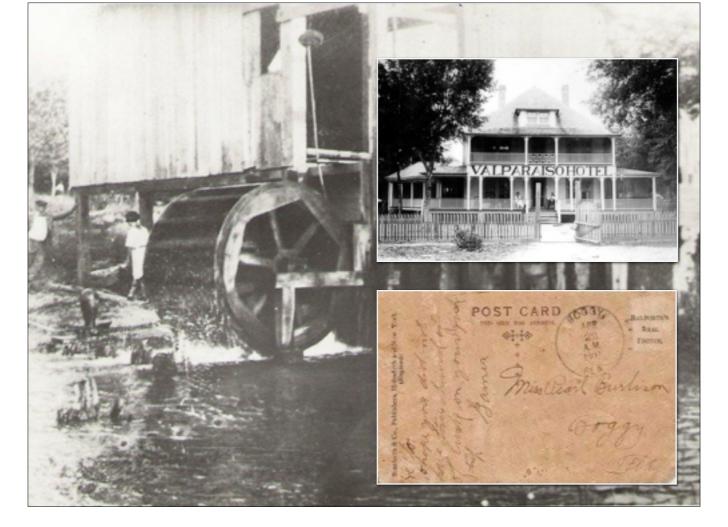


Hi and thank you for having me. "Future proofing" is a sci fi term that basically means something's unlikely to become obsolete. Nothing fancy. We're in this weird situation in small and rural libraries where all this ebook/tablet/text-a-librarian stuff can seem futuristic to some at the same time as other people are calling libraries irrelevant.

You and I know that's not where libraries are going. Let's work out how to get that point across to patrons, funders, each other.



People on the internet often ask me to talk about "the future of libraries" and then get dismayed when I don't think things are really going to be terribly different in ten or twenty years. Not in small towns. Not really. I grew up in Boxborough Massachusetts, now I live in a Randolph Vermont, about the same size population-wise. Maybe 4500 people. A good size. About the size Niceville was the year I was born. I love looking at the histories of other small towns. I liked learning about Boggy Florida's post office and about the Nathey Gristmill and the Valparaiso Hotel



People are great at having visions and giving a lot of advice on how things should be. It turns out it's a lot easier to envision a glorious future than to figure out how to get there from where we are right now. We see this in libraries, enduring institutions that evolved a certain way over a long period of time. Truly public institutions, for everyone. A thing that's rarer and rarer.

Everyone can imagine a great and different way for libraries to BE but not how we can get them there. So let's talk about that.



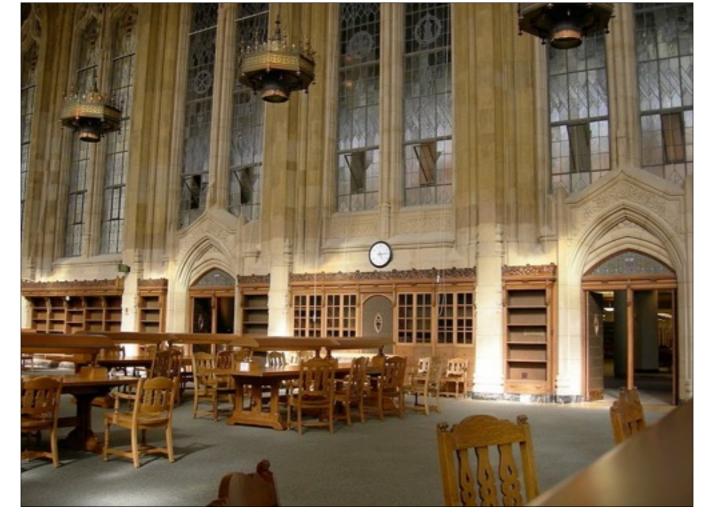
This is what the Florida State Library basement looked like about 75 years ago, just as a point of reference. It may still look like that today but I suspect not. So I think we can all agree that future-proofing and saying the same are not at all the same thing, and that this is okay.

I've shifted my ideas about how to approach and educate people about technology over the years. I'm now working with what I call (click) the One Thousand Starfish approach. I'll explain that in a bit.



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I did that thing many kids do and moved away after college. I went to Seattle where I learned some tech skills, got my library degree here at UW, and spent a lot of time in a tech-saturated environment teaching basic computer skills at Seattle Public Library and elsewhere. My idea at the time was that I'd teach basic email and technology classes for a while and then somehow everyone would know those things and we could focus on less 101 topics like privacy and security and copyright.

I laugh to look back and think of it, but that was my feeling.



I moved back home to New England, settling in Vermont. I do a lot of things for work but the two biggest things besides talks like this are

Teaching basic technology classes and staffing a drop-in time for adults at a local vocational high school. Think "where are my files?" sorts of things. This is Colin, he is 88. He comes to organize his photos and to fight with his email. He likes help with this fight.
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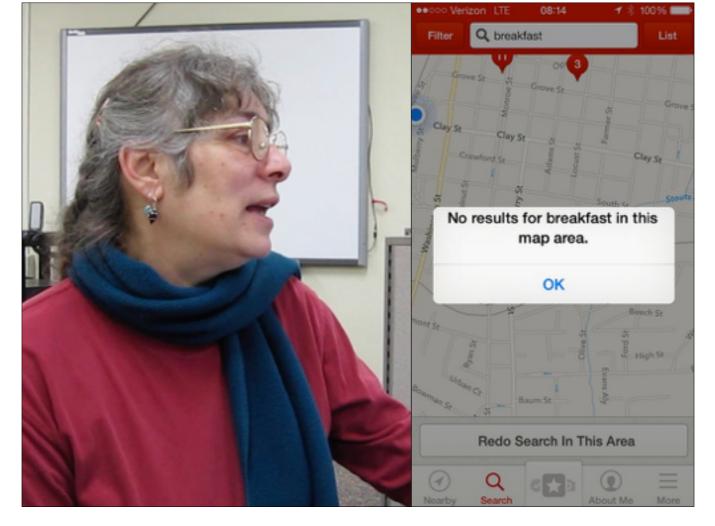
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This is Corliss. She comes in to work on her resume so she can get a job somewhere other than the glove factory and the music box factory in our town. So there's a Big City/Small Town aspect to what I do, where "the internet" is the big city.

