This poster will address the question of choosing materials for digitization and lay out research parameters that will help provide better data points to aid in making more informed choices for digitization candidates.

In 2011/12, Illinois State University’s Milner Library was awarded a grant through CARLI to digitize its yearbook, catalog, and governance collections. Qualifying materials had to meet specific guidelines such as size and condition and must be uploaded to the Internet Archive. As of Spring 2013, all of these materials were accessible via a portal page on the ISU University Archives website linking to their permanent home at the Internet Archives. These materials have proven to be extremely popular with ISU University Archives patrons, totaling 37,808 downloads for 461 digital items in the past 23 months. As funding is extremely limited, the ISU University Archives will be gathering data to determine what collections to digitize next that will satisfy both the department and library administrative needs but the needs of the patron and the local community.

The ISU University Archives will collect patron research and material access data in the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 terms. Data will be gathered from patron registration forms, analytics data from the department’s websites, and patron contact. Patron contact is defined as the pre and post interview portions of the research visit where staff gathers information to help assist patron access to materials. Staff will anonymously record the requested materials along with the specific data points patrons are researching. Examples can include scores from specific sporting events, detailed student/faculty/staff demographics for particular events/years, course syllabi written by an individual professor. Once the research is complete, staff will re-interview the patron to determine if they were satisfied with the information that was found.

We hope that the specific data points we gather will help us make better choices for digitization candidates in the future. While we believe certain collections made available online would be useful to patrons, without hard data we simply cannot be sure. By gathering this data, we not only are spending our limited funds more responsibly – we are digitizing materials that we know our patrons want rather than what we think our patrons want.