

Thunder Bay Museum digitally preserves newspaper archive with a Contex IQ FLEX



PRODUCTS: IQ FLEX flatbed scanner and Nextimage 5 software

CHALLENGE

For over two decades, the Thunder Bay Museum preserved its newspaper archive using a common office tool: a photocopier. It functioned to a degree, but the staffers knew it wasn't an ideal solution. The quality was low, and the speed slowed down the archiving process for its team of volunteers.

SOLUTION

A Contex flatbed scanner is the professional's tool to capture delicate, oversized materials such as a museum newspaper archive. The Thunder Bay Museum installed a Contex IQ FLEX, a flatbed scanner for transforming documents, books, textiles, artwork, and more into digital content.

RESULTS

Thunder Bay Museum is able to build its digital archive faster, and with better quality, than ever before. By reducing the scanning time, its team of volunteers can process more newspapers for museum visitors and researchers to easily access.



The Contex scanner is user-friendly.
I'm surprised that the learning curve is not steep. The scanner does what it needs to do.
The presets make it easy.

*Michael deJong, Curator/Archivist
Thunder Bay Museum*

Background

Rooted in history, the Thunder Bay Museum in Canada offers visitors several galleries of local, regional, and national heritage dating back to the 1800s. The Museum's exhibits depict the early years of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario, as well as works by local artists and craftspeople. Preserving the museum's history is paramount, and its newspaper archive was a priority.

CHALLENGE

A photocopier blurs the lines

In the late 1990s, the Thunder Bay Museum began to digitally preserve a century of newspapers across multiple regions in Canada using its photocopier. That's a common solution for some museums, but the poor scanning quality and speed slowed down the archiving project. Plus, there were few options to adjust or edit the scanned file on the photocopier.

SOLUTION

A professional tool for preservation

Now, Thunder Bay Museum uses a Contex IQ FLEX with Nextimage software to scan and save newspaper pages as a single PDF. The scanning solution was recommended by scanning expert, George Catchpole of Drafting Clinic Canada.

To avoid amassing terabytes of data with the scanning project, the staffers use a scanning preset of 300dpi. The files are made searchable using OmniPage Pro, an optical character recognition (OCR) software.

"At first, we scanned in such a way that the text was crisp but the photos were lost. Newspaper photos are never great, but an archivist adjusted the despeckle setting, and they're usable now," comments Michael deJong, Curator/Archivist, Thunder Bay Museum.

Despeckle is a filter that allows users to precisely adjust the quality control of scanned black-and-white images. Used in tandem with the Black and White Threshold and



Adaptive Threshold filters, it can be instrumental in eliminating small dark speckles that show up in the white areas of a scanned document. This allows users to set less aggressive threshold values without losing important information.

Currently, the museum archive consists of 40,000 digital files, about 306GB. This represents approximately half of the newspapers in storage. Once all of the newspapers are digitally archived, they will remain in the museum's in-house storage center.

RESULTS

Scanning made easy

The museum plans to use the Contex flatbed scanner on occasion for large maps and photographs. "When the scanner is needed for an exhibit, it comes in handy," notes deJong.

The Museum enlists the help of volunteers for its newspaper archiving project. "It's not difficult to recruit volunteers," comments deJong. "We have three to four newspaper scanner operators — a mix of retired people and some in their 30s and 40s. They enjoy the process."

Michael deJong: "Before using the Contex flatbed scanner, we used a regular photocopier. It wasn't ideal and slowed down our archiving project. Overall, we are pleased with the Contex scanner. It's reliable and does what we need it to do. Plus, it's easy to train volunteers."



SEE MORE: contex.com/iqflex · contex.com/nextimage-software