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NU LIBRARY UPGRADES TO DIGITAL ARCHIVES

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By Charlette Tapsoba

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The Northwest University Hurst Library is advancing into the digital era. The library archives have previously been analogically recorded. Last summer, the library began an archiving project with a goal of maintaining past documents by transferring them to digital form.

Library director Adam Epp has been supervising this project since its beginning. From its conception, Epp has overseen the policy development and working with the budget and the creation of metadata.

"The goal of the archives is to bring together all existing materials related to Northwest University history in a single, full-text searchable electronic database. All materials in the archives will be digitized and viewable online," Epp said.

The archive project will not only benefit current students but also perspective students.

"The archives will provide students with a lasting record of NU as it existed during their time here and help them to see their place in the bigger history of the institution," Epp said. "Researchers studying the history of the institution will be able to draw on a rich source of information."

Preservation and access are the most important aspects in putting together the project.

"Physical materials can easily be lost due to fire or flood since only one copy exists. Digital materials, on the other hand, can be easily copied and stored at many backup locations around the world," said Epp. "The clever acronym for this principle is LOCKSS: Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe. Access to the materials will, of course, benefit greatly from digitization as well."

One of the biggest challenges for the library team has been figuring out how to digitalize the wide variety of formats.

"Video formats alone include DVDs, VHS, Beta, Hi8, and ½" helical scan video tapes as well as 8mm, Super8, and 16mm films. Each of these formats require specific tools and techniques to obtain the best possible digital copy. Even born digital formats are challenging," said Epp

The archive project is an ongoing project that will be in progress for the next several years until completion.

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