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Online Access to Local Treasures

Digging Up Digital Records

In 2009, Arlene Polk traveled with her 80-plus-year-old mother to a cemetery in Greenfield, Indiana. On the hunt for paternal ancestors, they came across a gravestone inscribed "Mary Curry", the name of Arlene's great-great-grandmother. Arlene knew that several women of the same name were buried in the cemetery, but her mother, who died several months later, was certain that the grave was her relative's final resting place.

Two years later, Arlene discovered a digital collection composed of the majority of the 1899-2005 run of the *Indianapolis Recorder*, a new resource made possible by the [IUPUI University Library](#). Searching the digital archive, Arlene discovered a 1901 article about Mary Curry's son Richard, who rushed to his mother's bedside in Ohio. That story led Arlene to Curry's Ohio 1909 death certificate, Ohio news reports on her death and confirmation that the Greenfield headstone, which her mother had the chance to see and touch before her death, indeed belonged to her great-great-grandmother.

From personal discoveries to historical research, digitization is changing the role of libraries throughout the world. Unlike traditional archives, digital collections can be accessed beyond a library's walls, connecting local resources to international audiences. The IUPUI University Library works with local partners including the [Indianapolis Public Library](#), the [Indianapolis Recorder](#), the [Indianapolis Firefighters Museum](#) and many others to preserve and provide access to local history through digital collections.

"We get to see people walk back in time, recording oral histories and hearing about research projects," says Jenny Johnson, Digital Initiatives Project Coordinator at the IUPUI University Library. "Providing online access to these local treasures make them a powerful resource that everyone can use."

Collections Represent Indianapolis History

The IUPUI University Library supports a diverse range of digital resources, and many of the digitization projects are supported by grants from [The Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund](#). The collections include:

[The Crispus Attucks Museum](#)

Using school newspapers, yearbooks (1928-1986) and graduation programs, this collection provides a record of Crispus Attucks School. The school, Indianapolis' first segregated high school built for African-Americans, has noted alumni including David Baker, Julia Carson and Oscar Robertson, whose



THE BOWEN-MERRILL COMPANY FIRE, MARCH 17, 1890.

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Crispus Attucks Basketball Roster

	Ht.	Wt.	No.	Grade
Stanford Patton.....	6'2"	176	15	Sr.
Sam Milton.....	6'1"	160	33	Sr.
John Gipson.....	6'3"	179	45	Sr.
Oscar Robertson.....	6'4"	190	43	Sr.
William Brown.....	6'2"	195	23	Sr.
James Enoch.....	6'2½"	168	34	Sr.
Earl Sevey.....	6'4"	166	35	So.
Odell Donel.....	6'3¼"	200	44	So.
Albert Maxey.....	6'2"	179	14	Jr.
Henry Robertson.....	6'1"	185	24	Sr.
Booker T. Bond.....	5'11"	159	13	Sr.
Fred Bradley.....	5'10"	154	25	Sr.
Ray Crowe—Coach				
Albert Spurlock—Asst. Coach				
* Starters				

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scrapbooks are included in the digital collection.

[Indianapolis Firefighters Museum Collection](#)

Facing the challenge of preserving logbooks, scrapbooks and other fragile resources, many from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Firefighters Museum partnered with the IUPUI University Library to make the resources public. The collection includes images dating as far back as 1874, photographs of historic fires and an African-American firefighters collection. In addition to the online connection, the public can view a [video featuring highlights](#) from the collection.

[The Indianapolis Recorder](#)

Founded in 1892, the *Indianapolis Recorder* is one of the leading African-American publications in the United States. The digital collection represented the bulk of the newspapers issues from 1899-2005. Family historians including Arlene Polk, academic researchers and journalists utilize the collection, which includes coverage of local and national events. Recently, National Public Radio utilized the collection to investigate anachronisms in the *Downton Abbey* series, finding that "when push comes to shove" has its original record in African-American literature and newspapers.

[Indianapolis Sanborn Map and Baist Atlas Collection](#)

Using a combination of fire insurance maps and real estate collections, these maps provide a record of Indianapolis' built environment from 1887 to 1941. Researchers with a focus on history, urban geography, architectural history, ethnic studies or urban archeology can find specific information about building types, materials and uses.

[Shortridge High School Yearbooks](#)

This collection contains digital copies of *The Annual*, Shortridge High School's yearbook, from 1894 to 1976, with just a few missing years. Shortridge is the oldest free public high school in Indianapolis, originally opening in 1864. With distinguished alumni from Senator Richard Lugar to author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *The Annual* is a useful resource for professional and family historians.

Basketball buffs can find the full roster of the 1956 championship team, featuring Oscar Robertson, in the December 13, 1955 *Attucks News*.

More about [The Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund](#).

Photos are from the digital collections listed above and have been used with permission.



The 1940 Shortridge basketball team included Kurt Vonnegut, bottom row, center.

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