

Developing an archive for Indian Lake

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report Submitted to the faculty of
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This report represents the work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of completion of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its website without editorial or peer review. For more information about the project's program at WPI, please see <http://www.wpi.edu/academics/ugradstudies/project-learning.html>

Abstract:

The purpose of this project was to design an archive that would be readily available and accessible to the residents of Indian lake. Through research and interviews, I found that creating an archive online works best. I also found that the website can be promoted by posting scannable QR codes on signs around the lake. I recommend the website be implemented through Omeka and to continue reaching out to members of the community for history to include in the archive. The result of this project is a plan for creating the Indian Lake archive.

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I also want to thank archivist Arthur Carlson for providing the web application service and offering to give the Indian Lake Archive a home in the Gordon Library of Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

As well, a big thank you to all residents of the Indian Lake neighborhood who took time out of their schedules to interview and respond to the survey.

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Introduction

Indian Lake, known as North Pond, is located in Northern Worcester, Massachusetts. The surrounding area is well populated with settled neighborhoods, commercial buildings, and wildlife. Many residents use the surrounding area for recreation, such as running, walking, biking, fishing, and boating. For this, a plan was suggested in 2020 to build a loop trail around the lake in order to make it safer and more accessible for recreational use. Since the loop trail would require signage, possibly historical information about the lake, the Indian Lake Watershed Association (ILWA) has been thinking about ways to archive the lake's history.

I set out to research what historical information should be archived and catalogued through the sponsorship of the ILWA. Knowing the history behind something tells a story, increases a sense of identity, and provides evidence of its existence. For this, Indian Lake would benefit from having an archive of history easily available to the public.

Background

To create an archive, the importance of “archiving” must be understood. An archive is a collection of materials stored and kept together in a singular location. “*The moment of the archive represents the end of a certain kind of creative innocence, and the beginning of a new stage of self-consciousness, of self-reflexivity in an artistic movement*” (Hall S, 2001). This quote helps describe the importance of archiving. The beginning of a new self consciousness is meaningful because it describes how collecting history can bring identity and purpose.

Community archives provide access to history that could otherwise be lost or untold. Documented history gives meaning and identity by relaying past events and stories. According to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), knowing the past is an important step in understanding the present and creating the future. History allows one to connect with the lives of people in the past and know the significance of what happened (NARA, 2021).

In today's world, creating a website for an archive is one of the best solutions because it can be accessible to a lot of people. This is because the internet is widely available to people through computers, laptops, cellphones, and other mobile devices. We are living in a time where the internet continues to make information more easily accessible to everyone. Many websites have adapted to creating responsive web pages that render on a variety of different devices. This code allows a webpage to properly function on any size smart device or computer. Since smart devices have the ability to save webpages to their home screens, websites with responsive web pages can be used as apps without having to pay annual appstore fees. Below is the link to the archive and how to add it to a smartphone (Figure 1).