The thing that is the most interesting to me is how much these two "worlds" are a little invisible to each other. Techies seem to forget that the digital divide exists or have oversimplified it to some nasty "We just need to wait out the old people" analysis (old like me? old like Corliss We're not that old...) And then they build tools that don't take novice users into account, that presume too much, that have bad defaults, that think you can "crowdsource" everything you previously would pay for. We've used those tools. We don't like them. Our patrons have tried them. They've made them feel bad. They get tired of hearing how "email is dead" when it's just barely live to them. (click – this was me trying to find breakfast in Mississippi)



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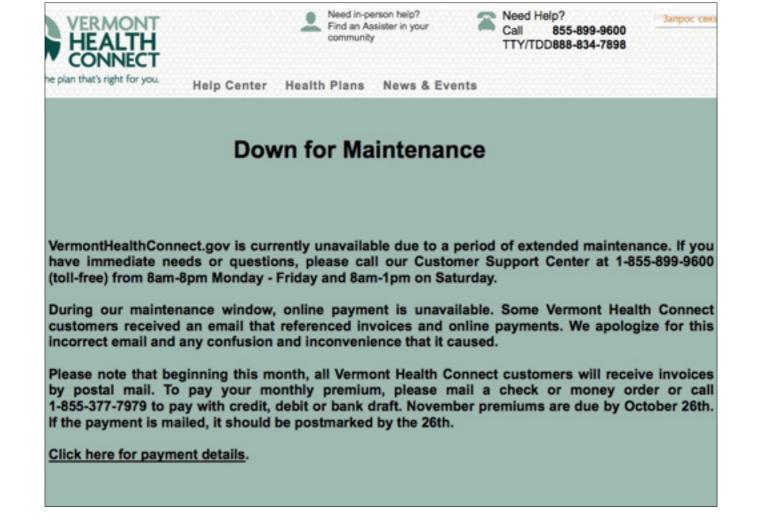
And people in smaller towns (I think of the ones I know in Vermont, this may or may not be true for you) sometimes find a point of pride in *not* being online. This is Fred Tuttle in Tunbridge Vermont, holding a photo of his father who is holding a photo of HIS father. They are proud that they've avoiding the spam and the viruses and the smartphone-facilitated distractions. There's a sort of reverse-snobbery in action. They like me okay but those OTHER people who are online all the time facebooking and tweeting and sexting, there is something WRONG with them. I listen, and learn.



The whole IDEA of computers has changed generally. Back in the day, you'd have a computer if you were an electronic hobbyist. Nowadays, we're told, they're for everyone (click) and their dog. The media writes about people's refrigerators being hacked. Most people want a computer to do a few dozen things simply, but no one can agree on what few dozen things those are. So computers do a few thousand things and people get stressed out that they don't know how to do the other 975 things it does or 9075 things. Plus they're expensive to fix, and maybe touchy. So people get discouraged....



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Speaking of discouraged, last year Vermont's healthcare website has been down for six weeks. Like that's crazy can you be said to have a website if it's been down for over a month? I get sort of angry about this.

But here's the interesting thing. The State of Vermont made a choice. With the number of people who needed to use the site (we've got 650,000 people in the state a small fraction of those are on state health care) and the amount of support those people needed, it was actually simpler to just keep the website down and do one-on-one phone support rather than struggle with a website that was up and down for a month. At scale, it actually was a solution.

This is the small library strength. This is the small community strength. We can know all of our people. In NYC where you've got several million patrons, good luck with sussing them all out, but we can actually do some of that one on one work. If I know a hundred people in town, and they each know fifty, that's everyone in town.



Back to that starfish comment: Last folksy story, promise.

I work in a vocational high school and there are a lot of kids there who are often dealing with challenges that are more pressing than school. Poverty, bad family situations, food insecurity. School for these kids is just one more tough thing. It's a small school with a decent student/teacher ratio. At the beginning of the year, they list out all the kids at a teacher's meeting and every teacher makes a check box next to the kids they know or know of or are friendly with the families or whatever. There are always some kids left. New kids, kids from far away, maybe kids with problems, shy kids, kids who miss a lot of school. And each teacher takes a kid. Not to get all up in their business, but to maybe notice if something is wrong, make sure the kid has a warm jacket, make sure every kid has a person at the school who is thinking about them.

(click)

At our small scale, this works. The parable about the kid hucking starfish back into the ocean from the beach and the person saying "What are you doing? You can't save all the starfish!" and the kid says "Well I saved this one" *huck* "and this one" *huck* At small scales you actually can save them all.

