Digitization and Accessibility Challenges for an Oil Shale Repository

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Tell Ertl Oil Shale Repository

The Tell Ertl Oil Shale Repository at Arthur Lakes Library at the Colorado School of Mines, Golden, Colorado houses over 24 special collections on oil shale production, processing, and environmental issues. The Center for Oil Shale Technology and Research Center (COSTAR) hired a research librarian to catalog and manage physical and digital copies of the information housed within the repository. Digital items uploaded on the Alliance Digital Repository (ADR) can also be found on the Tell Ertl Oil Shale Repository database.

Projects

Projects have been developed to create better access to research materials in the oil shale repository. Projects are developed under library and COSTAR oversight.

1. Enhancing catalog records for specialized databases.
2. Conducting educational outreach via exhibits, poster presentations at various conferences, and newsletters.
3. Providing access to >11,000 maps & drawings by unrolling, numbering, mending, and placing maps in flat map cases.
4. Developed copyright procedures for full-text digitization and access of technical reports.
5. Posted finding aids on Tell Ertl web site showing contributors biographies and descriptions of collections within the repository.

Collection Content

Housed in the Tell Ertl Oil Shale Repository are 24 collections about the oil shale industry. Each collection offers something unique, while some of the collections will overlap each other. Collectors are from petroleum engineers, energy investors, historians, and federal lab researchers. These various collections give historical, educational, legal, and environmental aspects of this energy industry within the United States, and globally.

- Film: 66
- Books: 9
- Technical Reports: 6,887
- Photos: 11,347
- DVDs: 8
- CDs: 4
- Overhead Slides: 16
- Microfiche: 200
- VHS Tapes: 7
- Negatives: 1,069
- Postcards: 11
- Videocassettes: 10
- 3 ½” Floppy Disk: 17
- Posters: 3
- Artifacts: 5

Information Crisis

Shale oil in bottles and a block of oil shale. From the Laramie Project Office (DOE) Collection, Tell Ertl Oil Shale Repository.

Consistent and accessible documentation is necessary for successful research. Oil shale has historically peaked and crashed over the past century, with some research materials being tossed, lost, or forgotten. Because of lost information, some researchers may repeat research that has already been done. Inconsistent funding to record and provide access to research across the board impedes research growth. When an industry ceases to produce, what is done with their past research? Can oil shale research be applied in other disciplines? Issues such as these will need to be addressed if research is to be organized and made accessible. If archival and digitization applications are not continued even when research has stopped, then there will continue to be holes in the research, costing industry and government more money and time in future developments.

Alliance Digital Repository

The Alliance Digital Repository (ADR) service provides a base of digital content discovery, access, and management functionality. Arthur Lakes Library joined the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries which has created a collaborative digital repository through the Alliance Digital Repository. Following the oversight from Arthur Lakes Library, COSTAR helped fund the digitization of the Synthetic Fuels Quarterly and Oil Shale Symposium Proceedings from within the Tell Ertl Oil Shale Repository. These digital copies were then uploaded onto the digital repository with metadata organized by the COSTAR Librarian.

Digitization Issues and Solutions

Issues with this digitization project are missing pages found in the PDFs produced by digitization vendor. Solutions:

1) Utilize a state vendor to cut costs and provide better quality check.
2) Produce PDFs internally and only outsource when the items are rare and require the “gentle book” scanning to prevent further damage from handling.
3) Tracking any issues with digitization projects, and announce on COSTAR web site when new items have been added to the Tell Ertl Oil Shale database for retrieval and research.

Copyright

Copyright remains a large time requirement of the COSTAR Librarian. Signed copyright waivers, from authors to the Colorado School of Mines have been requested by CSM Legal services, in order to provide full-text Oil Shale Symposium Proceedings on the digital repository. Email correspondence to participants of the Oil Shale Symposia requesting signed copy right forms have resulted in few responses. Future requests may be for a non-exclusive, royalty-free use license to increase response from authors, with the hope that most authors will readily respond to make their research more accessible.

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