Virtual Community: Telling Neighborhood Histories in a Digital Age

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Though located more than fifteen miles from downtown Chicago, the neighborhood of Pullman in many ways stands at the center of American industrial history. The community originated as a company town, built by—and named after—the Pullman Palace Car Company in 1880 to house those workers who labored in factories that were also situated at the center of town. And though the company sold off its residential land in 1907, the neighborhood of Pullman persisted as white, blue-collar community throughout much of the twentieth century until white flight and deindustrialization transformed the area into the largely African American, inner-city community it remains today.

In the summer of 2011, the Dr. William M. Scholl Center for American History and Culture at the Newberry Library held two, one-week summer workshops for community college faculty on using both the Pullman neighborhood and the Pullman Company as a window through which to teach the history of industrial America. The workshops included site visits to the Pullman neighborhood as well as time in the Pullman Company Archives, which the Newberry holds. At the workshop's conclusion, the Scholl Center initially intended to provide participants with a CD of digitized materials from the Newberry's collections for classroom use. But by utilizing Omeka, the free, open-source software developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, the Scholl Center was able to create an enduring, online exhibit on the Pullman community.

The benefits of using Omeka were twofold. First, the low cost associated with establishing the digital exhibit freed up resources that would have been spent purchasing and

burning CDs to digitize more material. When launched, the Pullman exhibit will feature nearly three hundred items on the community's history, from the 1880s through the 1980s. Secondly, creating a virtual space to house the history of Pullman also became a kind of web portal for the neighborhood, a place to link out to all of the social and cultural organizations that continue to actively curate the community's history. In this vein, the exhibit became partially "crowdsourced," as the Historic Pullman Foundation, the Pullman Civic Association, the Pullman State Historic Site, and the A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum, which is located in Pullman, all contributed to the exhibit, receive prominent mentions, and are linked to throughout the exhibit's narrative.

For all of the benefits associated with building a digital history of a still-existing physical community, however, there have emerged several unique problems. By far the most pressing has been navigating—and representing—the ongoing racial and spatial politics of Pullman in relation to their presence on the internet. As a part of the much larger Roseland and Kensington neighborhoods, Pullman is a largely African American community that suffers from high rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime. Among its current residents, the community's most active organizations are political ones, ward clubs and neighborhood groups that advocate for economic development and better city services. While many of these organizations are longstanding institutions vital to the community's existence, most lack any kind of active web presence. Those groups that *do* tend to have a robust internet presence, by contrast, tend to be associations of *former* Pullman residents who through Facebook, group blogs, and even historical societies attempt to recreate the community "as it once was" online. Though these groups in some ways are the least invested in the survival of the neighborhoods of which Pullman is a part, they are the most active online and therefore are disproportionately represented on the Pullman exhibit.

In an age in which museums and other cultural institutions have increasingly attempted to revive their institutions by involving the public as online curators, the Pullman exhibits suggests public historians have not talked seriously enough about the ways in which crowdsourcing history privileges a certain level of access to technology. How can we, as public historians, involve these digitally silent communities in our neighborhood histories? A particular frustration I have in this regard is the limits of Omeka as an exhibition software. While the program is absolutely vital as an open-source platform that allows even the smallest historical society to have a digital presence, I found no way build within Omeka a system by which Pullman residents could submit materials to be included in the exhibit. I am therefore interested in how financially-strapped cultural institutions can innovate ways to "crowdsource" history with communities that face technological restraints. In what ways can open-source programs like Omeka be modified to allow spaces for user-generated content? What external programs or software can be used to achieve a similar effect? What kinds of outreach could an institution do to reach these communities?

Case Statement for Jessica Elfenbein and Tom Hollowak

How did you build a relationship with a community partner, and convert that into a digital initiative?

The University of Baltimore, in partnership with a wide variety of community partners, has been regularly convening stakeholders in local history since 1996. Attendance at our public history conferences has been in the range of 300-400 people, representing a broad cross section of the broader community.

