

## A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ARCHIVE: DIGITIZING THE NEW DEAL'S PRAIRIE STATES FORESTRY PROJECT

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## **1 ABSTRACT**

*This paper addresses how digital humanities methods are being used to advance the interpretation and documentation of a rural cultural landscape in the United States. Due to the size and scope of rural landscapes, innovative methods for collecting and analyzing data are critical for advancing landscape preservation initiatives. The New Deal's Prairie States Forestry Project, the largest afforestation project to date in the United States, lends itself to one such preservation initiative. Using an in-progress online project, the authors show how digital humanities methods for digital preservation and metadata entry are an important first step to disseminating thousands of previously inaccessible primary source documents in a web-based platform. The collaborative digital humanities project is an act of preservation that creates new opportunities for documenting and managing cultural resources. The archive incorporates geospatial, landowner, and plant species as metadata, allowing search functions to correlate diverse primary source materials, including photography and planting records, to landowners in different geographic locations. This allows stakeholders, including landowners, the U.S. Forest Service, State Historic Preservation Office, and historical researchers, to not only identify a baseline inventory of historical plantings, but to connect the shelterbelts to those who planted and/or still maintain them. The collaborative curation of source material for the digital archive not only provides immediate access to thousands of primary source documents, but digital features and organization of the archive itself expand the questions that landscape architects practicing in historic preservation and forestry can ask when evaluating this large-scale cultural landscape.*

### **1.1 Keywords:**

New deal, cultural landscape documentation, digital humanities, digital archiving

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