Franco American Digital Archives / Portail franco-américain (FADA/PFA)

Centering Franco-American Communities in Digital Discovery

Susan Pinette & Jacob Albert
University of Maine Franco American Programs
Abstract of this presentation

During this presentation, we will introduce FADA/PFA to the Digital Commonwealth community and outline its collaborative efforts to center Franco-American community researchers and overlooked archival materials within the digital archives landscape. We will outline our multi-year collaboration to conceptualize a multi-institutional portal; identify and aggregate overlooked collections from over 75 North American institutions; build contributing partnerships; transform and translate metadata with culturally specific markers; raise funds; and build a sustainable, post-custodial, bilingual digital system—all within the context of COVID-19 shutdowns and distancing. We will detail how the portal and consortium pay particular attention to culturally-specific knowledge construction, "centering" Franco-American communities and local knowledge within practices of information organization and archival description. We will also discuss our aims to grow and evolve the portal and consortium to raise awareness of this historically underserved cultural and language community, with collaborating institutions and team members spread throughout the United States and Canada.
Franco American Collections Consortium

Purpose
Franco American Collections Consortium is a collaboration of universities, archives, and centers that maintain vital collections of books, documents, photos, oral histories, art, maps and artifacts related to French-Canadian and Acadian heritage communities. We collaborate to unite resources, create educational materials, provide leadership, and promote Franco American literacy among researchers, academics, the general public, and Franco Americans themselves.

Mission & Vision
Franco American Collections Consortium works together to make accessible the history and culture of Franco Americans in the Northeast and beyond. Together, we keep Franco American history and culture alive.

https://facconsortium.org
The term "Franco-American" refers specifically to people of Québécois and Acadian heritage living in the United States.

- Composed of rural francophone settlements in northern Maine that date back to the eighteenth century and communities of French Canadians who started immigrating to industrial New England towns in the late nineteenth century, Franco Americans constitute the largest concentration of French speakers in the United States. In New England, Franco Americans account for up to 26% of state populations.

- According to the US census, respondents claiming Canadian/French/French Canadian ancestry constituted 24% of Vermont, 26% of New Hampshire, 25% of Maine, 16% of Rhode Island, 8% of Massachusetts, and 11% of Connecticut populations.
"When at the French consulate in Boston, I had applied for a visa to study in France, I wrote in the space on the form where ‘nationality’ was asked for, ‘French,’ for that is what I thought my nationality was" (78).
Ignored communities

These ignored communities constitute one of the largest concentrations of French speakers in the US.

Linguist Cynthia Fox writes, "Although Americans are generally aware that there is in the US today a numerically significant, culturally distinct, and historically French-speaking population in Louisiana, many are surprised to learn that the same statements also apply to another subset of the population, the Franco Americans of the Northeast."

Bruno Ramirez called the borderland region between the US and Canada an "historiographical desert."
Why this work?
Why this work?

- Inaccurate and Inadequate Description of Materials
- Institutional, Geographic, and Digital Barriers to Discovery of Materials
Inaccurate and Inadequate Description

LCSH: The term “Franco-Americans” was designated a Library of Congress subject heading only in 2008, nearly 80 years after the Johnson-Reed Act essentially closed the border to new migrants.

In terms of organization and access, libraries are sites constructed by the disciplinary power of language...The idea that language has meaning only in context, an idea articulated abstractly in fields like philosophy, comparative literature, and anthropology, was made very materially evident: subject headings, often cast by catalogers as a kind of pure, objective language, are not; where and when and by whom subject headings are used makes all the difference in terms of meaning...In both their activism and their scholarship, librarians have convincingly made the case that Library of Congress Classification (LCC) and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) fail to accurately and respectfully organize library materials about social groups and identities that lack social and political power ("Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," Drabinski, 95)
Title: Histoire des Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1775-1900 / Armand Chartier.

Subject: French Americans New England History.
Subject: New England Emigration and immigration History.
Subject: Québec (Province) Emigration and immigration History.
Subject: Canada Emigration and immigration History.
Institutional, Geographic, and Digital Barriers to Discovery
Example #1: Repository-centric Organization
**Example #2: State-based organization and funding**

**NDNP: Through limiting technical, geographic, and funding specifications, the National Digital Newspaper Program has inadvertently constructed barriers to preserving and representing Franco-American newspapers.**

The key program for funding historical newspaper digitization in the US, the Library of Congress' and National Endowment for the Humanities’ National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) works through state-led, state-limited projects. Yet the NDNP inadvertently constructs barriers to digitizing Franco-American newspapers:

- State with the highest number of Franco-American newspapers (Massachusetts, 197 titles) only just received NDNP funding; New Hampshire (68 titles) does not received NDNP funding.
- NDNP requires that newspapers be digitized from master microfilm.
- Many titles are not held in one state, and many runs are not held where they were published.
- BAnQ holds many master microfilm of Franco-American newspapers, yet BAnQ’s work focuses on current-day Quebec, not the publications of their US-based diaspora communities.
Chronicling America Non-English Language Coverage (Map)

Visualization shows locations where non-English language newspaper pages published between 1890-1963 are available in Chronicling America.

