Project Background

In the fall of 2020, the Digital Projects Unit at the UNT Libraries was contacted by Elizabeth Bass of the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) for a project to honor the now-retired former editor of The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Bob Blackburn. Elizabeth wanted to make the Chronicles accessible to a wider audience by making all issues available on the Gateway to Oklahoma History. Shortly after, the Digital Curation Unit at UNT—Mark Phillips, Whitney Johnson-Freeman, and Katherine Dobbs—set to work planning and executing the project.

Background of The Chronicles of Oklahoma

The Chronicles of Oklahoma is the scholarly journal of the Oklahoma Historical Society. First published in 1921, The Chronicles is mailed quarterly to OHS members and subscribers. Articles published in the journal cover the broad sweep of Oklahoma’s rich history and culture, ranging from biography and ethnography to historiography and historic preservation. Each issue also includes reviews of relevant books and the minutes of the quarterly meetings of the Oklahoma Historical Society Board of Directors.

Workflow

This project required workflows for two different types of materials—born digital PDFs, and scanned images.

**Scans**

The scanned images were processed using Scan Tailor, an open source post-processing tool.
- Scan Tailor splits processing into 6 steps that correct orientation, fix skewing, and normalize coloration.
- Once a step is complete, it’s possible to backtrack and make corrections.

**Born-Digital Files**

Issue folders were named according to the scheme YEAR-VOLUME-ISSUE, or YYYY-##-##.

Then, each issue was exported as a collection of high-quality JPGs using Adobe Acrobat. The PDFs and JPGs were split into two separate subfolders, labeled 01_jpg and 02_pdf.

If the covers were sent separately, they would be transformed and processed using Adobe Photoshop, and then added to the 01_jpg folder.

“Magick Numbering”

UNT Digital Libraries uses “magick numbering” on items with sequentially numbered pages to ensure correct presentation on the web. The eight to twelve-digit number consists of two parts—the first four digits indicate the file sequence number, and the remaining digits indicate the actual page number.

There are also unique codes for certain pages types, such as 00fc/00bc for the front and back cover, or 0000 for unnumbered pages.

Using Adobe Bridge allows us to rename files in bulk according to a defined sequence. From there, unusual pages (such as the covers) can be renamed manually.

Problem Solving

Automation doesn’t fix everything:
- All steps in Scan Tailor required some level of manual adjustment.
- This could mean a quick review, or image-by-image checking and fixing.
- Output is by far the most difficult, time-consuming step to complete.
- Pages with images are processed in a mixed mode that allows the page to be rendered in black-and-white and the image in color or grayscale.
- Often needed corrections to the auto-detection to ensure that the whole image was captured, or to remove artifacts around the borders.
- Unwanted marks such as library stamps and pen marks had to be removed manually.

Working remotely:
- Training took place over Zoom using the screen sharing function.
- Wikis helped refine the workflow and act as a quick reference.
- The key parts of our Wikis are:
  - Links to other resources
  - Images of special/difficult to describe details
  - Notes for common problems or areas of confusion
- Continual updates

Missing content:
- During processing, we discovered that some pages were missing from the files. We turned to UNT’s serial collection to fill the gaps. We had almost every issue in remote storage, so we coordinated with the Digital Library’s Digital Projects Lab to scan the missing content. The Lab had procedures in place for social distancing, so we had to plan out who would scan on what days.

Conclusion

State of the collection:
Currently, the Chronicles of Oklahoma collection contains 97 items spanning 5 decades of the journal’s history, with around 40 awaiting metadata and another 40 awaiting final processing and upload.

Future goals:
Once all issues are uploaded and available online, the UNT Libraries and the Oklahoma Historical Society hope to continue work on the collection by uploading individual articles for searching and browsing, further enhancing the usability of the collection.

Positive feedback and impacts:
The Oklahoma Historical Society is already receiving positive comments about the availability of issues of The Chronicles through The Gateway to Oklahoma History. Richard Mize, a reporter with the Oklahoman newspaper in Oklahoma City who has had articles published in The Chronicles, wrote a story praising the efforts at making the journal more accessible to the public. One college professor on the Oklahoma Historical Society Board of Directors had Elizabeth Bass present about The Chronicles to her graduate-level history course, and all were excited about the increased availability of recent scholarship on Oklahoma history that this project promises.