

LSTA Grant Evaluation
Oregon Poetic Voices Year One
Submitted by: Sue Jenkins
Date: March 31, 2011

Summary of Evaluation:

Project Objective: The primary objective of this project was to create an online portal for poets, teachers, and students throughout Oregon to access recordings of works composed, and in some cases recorded, by Oregon poets, including those whose work already exists in archives in various parts of our state.

Project Method: A partnership structure was created between Lewis and Clark College, Fishtrap Writers Gathering in Wallowa, Oregon, KBOO radio/ /Talking Earth in Portland, and the Mountain Writers Center. This structures allowed for the transfer of previously recorded works to the Poetic Voices digital archive on the project website, as well as a means to contact the various writers communities represented by the partners listed above. In addition, project staff and volunteers went into rural libraries throughout eastern and southern Oregon to offer recording time to local poets of all ages. In effect, the local libraries became silent partners to the project by lending not only their facilities but also their position in their communities as project support.

The project website, www.OregonPoeticVoices.org was also created during this first year; it is structured so that students and teachers can find resources to not only recorded works, but to other related resources for the enjoyment of poetry. Use of the website has grown slowly but steadily as word of the project gets out.

Project Results: The website is up and running, with updated resource files as works come in from the partners and recording sessions. There has been some difficulty in gaining access to the archives at KBOO/Talking Earth as well as Fishtrap's library in Joseph. Recording sessions have been held around the state, using rural libraries as temporary recording studios. The project has been publicized in various media outlets, although documentation of publicity efforts at rural libraries has not been provided. By this I mean images of flyers, copies of press releases to local media, inclusion on library websites and other local outlets. A file on the website

could be created to archive some of that information to demonstrate best practices to those interested in duplicating this effort in other states or regions.

Project Impact: This is an extraordinary project with the potential to impact the writing lives of many Oregon poets and students. If the college continues to support the website, including uploading recordings and listing related events, this project could have an influence on our state's literary culture for many years. This project also has the potential to raise the Lewis and Clark library's image throughout the state as an example of an academic library working with groups and individuals outside of the campus family all across the state. Lastly, this project could be customized to another state's literary climate if a local champion with the prestige of the Lewis and Clark library and Doug Erickson, Head of Special Collections at the library.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Permanent funding should be created to ensure the life of this project beyond the grant period.
2. A permanent intern's position should also be created for maintenance of the website, researching Oregon poets and recordings, and to provide an enriching experience to a graduate student in the literary arts area.
3. A statewide publicity effort using local media outlets in those "unrecorded" areas should be launched. The resulting recording sessions should be listed on the project website so area poets can refer to these events.
4. Every effort should be made to get this project linked on every library website in our state., and brought to the attention of not only Library Directors but library programmers and other staff. This could easily be done via the Library Development office at the Oregon State Library and through Oregon Library Association publications
5. The project should also be "connected" to local writing groups throughout the state. We have five or six of those in our coastal county and all could benefit from knowledge of this project and the archive.
6. Lastly, from the viewpoint of someone with vision limitations, the website needs more contrast between the background field color and the white lettering. Even with my gigantic monitor and increased resolution, I found it hard to read some of the text. The website design is clean and easy to use and understand but for some of us with "older eyes" hard to read.