range of materials including pamphlets, broadsides, posters, flyers, handbills, tickets, cigarette boxes, certificates and other memorabilia. Ephemera provides a glimpse into the past by revealing aspects of societies that are otherwise difficult to document or even forgotten. For example, few items better illustrate perceptions of male sexuality in Victorian-era life than *The Mormon Elder’s Book*, a late 19th century advertisement for a product marketed as a sexual stimulant for men.<sup>5</sup> Produced by a New York company that specialized in prophylactics and tinctures to improve sexual functions, this small pamphlet capitalized on the mythical virility of Mormon leaders. Its message seems to be that all men would be polygamists if they could be, or perhaps that the reason Mormon polygamists were able to keep so many wives was because of products like the wafers. It plays on public outrage against polygamy and the illicit nature of products like the wafers while maintaining social myths about sex roles. Given its fragility, that such an artifact has survived down to the present is nothing short of miraculous.

In addition to pieces such as the *Mormon Elder’s* advertisement booklet, less controversial documents were also scanned, such as a ca. 1870 certificate for the Salt Lake Yacht Club.<sup>6</sup> One of the most intriguing items in the collection is a beautiful advertisement for Cronk beer, a popular beer brewed under license in Salt Lake City by a Latter-day Saint who had emigrated from Wales.<sup>7</sup> Dated 1876, this piece shows that Latter-day Saints did not immediately eschew alcohol in the 19th century; rather, the cultural shift against alcohol that Mormons are often known for today developed over time as Latter-day Saints placed greater emphasis on that area of their faith.

5. This item was not uploaded with the rest of the ephemera described in this paper at the time this paper was received by the *Journal of Western Archives*. Due to steady use of our ephemera on IA, I arranged a second scanning project encompassing 350 other ephemeral pieces, including this item. Not all of the next set of scans had been uploaded at the time this paper was revised prior to publication. See *The Mormon Elder’s Book* (New York: F. B. Crouch, 1882). <https://archive.org/details/mormoneldersbookoonewy> (accessed September 5, 2017).
6. See Figures 1 and 2. While the Yacht Club certificate may seem unimportant, it can easily be viewed as evidence of Salt Lake City’s growing population of individuals with the means to organize such a club. The item is finely printed and could be used as an example of growing social divisions between the wealthy and poor that began to appear as mining became a fixture in Utah’s economy in the 1860s and 1870s. Additionally, the item is something of an oddity because sailing on Salt Lake would be very unpleasant.
7. See Figure 3.

## Literature Review

In this review of the literature, the value of ephemera collections for research and classroom use is discussed. This is followed by an analysis of the literature on library digital collections and digital repositories such as Internet Archive (IA). Finally, the role of social media in promoting digital collections and relationships between libraries and researchers is considered in light of recent studies on academic library use of social media.

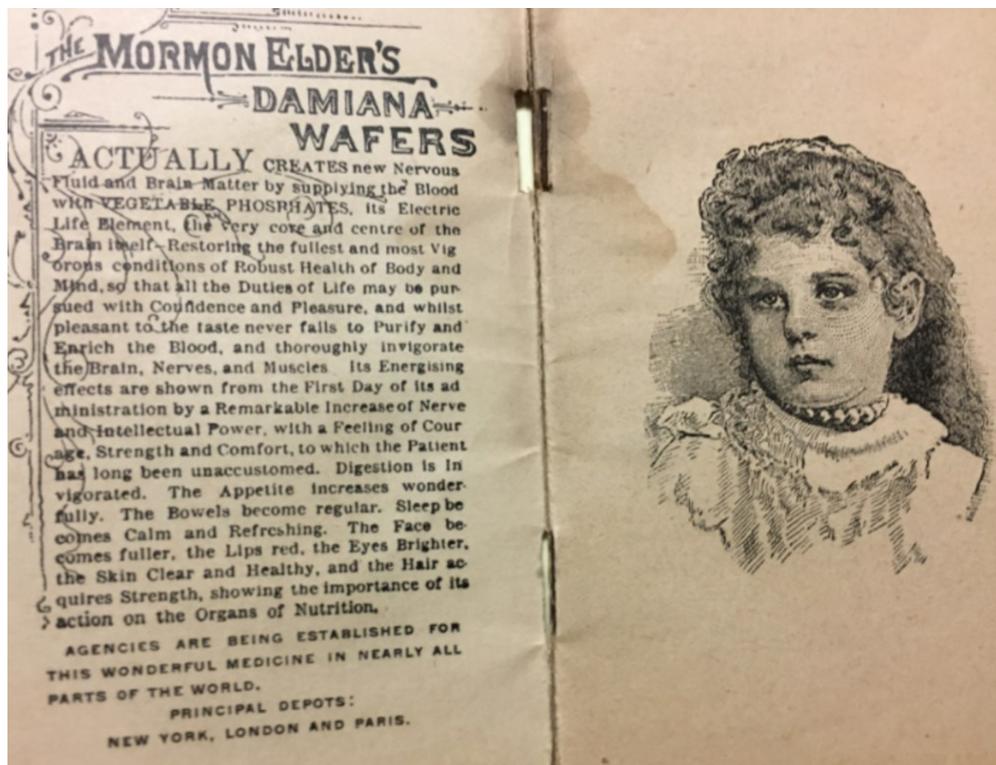


Figure 1. *The Mormon Elder's Damiana Wafers*, p. 2 and 3. Image courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections. <http://www.archive.org/details/mormoneldersbookoonewy> (accessed September 2017).



Figure 2. Salt Lake Yacht Club. Image courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Provo, Utah. <https://archive.org/details/certificateofmemo5salt> (accessed September 2017).

