

Baylor partnership brings Baptist Standard archive online

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Baylor University Libraries are partnering with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Baptist Standard Publishing to digitize the *Baptist Standard* archives, making Baptist history accessible.

Baylor Libraries, Texas Baptists and Baptist Standard Publishing recently reached an agreement to digitize the *Baptist Standard* and the earlier *Baptist News* to make the newspaper accessible online to scholars, as well as laypersons.

An initial set of archived material, 531 issues from 1928 to 1944, is available online [here](#), and additional material will be added as it is digitized. The process is made possible through the gift of an anonymous donor.

“In fulfillment of a shared vision, the Baylor Libraries are pleased that all parties have agreed not only to allow the entire run of the *Baptist Standard* to be digitized but also shared with the world,” said Kathy Hillman, associate professor, director of Baptist Collections and Library Advancement at Baylor University.

“The newspaper provides valuable insight into the history and culture of Texas Baptists, as well as their broader impact.”

‘A record of Baptists in Texas and

around the world'

Since 1888, the *Baptist Standard*—formerly *Baptist News*—has served Texas Baptists as an independent source for news and conversation. Today, the *Baptist Standard* is a donor-based weekly digital newsletter publication. However, for more than 100 years, it was available only in print.

“The *Standard* is a record of Baptists in Texas and around the world,” said Eric Black, executive director, publisher and editor for the Baptist Standard Publishing Company. “The *Standard* contains more than 130 years of historical, cultural, political, social and religious records of Texas, the United States and the world.”

At its height, the newspaper was a staple for Texas Baptist families, being found in more than 300,000 homes.

“At one time, the *Standard* had an enormous circulation, eclipsing even some nonreligious publications. From that standpoint, the *Standard* carried significant influence in hundreds of thousands of homes and millions of people’s lives,” Black noted.

Make material readily accessible to researchers

Digitizing this valuable cultural and historical resource and making it available online enables researchers and others around the world to surface materials quickly and discover connections that previously were difficult or impossible.

“This type of access will allow researchers to quickly find reports on people and events they are studying,” said Alan Lefever, director of the Texas Baptist Historical Collection. “Because of this ability to expedite research, I

believe more people will study the history of Texas Baptists. Topics and historical events previously ignored or understudied will be seen in a new light—or for the first time.”

While the *Baptist Standard* chronicles the lives and works of Baptists in Texas, its impact is truly national and global because of the figures who have been involved with or were reported on in the newspaper.

“The *Standard* contains a famous photo of editor E.S. James sitting and talking with President John F. Kennedy in the Oval Office. Decades before that, editor J.B. Cranfill, who privately owned what eventually become the *Baptist Standard*, was nominated by the Prohibition Party in 1892 for vice president of the United States,” Black noted.

“Then, there was the infamous J. Frank Norris and the not-so-infamous J.B. Gambrell, both editors of the *Standard*. *Baptist Standard* editors were giants, not just among Baptists, but among Texans and Americans.”

Baylor Libraries’ digitization and digital preservation team have begun working with the Texas Baptist Historical Collection on the initial stages of the project. The Texas Baptist Historical Collection, located in Waco, holds the only known complete run of the *Standard*.

Darryl Stuhr, director of digitization and digital preservation, believes that digitizing a collection of this size will take about 18 months, although portions of the archive are being made available as they are processed.

“Baptists can celebrate having such an influential institution as the *Baptist Standard*, with its complete archive, readily available and easily searchable from anywhere in the world,” Black said.