

July 6, 2025

Welcome to anyone else working on digitizing or creating a database of the Ted Owens articles. I wanted to give you an introduction to the processes I am using for the digitization. We are always open to any suggestions on how the process can be improved.

Although all we are doing is just taking photos of articles on a cell phone or scanning and putting dates on them, it is still important to have a basic understanding of Ted Owens' work and to be aware of some of the patterns and themes of the articles. This can help when for example you understand that sometimes Ted Owens put notes on the second page of an article that refers to the previous page and those two pages thus need to be digitized as single document not separate documents. Or for example of why we need to keep each article filed under month received instead of by actual date of the article. This will be explained more later.

Furthermore, please remember to put the articles back in the storage boxes as you found them. Unstaple and re-staple as few as documents as possible and try to keep any loose envelopes next to the article they appear with. Fortunately, there are very few times I ever have to take out a staple and re-staple the document. Please keep any duplicate pages in the files. Ted Owens was sending articles more than just to Jeff and occasionally people would send the exact same article from Ted Owens to Jeff. Jeff filed the duplicates received in the files. Of course, you don't need to scan the duplicates but just keep both of them in the storage boxes.

These articles will be researched for centuries and we need to protect their original condition as much as possible. These articles also represent person's life's work and story and I think we need to respect that. Once you begin to read or research the articles it will dawn on you what a treasure trove and amazing collection of primary source material these articles are!!! I have been completely blown away.

Background

The copies of newspaper articles sent by Ted Owens number in the thousands. They were sent to Russel Targ and his colleagues from 1966 to 1976 and to Jeffrey Mishlove from approximately 1976 to 1987.

These photocopied newspaper articles were mostly sent in 8 x 11 clasp envelopes containing several pages. Regular size envelopes were used from time to time when Ted Owens just sent typed letters. We have no idea where the original articles are that Ted Owens photocopied. The original regular size envelopes for letters appear every now and then. So far I have not seen any of the paper size 8 x 11 clasp envelopes.

Jeffery first met Ted Owens in 1976 at a conference in England. At about that same time Russell Targ asked if Jeff would like to take on the work of collecting the articles. Some of the 1976 to 1987 newspapers articles and letters are addressed to Jeffrey so I would assume that prior to 1976 we will see some of the articles and letters addressed to Russell Targ and his colleagues.

Jeffrey categorized the articles by month and year he received them in and kept them in large storage boxes. Sometimes Jeffrey would receive an envelope a couple times a week and sometimes just a couple times a month. Sometimes a month may only contain 20 articles and sometimes month perhaps as much as 100. But they just kept coming.

The articles

The pages sent to Jeffrey could be single articles photocopied on one page or 2 or 3 articles or more photocopied on one page. Sometimes the articles were just single pages not attached together. But most pages were either stapled or paper clipped together. Staples were definitely far more common than paper clips. Perhaps that represented a batch from one envelope sent to Jeffrey? As mentioned before, we don't have the original clasp envelopes so we don't know for sure which pages were a batch from a single envelope. Whether or not they were a batch sent together in one envelope or not is most likely not very important but there is that angle to research more deeply if it is important to you.

Typically, there was a similar theme for articles appearing on a single page or if they were 5 or 6 pages attached together. For example, a theme of the articles might be weather, sports or nuclear power. And less often there simply wasn't a similar theme in the attached articles.

Sometimes Ted Owens wrote notes next to the articles for additional details. I notice sometimes Jeffrey's handwriting appears next to the articles as well but it usually just short sentences or phrases to help categorize the theme of the articles. Sometimes Jeffrey's writing would provide further details on the articles but that was rare. Jeffrey's very fancy and clear cursive is very easy to spot compared to Ted Owens' handwriting.

Digitizing and dating them

I simply took a photo of each page with my cell phone and then downloaded them to my computer from iCloud. I then attached a date to each digital file pertaining to one of the dates of an article.

For example, a page may have one article dated March 2, 1980 or two articles with one dated March 2 and one dated March 3rd. I would then date the digital file March 2nd or March 3rd 1980.

Thus, the articles being digitized match the copies kept in storage boxes and also categorized by month and year.

And when articles that I titled had the same date, then I would add a number for example March 30 1980 1 and March 30 1980 2 etc.

We considered that scanning them as a group into a scanner and that might be faster. If that works for you then please use the scan method. The challenge is that this might hinder one's ability to decipher when two pages need to be entered as a single digital document. One would also have to remove and replace the staples. Regardless, taking single photos of each page doesn't add that much time to the process as most of your time will be spent adding dates to the documents. You will have to search for a reliable place in your room that gets good lighting without casting shadows.

