

Library News

On January 22, GSP library representatives Bettina Hess and Maria Sturm attended a conference on digital library collections held by the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL). The meeting was held at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books, and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania. The conference was a great opportunity for us to hear what other area libraries are doing with regard to digitizing items in their collections. This is an important way in which libraries are increasing visibility and creating access to their holdings.

While we do not have the staff or financial means to undertake large-scale digitization projects on our own, there was much discussion of ways in which larger institutions can help smaller ones through collaboration. During the meeting, tours were offered of Penn's digitization lab and by coincidence we happened to see our own German-language newspapers in the process of being digitized.

At the beginning of 2015, the German Society gave several nineteenth century German-American newspapers to the University of Pennsylvania so that they could be digitized and made available to researchers through its website. In the lab, we were able to see for ourselves how these enormous volumes are carefully propped onto scanners and photographed page by page, in all probably tens of thousands of pages! After they are scanned, the images will be made searchable through a specialized OCR (optical character recognition) software that can read the Fraktur typeface. These digitized volumes will become a great resource for genealogists and other researchers looking for individuals or events in the history of German-speaking Philadelphia.

-Bettina Hess