In addition, UB holds the archival records of 130+ civic, voluntary, and nonprofit organizations. Collecting in this area began in the late 1970s and was restarted in the mid-1990s when we deliberately began an outreach campaign to those organizations whose records we already held. At the same time we reached out to dozens more organizations, soliciting their archival records.

With that as a base, UB led the organization of a major, multi-faceted public history project, Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth in an American City, that included a major digital humanities piece – www.ubalt.edu/baltimore68.

How did you structure your class so students could take advantage of the opportunities presented by the web? In your statements, consider what worked, what didn't work, and how you would do things differently in the future.

Since there were virtually no secondary sources about April 1968 and the riots that ensued following the death of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. , we created a web presence to share information not only about the civil unrest, but also the city before and after. Baltimore '68 riots and rebirth became the theme we worked around. An advantage in involving our students in the oral history process was twofold: first, they were older than traditional undergraduates at four-year colleges; second, they had long roots and ties in the community. In bringing out into the open a subject that had largely been purposely "forgotten" or only discussed in private could only be undertaken after a certain amount of trust had been established.

The students worked in teams of three with the idea that they would interview their informant three times asking questions related to what their life was like before April 1968, during the unrest, and after April 1968. The team would also record and videotape each interview and rotate responsibilities, i.e. interview, record and transcribe interview, and videotape. The transcript would be sent to special collections for posting to the website. Scheduling problems both for students (many of whom were working adults) and informants let to this tri-fold plan not materializing. Transcribing the interviews also proved problematic and either transcription was not completed or replete with errors {grammatical, misspellings of streets and individuals, etc.}. To solve the latter grant money provided for outside transcribers to complete the work and a careful editorial review by the project director, Dr. Betsy Nix of all the interviews led to completion of the project.

How do we create spaces where visitors can freely share their knowledge, their objects, and their opinions?

In the creation of the web presence we provided a space where divergent views of what occurred in Baltimore before, during, and after April 1968. Informants who were interviewed their complete interview would be available online. Documents were located and digitized from across the archival holdings to provide primary sources without regard to whether they contradicted or dispelled the opinions of the oral interviews, secondary and even primary sources on the site.

Local newspaper stories on the student oral history project led to further community involvement. A Baltimore City Police officer who collects memorabilia about the Police force contacted us about sharing his photographs collection related to the riots. Two grandchildren of business owners who were victims of the civil disturbances provide primary documents and stories of how their families were affected. Before contacting us directly they had visited the website and seen it as an objective site that provided equal access to a diversity of experience.

How do we create opportunities for the public to work collaboratively with traditional experts?

The public arts component of Baltimore '68 is an example of providing this opportunity. As a community artist intern, Christina Ralls contacted each of the informants and invited them to come and share their experiences and develop a piece of public art as the final product. Those who agreed to participate began the process with a communal storytelling – participants telling their individual recollections. Asking them then to create a visual of their story eventually led to the development of an equitable documentation of the community's shared history of this particular event. The final product was a mosaic where individual tiles [a symbolic rendering of individual stories] were incorporated into creating a collective whole.

We also collaborated with the YMCA of Central Maryland to create civic dialogues at their branches across the region.

If we can create these spaces and opportunities, how do we convince the public to invest their time and energy with us, and not someone else?

When were contacted by the public there was a rapid response and a sharing of what we were trying to do and encouragement to participate. In other words after the initial contact someone on the project team called the individual and discussed their participation. For example, when Officer Jim Kelly called he was referred to Tom Hollowak who spoke with him over the phone to discuss his collection and then convince him to allow us to digitized the photographs and put them online. In scheduling a time for him to bring in the photographs he was provide with assurances that the scanning would be done while he waited and an estimated time it would take to do it. This allayed his fears of having to leave the collection and he knew about how much time to allow for the work to be done. Once the work was done it was put online with a day or two of his visit. This demonstrates our appreciation of their willingness to sharing this resource and our commitment to making it widely available as soon as possible, thereby convincing them to invest their time and energy with us.

How do we transform websites from digital repositories to meaningful community resources? How is this both a technological or institutional problem?

