Prospectus for the

North American Digital Catholic Newspapers Project: **a two-part project supporting the creation and development of digital resources from the Catholic scholarly tradition**

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Prepared by Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA)
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The Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) is a collaborative alliance of currently thirty member organizations whose mission is to provide enduring and freely available access to Catholic scholarly materials. The Catholic portal www.catholicresearch.net presently contains records to over 150,000 rare and unique resources owned by members, including records for a few Catholic newspapers. Providing the discovery layer is the member-developed open source application VuFind. Portal development plans include building a leading-edge digital humanities environment enabling scholars to use the materials, and to share data and research. Steps on that path include increasing the number of digital assets in the portal, building the repository, and implementing digital tools such as those under development by Indiana and Illinois universities. We imagine the possibilities for searching across historical major and minor Catholic newspapers in pursuit of new connections and potentially, new historical perspectives.

Catholic newspapers
Scholars have become keenly aware of the importance of Catholic sources as the Church has helped shape the American experience, with significant influences on our systems of education, social justice, immigration, and medical care, to name just a few. Catholic newspapers are relevant to an array of issues across disciplines, including but not limited to: class formation, ethnicity, adaptation to new environments, religious discrimination, charitable work and social justice, school systems, and hospitals.

The newspapers provide many key insights into the life of this important group and their adjustment to American society, documenting not only actions of episcopal elites but detailing activities of local parishes, societies, schools and organizations in everything from their efforts to preserve languages, maintain holydays and teach sexual morality to their embrace of American popular pastimes like sports and variety shows.   In many key states, for example, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, Catholics made up a far larger proportion than in the nation at large. Because of their size and location, their history was intimately bound up with the evolution of many key trends and issues in American life. The newspapers thus provide an often missing Catholic dimension to critical questions in American history. Just in the last year, two books were published that dealt extensively with the career of John Boyle O'Reilly, editor of the *Boston Pilot* in the 1870s and 1880s, and his intriguing opinions on African American rights. The papers are a treasure trove for Catholic positions on such diverse, crucial issues and trends as anti-communism, abolition, and slavery, women's suffrage, immigration restriction, American imperial adventures in the Philippines, and the New Deal and labor unions.

However, many of these newspapers are difficult to access: full runs are scattered among a variety of locations, holdings remain hidden, and few papers are available in digital form. Because of the advances in technology and the development of a Catholic archival network, the ability to provide efficient and freely available access to the documents of this rich and influential culture is within reach. The Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) is poised to carry out its plan to locate, identify, document, preserve, and digitize the corpus of Catholic newspapers. Further, the CRRA aims to make it possible for scholars to engage these resources with new tools for analysis, synthesis, and collaboration.

Context

This proposal is inspired by conversations with scholars, students, consultants, librarians, archivists, granting agencies, historians, business owners, clergy, religious, and the leaders of other professional organizations from spring 2009 through fall 2011. Stakeholders have been consistent: in addition to providing *discovery* of uncommon Catholic scholarly resources and collections, providing access to *the thing itself* is imperative. CRRA turned to its Scholars Advisory Committee to identify singular collections that are not digitized but of high value to a wide scholarly base. The Committee identified three primary digitization targets: the *Official Catholic Directory* (OCD), Catholic pamphlets, and Catholic newspapers. With other CRRA members, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary and the University of Notre Dame will begin digitization of the OCD and Catholic pamphlets, respectively. With participation and support from the Catholic Library Association (CLA) and the American Theological Library Association (ATLA), the CRRA is taking the lead to enhance access to Catholic newspapers.

Project plan: Part One
This document outlines the CRRA's two-part plan to locate, provide access to and further the digitization of Catholic newspapers. At this time, we seek funding for activities in part one that will significantly enhance access and foster digitization initiatives coordinated to result in a large aggregation of digital Catholic newspapers. Part one has three steps:

1. Conduct an environmental scan of North American Catholic newspapers to determine what newspapers exist, where located, and extent of holdings and formats. The scan would mine existing sources, for example: Willging and Hartzfeld's *Catholic Serials of the 19th century*; Library of Congress' National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) and state projects; Wor*ldCat database; Catholic Press Directory; Official Catholic Directory;* Clarence *Brigham's Bibliography and History of American Newspapers.* This work will lay the foundation for a survey of holdings in archives and libraries within academic, diocesan, seminary and religious order institutions.

   In addition to defining the scope of the *Directory*, the scan has the following goals:
   * Develop an awareness of the need for and opportunity to create effective access to Catholic newspapers,
   * Inform the means for subsequent collection and contributing of metadata, and
   * Support collaboration with other projects, such as the Catholic Library Association's proposed list of all U.S. Catholic serials and the National Digital Newspaper Program.

   2. Create a comprehensive, fully searchable *Directory of North American Catholic Newspapers* for discovery, access, use, and collaboration. Initially, the *Directory* will include primarily metadata for Catholic newspaper titles, with links to full digital content where

available. Records will follow national metadata standards and we anticipate collaboration with open source developers. The *Directory* will have the following goals*:*

- Simplify and strengthen scholar access by collocating scattered about, difficult to locate complete runs of historical and current newspapers into a single directory,
- Encourage collaborative discovery of resources by providing digital tools for users to contribute information about resources to the *Directory*, and
- Encourage wide use by making it freely available within the Catholic portal.

3. Create an attractive, inviting and innovative digital resource to showcase the *Directory* as a North American project*,* highlighting scholarly opportunities as well as completed projects and promoting ongoing collaboration. We will host webinars and presentations at scholarly conferences to garner interest and provide guidance for prospective participants.

Project plan: Part 2
Part 2 will continue individual digitizing initiatives, develop priorities and identify strategies for collaborative digitization. Three CRRA members (Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center (PAHRC) and Villanova University) will digitize and make available *The Catholic Standard & Times* (1866-1923), the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. With grant support, Duquesne University continues to digitize the *Pittsburgh Catholic* volumes into the 20th century. Other individual projects too will begin and/or continue. In conjunction with CLA, ATLA, ACDA, the American Catholic Historical Association (ACHA), and others, CRRA will identify further priorities for digitization, with attention to the results from the environmental scan and targeting papers from major North American cities, those in need of preservation, and partnership opportunities with other cultural heritage institutions interested in making digitized copies available to their populations. Digitization will preserve under-accessible and endangered newspapers, and support innovative, interdisciplinary and collaborative research projects.

Project participants and management
CRRA will work with the Catholic Library Association (CLA), the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and the Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists (ACDA). CRRA's ability to collaborate and lead is seen in the recent CLIR grant awarded to three CRRA members. We will hire a project manager and set up an advisory council of scholars, archivists and librarians. This structure will allow the project to move quickly, thoughtfully, and cost-effectively.

The primary need is to hire staff to conduct the environmental scan; develop the Catholic newspaper directory including design, functionality, and metadata collection; and develop the digital resource. While the CRRA will provide overall direction and advising, the project manager will develop and carry out the project. We anticipate the project manager will need assistance for specific activities which will be addressed by employing graduate students as well as through contract hires and in-kind member contributions (total $75K). Additional expenses include supplies and materials ($10K) and travel funds for workshop participation ($10K) for a total of $95,000.

We appreciate your attention and advice.

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