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## SCSU project digitizes Minnesota's 1st 50

years

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PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION

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A \$300,000 grant received by St. Cloud State University will pay to create a digital collection chronicling the first 50 years of Minnesota.

The collection of 6,000 to 10,000 images is called "Minnesota Reflections." It will feature images created before 1908, 50 years after the state was formed.

The collection becomes more significant in 2008, when Minnesota turns 150.

"We're launching this project so we'll have a big splash for 2008," said Kristi Tornquist, dean of learning resources and technology services at St. Cloud State. "We're just very, very excited, of course. It's a wonderful opportunity for the state, I think, to be able to work on it."

"Minnesota Reflections" is a pilot project that will belong to a digital library combining dozens of cultural collections from throughout Minnesota.

The larger project, called the Minnesota Digital Library, is spearheaded by St. Cloud State. Other participants include the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society and the St. Paul Public Library.

### Creating access

A digital library would make it easier to find and access resources -- books, photos, paintings, sculptures and old letters -- created and collected by institutions in Minnesota.

"Our purpose in digitizing these (images) is to promote their access," said Keith Ewing, library systems coordinator at St. Cloud State.

Work on "Minnesota Reflections" will take about 18 months. A project

director will be hired to oversee the work. Part of the \$300,000 grant, which is from the Minnesota Department of Education, will go to the director's salary. The money is from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency.

Project participants are not only looking for images to include in "Minnesota Reflections" but also information about those images, Ewing said.

"How do we extend and expand that history and make it relate to people today? Because we're an extension of that history," Ewing said. "I'm hoping that as this stuff becomes more broadly available, people will donate them ... to someone who will take care of them."

### Global resource

The first order of business is to work with county historical societies and identify items in their collections that are worth digitizing, Ewing said.

"Once it gets on the Web, it's a global resource," Tornquist said. "These kinds of digital library projects happen in many other states and regions, but because of the technology capabilities, that makes this sort of a logical next step on how you make resources available to people."

The long-term purpose of this collection and the more comprehensive Minnesota Digital Library is to help teachers, professors and students use state resources in the classroom and encourage dialogue about history, Ewing said.

"To understand the present, you really have to understand how it came to be," he said. "What we're hoping to do through these images is make some of this history come alive."