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LSTA Grant Project Evaluation

University of Oregon Access or Oregon Folklife Collections Project, Year 2

Summary of Evaluation:

In this second year of grant funding, the Archives of Northwest Folklore set out to improve access to Oregon Folklife Program (OFP) collections. These 35 collections (130 linear ft., 100 boxes), created between 1988 and 2009, contain fieldwork documentation and administrative records generated by the Oregon Folklife Program (OFP), which was located at the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) until 2009, and replaced in 2011 as the state's public folklore organization by the Oregon Folklife Network (OFN), located at the University of Oregon. The OFP collections are a valuable resource for the communities they document as well as educators, researchers, students, historians, and folklorists. The Archives of Northwest Folklore partnered with the Oregon Historical Society, University of Oregon Libraries, and the Oregon Folklife Network to make these collections accessible. The project is ambitious, and successful.

I met with Nathan Georgitis, the managing archivist, on Monday, March 11th to discuss the project. The materials have been minimally reprocessed, media items digitized, collection level finding aids drafted, and Mr. Georgitis assured me that within the ten days the finding aids would be built out to include item level records. Once that is completed, they will be pushed out to the Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA) database, a project that will be completed by the end of April. The MARC records will be generated using a new tool by OCLC, which automatically harvests data for the MARC record. While striving to achieve their proposed vision for community outreach, they've fallen short. However, the Archives prepared the way for community engagement in the future through the cultivation of vital relationships with cultural communities and folklore professionals. These relationships in conjunction with publicity and conference presentation could potentially lead to an increase in visibility and access to the collections.

Project Objectives:

Located in the University of Oregon's Folklore Program, the Archives of Northwest Folklore's project: "Access to Oregon Folklife Collections Project, Year 2" sought to address Goal #5 of the State of Oregon's *Five-Year State Plan 2008-2012*, "use cost effective technologies to expand and enhance the access that all Oregonians have to

information resources." The Goal of the project: "Improve public access to Oregon Folklife Program collections by developing a collections database in Archivists' Toolkit and publishing finding aids and catalog records for collections to online library catalogs and databases." Within the project plan were six objectives, each with specific activities to be completed within a specific timeframe:

Objective 1: Review of collections and data

Activities included preparing processing and data migration plans.

Objective 2: Collection processing

Activities included inventory of materials, training student archivists for processing activities, and inventory and assessment of media materials.

Objective 3: Data migration

Activities included importing data to AT database and execution of data migration plans for collections.

Objective 4: Database development

Activities included the development of collection level information, redaction of personal information from the records, and drafts of catalog records and finding aids.

Objective 5: Publication of finding aids and catalog records; updates to websites

Activities included publication of finding aids, export data to Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA), submission of catalog records to the UO Library Catalog and WorldCat, and changes to OFN and Archives web sites to promote collections.

Objective 6: Promotion of Oregon Folklife Program Collections

Activities included presentation on the project at a regional, cultural heritage conference, creating and distributing publicity materials, engaging communities to promote the collections, creation of publicity mailing list, and distributing publicity materials to heritage organizations and community centers.

Project Method:

The Archives began with an inventory of the 100 boxes and gathered information at the folder level. Students were trained and involved in the process as a part of their education. They made the decision to leave all of the materials where they were, physically, and provide the necessary information in the finding aid to enable users to locate the materials needed. The Archives quickly discovered that there was an inordinate amount of confidential information within the folders, such as social security numbers, and began the process of redacting that information.

Simultaneous to the redaction project, Nathan Georgitis, the archivist, drafted collection level finding aids for the 35-40 collections that are represented, and will begin building those out to include item level information within the next week to ten days. The project is on track to begin to migrate data and finding aids out to the NWDA database, which was the main goal of the grant. They will produce MARC records for the collections using a new tool by OCLC, which will automatically harvest data from the finding aids, and map it into the MARC record format.

The Archives has hired the UO Libraries' Internet Media Group to develop a set of Folklore Fieldwork Forms. These forms directly support the Oregon Folklife Network's upcoming projects, and the Mills Folklore collection as a whole rather than necessarily being target to the Oregon Folklife Program Collections. It's a set of fieldwork forms that are hosted through a computer, not the web. It allows a fieldworker to enter data in the field, and prepares that information for exportation into the Archivist's Toolkit, which can then be exported as EAD finding aids, making the data accessible to the public.

Last year, they went to the Oregon Heritage Conference, as participants, and they will present at the Western States Folklorists Society Conference this spring. Nathan Georgitis has developed a professional relationship with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, and networked at various conferences and meetings. He has also worked to facilitate the relationship between the Oregon Folklife Network and the Oregon Historical Society, including securing a loan agreement, getting materials to the University of Oregon, and developing a Memorandum of Understanding.