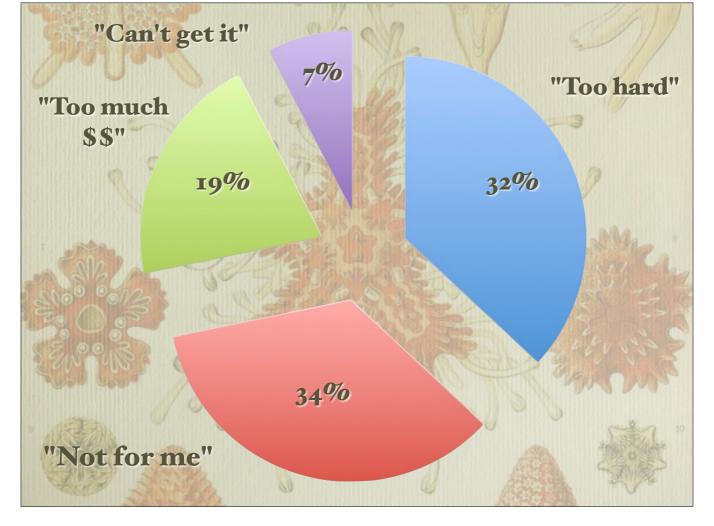


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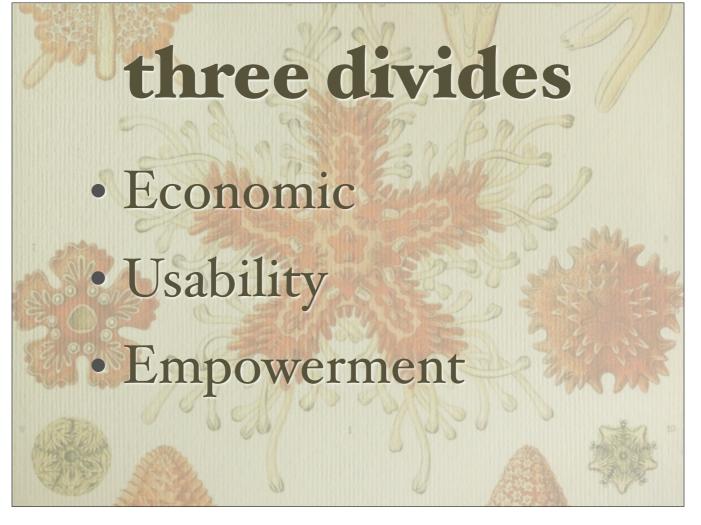
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What we've learned in the past few years is that the digital divide is less and less about people who literally can't get online (no broadband, no computer). Those people exist, don't get me wrong, but they are a smaller fraction of the 18 or so percent of people who are offline. Some of them are my neighbors, I don't mean to downplay their situation. But the larger group are people who are offline either by choice or by "choice" meaning they have hurdles they'd need to get over in order to really be online.

IRS was one of the original organizations (along with the FCC) to study offline America (sidebar: why) and they found that people were pretty evenly split on why they weren't online.

34% "Internet is not for me" (fear, stubborn, who knows)
32% "Internet is not easy to use" (need help, have challenges)
19% "Too expensive" (need access or need computer)
7% "Can't get it" (regulation is helping with this, but slowly)
8% Random misc - I know it doesn't add up to 100



So looking now at what we need to address. The divides.

The economic one (can't afford a computer or broadband) is getting addressed by the public libraries. 97% of people in the US have a public library where they can get online or use a computer. Go team. There's also the usability divide (I teach a class on facebook but it really should be called "where are the little triangles that are hiding all my settings?") and lastly the empowerment divide. This is the "I don't see myself as a person who enjoys the internet, or uses the internet, or participates on the internet" The idea even that you might participate is not clear to many people. It's daunting.



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We sometimes call this divide the digital readiness gap. People need not only the skills: mouse, click, read, whatever, but also the ability to be ... "up for it" to have the confidence to try and the ability to be discerning about online information, make sensible choices, stay safe.

MEDIA

Wikipedia Emerges as Trusted Internet Source for Ebola Information

By NOAM COHEN OCT. 26, 2014

with conspiracy theories, supposed	
Share miracle cures and Twitter posts of	T
dread.	101
But amid the fear mongering are	
Save several influential sites that are	
sticking to the facts about Ebola.	
More Millions have come to rely on these	
sites, including those run by the	
Centers for Disease Control and	James H British (
Prevention, the World Health	which m
Organization and Wikipedia.	articles,



James Heilman, an emergency room doctor in British Columbia, leads Wikiproject Medicine, which monitors the site's major public health articles, like Ebola Virus Disease.

So this can be as simple as someone just not feeling like they need to have a twitter or facebook account (tons of people don't! This is normal! my sister isn't on facebook! She's not weird!) or someone who find an error in Wikipedia and just leaves it there instead of fixing it. Wikipedia, right? Is it "an encyclopedia anyone can edit"? or is it the domain of only about 1500 superactive young men? Both! This is confusing to people.

But at a small scale, we can find the incentives for each of our patrons that make the online world seem like more like a place where they could be, and using that crowdsourced "big city" out there to find ideas. I'm fully in favor of everyone making their own choices about whether to be online or not, but it's better to have that place, that online place, be a place you've at least seen before. I have mixed feelings about the inevitability of everything being online but I'm okay acknowledging that online holds SOME charms...

make it ours



Wikipedia #1lib1ref

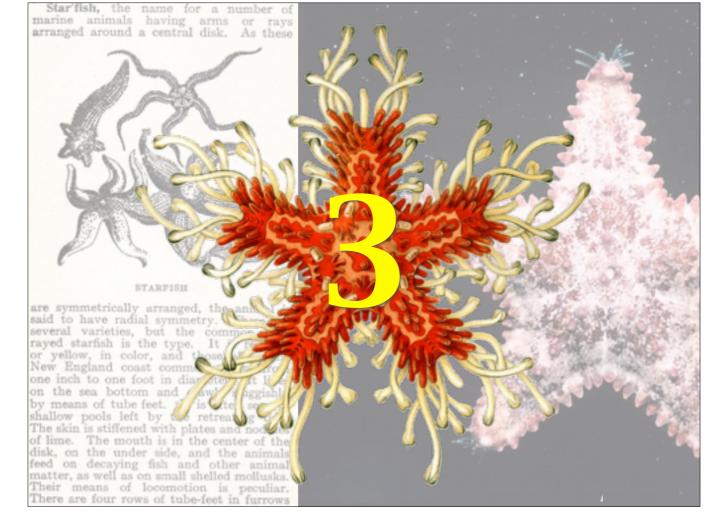
January 15 through February 3, 2017

Imagine a World where Every Librarian Added One More Reference to Wikipedia

The **Wikipedia Library** is hosting the #1Lib1Ref campaign. The object is to get every librarian to add one reference or citation to a Wikipedia article.



This is what I have been working on literally this week. This is a push to try to get librarians more into using Wikipedia. Hey just add one citation! There are even tools to help you do that. This helps make Wikipedia better and helps librarians learn the good (and bad) about interacting with Wikipedia. It's win/win.



So, back to our patrons. We know that people are telling us they would need help to get online, to use the tools available to them, to use the tools we're offering in the library, to use the tools that they need for home or work. So let's look at "what does help look like?"

One of the things we learned in library school is that people won't go to the library first when they have an information need, they'll ask their friends (even if their friends have no particular expertise) or maybe they'll Google something.