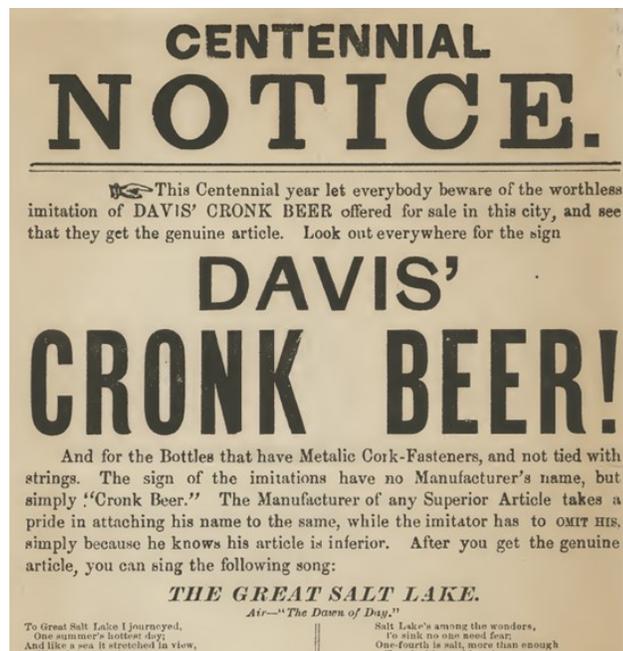


Figure 3. Centennial Notice. Davis' Cronk Beer! Image courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Provo, Utah. <https://archive.org/details/centennialnoticeo9davi> (accessed September 2017).

## The Value of Ephemera Collections

While bibliography as the study of books as objects is currently a mostly-forgotten field, ephemera provides immense value to researchers exploring the history of printing due to the examples of job printing typically preserved in ephemera files.<sup>8</sup> Ephemera can also be of great value for increasing our understanding of popular culture in different time periods. Librarians and archivists can help patrons generate useful connections to the past by careful use of ephemera to illustrate historical events.<sup>9</sup> For example, advertisements often provide vivid glimpses into the mindsets of advertisers and potential customers. Theater and cinema broadsides and handbills help us understand how popular culture was expressed at different times and places because they show how particular characters and stories were expressed.

One example of this found in the Vault 094s is a handbill produced for a performance by the Home Dramatic Club at the Salt Lake Theater in 1880.<sup>10</sup> The title of the work performed, "Queen's Evidence," is intriguing because the American title of the work, according to a 1908 history of the Boston Theatre, was "A Free Pardon."<sup>11</sup> Why did a group of Utah actors choose the British title? By 1880, thousands of British citizens had emigrated to Utah, and their influence on local culture is visible in the title choice. This suggests that popular culture in Utah was informed by trends from England. More generally, researchers interested in popular culture have often turned to theater broadsides and handbills to show what ideas and beliefs were commonly accepted by a population at a certain point in time.<sup>12</sup>

8. Job printing refers to the commercial printing efforts undertaken by a printing press. It was an important source of revenue in the years before advertising became the main source of profit.
9. One author has delineated some of the intricacies of understanding the past and the dangers of presentism (believing that one's own age is superior to all others) with reference to the work of Bertrand Russell. This leads him to argue that using ephemera in the classroom can lead students to better understand previous generations. See Jad Smith, "Teaching Ephemera: The Eighteenth-Century Culture of Charity in the Contemporary Classroom," *Encountering Ephemera, 1500-1800: Scholarship, Performance, Classroom*, eds. Joshua B. Fisher and Rebecca Steinberger (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK), 533.
10. Home Dramatic Club, *Theatre! To-night! To-night! The Inauguration of Home Theatricals by the Home Dramatic Club...* (Salt Lake City, 1880). <https://archive.org/details/theatretonighttoohome> (accessed September 7, 2017).
11. Eugene Thompkins and Quincy Kilby, *The History of the Boston Theatre, 1854-1901* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908), 295.
12. Theater broadsides were used by one author to prove a major shift in American Culture during a two-hundred year period. See Daniel A. Cohen, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace: New England Crime Literature and the Origins of American Popular Culture, 1674-1860* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993). In a 2016 article by Debra Caplan, she used theater ephemera, including broadsides, playbills, and programs, to reassess the impact of late 19th and early 20th century Yiddish theater on the broader history of theater in the United States, upending the traditional narrative used

The value of ephemera to researchers and thus to library collections has been articulated by many library and museum professionals over the past fifty years. For example, Pollard argued that artist ephemera was essential for telling the story of artists in United Kingdom art library collections in 1977.<sup>13</sup> Harvey and Watson, commenting forty years later on Pollard's influential article, wrote:

We're trying to capture information particularly on artists at an early stage in their careers, who may not have been the subject of a major publication yet. For well-known artists, the ephemera produced over periods of years traces their careers and can sometimes fill in gaps not covered in books and exhibition catalogues. It gives a fuller picture [of the artist's work and career].<sup>14</sup>

While libraries and archives have long recognized the value ephemera provides, curators, archivists, and special collections librarians have sometimes struggled to balance best practices in processing while also creating records that help patrons locate otherwise hidden materials, though EADs have been used as a solution for long-term vertical files accumulated by institutions.<sup>15</sup> Access to ephemera can be difficult to facilitate without extensive work behind the scenes to organize and describe such material, which often cuts against trends towards MPLP.<sup>16</sup> "Varied ephemera," after all, is not an especially inviting collection title for a researcher with limited time and funds.

Ephemera is, however, known to be useful in object-oriented classroom discussions of historical moments.<sup>17</sup> The Library of Congress's guide to using broadsides in the classroom argues that they capture experiences related to important turning points in history. Additionally, classes that require students to work with original documents can immerse students in the past, providing long-lasting

to explain the history of American culture. See Debra Caplan, "Reassessing Obscurity: The Case for Big Data in Theatre History," *Theatre Journal* 68, no. 4 (December 2016), 555-573.