Initially the Baltimore '68 website was simply a digital repository to provide online access to the oral histories created by UB students. As primary sources were located among the archival holdings the original format was expanded to allow for inclusion of these items. However, as more and different

material was created or located the digital repository site evolved into community resource. The technology required to create both an attractive site that was "user friendly" and allowed for flexibility in both adding new resources and new types of content required working both outside technological support in web design and implementation. It was also an institutional problem in the availability of server space. With regard to the former I looked a number of different digital humanities sites and then created on paper a composite model. Using this starting point I met with a web designer who had me explain my ideas and objectives and then she worked up several different designs. After reviewing these we had further discussions that led to further refinement on her part to incorporate my ideas which had become clearer after seeing her first design concepts. After two further meetings and discussions we came to an agreement on the present site.

Another problem that was institutional was server space. The development of the site form digital repository to a digital humanities project resulted in a dramatic increase of the university's server space. The site not only included digitized paper documents, but mp3 files and news footage. Since this project also led to efforts at enlarging our digital repository holdings it was not long before we were using 95% of the university's server. The only solution was to purchase our own server space.

How can public historians motivate different community members to become involved in their digital projects? What work needs to be done offline in conjunction with online activities?

Motivating different community members to become involved in their digital projects has to come first from selecting projects whose appeal is not limited to a narrow group. It must resonate with as many different community members as possible. It should also try to foster a climate where differing voices can and will be heard and respected. A lot of meetings and discussions need to be done "offline" first then as resources become available creating a concept to make them available online, understanding that the online presence with probably need to be redefine and evolve as the project develops.

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What follows is a brief reflection on my work for the American Enterprise exhibition, written for the upcoming NCPH working group, "Public History Online: Using the Web to Collaborate and Share."

In August of 2010, Will Tchakirides and I joined the *American Enterprise* exhibition team at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH). When it opens in early 2015, *American Enterprise* will be the first NMAH exhibition to explore the history of American business and the ongoing tension between capitalism and democracy. For two academic semesters, Will and I worked as web interns for the show, designing a "pre-exhibition" website for *American Enterprise*.

What is a pre-exhibition website? That was our first question, too. In 2010, an internet search for that term produced a rather slim number of examples for us to study; the Museum of Modern Art's Talk to Me exhibition was a rare (albeit outstanding) exception. At the same time, *American Enterprise* was already several years into its development. That August, Will and I spent a few weeks simply catching up to speed: meeting the large exhibition team, studying design drawings, and talking to curators about the show's structure, its themes, and what they hoped to accomplish. Gradually, we learned that, as web interns, we would function as liaisons between the various departments represented on the exhibition team and the NMAH's independent New Media office.

Beyond offering their technical expertise, the New Media office introduced us to the Smithsonian's digital initiatives – none more important than its "Web and New Media Strategy." Although expansive in its details, the strategy's central goal is to transform the Smithsonian's learning model, making the institution a nexus for learning and discovery, rather than an isolated temple of knowledge. (For shorthand, we could call this Smithsonian 2.0). As the image below suggests, Smithsonian 2.0 will depend upon collaboration, sharing, and the shared wisdom of the web.
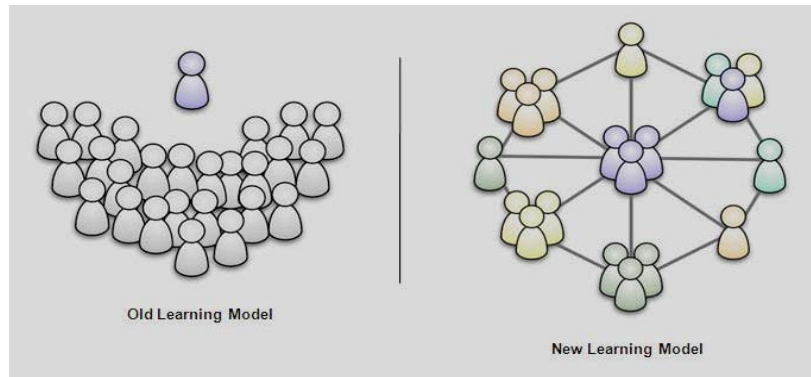
Figure 1: The Updated Smithsonian Learning Model

Source: http://smithsonian-webstrategy.wikispaces.com/Strategy+--+Themes#learning

The *American Enterprise* team was enthusiastic about bringing this 2.0 ethos to bear on both their exhibition and, more directly, their pre-exhibition website. Virtually every team member expressed a desire to connect with the museum's online visitors in more substantive ways. A few wanted to create opportunities for visitors to submit their own stories and objects, creating a bottom-up, crowd-sourced show. Many others wanted to use the website to "field-test" the exhibition, gauging people's reactions and weeding out bad ideas years before *American Enterprise* reaches the museum floor.