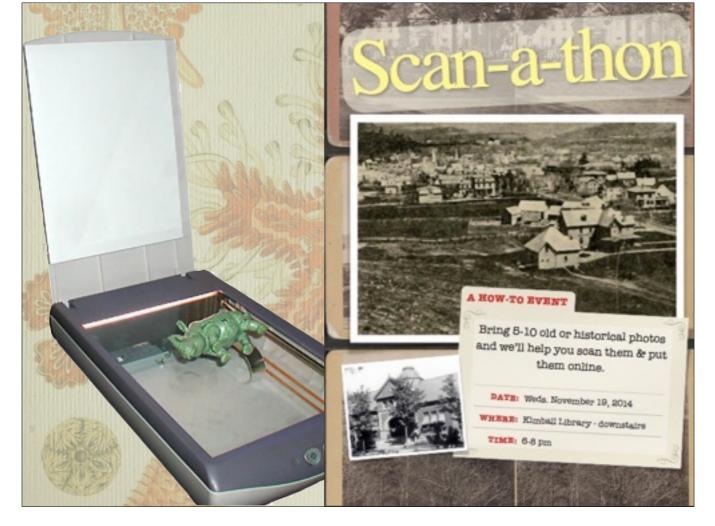
By the time they're at the library in many cases they've tried and discarded other options. In my world it's people who have new grandkids, who need to apply for jobs or unemployment or food stamps, or who want to meet people, buy things, sell things. There are a lot of tipping points that push people towards an uncertain future with technology.

One of the things I try to do is help people's early experiences be good ones. Sometimes this means getting them using the tools before they are forced to. Here are some things that I've done, or seen done, maybe you have some of your own.



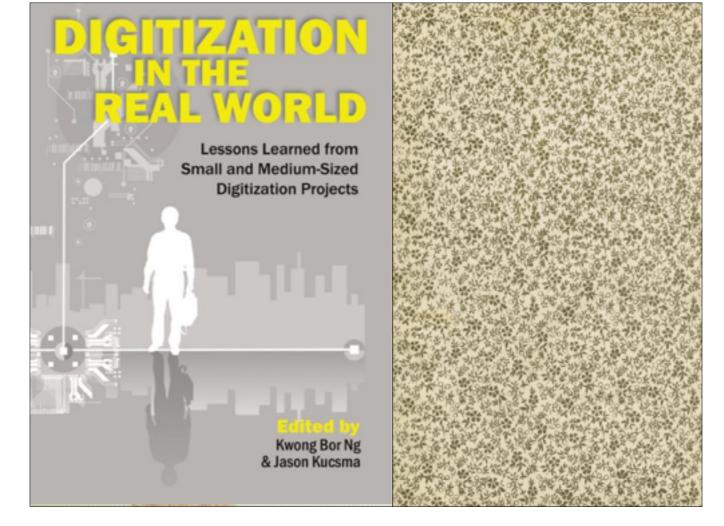
From a passive content perspective each librarian has tricks, things they show people online that make online seem interesting and non-creepy. This can be an aerial view of someone's house (not always creepy!) or a way to find something on sale with free shipping that costs a ton of money or involves a long car ride, or maybe it's just something about themselves or where they are... this was from a talk I gave in Ashfield MA over the summer. A fascinating story about a bear! Of course while that was happening. Florida was still accepting homestead claims in this part of the state

Looking up local history I enjoy the competing reports that Niceville's original name, Boggy, was because it was "bogged up with business." turpentine business according to the The Pensacola Journal November 25, 1908 (very shortly before it became niceville)



One of the simplest things you can do is start with a scanner, or even a camera and encourage people to digitize things, their things (or your things). It sounds techie when you say it that way but it doesn't have to be. Scan photos or documents. Send people home with a copy. Offer to show them how to email or store that photograph online (free!). Maybe give out some branded USB drives that people can bring with them. I don't even get into "the cloud" Someone at work yesterday told me she had downloaded the cloud. I told her I doubted that.

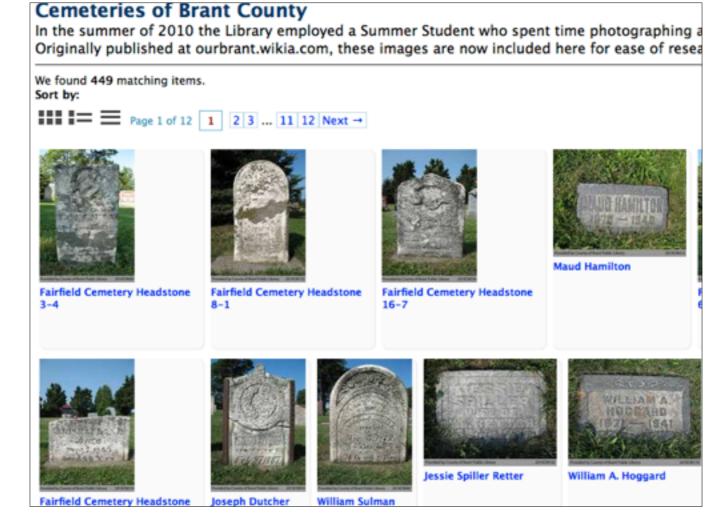
People who don't feel comfortable with the technology can assist in the organization or the metadata (just don't call it metadata). People think they have to create huge digital archives when really, putting 12 photos on Flickr this month is 12 more photos than were on Flickr last month. And they're your photos! One of my local initiatives is to help people in town put historical photos of the town online where they can be shared and used to illustrate wikipedia pages and sent to others. Little steps. Two scanners, one evening. I'm doing it as a volunteer.





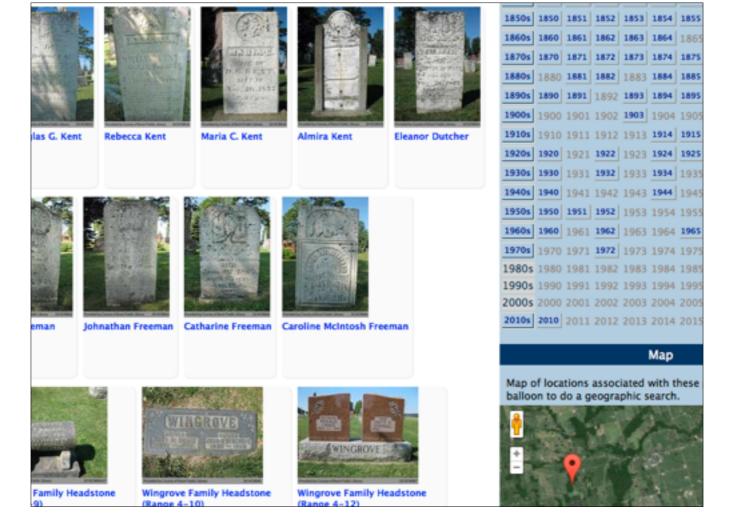






Sometimes I'll start with simple brainstorming. "What information do we have here in this building that other people might want access to?" "How can we share it beyond our borders?" "Can we do this legally and ethically?"

