

# Historical newspapers free at your fingertips

Library digitizes publications

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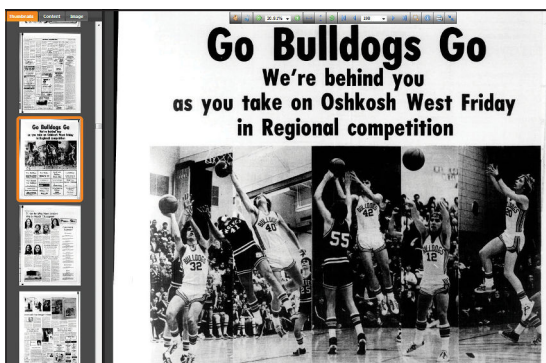
NEW LONDON – Decades of historic New London newspapers are now online and free for public browsing.

Earlier this month, the New London Public Library launched an online archive featuring four New London newspapers dating from 1897 to 2005: the Republican, the Press-Republican, the Press and the Press Star. The papers are hosted on the city's website at [archive.newlondonwi.org](http://archive.newlondonwi.org).

The project cost about \$14,000 for the Wisconsin Historical Society to digitize 95 microfilm reels, according to Ann Hunt, library director.

The Press Star newspaper's parent company Multi Media Channels was not involved in the process, but Dave Wood, general manager for MMC, supported the library's initiative to bring local history to the masses.

"I think the digitized newspaper project is an incredible resource for the New London and Hortonville areas," Wood



Visitors to the New London Public Library's new online archive can view digitized copies of old Press Star newspapers like this one from the late 1970s.

Screen shot from [archive.newlondonwi.org](http://archive.newlondonwi.org)

said. "The Press Star has kept a long and wonderful history of the area that we can draw from now and into the future."

In 2016, Wisconsin Library Services, in partnership with three state organizations, digitized three New London newspapers for free as part of a pilot project: the Times, from 1856 to 1858 and 1879 to 1891; the Press, from 1893 to 1901; and the Republican, from 1901 to 1906.

Hunt said this inspired her to have more historic newspapers digitized knowing some were already completed thanks to WiLS.

The city is saving the library money by hosting such an expansive collection on the city website rather than a third-party website, according to Keith Gowdy, owner of PC & Cell Solutions and the city of New London's contracted information technology professional.

"Our monthly cost is zero," Gowdy said. "That's something our taxpayers might love to hear."

Gowdy built the archive's website. The site hosts 184,653 pages adding up to nearly a quarter-terabyte of data.

**Historical newspapers**

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"We're a small city, so it's pretty cool for us to be able to do this," Gowdy said.

The site averages two to five unique visitors per day, but its popularity is growing as more people find out about it, Gowdy said.

Gowdy said he has spent hours immersed in the news pages he uploaded to the site. He was delighted to find his name in a 1995 Washington Junior High honor roll, and he found the political commentaries in the earliest newspapers "hilarious" because they show little has changed today.

His favorite reading material is the advertisements. He said he is fascinated by all the hand-drawn advertisements in the New London Republican's days as well as how low the prices were for products.

Visitors to the website can browse newspaper collections by year or search keywords for names or topics.

Prior to the digitization, library visitors had to explore headlines of the past using the microfilm reader. The machine will remain available, but members of the public may find it more practical to read old newspaper scans at home 24/7 on their computer or digital device.

"I think people will find it useful and enjoy it," Hunt said, from New Londoners curious about local history to out-of-town genealogists.

One user who is pleased with the online resource is Steven Hart. The New London resident researched some history behind his Spring Street home.

"My house has been moved twice, and I was looking to see if there was any pictures from the house being moved," Hart said. "And I found some. It was kind of neat to find that they had pictures of the house on wheels and ready to go down the street."

Hart said he prefers the web experience over using the library's microfilm reader.

"It's just easier to put in a search phrase, and boom, there it is," he said.

Visitors will not find everything on the digital archive.

"The digitized newspaper archive is a great resource for information printed after 1922," said Alice Gilman, assistant director at New London Public Museum.

She said New London's main newspaper, the Press, is not digitized from 1893 through 1922. The digitized New London Republican fills in some of the gaps during this time but not completely.

People wishing to read those missing issues of the Press can view the microfilm at the library, Gilman said.

The Wisconsin Newspaper Association's online Archive of Wisconsin Newspapers houses New London newspapers from 1856 to 1858 and 1879 to 1906.

The WNA also hosts most of the Waupaca County Post East, which replaced the Press Star as New London's newspaper from 2009 to 2014, as well as the Press Star from its return in 2014 up to 90 days ago.

Find a link to the WNA's archive on the library's homepage, [www.newlondonlibrary.org](http://www.newlondonlibrary.org).