

Preserving History: Digitization of the Scarsdale Inquirer Underway

Scarsdale Historical Society and Scarsdale Public Library in joint effort; Historical Society donates \$25,000 to begin a major digitization process

The Scarsdale Historical Society and the Scarsdale Public Library have joined forces to begin the digitization of back issues of *The Scarsdale Inquirer*. A much needed funding grant of \$25,000 by the Historical Society fills a financial gap in the library's budget and provides the impetus to begin the digitization process of the *Inquirer's* back issues.

Elizabeth Bermel, director of the Scarsdale Library, said, "We are extremely grateful for this funding grant from the Historical Society. We couldn't have afforded to do it on our own. Under the current economic conditions, it is simply not possible for the library to fund this project through its own operating budget."

"The library staff," Bermel added, "has expressed great concern about the deterioration of these materials and the possibility of losing unique resources. The Historical Society's donation puts us well on our way to not only preserving Scarsdale history, but making the information easier to use."

According to Adam Krajchir, current president of the Scarsdale Historical Society, "This grant to preserve history is one of several proposals the Society is studying in order to carefully marshal its resources for the benefit of the Village of Scarsdale and its residents."

In the past, the back issues of the *Inquirer*, which contain information not available anywhere else, have been made accessible at no charge at the library in both print and microfilm. However, many of the back issues are in undeniably fragile condition, and need to be digitized in order to preserve these important Scarsdale historical documents.

A Valuable Resource Tool

"The newspapers are widely used today, especially by those researching past events in the Village of Scarsdale—students and teachers, historians, and even reporters of the *Inquirer*—as a valuable resource tool," Bermel noted.

The Historical Society's \$25,000 funding grant will enable the library to commence the digitization process of back copies, starting with the oldest issues. It is anticipated that the Historical Society grant will enable the library to initially digitize the issues through 1936 plus preserve film that are deteriorating.

The *Inquirer* began publishing in 1901.

The library's plan is to scan the copies of the publications into digital form and then make them available on the Internet at the library's website, and also in digital form at the library. There will be no charge to the public for this service.

Hudson Microimaging of Port Ewen, NY, has been selected by library officials to provide preservation digitization services for this project.

Copies are Deteriorating

"Our older copies of the *Inquirer* are deteriorating, as are our older microfilm copies," Bermel said. "With this grant, we can make these important original source materials more readily available to members of the community in searchable format. In the future, we hope to expand the program and cover more issues of the *Inquirer* since it is such a valuable resource to the community."

Randy Guggenheimer, chair of the Historical Society's digitization committee and a trustee, said, "We hope to continue working with the library on this project in the future. We see our involvement with the library as an integral part of our mission in the community. We've had this idea in the forefront of our strategic thinking for some time now. The idea was hatched under the leadership of Bill Doescher, then Society president and now chairman emeritus, and continues under current president Krajchir."

In addition to Guggenheimer, Doescher and Krajchir, other Trustee members of the society's digitalization committee include Eric Rothschild, Seth Kaller, and Linda Blair Doescher. Members of the library digitization committee include Sara Werder, Library Board president, Reference Librarians Ann-Marie Cutul, Bobbi Kokot and Dan Glauber, and Bermel.

According to Scarsdale's Susan Douglass, a copyright and trademark lawyer who worked on this project with the Historical Society and the library on a pro bono basis, "The library is free to scan in digital form and make available on the Internet all issues in the public domain. Based on my research, it appears that back issues neither bore a copyright notice nor were registered. In my opinion, the library is free to copy and post in digital, searchable format on its website all issues prior to March 21, 1989. In addition, the library is free to scan and make available in digital format at the library a copy of all issues of the *Inquirer* to date, pursuant to Section 108 of the Copyright Act."

"The collaboration on this important digitization project exemplifies the successful outcome possible when two Scarsdale village organizations work in concert as equal partners," concluded Society Chairman Emeritus Doescher, a volunteer on many projects in the village for a number of years.