13. Nik Pollard, "Arty Choke: Acquisitions and Ephemera," *Art Libraries Journal* 2, no. 4 (January 1977): 4.
14. Alice Harvey, "Arty Choke: A Response: Alice Harvey, in Conversation with Kerry Watson," *Art Libraries Journal* 41, no. 2 (April 2016): 84.
15. Rebecca Altermatt and Adrien Hilton, "Hidden Collections within Hidden Collections: Providing Access to Printed Ephemera," *American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2012), 1.
16. The razor's edge between too much processing and too little is often at its most complicated when archival collections contain extensive printed ephemera. MPLP stands for "More product, less process" and refers to Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208.
17. The Library of Congress, "An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broad­sides and Other Printed Ephemera." <https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/time-capsule/> (accessed June 30, 2017).

memories and connections to the past.<sup>18</sup> Ephemera can make up part of a primary source lab such as that suggested by Claremont University Consortium librarians in 2016.<sup>19</sup> Understanding how ephemera comes to be could be an important aspect of gaining primary source literacy, depending on how information literacy and/or primary source labs are set up.

The digitization of ephemera for use by educators can be an excellent means of sharing information about the lived experience of past peoples to those who have, perhaps, never considered how culture changes over time.<sup>20</sup> Ephemera gives us glimpses into the problems of the past in a way that allows educators and researchers to frame issues like racism, sexism, and class violence. For example, this can help students develop a better sense of what it was like to live in a time when it was normal for stores to use racist or even genocidal language in their advertising. While we are a long way from setting aside such concerns in our own time, helping students connect the language of the past with the problems that people outside of societal norms faced can be one of the best ways to use ephemera.<sup>21</sup>

Ephemera can also be political. Tkach and Hank argued for politicizing collection development in their article on collecting zines, another ephemeral form of printing. Many of their points about the value of collecting zines (i.e., they illustrate and conceptualize countercultural experiences) are equally valid in general discussions of ephemera, though at times from the opposite perspective. Zines “represent individual expressions unconcerned with adhering to viewpoints that encourage sales, or even readership for that matter. Zine writers often expose the most personal details of their lives and disseminate printed copies of those details to whoever may care to pick up a copy.”<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, other ephemera tells the viewer about the vernacular assumptions societies make. Advertising ephemera, tickets, broadsides, certificates, and other artifacts are produced for public consumption. Ephemera in general obfuscates our relationship to the past by drawing historical material into the present. A ticket to a 19th-century play may have features that render it distinct from

18. I speak here from my own experiences, but see also Rian E. Bowie, “Discovering the Woman in the Text: Early African American Print, Gender Studies, and the Twenty-First-Century Classroom,” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 33, no. 1 (2016), 8-11.

19. Adam Rosenkranz, Gale Burrow, and Lisa L. Crane, “Developing a Primary Source Lab Series: A Collaboration Between Special Collections and Subject Collections Librarians,” in *Collaborating for Impact: Special Collections and Liaison Librarian Partnerships*, eds. Kristen Totleben and Lori Birrell, (Chicago: ACRL/ALA, 2016), 167-168.

20. Michael Heller and Aidan Kelly, “Throwaway History: Brand Ephemera and Consumer Culture,” *Journal of Macromarketing* 35, no. 3 (2014): 397.

21. David Tkach and Carolyn Hank, “Before Blogs There Were Zines: Berman, Danky, and the Political Case for Zine Collecting in North American Academic Libraries,” *Serials Review* 40, no. 1 (author's accepted manuscript, May 2014): 1-2. Tkach and Hank argued that preserving zines saved alternative historical perspectives and identities from the trash heap.

22. *Ibid.*, 2.

a theater ticket today, but any student or researcher can relate to the experience of buying a ticket. When the 19th-century ticket happens to be for an anti-Irish or blackface sketch, the very familiarity of the ticket creates a sinister echo that defamiliarizes it. This makes ephemera useful in classroom discussions about difficult historical events because ephemera highlights the past in a way that makes it both familiar and distinct from the present.

### Academic Libraries and Digital Collections

In 2014, the author of a study on social media use by corporations noted that those engaged in promoting and engaging the public through social media had largely lost control of their brands. Responses to a flat marketing campaign are instantaneous, and even a well-thought out approach to branding can be sideswiped by aggressive social media users.<sup>23</sup> The upshot of this reality is that marketing professionals today seek to foster engagement between products and consumers rather than simply push a brand message or a corporate line. Interactivity is fundamental to successful marketing campaigns.<sup>24</sup> Research by librarians and archivists in recent years has similarly found that social media campaigns carried out by libraries must engage users. At least one such study also noted that libraries and archives using social media were completely missing out on the opportunities to engage users that social networks created.<sup>25</sup> Another major case study of special collections users found that making more digitized collections available online was one of the most requested improvements requested by patrons.<sup>26</sup>

Just as consumer habits have changed since the advent of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest, researchers have also undergone important shifts in the way they do their work.<sup>27</sup> Researchers develop information networks to support their work. These networks are often made of friends and colleagues, but since most conversations occur in public spaces online, the opportunity for libraries and archives to be part of these conversations has never been

23. Marcus Kick, "Corporate Brand Posts on Facebook: The Role of Interactivity, Vividness, and Involvement," in *Selected Essays on Corporate Reputation and Social Media: Collection of Empirical Evidence* (Munich, Germany: Springer Gabler, 2015), 142.

24. *Ibid.*, 142-145.

25. Melanie Griffin and Tomaro Taylor, "Of Fans, Friends, and Followers: Methods for Assessing Social Media Outreach in Special Collections Repositories," *Journal of Web Librarianship* 7 (2013): 259. DOI: 10.1080/19322909.2013.812471.

