

NEWS

State Library Pilot Drives Digital Access to Historic Resources

The first-ever project by the California State Library's Digital Concierge Program, in collaboration with the State Parks Capital District, made photos of one of the best-known governors of the modern era accessible online.

November 10, 2023 • Theo Douglas



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A recent pilot at one of the state's oldest entities increased digital accessibility to historic resources and connected Californians with their formerly analog heritage.

Founded in 1850, the same year the state entered the union, the [California State Library](#) has served as the state government and Legislature's central reference and research library for nearly 175 years. Its collection numbers more than 4 million titles, 6,000 maps, and 250,000 photographs, per its website; and among its roles, it is a State and Federal Depository Library, offering free, open access to government information; and a U.S. Patent and Trademark Resource Center. Within that multifaceted mission, much

information remains to be made accessible online. The [California Revealed](#) initiative, launched in 2010, helped public libraries, archives, museums, historical societies and other groups digitize and preserve their materials — but the same need still existed at the state level. The [Digital Concierge Program](#) (DCP) aims to digitally preserve and share collections within state government that may be hidden or not available to the public. Among the takeaways:

- DCP is a standalone program with three staffers that's within the California State Library, [Kristi Powell](#), its outreach coordinator, told *Industry Insider — California* via email. Its roster also includes a project manager and a digital specialist. The program's pilot project, a collaboration with the State Parks Capital District, [made available](#) photographs from 1959 in the collection of the Governor's Mansion State Historic Park, documenting "[Governor Pat Brown's Inaugural Year](#)." The photographs, made live in August, follow Brown's inauguration and his visit to the 1959 California State Fair. Powell praised the district's team for having "understood our purpose" from the beginning and being "an enthusiastic partner." "The pilot project has provided State Parks with archival quality digital objects that ensure the long-term preservation of their original materials," she said. "In turn, the project allowed DCP to refine our digitization workflows and determine how best to support our inter-agency partnerships." In a statement, District Cultural Resources Program Manager Emma Silverman said it was "thrilled to be part of this groundbreaking partnership with the Digital Concierge Program, which enables our wealth of collections representing California's diverse histories to be made more accessible to the public." *Industry Insider* has reached out to the district for comment; this article may be updated.
- The DCP team has a comprehensive understanding of the archival standards for the digitization and digital preservation of historical materials, which involve "a lot more than scanning a physical object into digital form," Powell said. Digitization requires familiarity with specialized hardware and software as well as with professional standards and tasks — making it a "costly and time-consuming endeavor." "Such workflows are comprised of a series of labor-intensive and time-intensive tasks to ensure that the digital copy is accessible and preserved for long-term use," Powell said. "These are the exact technical and logistical details that the Digital Concierge Program staff can focus on."
- DCP, Powell said, offers "expertise and collaborative services" to state agencies that seek to uncover, organize, preserve and share their assets online: "We initiate

projects on behalf of partners and can either digitize materials at the State Library or contract with an external vendor that specializes in handling specific formats and fragile collections,” she said. The team can oversee projects from start to finish, leveraging the Library’s [Google Arts & Culture](#) webpage as a globally accessible digital space and providing “high quality digital surrogates” to state partners of their historic materials, plus online exhibits enabling collections to reach an exponentially wider audience. The program is now working on two digitization projects in partnership with the California State Railroad Museum and seeks new partnerships with other state agencies. It can be reached at Digital.Concierge@library.ca.gov or (916) 603-7156.

“Important stories about who California is and how we got here are hidden in file cabinets and banker boxes. The State Library wants to yank open those drawers, throw off those lids and bring those stories to light!” Greg Lucas, California state librarian, said in a statement, adding: “This is the first of many partnerships not just with Parks but other state agencies, to share out more of California’s stories with more Californians.”

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Theo Douglas

Theo Douglas is Assistant Managing Editor of Industry Insider — California.

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