Coverage as of September 2019

Tips: Use the map's zoom and pan controls to explore titles available in Chronicling America. Click dots to see more information and links.

About: Data in this visualization is from https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov as of 9/4/2019. Map locations are based on system generated longitude and latitude values. Color shows details about language (also labeled in legend). (optical character recognition) files that represent the text printed on individual newspaper pages. More info at: https://www.loc.gov/hdmpcc/

© 2019 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap
Total number of states publishing Franco-American newspapers
7 (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, NY)

Coverage period of Franco-American newspaper publication
1828-present

Total number of Franco-American newspaper titles
ca. 390

Total number of extant Franco newspaper titles
ca. 175

Total number of Franco newspaper titles with serial records in Library of Congress's Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers
95
Longest publishing periods for Franco-American newspapers
80 years (*Le Messager*, Lewiston ME)
77 years (*L'Indépendant*, Fall River MA)
75 years (*Le Travailleur*, Worcester MA)
71 years (*L'Étoile*, Lowell MA)

Most prolific cities publishing Franco-American newspapers
Manchester, NH - 55 titles
Lowell, MA - 37 titles
Worcester, MA - 29 titles
Woonsocket, RI - 26 titles
Example #3: Digital Barriers
Alida Capristant was the eleventh of twelve children in a large French-Canadian family in South Hadley, Massachusetts born on July 24, 1914. Her parents both immigrated from Québec in 1885. On September 30, 1895 they were married in South Hadley. The Capristant family rented their home until 1912 when they purchased their first house in South Hadley. Alida had an active social life as a teenager and considered attending college or university, but did not pursue any further education until about 1943, when she studied at the Providence Hospital School of Nursing in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Two years later she married James Perreault and the couple had two children, a daughter, Marcia (Perreault) Matthieu and a son, David James Perreault. They lived in South Hadley until 2003, when they moved to Chandler, Arizona to be near their daughter. Alida Perreault died of complications from Alzheimer’s disease on April 7, 2006, and James died in 2008. Both are buried in Saint Rose Cemetery in South Hadley next to Alida’s family.

Alida’s correspondence during her high school years (1928-1932) reveal a young woman with a substantial network of friends and family. The bulk of the collection consists of letters from several friends, including two potential romantic interests. Letters document daily activities, family happenings, and later Alida’s interest in a career as a nurse and her leadership role in the South Hadley Women’s Club.
Franco-American Items & Collections

- **A. Poulin Papers and BOA Editions Records**
  Yale Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- **American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-40**
  Library of Congress
- **Edouard Du Buron Papers, 1937-1993**
  Archives of American Art
- **Jack Kerouac Collection, 1948-1880**
  Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin
- **"Le français dans le Connecticut"**
  CIHM Monograph Collection, University of Alberta Libraries
- **Alida Perreault Papers**
  UMass Amherst Libraries Special Collections and University Archives
- **Adélard Lambert et ses collectes**
  Répertoire du patrimoine culturel du Québec, Gouv. du Québec
First steps

First, we needed to find the materials. **How to discover them if not by keyword or subject?**

We drew on cultural knowledge in order to find culturally laden signifiers like last names, geography, traditional occupations, language, and community institutions.
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First steps

Second, we needed to think about and find a tool that could help us make these items discoverable.
Welcome to the Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository

The Latin American Digital Initiatives (LADI) repository is a collaborative project that preserves and provides digital access to unique archival documents from a network of Latin American partners with an emphasis on collections documenting human rights issues and underrepresented communities.

