

“We looked at multiple options for converting over 100 years of newspaper microfilm archives. Ultimately, Digital Reel from BMI Imaging provided the best combination of online user-friendly access, price and proven expertise. BMI became a trusted partner in the effort to quickly digitize our unique one-of-a-kind collection.”

Reed Strege, City Librarian
City of Azusa, California

INDUSTRY

- Local Government - Libraries

LOCATION

- Azusa, California (“The Canyon City”)

CHALLENGES

- Access to over 100 years of newspaper archives bottlenecked via a single microfilm reader / printer
- Deteriorating physical indexes made finding specific information more costly and time consuming
- Specialized training to access archives delayed response to incoming requests

BMI PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- High quality digital images from 100+ working Library microfilm rolls (negatives not available)
- Digital San Gabriel Valley Tribune newspaper records and indexes hosted at BMI’s data center

BENEFITS

- Universal online record retrieval from any desktop or laptop
- Out-of-state patrons access newspaper articles from the Library’s web-site
- Non-proprietary formats (e.g. PDF) for on-demand user download

Case Study



Overview

The City of Azusa’s 45,000 residents are proud of their long and storied history dating back to the City’s start as a Mexican land grant in 1841, and the subsequent sale in 1844 to English immigrant Henry Dalton. Today, Azusa serves as a local hub for the surrounding region. It is also the home of Azusa Pacific University and a major IT and research facility for international defense giant Northrop Grumman.

Like many cities, Azusa wants to preserve and provide access to over 100 years of history to its citizens and the general public. The San Gabriel Valley Tribune newspaper represents an important archive of the City’s history. Digitally converting the newspaper’s archive from microfilm to an easily accessible online solution was an important project for the long term accessibility of Azusa history.

After reviewing several options, Azusa selected Digital Reel because of its competitive price, secure and efficient document handling, and simple, elegant user interface.

Access to More Than 125 Years of Public History

Reed Strege, the City Librarian at Azusa City Library, knew that there had to be a better solution to provide access to historical newspaper archives. The library only had one microfilm reader/printer available to both local staff and the general public.

The San Gabriel Valley Tribune archive was a one-of-a-kind collection. Requests come from local citizens, other City Departments (e.g. Community Development, Police) and out of state calls (mostly looking for obituaries).

Often, it would take days, even over a week, to respond to these information requests from the public. “Trained staff needed to always be available at our Reference Desk,” states Reed Strege. “That was not a viable long-term service level for our library.”

After more than a year of research investigating various alternatives, Azusa City Library met with a local representative from BMI Imaging to learn more about the Digital Reel newspaper microfilm digitization solution.

Affordable Price and Full Text Search Separate Digital Reel from Alternative Approaches

Azusa City Library had reached out to various vendors and peers in the previous twelve months to research available newspaper microfilm digitization options.

Alternative solutions were either too expensive or provided only basic digitization without indexing or search capabilities.

Azusa decided to move forward with Digital Reel due to the solution’s universal web-based access, OCR indexing for full text search and proven expertise working with other municipal clients.

An added benefit was the fast and efficient microfilm conversion turnaround time. BMI was able to leverage Azusa’s working microfilm rolls because the negatives duplicates were unavailable. “The newspaper images turned out great and the text searches provide above-average search results despite the fact that we scanned our working microfilm rolls”, states Strege.

Self-Service Access from the Library’s Web-Site Unlocks Historical Newspaper Archive

Today, Azusa staff and any citizen can log into the newspaper archive from anywhere in the Country. Users are able to access San Gabriel Valley Tribute articles and photos dating back to the early 1880’s without specialized equipment or training by simply using the Digital Reel application.

Local citizens and Government officials can visit the library and look for articles and photos. Out-of-state citizens are now directed to Digital Reel, accessible from the Library’s web-site, where they can log in from their computer to search for articles. Full text search makes it more efficient than before to locate articles across the entire archive.

Strege concludes, “BMI’s Digital Reel was price competitive and the turnaround time was fast. We’re reducing staff time requirements and enabling anytime, anywhere digital access to the San Gabriel Valley Tribune newspaper archive – exactly what we were looking for with our newspaper microfilm digitization project.”



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