26. Wendy M. Duff, "User Studies in Archives," in *User Studies for Digital Library Development*, ed. Milena Dobrova et al. (Facet Publishing, 2012), 201.

27. Lorcan Dempsey, Constance Malpas, and Brian Lavoie, "Collection Directions: Some Reflections on the Future of Library Collections and Collecting," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14, no. 3 (July 2014): 398-399.

better or more necessary for libraries to survive.<sup>28</sup> What content can we provide researchers to keep them coming back to us? How can we add value to their work?

As libraries continue to move beyond traditional users to invite new stakeholders to participate at all levels, our ability to communicate with these new users is often facilitated by social media tools. Library users often see libraries as “conduits of information, specifying that the role of libraries is to provide scholars with an easy access to information.”<sup>29</sup> Special Collections in general contain many books and collections that are only rarely of interest to the general public. While teaching faculty and librarians at academic institutions often work together to teach students how to use special collections materials, usage of any particular collection or book is a function of how well that resource meets the immediate needs of the researcher and the discoverability of the collection or item.<sup>30</sup> Digitizing a book or a manuscript collection makes it accessible to anyone with an internet connection, but if no one knows it exists, how will it ever be used? Social media is one tool to bridge this gap between digitization and use.

### Libraries and Social Media

Dempsey, Malpas, and Lavoie’s 2014 major study of trends in digital collections at academic institutions found that libraries in general were becoming more integrated as transaction costs traditionally associated with the information sharing activities of libraries decreased due to the growing strength of digital networks.<sup>31</sup> Librarians and information professionals have long recognized that digital librarianship a network-creating activity with social and technical aspects.<sup>32</sup> One example of digital library integration is Internet Archive, a multi-faceted, multi-media project to increase access to information of all kinds. Internet Archive has developed relationships with a wide variety of institutions to preserve and provide access to books, videos, and other media. Internet Archive is significant in this paper because the digitized ephemera

28. Smiljana Antonijevi and Ellysa Stern Cahoy, “Personal Library Curation: An Ethnographic Study of Scholars’ Information Practices,” *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14, no. 2 (April 2014): 288.

29. *Ibid.*, 301.

30. The term “discoverability” refers to all efforts made to push material out to the public and includes press releases, social media references, OPAC (online patron access catalogs), finding aids (digital and physical), and Internet presence (does the item at your institution come up when a Google search on relevant terms is performed?).

31. Lorcan Dempsey, Constance Malpas, and Brian Lavoie, “Collection Directions: Some Reflections on the Future of Library Collections and Collecting,” *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14, no. 3 (July 2014): 395.

32. Ann P. Bishop, Nancy A. Van House, and Barbara P. Battenfield, eds., “Introduction: Digital Libraries as Sociotechnical Systems,” *Digital Library Use: Social Practice in Design and Evaluation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 1.

was uploaded to their servers for public access.<sup>33</sup> Yet lowering information transaction costs requires more than simply uploading documents to a Web server. The documents must reach the appropriate user—rather, the user must discover or be introduced to the documents they are interested in. As such, the collection and use of data about users is a key facet of modern information networks and necessary for preparing and assessing library work.<sup>34</sup> Relationships between curators, librarians, students, faculty, and independent researchers continue to facilitate the flow of information using both digital and face-to-face methods. Social media tools are crucial for creating connections between users and collections (or newly acquired rare books).

In 2013, Griffin and Taylor argued that prior studies of Special Collections social media use had failed to take into account the value of direct approaches by archivists and librarians to promote their materials online.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, they found that prior studies did not directly assess the return on investment (ROI) of social media activities. Griffin and Taylor found that special collections social media streams were being used as one-way information conduits to expose collections and library activities, not as tools to interact with patrons or to develop conversations.<sup>36</sup> The concept of meeting users “where they are” is a vital aspect of contemporary outreach.<sup>37</sup> Tweeting and blogging about new collections is good practice, but engaging potential users directly with content relevant to their needs requires diligent and careful study of where ideas and discussions are taking place.<sup>38</sup>

According to a 2015 study on consumer engagement and social media, social media networks grow when content producers frequently update their content and provide incentives for participation.<sup>39</sup> A study of library social media initiatives found that the libraries needed to be aware of their audience’s social media usage to

33. While we do lose some control over how the uploaded material is used and shared, we gain slightly higher discoverability and a much more fluid user interface than our in-house CONTENTdm, which has a sometimes difficult to use navigation interface.

34. Dempsey, Malpas, and Lavoie, 395.

35. Melanie Griffin and Tomaro Taylor, “Of Fans, Friends, and Followers: Methods for Assessing Social Media Outreach in Special Collections Repositories,” *Journal of Web Librarianship* 7 (2013): 259. DOI: 10.1080/19322909.2013.812471.

36. *Ibid.*, 266.

37. Mark Baggett and Rabia Gibbs, “Historypin and Pinterest for Digital Collections: Measuring the Impact of Image-Based Social Tools on Discovery and Access,” *Journal of Library Administration* 54 (2014): 12.

38. Griffin and Taylor, 269.

39. Christy Ashley and Tracy Tuten, “Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Branded Social Content and Consumer Engagement,” *Psychology & Marketing* 32, no. 1 (January 2015): 15.

successfully tailor their initiatives to their audience.<sup>40</sup> Another article stressed the importance of replying quickly to questions and daily updates also improved user engagement.<sup>41</sup> A 2016 study of Mormon studies researchers noted that “every respondent mentioned the use of online search engines, catalogs, and databases,” with one participant even noting that “the digital age is creating a lot of easy ways to find stuff you wouldn’t have found unless you spent twenty years [looking].”<sup>42</sup> The study’s findings suggest that making otherwise difficult-to-locate materials available online directly meets one of the most important needs expressed by researchers, their need for fresh material to write about topics from different angles.