Although the team's enthusiasm was contagious, throughout those initial weeks, Will and I kept returning to that elusive design question – "What are we building?" From our perspective, it was clear that, while there was a great deal of enthusiasm for a pre-exhibition website, as well collaboration and sharing, everyone on the team had a different vision of what, precisely, that website should *be*. At the time, a few of the proposals were:

- A node for news and information related to the exhibition and its themes.
- A blog-driven site, chronicling the exhibition's development
- A database-driven site, where we showcased the exhibition's ever-evolving database of objects, images, and collections.
- An informational site directed towards educators, complete with lessons plans.
- A digital version of the upcoming exhibition, including labels and object images.

As any project manager can tell you, time is the ultimate decider. In our case, the exhibition team had very little time to create original material for the website. New object labels, educational resources, and other forms of media were out. Knowing that, Will and I recommended pursuing a blog-driven site that could, over the course of a year, introduce visitors to both the upcoming exhibition and the people

building it. The plan was to create a basic "Explore" section that showcased some of the exhibition's objects and stories, but put most of our effort into a group blog where team members could talk about their research and, overall, demystify the exhibition-building process. When specific opportunities for dialogue or collaboration came up, we would pursue them on an ad-hoc basis, using the NMAH's established social media presence as a foundation for our work.

Since this was a blog-driven design, the WordPress publishing platform was an obvious choice for our software. Will and I chose WordPress for other, less tangible reasons as well. In the long term, we hoped that the exhibition team would be able to take over the website, running the blog largely internally, without the help of web interns or even the NMAH's New Media office. Finally, in a more technical consideration, we decided to host the website externally, outside the Smithsonian's servers, in order to give ourselves greater flexibility. (To learn about some of the challenges of building internally, check out Will's reflection on a different project). After assembling our initial materials and going through the necessary security checks, we launched the site in January 2011, six months after the project began.

Figure 2: The pre-exhibition website, at launch.

After months of planning, launching americanenterprise.si.edu felt like an accomplishment in and of itself. We quickly learned, however, that a blog is a hungry beast, one that requires weekly (if not daily) labor, thoughtful scheduling, and a great deal of dedication. After an initial flurry of posts describing research trips and new objects, the team settled into an more relaxed pattern, where substantial posts would be followed by one or two minor ones (such as snippet book reviews). As time went on, we learned the value of sharing our work-load with others. Since January, some of our best entries have been written by interns at the Smithsonian, or outside scholars whose work intersected with the show. Through practice, the exhibition's curators grew more and more proficient at responding to comments on their posts. Lastly, progress with other aspects of the show made it possible for us to revise and expand the

Explore section of the website, giving visitors a much detailed introduction to the exhibition, its objects, and its themes.

Figure 3: The revised Explore section.

Though promising, none of these developments on the blog or within the Explore section fostered the kinds of collaborations we envisioned at the start of the project. Although the pre-exhibition website figuratively opened the doors of the Smithsonian, revealing a development process previously hidden from public view, it did very little to invite the public inside. Occasional polls, conducted on the site or on the museum's various social media networks, were some of the few spaces (besides the comment box) where online visitors could critically assess the exhibition or offer us their expertise. While useful (one poll demonstrated, for instance, that most people do not like the title "American Enterprise," for instance), these polls were a decidedly limited form of sharing, one that did little to capitalize on the technological innovations made over the past decade on the web. For that reason, this past fall, the exhibition team decided to revisit and revise our website's long-term strategy. In the end, we settled on two interrelated goals that, we hope, will guide us through the next year of the project, and lead to greater amounts of shared learning.

