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LSTA Grant Project Evaluation—Year 2

Pacific University Library & Washington County Museum, “Washington County Heritage Online”

Summary of Evaluation

This report provides an evaluation of the second year of a two-year LSTA grant-funded project, the Washington County Heritage Online (WCHO). The same evaluator analyzed the progress and achievements of the first year of the grant period; see “LSTA Grant Project Evaluation, Pacific University Library & Washington County Museum, ‘Washington County Heritage Online’” of February 21, 2012.

The Evaluator spoke via telephone with Project Manager Lindsay Prescott Zaborowski and Pacific University Librarian/Library Director Marita Kunkel on January 3, 2013, to discuss the progress of the project over the course of the year and identify highlights and any challenges that the project team has faced.

Rather than replicate information about project objectives and method contained in the first-year evaluation report, this second-year report will instead focus on project results, impact, and highlights that either differ from the previous report or provide useful information that effectively sums-up both years of the project.

The purpose of WCHO project is to centralize and make more widely available via the Internet historic images of Washington County, Oregon. The project team has identified and scanned important historical materials from the collections of Pacific University Library (PUL), the Washington County Museum (WCM), and a number of other county heritage organizations. In addition to continuing the process of digitization, building the Internet infrastructure to host and manage images, and forging connections throughout the county, the second and final year of the grant project involved implementing a plan to sustain the health of the project well into the future.

Project Objectives

Summarized in first year evaluation report; see James V. Hillegas, “LSTA Grant Project Evaluation, Pacific University Library & Washington County Museum, ‘Washington County Heritage Online,’” Feb. 29, 2012, pp. 2-3.

Project Method

Summarized in first year evaluation report; see James V. Hillegas, "LSTA Grant Project Evaluation, Pacific University Library & Washington County Museum, 'Washington County Heritage Online,'" Feb. 29, 2012, p. 3.

Project Results

Achievements during the first quarter of 2012 included continuing to broadcast notice of the launch of the WCHO website (<http://washingtoncountyheritage.org/>) that occurred in February 2012 and completing usability testing for the website. The WCHO also added its first official partner organization this quarter, the Tigard Public Library, followed by two others shortly thereafter.

Importantly, during the first quarter of 2012 the project team learned through its experience with the Banks Historical Society that some organizations with important collections did not have the necessary staff or resources to scan, add metadata, and upload images. To bring these materials into the WCHO, the project team developed processes and procedures such as hands-on training and bringing scanning equipment to these other locations. The team also made significant progress on transferring images scanned at Pacific University (PU) with a different system (File Maker Pro instead of CONTENTdm) prior to launch of the WCHO project, thus making these images available without duplicating the scanning efforts. This also allowed the team to transfer rudimentary metadata along with these images so that they were able to avoid duplicating at least some of the metadata processing as well.

Highlights of the second quarter of 2012 included the addition of three partner organizations and formalizing relationships with three others. Looking forward to the time when grant funding would end, the project team began investigating ways to streamline and simplify the image metadata writing process; transitioning from a Microsoft Excel-based system to an online system using Google Docs offered the prospect of increasing accuracy and efficiency. At the request of some partner organizations, the team updated their training manual to include instructions about how to add scanned text documents to the collection. Indicating how quickly county institutions were seizing the potential of the WCHO, the project team reported that the Educational Coordinator at the WCM began building a lesson plan for public schools on the topic of Japanese American internment during World War II that combined oral history excerpts from WCM with images from WCHO.

During the third quarter of 2012, while continuing the digitization and outreach processes, the team also increased its work to create a plan for the future health and growth of the WCHO and to sustain a vibrant Advisory Committee. This included developing a plan for website maintenance and a contingency plan for digital items.

The project added its first scanned text documents to the WCHO website in the form of a monthly newspaper published by the group Community Action in the 1970s.

Ms. Zaborowski and Ms. Kunkel, in our phone conversation, reported a noteworthy experience regarding image copyright. After uploading images to the WCHO website, Ms. Zaborowski was contacted by a local photographer who had taken some of the photos from the 1970s. The photographer said that the images were not credited properly. The WCHO team moved to resolve this situation immediately and found that their copyright policy and agreement with the partner institution was in full accord with copyright law. However, there was confusion at the partner institution regarding proper credit and copyright for these images.

After further discussion the issue was resolved without the WCHO having to remove images. The photographer not only agreed to allow the WCHO to use the images but also offered to provide images—an unforeseen but beneficial outcome. To help ensure that lessons-learned from this circumstance would be available as broadly as possible, one of the WCHO staff members created a summary copyright law document to provide as a resource through the website.