### The Digital Process at BYU

In reviewing the literature on digitization, social media use in libraries, and ephemera, studies of digitization, outreach, and promotion are extremely common.<sup>43</sup> Case studies providing distinct insights into institutional approaches to digitizing and advertising are also somewhat common in the general literature on libraries and archives.<sup>44</sup> Though best practices in digital libraries are largely defined at this point in time, there are often differences in implementation, not to mention institutional idiosyncrasies, that can set organizations apart. The processes used to get an item through LTPSC’s digital labs are highlighted here as an example of one way to implement a digital workflow. The final product from this project, as mentioned above, can be found at <https://archive.org/details/mormonutahephemera>.

40. Jessica Hagman, “Joining the Twitter Conversation,” *Public Services Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (February 2012): 78-85.
41. Ginna Gaunthner Witte, “Content Generation and Social Network Interaction with Academic Library Facebook Pages,” *Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 89-100.
42. Trevan Hatch, Ryan Lee, and Gerrit van Dyk, “Research Support Services for Religious Studies,” All Faculty Publications, Paper 1745 (2016), 16.
43. See, for example, Lorri M. Mon, *Social Media and Library Services* (San Rafael, California: Morgan & Claypool, 2015); Marilyn N. Ochoa, *Digital Collections Assessment and Outreach* (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2014); Milena Dobрева, Andy O’Dwyer, and Pierluigi Feliciati, *User Studies for Digital Library Development* (Facet Publishing, 2012); Garry Robson, Malgorzata Zachara, and Agnieszka Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, *Digital Diversities: Social Media and Intercultural Experience* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).
44. Significant examples of articles on the digitizing process include Craig Harkema and Cheryl Avery, “Milne en Masse: A Case Study in Digitizing Large Image Collections,” *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 21 (2015): 249-255. DOI: 10.1080/13614533.2015.1034806. A recent M.S. thesis from the University of North Carolina surveyed the experiences of users of the University of North Carolina’s Wilson Library and their perceptions of library social media use and digital collections (see Lindsey J. Smith, “Users and Special Collections: Access and Outreach Awareness at the University of North Carolina’s Wilson Library” (master’s thesis, University of North Carolina, 2015)).

## Identifying Candidates for Digitization

In late 2016, a cataloger working to re-barcode printed works at LTPSC noticed that many early Utah and Mormon ephemeral pieces (dating from 1837-1923) were not available online. Each is cataloged using with an 094 Dewey call number. As such, this body of ephemera is referred to as the “Vault 094s.” Under the Dewey Decimal System historically used in the HBLL, the 094 classification was used for rare printed books. As the library became more sophisticated, items received more nuanced call numbers, but the Vault 094s were never reclassified. These items were acquired through purchase or donation by LTPSC curators from 1957 to the present, most notably by bibliographers Chad Flake and Larry W. Draper.

Because the Utah and Mormon Americana collections are traditional high-priority collecting areas for LTPSC, their preservation and use is significant to the library’s long-term collection goals. Additionally, LTPSC keeps a log of items requested by researchers in our reading room, and I turned to this log to see how often items from the vault 094s were used.<sup>45</sup> I thus determined that these items were rarely used.

Over the last three and a half years, LTPSC’s reading room has seen only a handful of uses of the Americana 094s—six requests from 2014-2016 and five in 2017. This was disappointing given that the 252 Vault 094 items are among the most valuable and historically interesting documents at BYU, but this is also logical. Each item relates to a specialized area of Mormon, Utah, or Western American history, meaning that only a subject specialist *might* know that a given item exists, have some sense of its potential significance, and know how to use it.

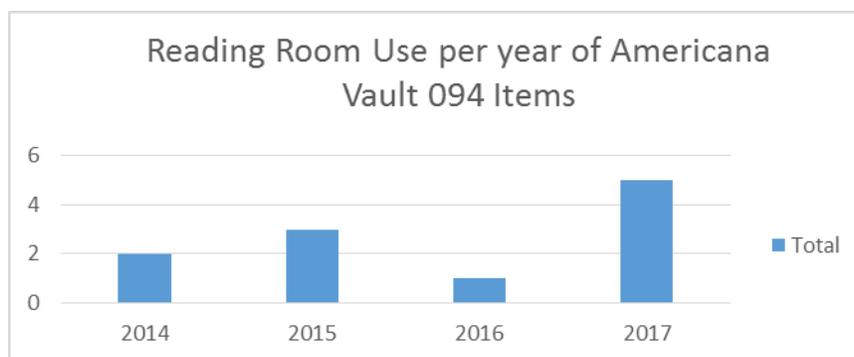


Figure 4. Use of Vault items in the Americana collection 094 class since 2014 in the LTPSC Reading Room

45. See Table 1. LTPSC items cataloged in the 094 Dewey series also contain some rare books not part of the Americana collection. Those items were not digitized as part of this project.

Sheer curiosity would be the only other “normal” rationale to look at these pieces. Fortunately, curiosity is a powerful force in the age of Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. Ephemera is well-suited for use in social media tools since most ephemeral pieces are visually interesting enough to get social media users’ attention and short enough to keep it. In 2014, a survey of academic libraries found that many institutions use social media to provide exposure to collections.<sup>46</sup> The value of social media as an instrument to promote collections is, however, limited by the number of potential users who follow a particular library, archive, or other repository on social media platforms.