Part of the problem, we realized, was that our current website was not reaching enough visitors for us to pursue any meaningful, born-digital collaborations. With that in mind, we want to **develop a larger and more active community for our website** over the next year**.** In practical terms, this means we will do more to publicize our work (via social media, old and new) and, less noticeably, plan our content for maximum impact. The latter point is a lesson we've taken from Project Argo and other media-driven sites. Content planning, beyond efficiency, makes it much easier for the creators to coordinate with

others and reach target audiences. To give a concrete example, later this year, we hope to collect a large number of postwar U.S. farming images using Flickr. Although this collecting effort is still months away, we have already begun reaching out to organizations that will help us "get the word out" among farmers and other target audiences. Simultaneously, we are already developing blog posts that will thematically reinforce the focus on agriculture, ensuring that our visitors will find material they are interested in on our site. With any luck, these tactics will make *American Enterprise* a more useful resource for our visitors, and create spaces where they can contribute substantively to the exhibition's development.

Secondly, we want to **pursue real-life collaborations that can be folded into our work online.** As before, an example helps put this in perspective. Recently, one of curators approached a fellow historian at Brown University, and together, they developed a year-end exam for advertising history course at the university. The final exam gave college students access to a trove of advertising images being considered for the show via Flickr, and invited students to curate their own exhibition on the history of advertising. This winter, we'll be showcasing much of their work on our exhibition's website. While the students' work adds to our exhibition's value (giving us insights and leading us in directions we never considered), our website gives the students a platform for showcasing their academic work, a great first step in their efforts to build a digital portfolio.

Although I've personally found it helpful to pause and reflect on a project that is very much still in motion, I'm interested to hear your reactions. As scholars like Cathy Davidson have shown, we are all selectively blind; we rely on each other to fill in the holes in our vision. Knowing that, I ask: *What's missing from this story? What can we do better?*

Mitchell Koffman
Project *Becoming Arizona Cyberpedia*, 2008-2010
Arizona State University

While attending ASU for a master's in Public History one of my project assignments was an assistantship tasked with the development and planning for the online encyclopedia of Arizona. In late 2009, Arizona had started preparations for its centennial in 2012 and the Public History department at ASU was involved in a range of projects and potential events. The idea of an online state encyclopedia was to follow the lead of other states like Virginia, Georgia, and Minnesota which by 2009 already had fully functional and developed web creations. Articles ranging from 500 to 1500 words were the planned content for the site, initially composed and edited by graduate students. Once an established presence existed, the pool of authorship was to be opened to the public; anyone interested in contributing to Arizona history with the articles being submitted, then edited and curated by website staff (most likely graduate students).

The main driving force behind *Becoming Arizona* was to bring together the ideals being pushed through the New American University initiative at ASU of interdisciplinary cooperation. The online cyberpedia would be based on sound historical practices, but ideas and suggestions included the Schools of Education and Technology. In addition to working with other disciplines, topics of articles in *Becoming Arizona* would range in both time and scope to include geological histories to contemporary social issues and sports. This would create the greatest number of potential authors, along with expanding the potential audience. Partners for the project were to include state departments in the humanities field and other educational institutions.

During my year of direct involvement, I took part in many roles from discussing the site's potential audience and visibility in the state to the look and feel of the site layout and user interaction/participation. One of the main reasons for my participation was a result of my technology background, having experience working in the IT field prior to graduate school. While the project included the input of full time technical experts, the project leaders were from the Public History department and did not think or have a full understanding of IT concepts. Once general ideas were proposed, I would offer my thoughts as to the possibility and funding needs for the requested tasks. When the idea for how potential authors would submit completed articles there was a general thought that people would send them to one email address. This is the simplest approach, but requires that you have a stable account and then a person to sort emails to find the real submissions and those from spammers. Another approach was to have authors be able to submit the articles through the website itself, along with providing categories that could be selected that would then send articles based on categories to specific editors; while an added cost, would reduce the number of hours spent sorting material on an individual basis.

