

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

Step 1

Map out your plan

Let's keep this simple. First, map out a plan that works for you and your institution. We see *I Found It In The Archives* as an opportunity for people to submit a short story of their quest for information and their success in finding it in your archives. The story – submitted either as a 400-word written essay or as a video recording of no more than two minutes – would tell their tale of discovery and show the result of their search. Your contest will take place primarily online, so participants should submit their entries to a designated email address. (You could allow entries submitted by mail or “walk-ins,” but then you’ll need to scan them and post them online.) Written entries could be attached as a Word document or pasted into the body of the email; video entries could be shared via a popular video site such as YouTube. You can decide, based on your resources, whether your contest is limited to either essay or video submissions or includes both.

Your contest will culminate after several weeks (you determine your own schedule) with the selection of a winner and awarding of a prize. The prize should be kept simple but special – a back-of-the-house tour led by an archivist, for example. we suggest that you roll out your contest as follows:

- Set the ground rules: Who can enter? Where will the entries go? How will they be judged? What is the timing? What is the prize?
- Be specific about what is expected of the entrant.

- Set a deadline for entries.
- Announce the contest online and wherever you are able to post information.
- Invite your users and, through them, their friends and family – anyone who wants to participate – to submit an entry. Exclude your co-workers and others who are closely affiliated with your organization (more on this later).
- Have an internal panel judge the entries and select finalists.
- Invite “the public” to vote for their favorite among the finalists.
- Announce the winner(s).
- Award a prize.
- Enter your winner(s) in the state-wide competition. (The deadline for submission in the state-wide competition is August 1.)

The state-wide competition will involve all winning entrants from local competitions being posted on the Society of Ohio Archivists' website for public voting in August. The winner of the state-wide competition will be announced in September. We'll celebrate the culmination of the contest at the OLHA/SOA joint fall meeting in Columbus in October, during the lunch plenary and in a special session about the *I Found it in the Archives* contest.



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Step 2 Set the ground rules

Few of us are alike in our work or our institutions, so your contest should fit your organization. The state-wide competition will be based on entries that demonstrate the personal value that individuals have found in our archives. We will be looking for diversity, which should be a given considering the diversity of our collections! You'll want to solicit entries from people who have "used" your facility or your staff's expertise, including those who may have explored your collections via your website.

Be sure to exclude your staff and their families from entering, as well as people who are so closely associated with your institution that it would be awkward if they were to win. This would include board members, docents, vendors (such as an advertising or PR agency), and maybe even volunteers (you decide). Be specific regarding who cannot participate so there are no conflicts later when judging takes place. **The customizable Entry Form outlines these exclusions.**

Submitting your video entry

For helpful tips on video sharing or to submit your local entry to the state-wide competition, visit www2.archivists.org/i-found-it

Compose ground rules that can be posted and that explain clearly what is expected of entrants. Announce the dates on which the contest will start and end. (We recommend that you limit the entry period to three or four weeks so that you build a sense of urgency among entrants – and so that you have plenty of time for your preliminary judging and online public voting. Although holidays generally should be avoided for public relations activities, this may actually be a good time of year for your entries as folks gather with their families and have video cameras at the ready.) The state-wide competition will run in August. Your local entry(ies) must be received by August 1 in order to compete state-wide. Therefore, you should set your deadlines to ensure that you've selected your winner(s) in time for the August 1 deadline.

All entries should be submitted to a specific email address that you have set up for this purpose. This will enable you to communicate easily with the entrants and, with their permission, you can add them to a database of people who are "friends" of your organization and communicate with them on an ongoing basis. If you choose to accept entries in other ways, do ask entrants for an email address.

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Step 3

Invite entries online, on site, and through media

The more people who know about your contest, the better – so use as many contact tools as you have at your disposal. First, create a page or section of your website where complete information on the contest appears. Promote it on your home page so that it is highly visible. Your goal in this step is to drive as many people as possible to your website and the contest rules page, so every promotional tool you use must include the URL (address) that takes prospective entrants directly to the information page.

There are many ways to promote your contest:

- Email your users, introducing the contest and providing a link to your website page.
- Post on your institution's Facebook page; tweet if you have an institutional Twitter account.
- Post and tweet using your personal pages and accounts. Ask employees of your institution to do the same and ask them to ask their friends to pass it along.
- Display posters or flyers throughout your institution.

- Post flyers in nearby shops or restaurants that people might pass en route to your facility.
- Post a video on your home page, your Facebook page, and/or YouTube to explain the contest and invite entries. (See tips here.)
- Issue a news release to local media, briefly explaining the contest and directing people to your website for full information. (For tips on media relations, see www2.archivists.org/aam.)
- Be creative! Who uses your services? Students? Researchers? The local community?

They're your targets. Alert them by email or phone or place flyers where they're likely to see them. Don't stop with one post, tweet, or email! The path to going viral is to be present repeatedly with information. Posting daily isn't too much, but do try to be original with each message. You could promote the fact that you've received your first entry (or the 10th or 25th), that a video made you laugh out loud or that an essay was particularly poignant. Comment on creativity or a clever approach. Do a daily countdown to the close of entries.