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Interactive comment on "A guide for digitising manuscript climate data" *by* S. Brönnimann et al.

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The value of early instrumental records with regard to current climate change issues comes to no surprise to readers of Climate of the Past. An example is the baseline northern hemispheric temperatures in the 19th century relative to the warmer temperatures in the 20th century, and especially those of the last 25 years. A second example is contrasting the atmospheric dynamics of the early 20th century warm period with the positive Arctic Oscillation regime in the 1990s, through the evaluation of upper air data from the 1930s. The authors are to be commended in their contribution on processing manuscript data. We would add the much of the intellectual effort of working with early instrumental data comes before this stage.

First of all, it is important to find all available information regarding a problem, as archive data sets produced are not always readily available and individual documents will almost never cover all important temporal and spatial scales. Thus begins a treasure hunt to find complete information including tracing back from one early author to another and obtaining the assistance of staff in different libraries, as often similar kinds of data are not available from a single source. The scientific objective should be clear to help limit the scope of the project.

It is also important to be well informed about the activities of other researchers and institutions in order to avoid duplicative effort. This perhaps seems obvious, but as the value of early instrumental and historical data for climate change and paleoclimate research has become more widely recognized, the number of data recovery projects has increased. Document imaging projects are making an ever-growing quantity of historical documents available on line. Imaging projects do not create data per se, but they do make rare and often fragile documents available in an electronic format suitable for digitization using one of the methods mentioned in this article. The original documents are not only much more available to researchers wherever they may reside, but are also protected from the repeated handling necessarily incurred when photographing or photocopying as part of a data digitization process. The NOAA Central Library Climate Data Imaging Project is a leading example. See: [http://docs.lib.noaa.gov/rescue/data_rescue_home.html].

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