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The Weekly Challenger Digital Archive & Research Guide Assessment Report 2019-2020

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The Weekly Challenger Digital Archive & Research Guide Assessment Report: 2019-2020

The Weekly Challenger Digital Archive is an online historical collection of St. Petersburg's African-American community newspaper. The Research Guide was created in 2018 with the purpose of guiding students through the collection with a historical chronology and index. In 2019-2020, the Special Collections and Assessment librarians decided to assess the interaction and integration of the Weekly Challenger archive into the USFSP curriculum in order to improve student access to news stories on St. Petersburg's African American community.

MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

1. Examine new usage data from the USFSP Digital Archive and the Weekly Challenger Research guide in order to compare and contrast two years of page views, downloads, and linking to identify patterns across these datasets
2. Survey USFSP students with a pre- and post- tests survey in courses with assignments pertaining to local African American news, history, and community. In the pre-test, students were asked what Tampa Bay African-American history related topics they were interested in writing about, and in the post-test, they were asked about their final paper topics to see how they changed after actually doing some research and interacting with the sources, and what resources were most useful for their research assignments.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

1. Identify what topics USFSP students are interested in researching in regards to African American history in Tampa Bay and Florida
2. Identify new ways of sharing The Weekly Challenger content with USFSP students and the St. Petersburg community
3. Increase Digital USFSP Archive usage statistics

RESULTS

1) Digital Archive and Research Guide Data Usage Statistics

Last academic year's Digital USFSP and Poynter Library LibGuide statistics: July 2018 to the end of the April 2019, the Weekly Challenger was downloaded 2,955 times to 86 countries. The top five downloaded editions were: July 30, 2009 (96 downloads), October 6, 1973 (90 downloads), July 22, 2010 (65 downloads), October 12, 2017 (48 downloads), May 1, 2008 (47 downloads). During this same time period, the Weekly Challenger research guide was viewed 1,123 times.

This academic year's Digital USFSP and Poynter Library LibGuide statistics: July 2019 to the end of the April 2020, the Weekly Challenger was downloaded 4703 times to 91 countries. The top five downloaded editions were: July 30, 2009 (169 downloads), June 24, 2010 (91 downloads), October 6, 1973 (80 downloads), December 18, 1976 (54 downloads), July 16, 2009 (43

downloads). During this same time period, the Weekly Challenger research guide was viewed 2399 times.

During the 2018-2019 academic year the most viewed articles from the research guide related to the 50th Anniversary of the Weekly Challenger newspaper, followed by an article on Joseph Savage (1968 sanitation strike), Ray Charles Day, the Ambassadors Club, Baseball and the Segregated South, and Omali Yeshitela (1966 city hall mural).

During the 2019-2020 academic year the most viewed articles related to the 50th Anniversary of the Weekly Challenger newspaper, followed by an article on the Manhattan Casino, The Deuces (22nd Street South district), Omali Yeshitela (1966 city hall mural), The 1960s “Courageous 12” policemen lawsuit, and a biography of Joseph Savage (1968 sanitation strike).

2) Student Surveys

Through email and in-person student questionnaires we worked with three classes to learn how to better integrate the Weekly Challenger archive into the USFSP curriculum. Approximately 40 students participated in USFSP three classes: “Neighborhood News Bureau” a journalism class; “History and Archaeology of the African Diaspora” an anthropology class; and “Historical Methods and Materials” a history class. Thus, it is notable that the Weekly Challenger is a resource for a range of classes that encompass the social sciences, humanities, and professional programs. That said the Coronavirus global pandemic and the university’s move to remote instruction, limiting other classes from receiving library instruction in relation to the Weekly Challenger Digital Archive.

Initial student topics before their library instruction session included:

- Mercy Hospital;
- African-American history in Southwest Florida;
- Manhattan Casino history;
- History of the racist city hall mural;
- Preserving local African-American history;
- Legal segregation via school zoning in St. Petersburg;
- African-American community folklore and stories;
- St. Pete public services such as police, fire department, medical, education.

These topics evolved as their final papers focused on the topics such as:

- Tampa’s version of the Manhattan Casino – the Cotton Club;
- School segregation;
- the St. Petersburg African-American Heritage Trail;
- Community projects.

Overall, we are finding redundancy in the students’ research topics and the Research Guide’s index. This is an indication of success, that the Research Guide has grown in tremendous size and that the Special Collections Librarian has developed a comprehensive list of topics and

associated resources. That said, this assessment still reveals new student topics and space for improvement; more on this will be discussed in the Use of Findings Section below.

Students preferred to use the following research sources: general Weekly Challenger stories; books; and Weekly Challenger biographical stories. In most of the cases the topics related to available Weekly Challenger resources; however, a few students introduced new topics that the Special Collections librarian added to the Weekly Challenger research guide.

USE OF FINDINGS

Last year we established a baseline of usage and downloading statistics about the USFSP Digital Archive and Weekly Challenger research guide. This year we were able to compare and contrast usage. Also, by directly contacting students, and seeing specific examples of curricular use, we were able to identify patterns of interest and ways we could improve the archive and research guide.

Now that an annual system of usage and downloading statistics has been established, we will continue to monitor the growth and success of the Weekly Challenger archive and research guide. We will also use student comments and research to see how best to integrate the archive into the curriculum and update the Weekly Challenger research guide.

One student did research on the St. Petersburg African-American Heritage Trail. This topic had not been previously incorporated in the research guide, but quickly emerged as a valuable hook to interconnect the Weekly Challenger news articles with city history and geography. As a result of this assessment, the African-American Heritage Trail was added as an entire section to a new research guide StoryMaps page. StoryMaps are a GIS based software platform that uses maps to tell stories of places, history, and communities. The Neighborhood News Bureau course has traditionally taken students on a walking tour of the African-American Heritage Trail, but the virtual tour, linking the GIS data to images, videos, and articles in the Weekly Challenger archive now expands the reach of the Heritage Trail and the newspaper archive to both in-person and online instruction. It is a classic example of how the Challenger archive can be integrated into the USFSP curriculum.

Another significant addition to the Research Guide based on student and faculty use is the addition of 2 new sections and inclusion of new resources:

1. The Research Guide now includes St. Petersburg African American news beyond the Weekly Challenger resources. Examples of this are links to African-American associations, museums, community and student projects.
2. Tampa focused African American stories, from the Weekly Challenger and also from other local news and history sources. An example of this is a link to a collection of NPR stories about local African-American communities.

As such, the Weekly Challenger Research Guide has been renamed: *Weekly Challenger Chronology/Index & Tampa Bay African-American History Research Guide*. <http://lib.usfsp.edu/>

[weeklychallenger](#)). The Weekly Challenger collection in the USFSP Digital Archive continues to be a significant collection and documentation of local African American stories, however, connecting the students and community to additional news, audio, and video sources only serves to create a richer narrative of the St. Petersburg and Tampa Bay African American experience.

CONCLUSION

Through this assessment we were able to identify the topics USFSP students are interested for their research on African American history in Tampa Bay and Florida. This process of surveying the students, also helped identify new ways of to share the Weekly Challenger content via the inclusion of the African American Heritage Trail to the Research Guide's StoryMap. We have also seen an increase in the Digital USFSP Archive usage statistics as well as an expansion of the disciplines that use the Weekly Challenger as an entrée into the local community.

A newspaper archive is only as good as the ability of students, faculty, researchers, and the public to find and tell the stories of the local community. As this assessment attests, the *Weekly Challenger Chronology/Index & Tampa Bay African-American History Research Guide* is a success according to the criteria of this assessment and by the broader goals of preserving and promoting local history and community of the St. Petersburg African American community.