

Data-driven Decision Making at L. Tom Perry Special Collections

RYAN K. LEE, CORY L. NIMER, AND J. GORDON DAINES III

Abstract: For the past several years L. Tom Perry Special Collections has been gathering statistics of various aspects of our processes. Our library has a data store of circulation statistics from which various reports can be run, and we have also kept circulation statistics on our own for the past decade or more. Since 2012 we have been collecting web analytical data on the use of our finding aids website via Google Analytics. Recently we have been attempting to take this data to help make more objective, data-driven decisions, focusing primarily on digitization. We have multiple audiences we are trying to serve, both those who use collections in-house and those who use our collections from abroad, via our website. This poster shows our preliminary results of merging these data sets that we have collected over a one-year period, and how this data can help us make objective digitization decisions. We believe by determining collections that have the highest use in both in-house and online use will pinpoint the best candidates for digitization. Further analysis of the data can also help us in making additional decisions, including which collections may need improved description or an online finding aid, or the effect of digitization on use over time. One question we also plan to address in the future is the proper way to package this information to help curators in making data-driven decisions. This project is an example of the possibilities of using available data to make objective decisions in our institutions.

About the authors:

Ryan Lee is Curator of 19th Century Mormon and Western Manuscripts in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. He earned a master's degree in library science with a specialization in archives and records management from Indiana University, and became a Certified Archivist in 2011. Ryan has worked previously for the LDS Church History Library and Indiana

University. His research interests include archival description, digitization and access to archival materials, and historical records and research of 19th Century Mormonism, Utah, and the American West.

Cory Nimer is the Technical Services Archivist for the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. He earned a master's degree in history at Sonoma State University, and a master's in library and information science at San José State University. At the Perry Special Collections he is responsible for the creation and review of descriptive metadata, including finding aids, catalog records and digital project metadata. His research interests include archival descriptive practice, the history of archives, and archival literacy.

J. Gordon Daines III is the University Archivist and Assistant Department Chair, Manuscripts in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. Gordon holds an undergraduate degree in history from Brigham Young University, a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago, and a certificate in archives and records management from Western Washington University. He has worked for the Oregon Historical Society and the Utah State Archives and Records Service. His research interests include the history of Brigham Young University, the development of the archives profession in Utah, finding aid design, primary source literacy, and standards development.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of our student research assistant Sam Deardon on compiling and organizing the data for this project.