Project Results:

The Archives of Northwest Folklore is on-track to accomplish the objectives set forth in their grant proposal by April 30th. The first four objectives took longer than initially anticipated:

Objective 1: Review of collections and data

Activities included preparing processing and data migration plans.

Objective 2: Collection processing

Activities included inventory of materials, training student archivists for processing activities, and inventory and assessment of media materials.

Objective 3: Data migration

Activities included importing data to AT database and execution of data migration plans for collections.

Objective 4: Database development

Activities included the development of collection level information, redaction of personal information from the records, and drafts of catalog records and finding aids.

The processes of inventory and redaction took longer than anticipated. It was expected that the folder level inventory would involve less digging through the files than was in reality needed. Similarly, the redaction project became more extensive, because the applications containing the majority of confidential information were so interesting that they could not simply be removed from the file. This necessitated extra hours of carefully whiting-out social security numbers, photocopying the applications, refileing the redacted copy, and destroying the original.

At the beginning of the next school term, at the beginning of April, Nathan Georgitis will focus his students on completing the finding aids and information for the MARC records. Once those are completed, the publication of the finding aids and MARC records will be as simple as a keystroke. Data will be exported to the Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA), and the MARC records and EAD finding aids will be made available in the UO Library Catalog and WorldCat. (Objective 5). Nathan Georgitis also stated that upon completion, these collection will be advertised on a few different websites, including: Archives of the Northwest Folklore (<http://pages.uoregon.edu/flr/archives/archives.htm>), Oregon Folklife Network (<http://ofn.uoregon.edu/>), the Oregon Historical Society (<http://www.ohs.org/>), and UO Libraries Special Collections (<http://library.uoregon.edu/speccoll/index.html>).

In pursuit of Objective 6, there was a presentation at the Oregon Heritage Conference last spring, and there will be a presentation at the Western States Folklorist Society this spring. The networking envisioned in the grant proposal has not really come to pass, especially concerning engagement with communities. Part of the issue rests with the length of time it has taken to accomplish the first four objectives. It is difficult to approach communities with the collection, without really knowing what you have in the collection. They had thought that they were going to have more time to locate the communities represented in the collection, contact them, and facilitate some planning of an exhibit or public program. That did not happen, because it is only now (mid-March) that they really know what is in the collections and they do not have time to put into this part of the plan without cutting into time that would be better spent accomplishing the final objectives.

Similarly, they haven't begun the process of producing pamphlets or flyers for the Folklife Collections, but they have an idea of what can be done by the April 30th deadline. If nothing else, there is the belief that they could develop a simple postcard that could be placed in the UO Libraries, OHS, and sent out to the Oregon Folklife Network mailing list.

In addition to their proposed efforts, the Archives did a couple of things to make the materials more accessible to the communities and cultural institutions represented in the collections. They've launched a slide-scanning project, which was the routine that they began under the terms of last year's grant. With the approval of the Oregon Historical Society, they have digitized materials from the collection, thereby placing the materials in a better position to be repatriated, reused, and more accessible to the communities.

Project Impact:

Considering that the last two objectives, Objective 5: Publication of finding aids and catalog records; updates to websites and Objective 6: Promotion of Oregon Folklife Program Collections have yet to be completed. It is difficult to gauge the long-term significance of the project. These two objectives are perhaps the most visible and quantifiable of the objectives.

However, the steps that the Archive has taken towards achieving these objectives has not only made their achievement possible, but has also made future goals of the project more easily accessible. The decisions that the Archive has made, such as the redaction strategy and the development of Folklore Fieldwork Forms, have been made with a vision for the future. These choices may have pushed the deadlines of the original plan for this LSTA grant, but by making those choices the Archives successfully endeavored to address Goal #5 of the State of Oregon's *Five-Year State Plan 2008-2012*, "use cost effective technologies to expand and enhance the access that all Oregonians have to information resources." as well as Goal #3 of the *Oregon Folklife Network Plan*, "Document, preserve, archive our cultural assets so they are not lost."

Overall this project is important to the accessibility of 100 boxes of culturally significant materials that would have otherwise been unavailable to Oregonians. The Archives and Nathan Georgitis have taken a little extra time to achieve the best possible outcome, and have consistently made decisions based upon the objectives of this grant *and* the future of these materials. For example, by taking the time to develop a relationship between the Archives of Northwest Folklore and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs there is an increased potential to yield more valuable results than simply placing a pamphlet in their museum or mailing out an impersonal postcard.