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To: Julie L. Sigall  
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

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Comment:

I am on the management team for "The Making of Modern Michigan," a digitization project administered by the Michigan State University Libraries. The goal of the project is to create an online collection of primary sources on Michigan history and to provide the training and resources small libraries need to digitize their unique special collections.

A large proportion of the local history materials owned by small and medium-sized libraries are "orphan works." Many of these take the form of photograph collections donated by local residents. In many cases, no one -- not even the donor -- knows exactly who took each photo or whether that person has been dead for 70 years (the "life plus 70" rule for creators of unpublished works.) Yet, these materials are of great interest to the public. They could be of great benefit to K-12 teachers (the Michigan social studies curriculum especially addresses state history in the 5th grade) and many lifelong learners are interested in local and regional history and in genealogy. I believe that making these materials more easily accessible is a benefit to public education and lifelong learning.