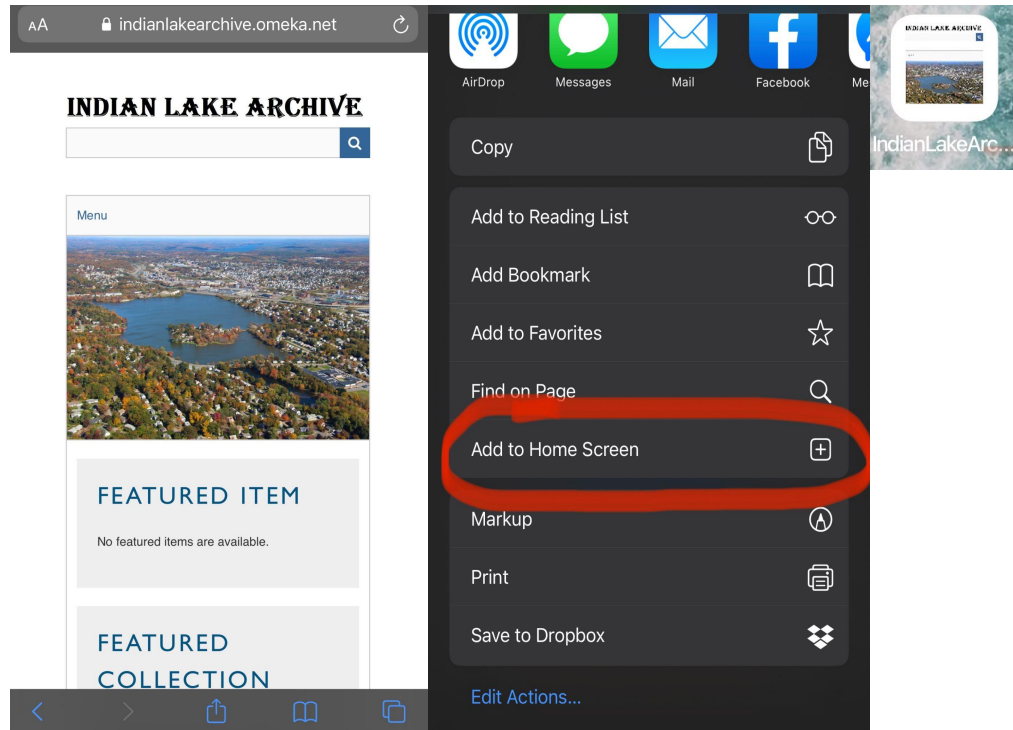


Figure 1: Adding a website to homescreen (Works for all smart devices)

That being said, websites are great for making information easily accessible, at minimal cost, and are easy to manage as well. Programs designed to build websites have made it easier for administrators to make quick revisions in a matter of minutes. Once the content is created, the website remains online, and the administrator may choose to visit when making changes. This allows for inexperienced programmers to develop their own pages. Additionally, many of the programs are free, with the agreement to allow ads on users' websites. Although ad removal isn't required, choosing to pay for the ad removal is cheaper than paying for multiple app store subscriptions to publish an app. This is why a website would be better.

On average, people spend 145 minutes a day using the internet. This number is projected to continue increasing each year (Statica 2021). Therefore, having an archive in the form of a

website increases accessibility, due to the rise and variety of technology in the past decade. The variety of technology, such as computers, tablets, and smartphones, has led to most people having access to the internet.

Methodology

To understand how my project could have the most impact toward the community and my sponsor, I made a project statement: How can I deliver a plan for an archive that is “easily accessible” to the community archive at minimal cost? Easily accessible means that the archive can be found and viewed by a majority of people. The answer was making a free website that has responsive web pages. People can now add websites directly to their home screens on mobile devices, allowing them to function like apps.

I split the methodology into three objectives for planning out the webpage. My first objective was to investigate what historical information would be archived. I did this by conducting a series of interviews with members of the ILWA and residents of the community. In addition, I researched the history of Indian Lake online. I first interviewed Marcel Blais, a math professor at WPI. I chose to interview Marcel because he lives in the Indian Lake Neighborhood. I made a list of interview questions for the purpose of gathering historical information about the lake and what he would like to see in the archive. I then interviewed Beth Proko, the President of the ILWA. I did this for the purpose of learning more about the organization and history of the Lake. To prepare for the interview, I had written down a series of questions. I started by describing my project and my plan to make a website for the archive. I asked about the history of the lake and came across a lot of information. Finally I interviewed Aaron Sakulich, a civil and environmental engineering professor at WPI. Since Aaron lives by Little Indian, a body of water connected to the main lake, the purpose of this interview was to learn the differences and similarities between the two.

To gather further information for the first objective, I sent out a survey to the Indian Lake community with the help of the ILWA. Beth contacted her team and made arrangements to have

the survey uploaded to social media and emailed to members on their distribution list. I created the survey using an online platform called Survey Monkey. I also created a graphic to be uploaded to social media to promote the survey. I created the graphic using Canva, an online program for creating posters (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Social media graphic for the survey

The main purpose of the survey was to get information from a large portion of the community without having to personally interview everyone. I used the survey to see if members of the community would be interested in using QR codes to access the website. The plan was to have signs placed in different locations around the park where members of the community could scan the code to access more information about the location on the website. This led to reaching out to the president of Park Spirit of Worcester to find how much the signs would cost. I created a sample sign using an online program called pics art (Figure 3). The QR code on the poster

works and directs you to the Sears Island lighthouse exhibit in the archive. I created the code using a program called shopify.