While I considered abandoning the project at this stage, three considerations led me to push the proposal forward. First, BYU has an excellent process for uploading materials to Internet Archive, and the Digital Initiatives team overseeing the scanning process did not feel that they would be overburdened by the project. Second, given that many items in the 19th-century Utah and Mormon ephemera files are rare and fragile, creating digital copies preserves the originals from overuse in the long-term, and the copies would have the additional benefit of serving as back-ups in the event of a local disaster. Finally, making the scans available online as a group would allow me to advertise them as a group, extending the potential audience beyond each specific item to the whole fields of 19th-century Mormon and Western American studies.

### Special Collections Coordinating Committee Proposal

LTPSC vets digitization proposals at a bi-monthly coordinating committee meeting of all special collections curators, the head of our digital labs, a representative from the cataloging department, our conservators, and the lead digital preservation employee who determines if digitized items should be saved to our Rosetta server or on M-discs only.<sup>47</sup> Gaining approval to digitize print materials requires coordinating with several areas of the library before going to the coordinating committee. Our Digital Imaging lab is first contacted to see if they have the labor and time to work on the project. Next, a cataloger is asked to assess the state of finding aids or catalog records, since these provide the metadata for items uploaded to either CONTENTdm in the case of manuscripts or Internet Archive in the case of books. One of our two full-time conservators then evaluates the material for obvious conservation needs or items too fragile to scan. Finally, a digital

46. Taylor & Francis Group, *Use of Social Media by the Library: Current Practices and Future Opportunities* (Taylor and Francis Group, 2014), 14. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/access/white-paper-social-media.pdf> (accessed September 8, 2017).

47. Rosetta is an Ex Libris Group product described as “complete digital asset management and preservation solution covering the full life cycle of any type of content, from deposit to delivery to archiving.” See Ex Libris Group, “Rosetta Overview,” <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/category/RosettaOverview> (accessed June 30, 2017). M-discs are produced by Millenniata, Inc., and are DVDs that claim to be capable of lasting for a thousand years, since the data layer is composed of a mineral instead of the organic dyes used by other DVDs and CDs. See M-Disc, “FAQ,” <http://www.mdisc.com/faq-1> (accessed September 8, 2017).

preservation priority sheet is filled out for the digital preservation specialist who helps the curator determine how thoroughly the digital images will be backed up—either using Rosetta and M-Disc or M-Disc only. Note also that these steps are interchangeable up to this point, but the order provided is what I have found to be most efficient.

Before meeting with cataloging and Digital Imaging, curators at LTPSC fill out a request form and create a spreadsheet detailing the unique cataloging identifiers for each proposed item to be scanned. Data provided include the item's title, author, date created, and the extent of the material if more than a single volume, and the item's disposition after scanning—will it be returned to the stacks, returned to the curator, used in an exhibit, or something else?

List in hand, I drafted a formal digitization request and asked LTPSC's Coordinating Committee (hereafter SCCC) to approve the request, which was done at the next meeting of that committee. The library's Digital Initiatives (DI) team has numerous flatbed scanners as well as two special scanners set up for Internet Archive projects, and the scanning and uploading took less than two weeks from approval to scanning and uploading.

### The Digital Imaging Lab: Process and Equipment

The HBLL and LTPSC support two tools to provide access to digital collections. The first is through the library's website via CONTENTdm. The second is through Internet Archive. The HBLL's catalog records for digitized books on Internet Archive and on CONTENTdm generally include links to those works, though it can take quite some time for the links to be added to the catalog. Though not part of this project, digitized manuscript collections are generally linked through the finding aid, not directly through the catalog, though some collections have links in the catalog as an artifact of older processes.

While the technical details of the HBLL's digital labs may not interest everyone, the intent of this paper is to share the process used to promote ephemera and its value to researchers and teachers. The digitization process we used is a critical part of this process.<sup>48</sup> The library's Internet Archive directory holds more than 21,500 items consisting of well over 5,000,000 images. In 2016, 1514 items consisting of 464,049 images were scanned and uploaded to Internet Archive. The HBLL maintains several different kinds of scanners in its digital labs, located in LTPSC.<sup>49</sup> Because we only have two IA Scribes, using our multitude of flatbed scanners greatly accelerated how

48. Special thanks are due to Marisa Snyder, supervisor of digital initiatives workflow, for providing me with technical details about their process, and to Scott Eldridge, the Digital Initiatives Program Manager, for allowing me to take up her time with my questions.

49. In addition to two Internet Archive Scribes devoted to scanning books full-time, the digital lab operates three types of scanners, including the Phase One P65+, the Epson Expression 10000 XL, and the Epson Expression 11000 XL. The Phase One captures images on Capture One CH in jpg format at 200 DPI. The Epson Expressions use Silverfast and scan in jpg at 200 DPI.

quickly the project was completed.<sup>50</sup> This is an important consideration—digitizing ephemera requires greater carefulness with the documents, since they are often relatively fragile, but the digitization process itself is simplified by the nature of the documents, since paper wrappers are often the only bindings encountered and many documents are only a single sheet of paper.

Over the last twenty years, library administrators have provided what is now called the Digital Initiatives team with generous funding for scanners and provided for two high-quality supervisors who work with student employees. As such, the Special Collections Coordinating Committee has not turned down a digitization proposal since I have been at the library, and new digitization projects are encouraged. However, there is still a high bar for approval, since three different areas of the library—conservation, digital initiatives, and digital preservation must be consulted before each project reaches the Special Collections Coordinating Committee.<sup>51</sup>

Before images are scanned by student employees, they load the HBLL's catalog record for each item into Internet Archive and generate an item ID code. Each item is scanned and the resulting files are named by item ID. Next, images are edited, cropped, and de-skewed. Student employees in the digital labs check each other's work to assure the quality of the scans. They look for image quality, color quality, problems with focus, make sure that the scans are complete, and that file names are accurate and follow necessary conventions. Images are then saved as JPEG2000 files and zipped.<sup>52</sup> Next, the Zip files are uploaded to the corresponding Internet Archive record and the images are sampled online to make sure they appear correctly. Finally, Chris Erickson, who oversees the library's Rosetta server, ingests the JPEGs into Rosetta.

