



History IT Archives Digitization FAQ

WHAT IS HISTORYIT?

HistoryIT is a digital preservation company specializing in digitizing the historical collection of fraternities and sororities. Their founder, Kristen Gwinn-Becker, is a professional historian, digital strategist, published author and thought leader in the field of digital preservation. HistoryIT's team of digital preservation experts have worked with a multitude of collections and historical material.

In August 2022, HistoryIT visited Executive Offices (EO) and conducted a thorough assessment of the Frances Lewis Stevenson Archives collection. They also met with more than 20 stakeholders from different areas of Delta Gamma to understand how our historical collection is used, why our history matters and how digitizing the archives would help us as an organization.

HOW BIG IS THE FRANCES LEWIS STEVENSON ARCHIVES? WHAT KINDS OF MATERIALS DOES IT INCLUDE?

There is no complete inventory of the Frances Lewis Stevenson Archives. Likely, the total number of items is somewhere in the 100,000 range. Materials in the collection include handwritten correspondence, photographs, clothing, plaques, charters, jewelry and much more. Digitizing the collection will serve as an inventory and exponentially increase our understanding of our historical material.

WHAT IS DIGITIZATION?

Digitization is a complex process that transforms physical records and artifacts into a digital format, making information easy to search and find. Each item is either scanned or photographed (depending on the type of item) at a high resolution. Then the metadata for each item must also be recorded and stored to be findable and usable in the future. One item might have dozens (in some cases hundreds) of potential pieces of metadata that need to be recorded and saved. Metadata can include (but is not limited to) information such as date, names, location, event and physical description of the artifact.

HistoryIT has been working closely with Delta Gamma's Archivist, **Diane Hall, Eta Upsilon-Drexel**, to understand Delta Gamma's history and what metadata to preserve. All this information will be uploaded into a database accessible to the public.

WHY IS DIGITIZING THE ARCHIVES IMPORTANT?

History gives us a connected past. That connected past gives us an identity. The history of Delta Gamma spans 150 years and over 260,000 members. DGs are all tied together by the shared history of the Do Good Sisterhood. That history is preserved in the Frances Lewis Stevenson Archives. By digitizing it, we will:

- Ensure it is preserved for all future generations. Unfortunately, physical material slowly decays and fades over time. It is also susceptible to damage from fires, floods, insect activity and other destructive forces. The most common way for artifacts to be damaged is through handling. Digitizing the archives will

significantly reduce the need for artifacts to be pulled out of storage or off display. Digitization is a critical preservation method to ensure our history is not lost.

- Make our history more accessible to our members. By digitizing the archives, members will be able to look up information quickly and have much more access than ever.
- Gain a deeper understanding of Delta Gamma's history and uncover more stories of our members and organization.
- We can share our history with those outside Delta Gamma more easily and effectively. Delta Gamma and our members have impacted national and world history; by digitizing the archives, we can share those stories with a broader audience.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THIS PROJECT? WHEN WILL THE ARCHIVES RETURN TO EXECUTIVE OFFICES?

The archives will be shipped to HistoryIT in the spring of 2024 and will be digitized over the next four years. This will align with the Executive Office remodel and keep the archives safe during construction. All material will be returned to Executive Offices once fully digitized and when the new archives space is ready to accommodate the collection.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A RESEARCH QUESTION FOR THE FRANCES LEWIS STEVENSON ARCHIVES WHILE THE COLLECTION IS BEING DIGITIZED?

While the collection is with HistoryIT we will have extremely limited access. This means we will not be able to answer some research questions during that time. Please reach out to the archivist at diane.hall@deltagamma.org. We will do our best to accommodate all research requests.

I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO DONATE TO THE FRANCES LEWIS STEVENSON ARCHIVES.

Please contact Delta Gamma archivist before sending any material you want to donate to the Frances Lewis Stevenson Archives. There may be a delay in how quickly we can accept new artifact donations while the Executive Offices are being renovated. You can contact the archivist at diane.hall@deltagamma.org.

WHEN WILL I BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE ARCHIVES ONLINE?

HistoryIT is already working on digitizing past issues of the *ANCHORA*, back to the first issue from April 1884! Those will be made available at Convention 2024. As areas of the archives are digitized, they will be reviewed by Delta Gamma's archivist and added to the online database in batches.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO PROBLEMATIC ITEMS IN THE COLLECTION?

In 2019, Delta Gamma launched the contextualization project to examine the moments in our history that have run against our shared values and to present this history honestly without distortion. The Frances Lewis Stevenson Archives contains many pieces of evidence of these moments. Digitizing the archives will likely uncover more of these painful moments. Those items will be digitized and preserved along with the rest of the collection. To do otherwise would effectively erase and cover up those moments.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU FIND PROTECTED PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION (PPII) DURING THE DIGITIZATION PROJECT?

It is common for an archive to find sensitive information, sometimes called protected personally identifiable information (PPII), in their collection. This can include information like medical records, banking information, etc. Such information is categorized as restricted material and will not be accessible to the public. All material will be reviewed before being made available online to ensure such information is not shared.

WILL HISTORYIT HAVE ACCESS TO ANY MATERIALS RELATED TO OUR RITUAL? WILL THAT MATERIAL BE MADE AVAILABLE ONLINE?

No, such Any materials related to our ritual will not be available for anyone to find online. HistoryIT will have access to our ritual material for the purposes of digital preservation. Having worked with many Greek organizations, HistoryIT both respects and understands the importance of our rituals and will not share any information about them.

HOW IS THIS PROJECT BEING FUNDED?

In September 2023, Fraternity Council voted and approved funding for this project to come out of Delta Gamma's set-aside funds paid in segments over the next four years. The Fraternity is able fund this project with Unrelated Business Income allowed to be set aside from taxes by the IRS with a Council vote. This allows the HistoryIT project to be undertaken without passing the cost along to our membership through fees and dues.

MY CHAPTER HAS HISTORY MATERIAL THAT WE WANT DIGITIZED. IS THAT INCLUDED IN THIS PROJECT?

This project is inclusive of what is held in the Frances Lewis Stevenson Archives. However, chapters do have the opportunity to preserve their local history by partnering with HistoryIT. HistoryIT can work with individual chapters interested in digitizing their archival holdings. This must be paid for by the chapter. Those interested in raising funds for this should contact Fraternity Fundraiser and Grant Writer Sarah Galiotto at sarah.galiotto@deltagamma.org.