A lot of people start with old family photos or, in some cases, those old cemetery records that you (maybe) keep in a binder. I grump about computers sometimes but one of the things they do really well is sorting. This is a project of Brant County in Ontario, about half the population of Franklin County here in MA. One summer they got a kid to photograph, map and type in the cemetery records from the towns. Then they put it online.... Now people who are looking for relatives in cemeteries can search by date, look on a map and find a grave even if they are nowhere near Ontario. Using the Googles!



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One of the neat things about this project is the "hey help us out" aspect. In a few ways. They solicit contributions with "scan and share" events. Brant County has even put up a how to essay called Digitzation without Fears. Don't know who is in a photo? Don't let that stop you, you can "tag" the photo as a "mystery" and then people can click through and leave a comment if they have more information.

I know it seems like a pretty big deal and maybe a lot of work, but the secret (besides some grants) is partnership. Working with the other little organizations in the region to get resources, or volunteers, or space or whatever.



Principal Symons and Teachers

1966-67 This photograph depicts I the Glen Morris Central School in the 1960s. Frances Kingston during a Digital Preservation 2011.

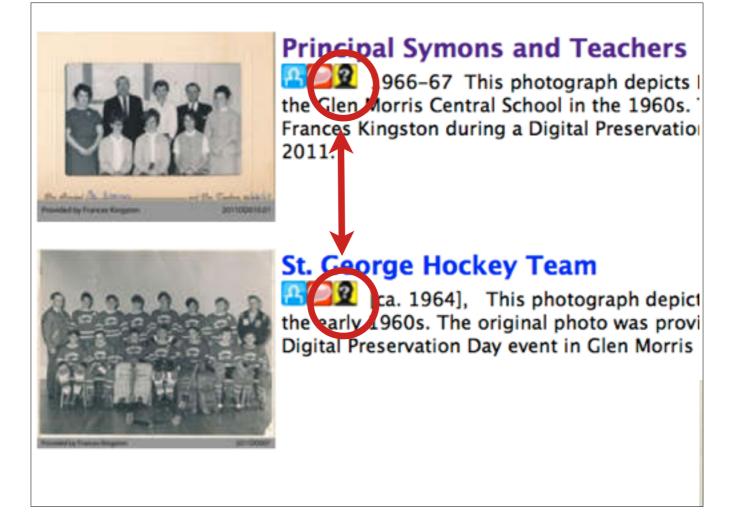


St. George Hockey Team

[ca. 1964], This photograph depict the early 1960s. The original photo was provi Digital Preservation Day event in Glen Morris

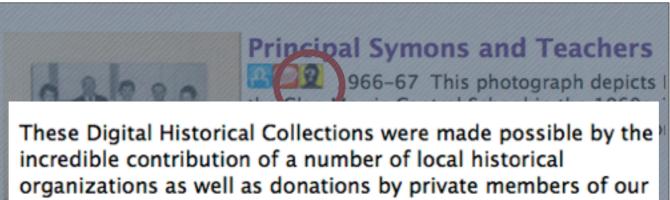
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organizations as well as donations by private members of our community. The County of Brant Public Library is proud to have partnered with so many valuable historical groups: The Paris Museum and Historical Society, Heritage Mount Pleasant, The Canadian Military and Heritage Museum, The South Dumfries Historical Society and the Salt Springs Church Historical Society. Without the tireless efforts of these groups this collection would not have been possible.



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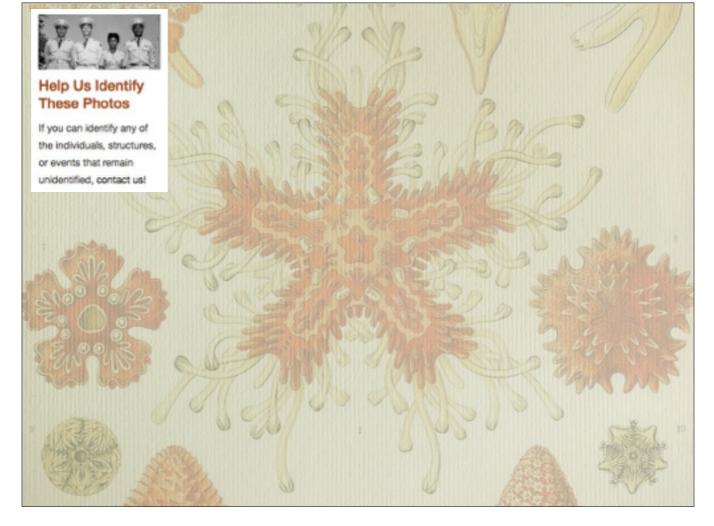
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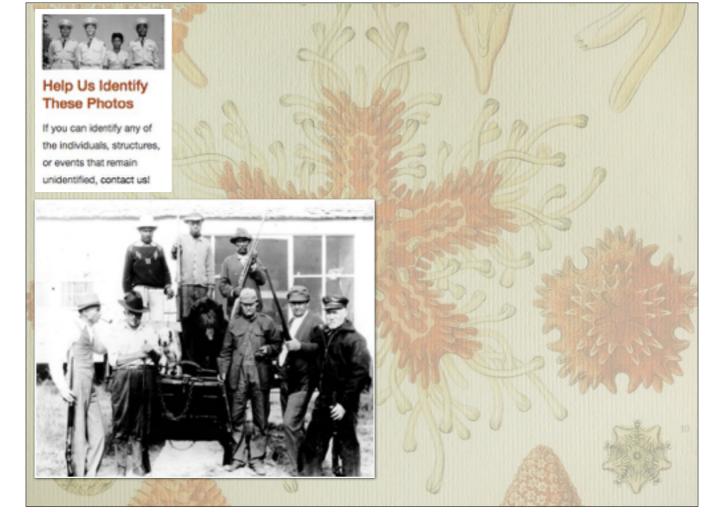