Marisa Snyder, supervisor of the digital lab, noted that the scanners provided by Internet Archive are good for scanning books, but scanning ephemera is more like scanning manuscript materials, since most items are loose and flat. The HBLL has a flexible digital process that allows us to use the best scanner for each job, and the workflow can be altered as needed.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the most important detail about their

50. General information about Internet Archive's Scribes and their scanning process can be found at <http://archive.org/scanning>. More detailed technical information can be found at <https://biodivlib.wikispaces.com/Scanning+Process> (accessed September 7, 2017).

51. The Conservation Unit assesses the items' conditions to make sure they will not be destroyed by handling and so that any truly significant repairs can be made before the item is scanned. Digital Initiatives does all the work, so we get them onboard as quickly as possible to make sure they have the scanners available to work on the project, and the library's digital preservation specialist assesses the need to have the digitized content uploaded to the library's Rosetta server.

52. JPEG2000 is the standard file format preferred by Internet Archive for uploading, likely because it is easily converted to other file formats.

53. E-mail correspondence with Marisa Snyder in possession of the author, March 2017.

workflow in the context of this paper is that they were able to easily and quickly scan 255 pieces of ephemera in about four days. Once the process and workflow for handling books in general is established, ephemera can be scanned quickly.

After the 255 digitized Vault 094s were uploaded, quality-checked, and backed up in Rosetta, a note listing the item URLs and HBLL catalog IDs was sent to the library Cataloging Department. As their time allows, they add the IA URLs to the catalog records, tying our catalog and the uploaded items together. Currently, this is one of the worst bottlenecks in the library, but we expect it to improve in the future. While not being in the catalog doesn't preclude users from stumbling across the items while using a search engine, it does make it impossible for users who rely on the HBLL catalog to discover the digital objects to have digital access from the catalog until a link is added. This makes outreach even more important, since researchers who happen to be working on a topic related to the scanned materials would never know that the items had been scanned and added to IA otherwise.

IA allows contributing libraries to create subdirectories within their main library directory. The contributing library fills out a request form, names the subcollection, provides a description of the subcollection, and notes the items that should be added to it. In outreach efforts, the ability to send users to a collection of documents as well as to specific items allows curators to reach broader audiences of researchers. In this case, we picked a fairly generic title—"Utah and Mormon Ephemera." As more ephemera is uploaded in years to come, this collection will likely be broken down into smaller, more specific topics and categories.

### Promoting the Materials to Faculty and Students

Promotional efforts began with a submission to the Conference of Intermountain Archivists' quarterly newsletter to announce the collection's digitization and to let other librarians and archivists know about it in case they knew of a party who would be interested in viewing the Vault 094s. Separate announcements were written specifically for BYU's History and Church History faculty. The HBLL's subject liaisons for History and Religious Education-Church History were contacted for permission to send the announcement out. The History subject liaison immediately sent the announcement on to the secretary in the History Department, who sent it out to the History faculty. The Religious Education-Church History liaison saved the announcement for his quarterly newsletter to that department. A slightly more general announcement was sent to the library subject liaisons for English, Germanic and Slavic Languages, and Art.

Several social media posts were also produced using content from the Vault 094s. LTPSC tends to get better reception to posts on Instagram and Twitter, so posts were tailored to those environments—low on text and heavily image-based.



Figure 5. Two tweets related to the digitized collection. Screenshots provided by the author.

Ideally, the HBLL's Facebook and Twitter accounts should have posted press releases as soon as digitization was complete, but I overlooked that step due to a focus on reaching a more specific audience—faculty in the History and Religious Education-Church History departments.

## Results

The data provided by our Twitter and Instagram feeds and Internet Archive “views” demonstrate that even small efforts to advertise digital collections can significantly improve usage of niche ephemera. Literature on faculty research habits has demonstrated that contemporary researchers in general use networks of trusted

associates and reliable Web sources to acquire information relevant to their topics.<sup>54</sup> Regular posting of potentially interesting material related to topic known to be of interest to our audience(s) creates these connections. Pushing information about our digital collections out to social media in combination with targeted emails to faculty provided researchers with the raw materials they need to do their research.

This project benefited from low expectations. LTPSC Reading Room uses of the 252 items since 2014 totaled 11 patron requests. Surprisingly, since the Vault 094s were digitized and advertised, the highest use item accounted for 31 views and the lowest had 4 views by June 2017. In total, there were 3,953 views between October 2016 and June 2017. This is a stunning number of hits based on reading room expectations. Unfortunately, IA provides no tools to distinguish “real” hits from bots and Web crawlers. A 2015 study found that 48.5 percent of all Web traffic is from bots and Web crawlers.<sup>55</sup> A 2016 study also calculated the bot and crawler percentage at 48.5 percent.<sup>56</sup> This would suggest that 2,035 of the 3,953 views are humans. If we then subtract 96 hits from quality checks on a third of the pages and my own browsing, and we get roughly 1,939 views since the collection was uploaded in October 2016 through June 31, 2017.

1,939 views is an increase of 176 times the number of views online as compared to reading room uses. Since URLs were still being added to catalog records as of the printing of this article, all views came from searches outside of the library catalog, BYU faculty who received emails, researchers who received BYU faculty newsletters, or viewers of social media posts related to the collection on L. Tom Perry Special Collections’ Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest accounts.