Read more about our work.
The discovery layer that we are building

- Bilingual
- Gateway to multiple institutions and relies upon those institutions for storage
  - "Post-custodialism is a collaborative, non-extractive, mutualistic approach to providing access to archival collections within their original contexts of creation...[and] to support the development of partners' archival capacity... The collections...have been digitized and[/or] described by partner repository staff, who provide the rich contextual knowledge captured in each collection's descriptive metadata. This work is guided by a commitment to nurturing reciprocal relationships between a network of local and international collaborators... to build a horizontal community...connecting partners with one another while decentering our own role." - LADI
- Centers Franco American knowledge structures in its finding layer and organization
Franco American Digital Archives
Portail franco-américain

https://francoportal.org
## Selected Facets

### Digitization Status
- Digitized / Numérisé(e) (180)
- Not Digitized / Non numérisé(e) (12)
- Partially Digitized / En partie numérisé(e) (6)

### Topic
- Daily Life/Vie quotidienne (129)
- Family and Home Life/Famille et vie domestique (90)
- Education/Education (52)
- Educators/Professeurs(e) (46)
- Sickness/Maladie (39)

### Geography

### Family Name
- Sansoucy (93)
- Harpin (91)
- Giguère (47)

### Contributing Institution
- Assumption University (128)
- University of Southern Maine (46)
- Siena College (5)
Résumé

État de la numérisation
Digitized / Numérisé(e) (170)
Not Digitized / Non numérisé(e) (3)

Thème
Daily Life/Vie quotidienne (120)
Family and Home Life/Famille et vie domestique (89)
Education/Éducation (46)
Educators/Professeur(e)s (42)
Sickness/Maladie (39)

Géographie

Nom de famille
Sansoucy (91)
Harpin (90)
Giguère (42)

Membre de
Sansoucy - Harpin Family Archive
Institution contributrice
Assumption University

Letter
Date
1940-08-16
Membre de
je Me Souviens...I Remember; Presenting and Preserving the Heritage of Upstate New York's Franco-American Communities
Institution contributrice
Siena College

Letter, 1909 December
Lettre de Corinne Harpin et Napoléon Sansoucy, à leurs filles Antoinette et Anne Marie Sansoucy.
Date
1909-12 (year and month approximate)
Membre de
Sansoucy - Harpin Family Archive
Institution contributrice
Assumption University

Letter, 1912 November 20
Lettre d'Adélahard Harpin, à Corinne Harpin.
Date
1912-11-20
Membre de
Sansoucy - Harpin Family Archive
Institution contributrice
Assumption University
## Item Description

| Existence and Location of Originals | French Institute, Assumption University, Le Maison 308, Worcester, Massachusetts |
| Repository                       | French Institute |
| Member of                        | Sansoucy - Harpin Family Archive |
| Description                      | Letter from Maria Harpin and Phillip Sansoucy to Napoleon Sansoucy. |
| Genre                            | correspondence |
| Author/Creator                   | Creator (cre): Harpin, Maria  
                                   Creator (cre): Sansoucy, Philippe |
| Date(s)                          | 1912-08-03 |
| Source Language                  | fr |
| Extent                           | 2 pages |
# Letter, 1912 August 3

## Item Description

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Dear Brother-in-law,

Your letter arrived yesterday, informing us of the relief of our dear Corine. I was at Pîtres (Pierre Sansoucy, brother of Napoleon), at Monceau, when the news arrived and I returned this evening.

Our poor Corine, God has given her her share of suffering. You said on your card that she has improved, but that she was very weak. Evidently, she was not strong in the first place. We think about all of you. Napoleon. It is so sad when the mother is ill.

My dear Antoinette, it is you who has the joy of seeing your mother. I know that she is well off with you. Tell her that if I am well, I will do all I possibly can to go to see her in the fall. Antoinette, tell me if the doctor has said that the hemorrhage could recur. It is so dangerous.

I don't write very long. Rather, I will avoid news from you, that is, about Corine. Goodnight, my dear ones. I embrace all affectionately, especially our dear Corine. Marie and Philippe Sansoucy

Letter, 3 August 1912

Letter from Maria Harpin and Philippe Sansoucy, to Napoleon Sansoucy.
Letter from Marie Harpin and Philippa Sansoucy, to Napoleon Sansoucy.

[Image of letter]

To Naples 3 August 1912

Dear Brother-in-law,

Your letter arrived yesterday, informing us of the relief of our dear Corine. I was at Père’s (Pierre Sansoucy, brother of Napoleon), in Montreal, when the news arrived and I returned this evening.

Our poor Corine, God has given her her share of suffering. You said on your card that she has improved, but that she was very weak. Evidently, she was not strong in the first place. We think about all of you, Napoleon. It is so sad when the mother is ill.

My dear Antoinette, it is you who has the joy of trying to comfort your mother. I know that she is well off with you. Tell her that if I am well, I will do all I possibly can to go to see her in the fall. Antoinette, tell me if the doctor has said that the hemorrhage could recur. It is so dangerous.

