

# Ensuring online access to 125 years of Massachusetts History

The Trustees of Reservations ('The Trustees') partner with Preservica to safeguard and provide online access to 125 years of Massachusetts history, enabling them to reach new audiences with a customized public access site.

## Background

The Trustees is the world's first land preservation organization, preserving and caring for some of Massachusetts' most treasured natural, scenic, and historic sites for public use and enjoyment.

Founded over 125 years ago, key pieces of history within the organization's collections include historical documents such as original letters written by Thomas Jefferson and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Charles Eliot's scrapbook documenting the founding of The Trustees; a 140-page account of clippings, letters, pamphlets, and more.

The collections also feature images from The Trustees' 116 sites, including Agassiz Rock, with its dramatic glacial boulders, and Appleton Farm, one of the oldest working farms in the country. Visited by 1.6 million people in 2015, the organization's properties span more than 27,000 acres across the state, many of which are designated as National Historic Landmarks.

## Challenge

The Trustees sought to digitize their extensive historical collections, in an effort to make materials more widely available to the public for the first time.

The Trustees' archives, ranging from museum quality art and objects to historic and present day photos, manuscripts, news clippings, and artefacts were to be compiled in an online catalogue.

During the planning stage of the project, the Trustees' Archives & Research Centre (ARC) team initially approached preservation and access as two separate components, interviewing both digital preservation vendors and web development agencies to separately take on what was originally thought of as two distinct project phases.

"We realized, however, our goals would be best served if we used a single system to preserve as well as provide access to our digital assets," said Alison Bassett, Manager of The Trustees' Archives & Research Centre. "We were thrilled to discover Preservica and learn they have created similar platforms for so many of our colleagues and esteemed institutions like Yale University and the Museum of Modern Art."

## Solution

After sending out an RFP and receiving 13 responses, Bassett's team selected Preservica on the recommendation of History Associates, a Rockville MD consulting firm that helps organizations find the right technology solutions for their needs.

Using Preservica's Cloud Edition, The Trustees have deployed a digital preservation strategy that will not only ensure their unique digital collections are "future-proofed", but also accessible online for the general public, researchers, and staff to search, browse and view.

"We chose Preservica's Cloud Edition because we knew it would allow us to provide the same level of care to our digital items as we do with our physical collection materials, and because it will safeguard The Trustees' digital materials for future generations by ensuring that the files that are preserved today can be migrated to formats that can be used and read by the applications and technologies of the future", Bassett added.

The online materials are catalogued using local guidelines and adaptations of national standards. Generally, several controlled vocabulary systems are used for names and descriptive terms: the Getty Research Institute's Art & Architecture Thesaurus, Thesaurus of Geographic Names, and Union List of Artist Names; and the Library of Congress Authorities database.

## The Future

Preservica will continue to help The Trustees bring their stories to life for visitors, and allow them to create and maintain a living and dynamic digital archive.

This will not only safeguard the digital materials, but also allows the organization to be relevant and responsive to the needs of new audiences beyond their properties and programs.

***"We're celebrating this milestone as another step in our mission to engage current generations in understanding and appreciating the need to preserve and protect the history of our land for the future"***

**Cindy Brockway**, Trustees' Program Director for Cultural Resources.