Beyond the raw statistics of page views, responses via email and social media were also quite positive. One Religious Education professor wrote, “The “Mormon and Utah Ephemera Collection is *very cool!* (I must confess that I spent several hours wandering through it today.)”<sup>57</sup> Additionally, one of our recent posts about the collection was re-tweeted by By Common Consent, one of the better-known Mormon Studies content aggregators. The same post in slightly different format received forty-four “likes” on Instagram. While none of these number or events shattered world records or changed the way libraries do business, our goal in digitizing the collection

54. Antonijevi and Cahoy, 301-303.

55. Igal Zeifman, “2015 Bot Traffic Report: Humans Take Back the Web, Bad Bots Not Giving Any Ground,” [www.incapsula.com](http://www.incapsula.com), December 9, 2015. <https://www.incapsula.com/blog/bot-traffic-report-2015.html> (accessed June 30, 2017).

56. Pawel Piejko, “Download the new Mobile Web Intelligence Report for Q1 2016,” [DeviceAtlas](http://DeviceAtlas.com), May 12, 2016. <https://deviceatlas.com/blog/download-new-mobile-web-intelligence-report-q1-2016> (accessed June 30, 2017).

57. E-mail correspondence in possession of the author.

was to create and improve connections with researchers and other patrons, and there is no question that this goal was accomplished.

This project also benefited from the well-defined process for scanning and uploading material to IA that LTPSC has in place. An organization with no digital processes in place would have expended a tremendous amount of resources to establish a digital process, but because this project was just one small part of the work produced by the Digital Imaging Lab in 2016, the cost to our organization was bundled with all of the other digital projects the library has undertaken since our digital lab acquired its current set of equipment. It is unclear if this set of materials will continue to see use unless promotional effort also continue. This demonstrates one of the central problems of special collections' relationship with social media—the need to produce a consistent stream of content to draw users in and keep them coming back.

## Next Steps and Conclusion

### Next Steps

While all of the 094s are currently under one subcollection on IA, we expect to add more documents in 2017, which will likely require topic or subject subdivisions on the 094 landing page. While there are several ways this might be accomplished using Internet Archive's existing infrastructure, we will also explore creating a Libguide for Americana collection ephemera. Additionally, tying links from IA to reference sources such as the online version of Chad Flake and Larry Draper's *Mormon Bibliography, 1830-1930* would increase the number of places where researchers could encounter our materials. Finally, the collection itself could be grown using a consortium approach.<sup>58</sup> While IA is already a consortium for all practical purposes, working with multiple institutions to gather Mormon and Utah ephemera together in one digital repository, and then creating branching subject and topic pages, would allow multiple institutions to leverage materials for classroom and researcher use.

Next, LTPSC needs to get better data back from Internet Archive about users—where they are coming from, bounce rates, and the users' overall satisfaction with the resources available online. IA was unable to provide such information when asked. LTPSC curators who organize digitization projects need this kind of data to know if our materials are being used effectively. Without better ways to analyze return on investment (ROI), digital offerings may prove to be too time consuming to justify. Simply providing access to documents online is not sufficient in this day and age. Outreach to engage potential users in a discussion about what materials best meet their needs will continue. Ongoing assessment, promotion, and engagement with

58. Andrew Weiss, *Using Massive Digital Libraries: A LITA Guide* (Chicago, IL: ALA TechSource, 2014), 57.

users is necessary to maintain steady use of library collections—there is no going back to the days when a librarian sat behind a reference desk and waited to field questions, or simply uploaded content and expected users to stumble over it. Personal engagement with researchers, students, and university faculty is a necessary component of future digitization plans.

To better utilize the digitized ephemera, I am currently in the process of hiring a student who will be looking at ways to promote specific cross-sections of this material through the LTPSC Blog and our social media accounts. For example, only three of the Vault 094s were authored or co-written by women, though many forms included in this set of materials do have women's signatures, and some invitations are specifically addressed to a woman.<sup>59</sup> The student researcher would identify such items and write social media posts promoting such items to particular segments of the Mormon Studies research community, or identify other ways that women might have been involved in the production of these items. In general, LTPSC curators could be more mindful of the history of other cultures as we select items to digitize. While we collect materials from a number of different cultures, our online holdings seem focused around traditional Mormon or European historical topics.

## Conclusion

Even small increases in library item usage are potentially significant. L. Tom Perry Special Collections averages roughly 7,000 reading room users per year. Only small increases in use are needed to impact overall usage of our collections. Given the importance librarians and archivists place on use and access, that the vault ephemera digitization project multiplied the total reading room uses of the 252 items digitized by 176 in just eight months is highly significant and strongly demonstrates the power of combining digital collections and outreach. Based on our analysis of the number of views recorded by IA and anecdotal responses on social media, this project greatly exceeded expectations. While LTPSC has traditionally not used Web access numbers to measure patron use rates, when we add Web use rates to our conventional statistics, a much more nuanced picture of patron usage appears. This in turn can be used to tune our collection development efforts as well as future Web-based projects.

This case study demonstrated that digitization and targeted advertising of a library collection increased usage of special collections materials. Low reading room usage rates did not carry over to the Utah and Mormon ephemera collection online. While further comparisons with other BYU digital projects and further analysis of users is necessary, this case study provided LTPSC with the opportunity to push one

59. Items authored by women include Emmeline B. Wells, *The Wife to Her Husband* (Salt Lake City, 1874), <https://archive.org/details/wifetoherhusbando3well> (accessed September 7, 2017); and Agnes Yullo Lindsay, *Fairwell hymn...* (Dundee, Scotland, 1849), <https://archive.org/details/farewellhymndedioolind> (accessed September 7, 2017); listing items signed or addressed to women would be too lengthy a list to cite in detail. This is perhaps one reason that a blog post grouping such items together would be a useful project for a student assistant to accomplish, but also demonstrates that this digital collection is not a finished product in its current state.

of our strongest collecting areas out into the spotlight and test short-term methods of collection promotion, and even improved our social media footprint among Mormon Studies researchers.