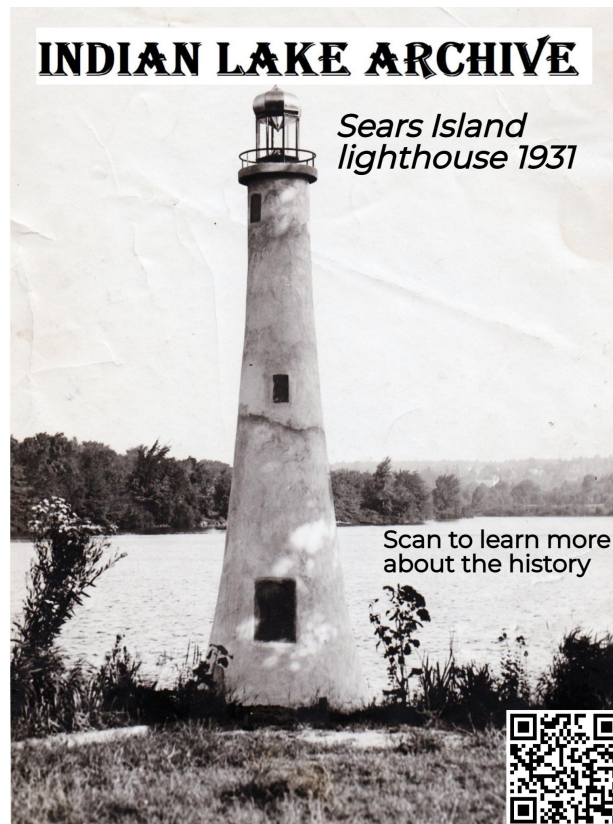


Figure 3: Example sign for Morgan Park

Additionally, I used the survey to see if members of the community would be interested in attending an event where they could bring items to be scanned and archived.

The second objective was to identify the different aspects of archiving. I did this by interviewing an archivist at WPI, and researching peer-reviewed articles online. For my third objective, I looked at the difference between three of the most common website building services: Wix, Site123, and SquareSpace. I found these were the most common by searching for drag and drop builders online.

Finally, to present the recommendations, I outlined where the signs should be located, using a GPS image from Google Maps and MS Paint to edit it. I also provided an analysis of the

website builders and a sample online archive that the ILWA can continue to develop. In the archive, I added the history of the plane crash, Karl Bjork, and the Sears Island lighthouse.

My goal was to develop a plan to archive and promote the history of Indian Lake. My proposal helps further express the identity and meaning to the lake and surrounding community. My project report includes the recommendation for the planning, an implementation process, and plans to add historical signs to the proposed loop trail.

Results

Objective 1

After interviewing Marcel Blais, he described the community members of the lake to be friendly. We then discussed how the city estimates the property taxes of the lake. It turns out every lake has a multiplier which is the property tax based on home value. Indian lake has a value of 1.5 on this scale. He went on to tell me about the history of his home, which is good information to include the archive. It turns out a holocaust survivor by the last name of Kochanowski lived in his home before him. Kochanowski was able to escape imprisonment by being a pianist for the Nazis. I found that members of the community used to enjoy hearing him play his piano in the evenings. Stories like this would disappear without a community archive, which is why it's important to have these documented.

When interviewing the president of the ILWA, I was able to find an abundance of information about the history of Indian Lake. I found there was a group of people called the Sea Scouts and they would use the lake to train. The organization taught its members how to use boats and how to be safe in the water. Going forward, we talked about the battle over route 52 which is now the highway for 190. The city wanted to build the highway over the lake, which would have divided it in half and created swaps on either side. The battle resulted in the city building the highway through some neighborhoods, which meant many had to relocate to new homes. Businesses were lost and relocated as well. The YMCA had to relocate to Shore Drive which was once on the other side of the lake.

Going forward, I learned about the plane crash that occurred near Little Indian. A pilot who lived in the neighborhood was performing stunts and flying around the lake. The plane had lost control and crashed, destroying two homes on the lake. This resulted in the death of the two

pilots on board the plane. Finally, I learned how the lake brought factories to Worcester because it was connected to a port, which allowed for supplies to be shipped and received. Many people migrated from Maine to work for Norton Company, which is now known as Saint Gobain. This company provided the grinding stones that were used to build the lighthouse on Sears Island. Finally, the lake used to be owned by Healds Corporation and people were not granted access.