After a long discussion with Jeffrey, we decided to create one photo per page. And if the article was two pages or if there were notes on the second page that referred to the article on the first page I then combined them into one digital document. Due to time constraints, I technically speaking just took a screen shot on my computer of the two pages next to each other.

There are other ways of documenting the articles of course. For example, one could create one digital file per batch of articles stapled together. But would create other issues and take a tremendous amount of time.

Challenges with dates that sometimes occur

Taking photos and attaching dates on the digital file was very easy task. Basically 99% pages were very straightforward with clear dates of the articles. The articles either had a date already in the article or Ted Owens wrote the date of the article by hand.

But there were of course some exceptions that occurred every now and then.

For example, there were every now and then articles didn't have dates. In that case I would assign a date closest to the date of the article on the next page. And I wrote down the new date assigned to the article in the storage box with a Post It note.

And sometimes there were articles with dates from different months on the same page. In that case, I just chose a date from one of the articles that corresponded to the batch of monthly files currently digitizing. For example, from February folder a page would have two articles with one date being February 2nd and the other being January 30th. As this was from the February folder, obviously I would use February 2nd as the date.

Occasionally this would get a little more complicated with a two or three page document consisting for example of an article from March 14th with letter written on Feb 16th on the second page and then a handwritten note dated March 20th. In that case I would simply choose a date that made sense to me. Sometimes I asked Jeffrey for more guidance when something like this occurred. He was kept in the loop how things were getting digitized.

Letters, notes and telegrams

Ted Owens also sometimes sent typed letters to Jeffrey. And sometimes Ted Owens photocopied some letters he sent to several people. A few times Ted Owens sent telegrams to people. I attached “letter” or “telegram” onto the digital file in case someone wants to distinguish between letters/telegrams and articles. There are also random handwritten notes that appear from time to time that I can’t tell if they are notes pertaining to an article or simply a handwritten letter to unaddressed person. Note: I need to go back and check if the letters addressed to Jeff were actual original letters or copies.

Quality of the photocopies

The articles in the storage boxes have been very well taken care of and most of the articles and letters are clear and easy to read. Ted Owens sending most of the articles on clasp envelopes so the paper wasn’t folded helped a lot.

Very few times were there any issues of articles going off the frame of the page. Sometimes it was as small as just having one or two letters of a single word off the page and sometimes slightly more than that.

There were a few exceptions which occurred every now and then in regard to clarity of the articles. For example, one time I saw he wrote one letter that went to several people by photocopying the original in which the copies sent were a little unclear.

Another exception to clarity was that some boxes received water damage in the early 2000s when in storage facility in Las Vegas, NV. I actually remember going to the storage facility with Jeffrey to pick them up. It wasn’t major water damage but Jeffrey still paid a restoration company to restore them as they Ted Owens files are so important. Fortunately, the water damage at this point is a very small issue.

Very few times did I ever have to take out a staple to gain a better photo in the margins. And there were a few times I wish I could have taken out the staples but the staples were so embedded in the paper that I basically couldn’t take them out without a lot of tears to the paper. So, I chose not to take out the staple.

Other people researching the boxes of articles

The articles appear to be in the original state Jeffrey received them. I know a few people have gone through the files in the storage boxes over the last 40 years. There a few instances where you see a missing paper clip or sheets of paper that have the staple removed or even restapled. I am not seeing any article organized by the wrong month. The people who previously viewed the articles obviously respected their original state. I will do the same. Occasionally I have to remove a staple and restaple it to get a good view for a picture but that is rare. Occasionally I find a regular size envelope attached by paper clip. Occasionally I find a loose regular size envelope that I don't know which letter it pertains to.

One potential issue on document titles that may need to be fixed

As mentioned before sometimes a page would have different months of article on the same page. For example, a page might have March 30th and April 1st articles on the same page. That is easy to manage.

But for some months this would be taken a step further with articles entered under one month containing several articles entirely from the previous month or even two months back.

April 1980 is a great example. For the April 1980 articles there were about 15 articles entirely with March dates in addition to April dates for the articles. That would mean there could be an article intitled March 30 1980 in the March file and an article intitled March 30 in the April file.

I am going to leave them as is right now. But at some point we will need to distinguish between the two March 30 articles and many others. Depending on methods used, this might also affect how the articles are entered into the database. Regardless it won't take much time to add numbers by the duplicate dated articles. I simply don't have the time to correct these right now.

And of course, we have no intention of physically reorganizing all the articles in the storage boxes to the exact month. If you have March articles that arrived in March and April that simply represents when Jeffrey originally received the articles or letters in the clasp envelopes.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you have any suggestions on how I can make it easier for other people in the next steps of digitizing the articles into a database.

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