



For release on July 27, 2018

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New IPS Digital Collection Provides Access to Local History

Researchers, educators and alumni can now access nearly 2,500 archived items that depict the rich and illustrious history of Indianapolis Public Schools as part of The Indianapolis Public Library's Digital Indy collection found at www.digitalindy.org.

Downloadable items, some of which date from 1853, represent the 120 elementary and high schools that have comprised IPS and underscore the role they have played in shaping the community. These include newsletters, yearbooks, IPS Board meeting minutes, school histories, registers of children, scrapbooks, news clippings, teacher contracts and staff biographies. Photos of students, school staff and schools also are included.

Made possible by a \$1.8 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. through gifts to The Indianapolis Public Library Foundation, the IPS collection is the culmination of a nearly three-year effort to identify, acquire and digitize more than 430,000 pages of materials that had been warehoused in various locations.

"We have been extremely fortunate to assemble such a vast collection of IPS history and house it in a new digital home that will serve as a valuable community asset," said IPS Superintendent Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee. "We are grateful to our network of partners for making the many achievements of the district, and of those who have been a part of it through the decades, more accessible than ever."

Of potential interest to site visitors is a collection of the *Daily Echo*, the daily school newspaper published by students at Shortridge High School, whose graduates include former U.S. Senator Richard Lugar and author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., both of whom wrote for and served as editors of the paper. From microfilm loaned by the Indiana Historical Society from which digital images were produced, 10,844 issues of the *Daily Echo* dating to 1898 are available for reading.

The IPS digital collection homepage features a video interview with Senator Lugar, through which he reflects on his days as an IPS student and the impact of the school system on his future career.

"The public schools of Indianapolis I revere," stated Lugar. "They offered such opportunities for me, for public leadership, and were the beginnings of my political service. I salute them and am grateful that they're being honored."

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The project's goal is to provide free public access to historical items that are fragile or otherwise inaccessible. The expertise of staff at Crossroads Document Services, a division of Easterseals Crossroads, allowed for the conversion of all types of media into the digital format. The organization was selected as the scanning partner due to its history of consideration and respect for documents dating back 160 years.

"We are honored to be a partner in this project that will make so much of our city's history available to our community," said Patrick Sandy, CEO/President of Easterseals Crossroads. "Our scanning capabilities have literally opened pages and pages of unseen documents relating to our city's schools. The majority of the scanning was done by individuals with disabilities at Crossroads Document Services where revenue supports programs for adults and children at Easterseals Crossroads."

Integral contributions to the IPS digital collection were made by IPS Facilities staff, media specialists and the IPS Board of Commissioners, as well as by staff from the IndyPL Cataloging and Digital Projects areas.

"This project underscores a key Library strategic initiative to digitize community resources which could be lost to time and decay," said Jackie Nytes, IndyPL CEO. "The coalition of partners that dedicated themselves to the success of the IPS collection are to be commended for their perseverance and special talents. We are so proud to shine this light on IPS' history."

The IPS collection is part of a larger Lilly Endowment grant to also digitize and make available the histories of the Indianapolis Fire Department, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, and Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department that will total more than one million records.

Completion of the final three projects and their availability on the Library's Digital Indy site will occur by 2020.