Through interviewing Aaron Sakulich, my IQP advisor and current community member living in Little Indian, I learned more about the Little Indian pond. Aaron pulled up a satellite image of the pond during our interview to give me a better understanding. The Pond is connected to the main lake through an underground passage under Grove street. The pond is used more for fishing, due to its size. We then discussed how the lake has become cleaner within the past 60 years because companies aren't allowed to dump waste anymore. The city also only treats the water for the main lake and not the pond. Finally, I found out that his neighbor has been a long time resident of the lake community.

Objectives 2 and 3

SquareSpace is a drag and drop design tool designed for creating web pages. Along with its 24/7 customer service, it allows for beginners with no coding or design experience to create their own website using 100+ templates. Site123 is another top class service with a great responsive web page design. It allows for its users to easily customize their webpages while making them compatible with all devices. Both of these free website hosting services are great do it yourself tools that have made it simple to design websites..

I found wix was the best platform created for building high quality websites without using code. It's latest features and capabilities enable any user to create a professional online presence. Founded in 2006, Wix is an Israeli software company that describes themselves as a

“cloud based web development service”. Their responsive web pages are coded to allow its users to create drag and drop websites compatible with all devices. Although Wix has great design features, professionals turn to this tool for its simplicity as well. The dashboard allows its users to manage all aspects of the site, which includes using the editor tool (Figures 4 & 5).

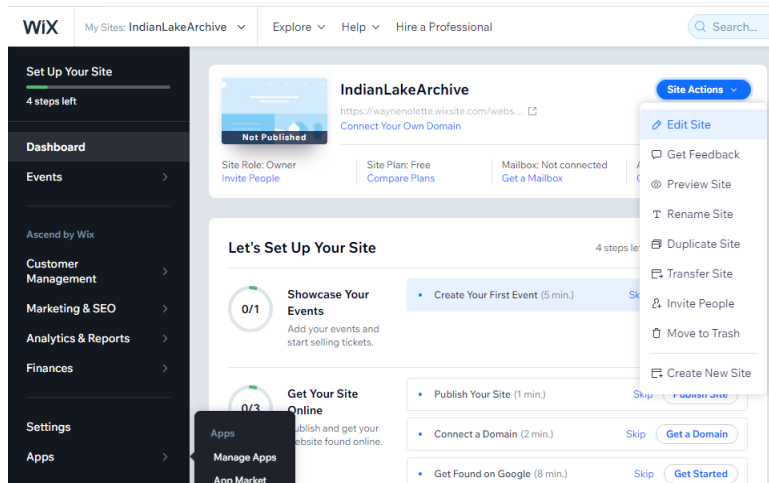


Figure 4: Wix Dashboard (Editor Tool)

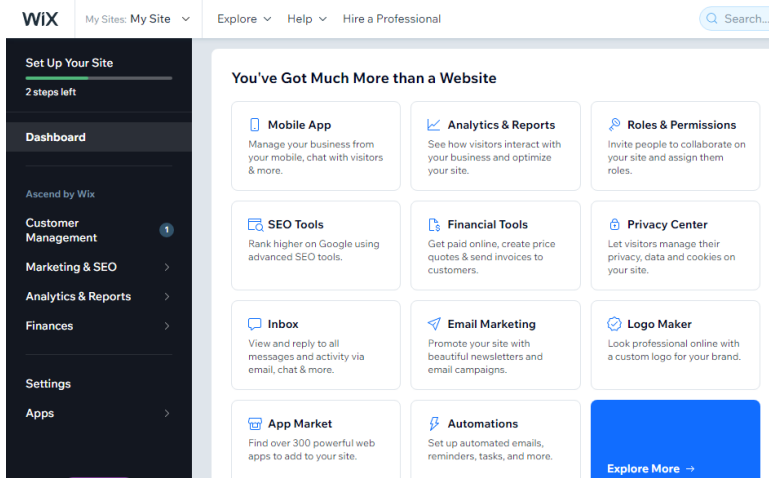


Figure 5: Wix Dashboard (Extra Features)

After interviewing the archivist at WPI, I found there are more advantages with using a website builder called Omeka. Although Wix is simpler to use because of its many tools, Omeka is designed specifically for showcasing online archives. The service allows you to create your own URL and choose from a variety of templates. A URL is the address of a webpage. Omeka isn't free, however the archivist explained that WPI offers access for students working on projects. This service allows for proper archiving by using metadata. Metadata is a set of data that describes and gives information about other data. This data allows for artifacts, newspapers, documents, photos etc to be easily searched by having keywords in the metadata. We also discussed using the WPI library as the home for the Indian Lake Archive. As well, I found he would be able to provide professional equipment for taking pictures of artifacts and scanning documents.