One important caveat exhibited in this example is that projects seeking to digitize and provide online access to historical and cultural materials must ensure that they comply with copyright law, which WCHO staff did; however, even if the project sponsor takes such steps, it may not be the case that other institutions have also done the due diligence on their part. To help identify and resolve this issue as soon as possible it is important for all project participants to be aware that this is a possibility and to be prepared to address it directly and promptly.

Project Impact

All of the project impacts outlined on pages 4-6 of the first year evaluation report pertain to the second year as well. Beyond these, the impact of the WCHO for partnering institutions and the broader community can be illustrated in some quantitative and qualitative ways.

Project Manager Lindsay Prescott Zaborowski has created monthly website usage statistics documents for her own use and for dissemination to the Advisory Committee and partner organizations. She makes these documents available via the WCHO's Google Docs site, <https://sites.google.com/a/pacificu.edu/wchoinfo/>. One of these documents list the number of times website users have clicked on a specific image. Another document shows monthly website hits, visits, unique visits, and average visits per day. This latter document shows that the total number of visits has grown from 7,448 in February 2012 to 47,165 by the end of December.

Assessed in terms of institutions involved in the WCHO and total numbers of images uploaded to the web site, as of January 13, 2013, the following information pertains:

Institution	Total Items
Pacific University Archives	3,031
Washington County Museum	1,574
Centro Cultural	904
Friends of Historic Forest Grove	270
Cornelius Public Library	144
Banks Historical Society	93
Community Action	81
Tigard Public Library	45
Forest Grove City Library	63
City of Beaverton	22
Cedar Mill Community Library	14
Total	6,241

Ms. Kunkel concluded that the success of the project was to a large degree due to Ms. Zaborowski's skills as a project manager. These included persistence and follow-through, ensuring thorough documentation, and providing clear and consistent communication. Ms. Zaborowski said that she did not have any formal project management training but was able to apply her training from graduate school and her ability to learn on-the-job to achieve success. Ms. Zaborowski's key recommendations to set the framework for a successful project will be beneficial for future project managers and included the following:

- 1) **Convene regular in-person project team meetings:** The project team and partners were located at various institutions in the county. Though they were all committed to the project and worked well as a team remotely, the WCHO benefitted from convening regular full-team in-person meetings to help ensure alignment.
- 2) **Schedule the in-person meetings to correlate with key project milestones:** Aligning face-to-face team meetings with the overall project schedule provided another way to ensure alignment and track progress proactively.
- 3) **Ensure long-term sustainability while achieving short- and mid-term goals:** WCHO staff provided training in image scanning and metadata creation while they were identifying and uploading images. In this way they transferred skills and experience that will be essential in the long-term vitality of the project. They did not focus solely on scanning and uploading a specific number of images within a set time merely to have these numbers to report at the end of the grant period.

- 4) **Create documentation, tools, templates, and guides:** Another way to ensure WCHO longevity has been for the project team to develop systems and methods for doing the work efficiently and effectively and then documenting these so that future staff, volunteers, and partner organizations will be able to learn quickly from past experiences and best practices.
- 5) **Proactively evaluate technologies to determine the most appropriate technology to fulfill the purpose of the project:** The project team evaluated leading online archival and content management systems and learned from colleagues and other professionals so that they would be able to commit to the most affordable and practical system possible within the project's scope, timeline, and budget. This knowledge made them aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the system they chose—CONTENTdm—so that they could explain these nuances to their partners and, when possible, devise methods or systems to address shortcomings.
- 6) **Engage regularly both with the communities being served and with specialists:** The project team developed a multifaceted approach to community outreach that included meetings, community events, and a regular newsletter. Ms. Zaborowski and other project team members also presented reports on the WCHO at national academic conferences. Both kinds of outreach helped spread word of the project and also helped generate new ideas, approaches, and leads.

Suggestions for Improvement

This Evaluator wrote in the year 1 evaluation of the WCHO that there were no suggestions for improvement because the team had thus far achieved its goals or had proactively addressed issues that could potentially stand in the way of achieving these goals. I concluded that "Success in Year 2 of the LSTA grant is contingent upon the continued dedication of project team members, and there is every reason to believe that this will come to pass." Upon review of both years of this two-year grant, I continue to be impressed with the achievements of this project, the solid framework to sustain the project into the future, and the professionalism, dedication, and creativity of both Ms. Zaborowski and Ms. Kunkel. I can do no better than quote my second-to-last paragraph of the year 1 evaluation to conclude this year's evaluation:

The WCHO project team is to be commended for their clear and achievable project plan, and for the ways in which they achieved their Year 1 objectives in a logical, progressive way that ensured a strong foundation for Year 2 and beyond. Project team members have a clear understanding of their purpose and the time that they have allotted to achieve their goals, and they have worked diligently to meet their deadlines. Further, they also have the self-awareness to see clearly when roadblocks (however slight) have arisen and the creativity to work-around these roadblocks to achieve success.