Both archival preservation and the spread of historical consciousness demand that more of the Bentley’s 7,000 collections be available on the Internet in digital form. After all, history is now made 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and instant worldwide access is now the norm. The materials for writing and understanding history should be made available around the clock as well. At the same time, preserving the Bentley collections and making them available for study is a continuing challenge. The paper that makes up many of the collections is acidic and, over time, becomes brittle. Best archival practices can slow this process but not stop it. Moreover, sound and video present enormous challenges for long-term preservation and access. A strategic plan to convert 100,000 pages of paper records and 500 recordings per year to digital format will allow the Library to meet its commitment to both preserve its holdings and increase access to the collections.

The Bentley Historical Library is part of the Victors for Michigan fundraising campaign to further the Library’s critical mission of collecting the materials for and promoting the study of the histories of two great, intertwined institutions: the State of Michigan and the University of Michigan. This, our first foray into a U-M campaign, is both ambitious and transformative, expanding on the Bentley’s fundamental role as an interactive laboratory where a range of audiences—including students, faculty, journalists, historians, family researchers, authors, university officials, and more—can access the educative power of the past in order to better evaluate and impact the present. Our $10 million goal is worthy of the name Victors, enriching the powerful historical experiences possible at the Bentley today while supporting the next generation of historical researchers and patrons. To do all this, and so much more, the Bentley needs you—because our world needs Victors.
OPPORTUNITIES

ENDOWED FUND FOR DIGITIZING BENTLEY COLLECTIONS

$1 MILLION

The 50,000 linear feet of documents and other materials in the Bentley collections form a fundamental resource for research into the history of the people and institutions of Michigan, and the history of the University of Michigan, including its faculty, students, administration, and beyond. However, limited resources have allowed the Bentley to digitize less than one percent of its collections. The Library’s holdings would be more frequently accessed if more were available on the Internet, whereby historians, students, researchers and others could access the collections quickly and easily.

EXPENDABLE FUND FOR IMMEDIATE DIGITIZATION OF DETERIORATING MATERIALS

$1 MILLION

From letters to photographs to analog media, the Bentley has recorded and collected historic moments such as John F. Kennedy introducing the concept of the Peace Corps on the steps of the Michigan Union; Jonas Salk and Thomas Francis announcing the discovery of an effective polio vaccine; and Heisman winners Tom Harmon, Desmond Howard, and Charles Woodson in action. Yet, without intervention, recordings on tape, cassettes, CDs and even DVDs deteriorate beyond repair. Best practices call for digital conservation and storage on servers, with preservation activities scheduled regularly for quality assurance.