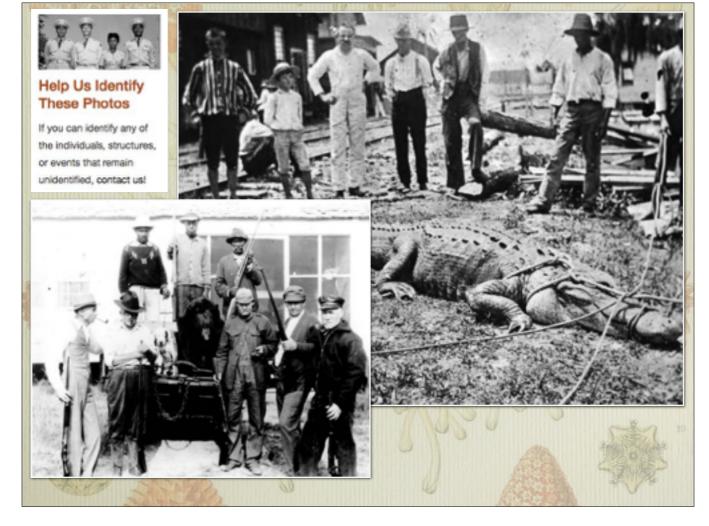
"crowdsourcing" as it's often called can be useful to make historical discoveries as with this photo which was uploaded to photo sharing site flickr, though to be a whaling photo until someone said "I think that might be Phineas Gage..." I have sort of a soft spot for this sort of thing because I used Google (and a Google Books view of a book about the history of Princeton MA) to find a photo of my great grandfather as a boy about a hundred years ago. This was a lucky grab because he happened to be friends with the kid whose dad owned the famous hotel. Some luck.

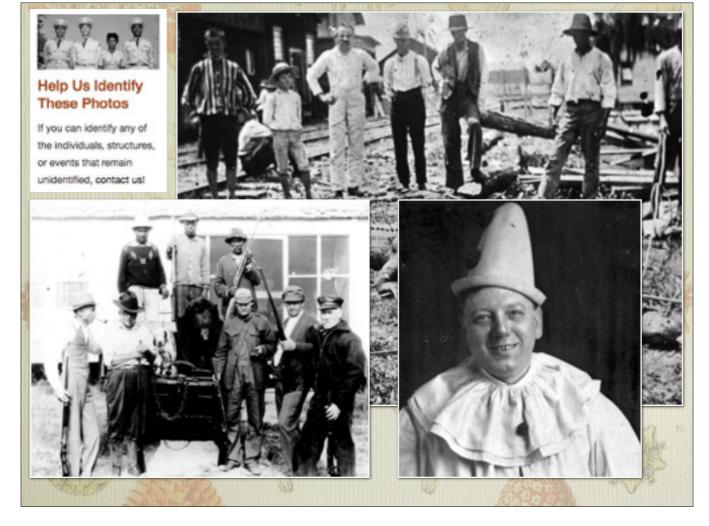


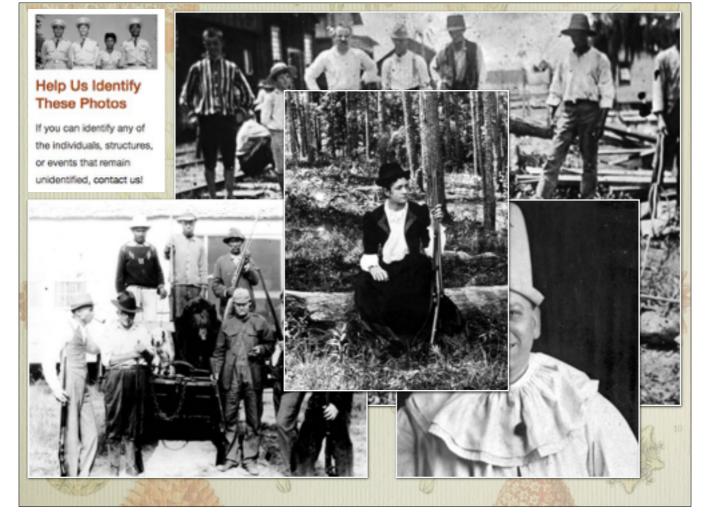
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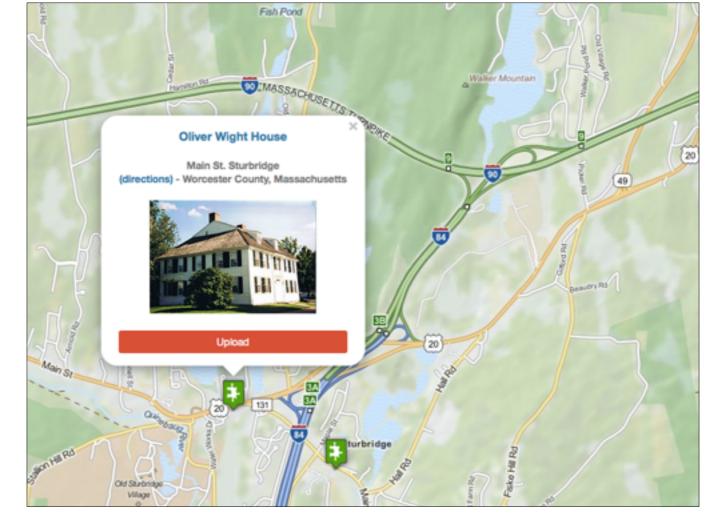