When my assistantship finished, the Becoming Arizona project was nearing the final stages before an official proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities was drafted. Ultimately, a final proposal did not materialize as the Public History department elected to focus its resources on other projects that were already funded at the time. In retrospect, two lessons that can be learned from this venture are that big projects should have a diverse leadership group in terms of organizations represented and that if public historians wish to have an effective web presence, a greater focus on learning the basics of information technology is vital.

The central leadership of this project was based in the Public History department at ASU and while partners included various other departments within the school and state, the fate of

Becoming Arizona rested in the hands of a few. The online encyclopedia for the State of Virginia was fortunate in not only attracting funding before the economic downturn in 2008, but its inception grew from a partnership between academia and the state's humanity council. In Arizona, if a partnership grew from the three large public universities, both costs and resources would have a greater pool to pull from, potentially leading to successful project. When a project has less tangible goods (i.e. a website or web based project), fundraising can be a challenge, but if the costs and required resources are spread out, then there is a greater chance for work to be completed.

Beyond this project, the fate of many Public History projects that wish to launch a web based component depend on our knowledge of technology. Everyone in the field does not have to know how to code a website, but understanding the fundamentals is important so that we can communicate with those that do without compromising any historical value. Digital History is an often used term, but seems always focus more on the history than the technical details when the ideal approach would be an even mix. The goals of any Digital History courses should provide Public Historians with the necessary skills to plan and initiate a web or computer based project without relying solely on technical experts. This also does not mean that input from a technology expert should be disregarded, but the chances for a project to be overtaken increase when we as a whole do not understand how the technology we want to use works.

Ultimately, the *Becoming Arizona Cyberpedia* only made it on the web in draft form, but we can learn from the ambitions by the ASU Public History department's desire to launch such a big endeavor. It's clear that as a field, Public Historians need to continue the effort in expanding the groups that we work with collaborate with and be willing to share the decision making

processes. Additionally, as the world moves further onto the web, the field must increase the

levels at which learning about various technologies in the classroom and out in the real world.

Becoming
Arizona
A Cyberpedia

Portal to Arizona's History, Culture, and Environment

Get Involved!

Questions or comments? Interested in contributing
or becoming a project partner?
Please contact us!

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Becoming Arizona is a web-based knowledge center— a cyberpedia of Arizona's history, culture, and environment —that explores the dynamics of change that shaped Arizona's past and continue to shape the state today. The project provides an authoritative and accessible portal to all things Arizona, engaging academics and the community in a collaborative project that bridges divides among peoples and cultures, across geographic space, and between past and present. Becoming Arizona is the twenty-first century resource for a fast-paced, growing state.

Why Becoming Arizona?

Arizona is a swiftly changing state with a larger-than-life mythic past. Many of the subtleties of Arizona's history and the dynamics of its present are misunderstood because of stereotypes of Arizona as the Old West or as a retirement community. In fact Arizona is young, culturally diverse, and rapidly growing. Becoming Arizona provides the means to delve deeper than mythology, nostalgia, and tourist-industry boosterism to transform casual clichés into more nuanced understandings of Arizona's unique character.

Arizona's diverse, rapidly growing population and economy marked by high-tech manufacturing, biotechnology, and sustainability initiatives signify an Arizona in the process of "becoming." Becoming Arizona's content explores identities within places; the permeability of state, tribal, and international borders; and generations of migrations throughout the region from indigenous peoples to the multicultural newcomers of today. It develops connections among and between accounts told by native peoples, histories over time, landscape and natural resources, economic engines, religious beliefs, sacred places, ethnic identities, gender roles, and expression through the arts. It will provide web users with a reference that is authoritative, dynamic, comprehensive, and accessible, and will bring together Arizona's cultural institutions in a partnership with Arizona's communities.

Past and Future

A rizona has long been in need of the kind of accessible, authoritative resource that Becoming Arizona offers, and Arizona's Centennial in 2012 has provided the impetus for its implementation. Becoming Arizona is intended to become a long-term State Centennial Legacy Project, helping to fulfill the centennial's goal of ensuring "a lasting legacy for future generations by encouraging all Arizonans to reflect on our unique and authentic history, to experience the rich and diverse tapestry of our heritage, and to explore our promising future."