I don’t write very long, Mother; I will send news from you, that is, about Corine. Goodnight, my dear ones. I embrace all affectionately, especially our dear Corine, Marie and Philippe Sansoucy

Letter, 9 September 1912

Letter from Adelard Harpin, to Antoinette Sansoucy.
St Ours 3 aout 1712

Cher beau frère,

Votre lettre nous est parvenue hier dans apparence la recherche de notre chère Coline. J'ai cru que je ne leverais la nouvelle ce matin et je suis venue que ce soir. Cette affreuse Coline le fut d'une mauvaise humeur, elle me donna son pape du souffrance. Nous avons enfin reçu notre carte qu'elle avait prise des temps. Mais qu'elle était très faible. Évidemment elle était si peu forte d'avance. Nous pensions bien nous tous Napoléon. C'est si bistre qu'il a quitté la maladie.

Ma chère Catherine, c'est toi qui a le bonheur d'essayer à soulager ta douce
# Family

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<td>Caraquet</td>
<td>Cohoes Falls</td>
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Sustainability
Sustainability

- Consortium - [https://facconsortium.org](https://facconsortium.org)
- Fundraising - $2.3 million in grants
  - collaborative solicitation
- Curriculum - 2 courses & 4-8 interns per year
- Cataloging - improving descriptive access
- Post-custodialism - stewardship & expertise
Growth & Evolution of FADA/PFA
Growth & Evolution of FADA/PFA

- Teacher guides - curriculum integration
- Exhibits - creative outlets
- Digitization - access & preservation
- Accession - 2-3 inquiries per month
- Support - small institution hosting
- Contributors - 2-3 institutions per month
- Outreach - regional promotion
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Franco American Collections Consortium works together to make accessible the history and culture of Franco Americans in the Northeast and beyond. Together, we keep Franco American history and culture alive.
Thank you!

https://francoportal.org

https://facconsortium.org
Works Cited
Works Cited (cont.)

https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search?commit=Search&date_end=&date_start=&op=AND&query%5B%5D=&query%5B%5D=franco-americans&search_field=advanced&search_index%5B%5D=all_fields&search_index%5B%5D=title&search_index%5B%5D=subject&utf8=%E2%9C%93. Accessed 11 July 2022.


https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=all_fields&q=french+canadian

https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&view=list&search_field=all_fields&q=%22french+canadian%22+AND+%22franco+american%22

Slide 21 - Various images from the Library of Congress, accessed 11 July 2022:
"Holding strikers in check, Lawrence, Mass." https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2014690133/.
"The boy standing is Manuel Baptiste, 605 Acushnet Ave., Fall River, Mass. Said 10 years old. 7 year old Alphonse and 12 year old Alphonse Derosies..." https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2018675714/.
"Class in English for employees. Pocasset Mill. After day's work. Location: Fall River, Massachusetts." https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2018677950/
"Corrinne Le May, 15 years old, bunching sweet peas at the Boston Floral Supply Co., 347-357 Cambridge Street..." https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2018677495/
Works Cited (cont.)

Slide 21 - Various images from the French Institute, Assumption University, accessed 11 July 2022:
    https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/islandora/letter-1924-christmas
    https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/islandora/25ieme-anniversaire-de-la-societe-des-artisans-canadiensfrancais-aux-etatsunis
  - " Literary, Dramatic, and Musical Entertainment Program at L'Assomption College," Dr. S. Alphonse Daudelin Collection.
    https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/islandora/literary-dramatic-and-musical-entertainment-program-lassomption-college
  - "Image of Notre Dame, Southbridge, MA," Félix Gatineau Collection.
    https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/islandora/image-notre-dame-southbridge-ma
  - "Portrait of Félix Gatineau," Dr. S. Alphonse Daudelin Collection.
    https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/islandora/portrait-felix-gatineau
  - "Letter from Philippe A. Lajoie, to Félix Gatineau," Félix Gatineau Collection.
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Slide 28 - http://findingaids.library.umass.edu/ead/mums808 Accessed 11 July 2022
Works Cited (cont.)
Presentation Title
Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain: Centering Franco-American Communities in Digital Discovery

Presentation Abstract
During this presentation, we will introduce FADA/PFA to the Digital Commonwealth community and outline its collaborative efforts to center Franco-American community researchers and overlooked archival materials within the digital archives landscape. We will outline our multi-year collaboration to conceptualize a multi-institutional portal; identify and aggregate overlooked collections from over 75 North American institutions; build contributing partnerships; transform and translate metadata with culturally specific markers; fundraise; and build a sustainable, post-custodial, bilingual digital system—all within the context of COVID-19 shutdowns and distancing. We will detail how the portal and consortium pay particular attention to culturally-specific knowledge construction, "centering" Franco-American communities and local knowledge within practices of information organization and archival description. We will also discuss our aims to grow and evolve the portal and consortium to raise awareness of this historically underserved cultural and language community, with collaborating institutions and team members spread throughout the United States and Canada.