Who, when, where?
Using an online book club to enhance access to a local history collection

Emily Jaycox, Miriam Whatley, Kelly Brown
SLRLN Tech Expo 2021
Who we are

Emily Jaycox
Librarian
Missouri Historical Society

Miriam Whatley
Assistant Branch Manager
St. Louis County Library

Kelly Brown
Acquisitions Librarian
Missouri Historical Society
What we'll talk about

Emily Jaycox
Project background

Miriam Whatley
Project design

Kelly Brown
Project implementation
Tom Weil Biography Collection

Project background

2018: Collection development opportunity
Biography, memoir, letters + diaries

Well known....
...and not so well known
"Five laws of library science - S. R. Ranganathan"

- Books are for use.
- Every reader his or her book.
- Every book its reader.
- Save the time of the reader.
- A library is a growing organism.
• Compelling (we hope!) narratives deserve readers
• Volunteers want directed reading projects
• Memoirs are underused sources for local history
Always seeking firsthand accounts of....

- How a family survived the Great Depression
- Accounts of specific military conflicts
- Descriptions of local:
  - Landmarks, neighborhoods
  - Shopping districts
  - Night life, entertainments
  - Schools, clubs, churches
Precedent project to help readers and books find each other

✓ Hundreds of sources indexed
✓ 500,000+ names referenced
✓ Started with a giant Excel spreadsheet.
Could we adapt the Genealogy Index concept... and help books and readers meet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books are for use.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every reader his or her book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every book its reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the time of the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A library is a growing organism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tom Weil Biography Collection

Project design

2019: Practicum project
Starting points:

Original Goal (6/2019)

The goals of the program are to improve the usability of the LRC’s biography collection and to create a deeper connection between the community and the LRC.

What:

• A public program that engages volunteers to read the Weil Biography Collection and complete a digital form detailing topics covered in the books that are likely to be of interest to researchers.

• Discussion groups, online and/or in-person, for people to share their findings and talk about what they’re reading.

Why:

• Engagement with the materials and the institution creates a sense of connection to that institution and to their collection.

• Make the collection more usable for researchers by increasing the amount of data known about each text.

• Increase interest in the LRC and its collection.
Form Builder Tools

Criteria

- Free
- Conditional Logic
- Well Reviewed
- Easy to Use
Coordinating all Parties

✓ Meet with volunteer coordinator.
✓ Take idea and initial work to IT to make sure our plan for the data was feasible.
✓ Recruit initial participants from existing volunteers to test the program.
✓ Make improvements based on participant feedback.
2020: Ready or not, here we come!

Project implementation
Getting things going in a hurry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>frederic L. Billon's masonic memorar.</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Publication Info.</td>
<td>More pub. Info</td>
<td>On SLPL ebook</td>
<td>On SLPL physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nobody said not to go : the life, love Cuthbertson, Ken.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (Hoopla)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Precious memories of Mae, 1910-19 Laske, Mary Alice Wyatt, 1947-.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Missouri : Mandy Laske, [2009];&quot;Merrimac N.C. : Lulu;&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>Not Found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The life and times of Colonel Henry H Holtman, Cherry Carr.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Missouri : [Holtman Haus Studios], [2013];&quot;M N.C. : [lulu]&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>Not Found</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yes, this is possible!

- Total Titles: 848
- Titles with something available: 316
- Titles with a digital option: 154
  - SLPL: e-books: 85 physical: 215
  - StLCoPL: e-books: 40 physical: 132
  - Google Books: 14
  - Internet Archive: 55
  - DPLA: 0
Recruiting volunteers

- Like to read
- Good at summing up information
- Attention to detail
- Comfortable with e-books
- We currently have 23 volunteers-11 signed up specifically for the remote project!
Book reports

- Fifty-three book report entries
- Forty-seven unique titles
- Only five book titles were done by more than one reader. Only one book had three reports.
- Reporting survey does not record user. We can't tell how many readers contributed reports.
First meeting of the Biography Book Club
2021 and beyond...

Next steps
• Using the results
• Planning a public interface
Get in touch!

Emily Jaycox
emily@mohistory.org
Missouri Historical Society

Miriam Whatley
mwhatley@slcl.org
St. Louis County Library

Kelly Brown
kbrown@mohistory.org
Missouri Historical Society
BONUS SLIDES

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION CAPTURED THUS FAR
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building/Location</th>
<th>Places Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Fox Theater</td>
<td>Nightclubs, Concert Venues, Theaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busch Stadium (1966-20...)</td>
<td>Nightclubs, Concert Venues, Schools (K-12), Restaurants, Schools (K-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busch Stadium (1966-20...)</td>
<td>Sporting Venues, Concert Venues, Restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busch Stadium (1966-20...)</td>
<td>Sporting Venues, Restaurants, Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sportsman's Park</td>
<td>Schools (K-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Station</td>
<td>Schools (K-12), Geographic Features, Restaurants, Theaters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the subject experience any of the following 20th century events?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917 Influenza Epidemic, Great Depression, Prohibition...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emancipation, Gold Rush, Trails, Civil Rights (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights (general), Civil Rights: Housing including ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights (general), Korean War, World War II, World ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights: School Segregation, Civil Rights (general)...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaslight Square, Korean War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Depression, Tornado of 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibition or Prohibition Repeal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>