Recommendations

The website is at a good starting point to continue developing the archive. Going forward, there's more information to be collected and added to the archive. I suggest having a Media Day for the community, depending on how the community responds to the survey. If enough people are interested, a Media Day would be important because it would allow for physical items and stories to be collected from the local community. The feedback from the community survey may give more valuable history to include in the archive as well. I also suggest reaching out to Arthur Carlson, an archivist at WPI. He has offered to provide the equipment necessary for archiving different types of physical items and is experienced in hosting these events. Once the information is collected, Arthur said he can create and manage the archive by giving it a home in the Gordon Library of WPI. This would be a good idea, as Arthur knows how to properly document the items in the archive.

Additionally, since Omeka has a responsive webpage design, it would be a good idea to promote adding the web page to the home screen of mobile devices. This could be done by including the instructions from Figure 1 on signs around the lake. Due to the timing of the project, I wasn't able to hear back and interview the president of Worcester Park and Spirits, Brittany Legasey. I suggest reaching out to Brittany and finding out how much the signs cost and the process for obtaining them. Good locations to include these signs would be on Morgan Park (QR code for Sears Island and Lighthouse), Shore Park Beach (QR code for history of the YMCA and Seas Scouts). Another good location for the QR codes would be on the cement wall located on the walking trail under 190 (For the battle over the highway 190 which was once called route 15). Finally, the tunnel near the St. Gobain shack (QR code for the history of St. Gobain). (Figure 6).

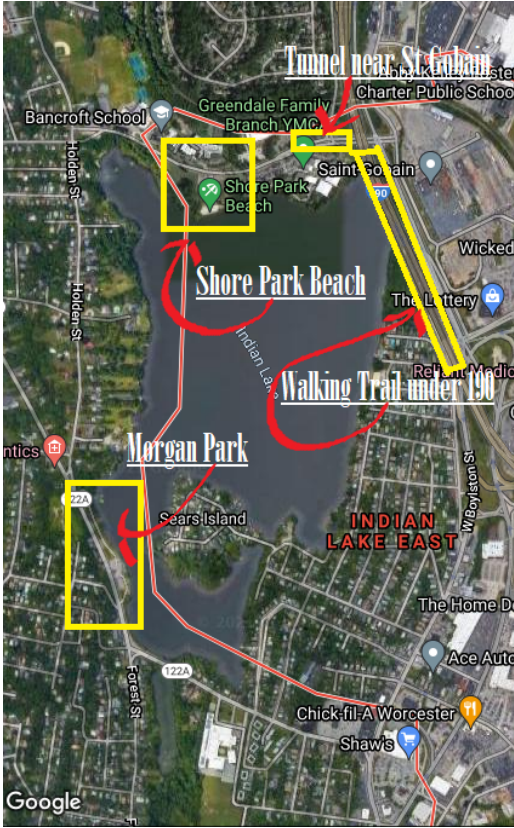


Figure 6: Sign locations

Conclusion:

My goal was to design and recommend an easily accessible archive for the ILWA and residents of the community. In order to reach my goal and fulfill my project experience, I set out to research more about archives before proceeding. My research led me to learn about the importance of archiving, the value they bring to communities, and what types of history to include. These discoveries provided a basis for the development and future of the project, such that reaching out to members of the community is most important.

In conclusion, there's more history and feedback to be gathered from the community for this archive. I was amazed by the amount of support and interest from residents in the community, ILWA, and WPI library. Everyone who was interviewed shared valuable knowledge and feedback for the initial development of the archive and recommendations. My recommendations to the ILWA will help future planning and development of the archive. This project provides a way to preserve the history and future of Indian Lake, by giving the community a place to share their stories and memories.

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