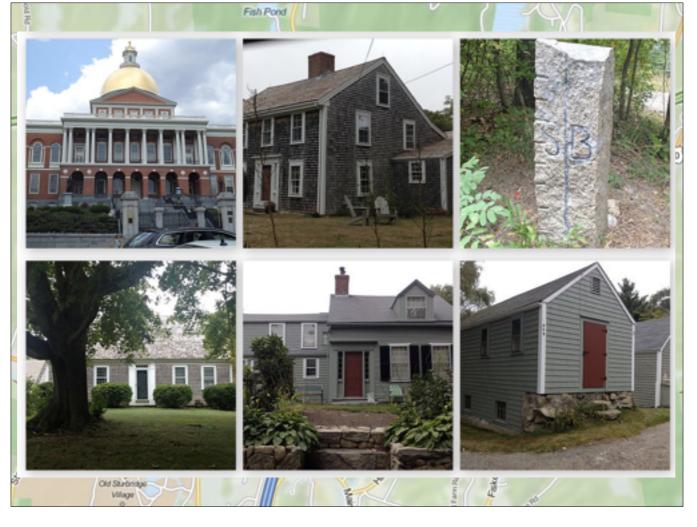




If you don't want to start your own project, maybe you can just contribute to another one. One of my favorite annual projects is the Wikipedia summer of Monuments (now just called Wiki loved monuments) which is a push (with prizes) to get people to upload images of places on the National Historic Register. These can be in your area (click) or just a place you've been. They're especially looking for pictures from the American south, in case you've been there or have patrons. Here's a picture from up the road. Here are some that were submitted for the contest (Boundary marker between Sandwich and Barnstable, MA state house) (it's not starting again til next Summer, plenty of time)



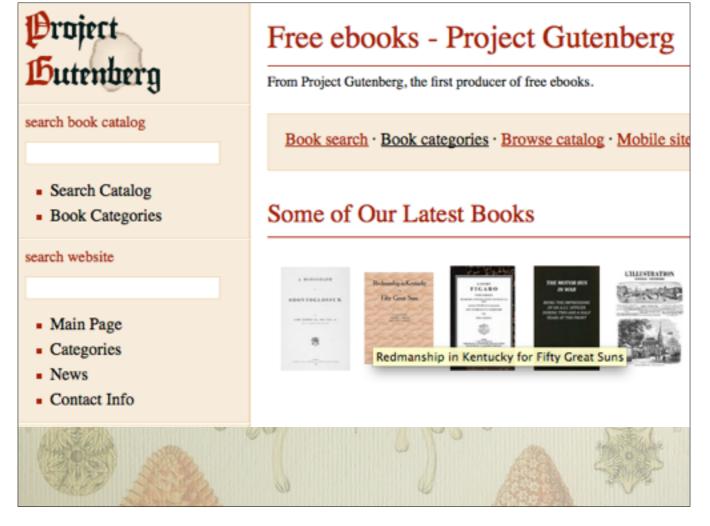
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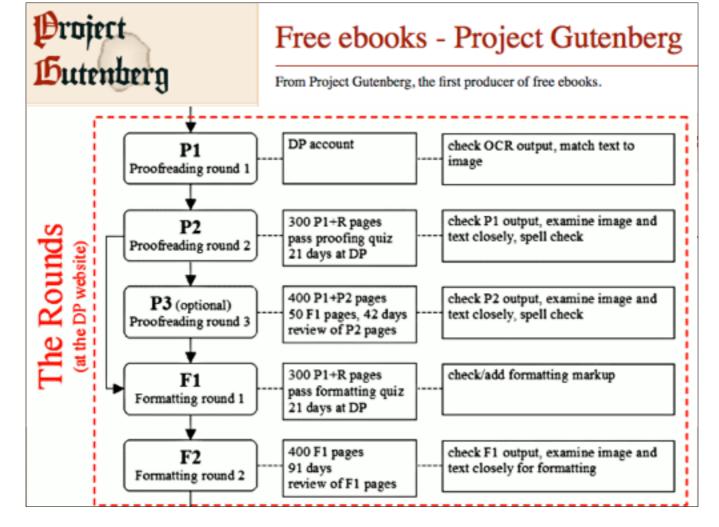
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And sometimes helping them see themselves somewhere is showing them that you've been there too. This is a front page story in my small town newspaper this week, it mentions drop-in time but the hook is that I went to the Wikimania conference. I was helping the guy from the newspaper fix his computer and he asked about the t-shirt I was wearing....



For readers, Project Gutenberg is an online archive of public domain texts. You can read them, download them, put them on your device, whatever. They're pretty high quality. According to the Atlantic, "100,000 people around the world have taken part in a massive proofreading project to correct the electronic texts of 25,000 free ebooks on the Gutenberg site." If you're a born nitpicker like I am this is actually fun. It's a little less fun to grapple with the interface and so while I like to use it as an example, it may not be the best way to get started....



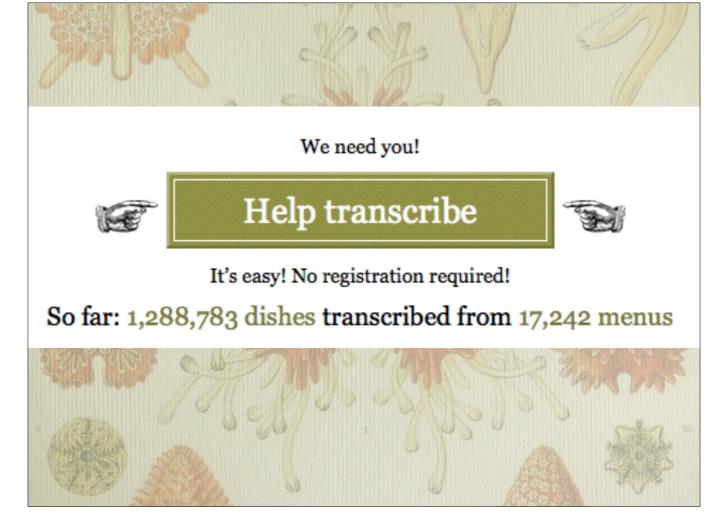
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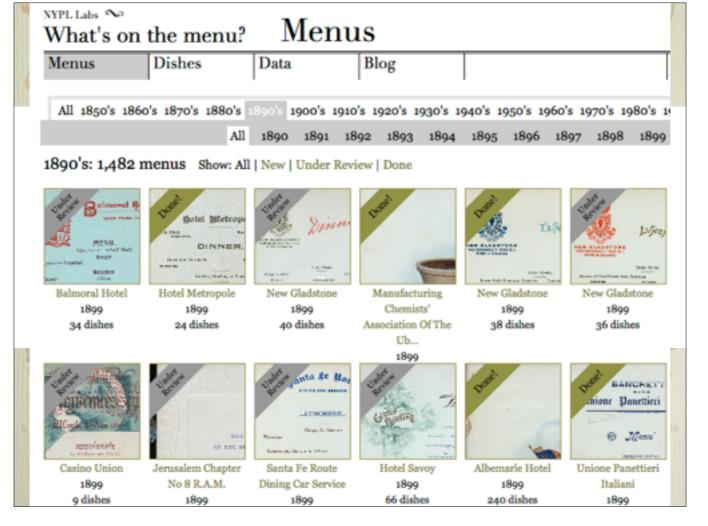
What do *I* like? Birds. In the winter I sit and watch them from my apartment but at night I can help out with this online transcription project from the Natural History museum.

Get Started		About	
ORNITHOLOGICAL from Natural History Museum			
NEW ROW 19 1945			
1945	1 Lophoceros melanoleuco geloensis 2 Turacus leucotis leucotis 3 Strix woodfordii bohndorfii	Boma Hills Magichot,	
Plants		Magnified	

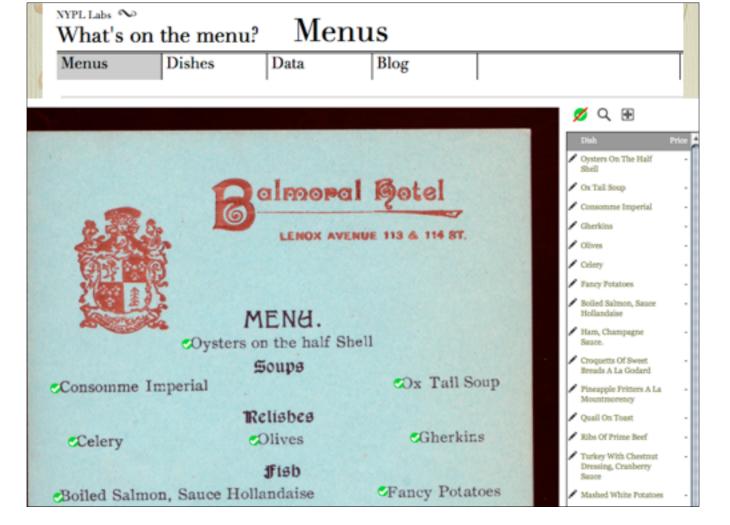
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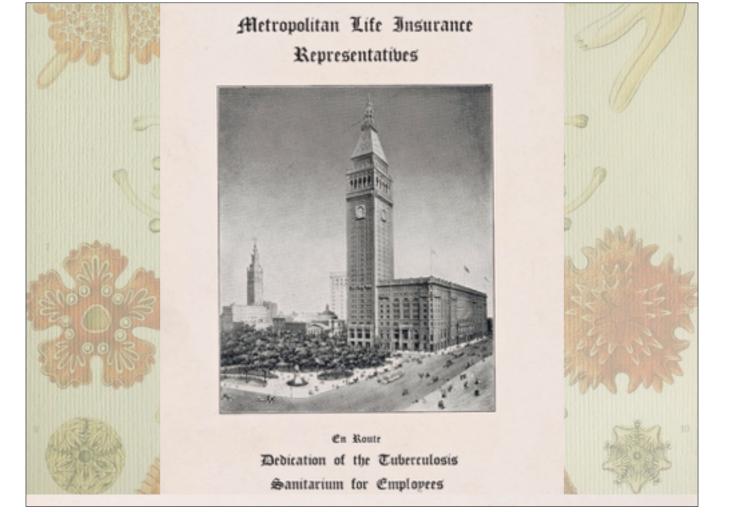
... and maybe people haven't heard of Project Gutenberg. It's possible. But they've probably heard of NYPL, right? They have a menu review project that is perfect for someone who knows a lot about food in the ... early 1900s?



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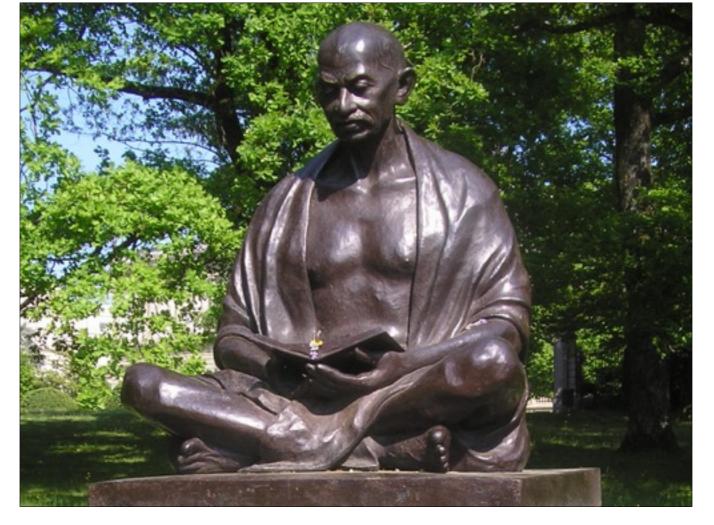
we can even keep with the theme and see what the Metropolitan Life Insurance Representatives en route to the Dedication of the Tuberculosis Sanitarium for Employees ate on the train. And while I was looking up this example, I proofread this menu!

ROAST SPRIN	NG LAMB, MINT SAUCE		
ROAST PRIMI	E RIBS OF BEEF AU JUS		
BOILED POTATOES	BRUSSELS SPROUTS IN BUTTER		
FRESH ASPAR	RAGUS, DRAWN BUTTER		
COMBINATION SALAD, FRENCH DRESSING			
ICE CREAM	ASSORTED CAKE		
NEUFCHATEL CHEESE	TOASTED CRACKERS		
TEA	COFFEE MILK		

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Find ways to break down the barriers between what the computers do and what "real life" is. Find people who model good tech positive behaviors and put them front and center doing projects. Be okay with trying a thing that maybe doesn't work. Network and share your efforts with all the other small organizations that are likewise trying to remain relevant, organizations like the grange or the historical society or the fraternal orders....



Gandhi is quoted a lot as saying "Be the change you want to see in the world", but it's a bit of a paraphrase of his longer statement.

"We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him.... We need not wait to see what others do."

So keep hucking those starfish back into the ocean. This is a project that is at our scale. Let me know how you did.



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