Arizona State University's Public History and Scholarly Publishing Programs, part of the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, received a seed grant from the ASU Institute for Humanities Research, which led to a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) planning grant in 2008. An implementation proposal to the NEH will be submitted in June 2010. Becoming Arizona will go online during the 2012 centennial.

Many faculty, staff, and graduate students of ASU's School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies are committing their support and talents to the project, alongside a variety of preeminent humanities scholars and organizations from around the state.

Partners:

- Arizona Commission on the Arts
- Arizona Historical Society
- Arizona Humanities Council
- Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records
- Arizona State Museum
- Arizona State Parks
- Arizona State University Libraries
- ASU College of Technology & Innovation
- ASU School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies
- Morrison Institute of Public Policy
- NAU Cline Library
- State Historic Preservation Office
- University of Arizona Library
- University of Arizona Press

Contents

Project Themes

Settlement and sequencing: What are the origins of Arizona geologically, culturally? Who peopled Arizona over time? Who lived here when, where, and how, and how have the scale and scope of settlement patterns and complexity changed over time?

Conflict and cooperation: How have people adapted and changed over time, and how do these intersections and complexities of cultures now enrich the arts and traditions of contemporary Arizonans?

Individualism versus government agency: Arizona's image is often of rugged individualism. How and why do those popular images persist in a state where more than 80 percent of the land is owned by federal, state, and tribal governments? What are the major impacts of federal programs for reclamation, conservation, and preservation in Arizona?

Aridity and identity: Aridity shapes the state's environment, but cultural values shaped how Arizonans responded to and tried to overcome aridity. How have people adapted to and tried to control Arizona's extremely biodiverse environments? Water is a limiting factor for the state. If it gets hotter and drier who will be the winners and losers? What kind of research about climate change comes out of the state?

Sustainability: A recent report states, "An ancient land of long habitation but a short modern history, Arizona has been described as part of the Old West, the New West, and the Next West. Now, the time has come for the Sustainable West." With one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the nation as well as some of the country's newest and fastest-growing communities, what can people learn from Arizona about the ways values, as well as its resulting technology, shape sustainability?

accessible

Becoming Arizona will make full use of its digital medium to provide a rich, varied, and easily accessible portal to Arizona. Not only will Becoming Arizona be available to anyone with an internet connection, this digital resource will combine scholarly research with interactive features, multimedia content drawn from the state's cultural institutions, and all the versatility a digital environment allows to engage users of any age, educational background, or interest level with Arizona's history, culture, and environment. Below are just a few examples of how Becoming Arizona will take advantage of its digital medium.

Digital Features

Searchability

Becoming Arizona's content will be fully searchable, internally linked, and incorporate features like subject categories and tagging to provide users with countless paths to explore.

Video

Digital tours, video histories, instructional videos, and any number of other video resources will be made available through this interactive digital resource, adding multisensory depth to the cyberpedia's content.

Maps

Interactive maps will allow users to track a subject geographically, focus on information about a specific location, and think spatially as well as thematically about the cyberpedia's content.

Education

Becoming Arizona intends to work with educators across the state to develop educational features that will transform the cyberpedia's content into an interactive learning laboratory for students of all ages.

Compatibility

Drawing on the very latest best practices for digital encyclopedias, Becoming Arizona will maximize its compatibility with ever-emerging technology like 3G phones and PDAs.

Visuals

Charts, graphs, photography, visual art, and historical documents are all easily incorporated into a digital environment, creating a richer and more diverse experience than text alone.

Audio

Music, podcasts, oral histories, linguistic samples, and other audio elements can provide users with another point of access to information about Arizona, making the cyberpedia accessible to any learning style.

Timelines

Timelines will provide yet another navigational option for the cyberpedia, adding a temporal dimension to its content and giving users a clearer picture of change over time.

Community

The project will encourage community involvement by creating a constructive online setting in which users can share their own knowledge of the state through channels like discussion boards and a moderated wiki.

Interconnectivity

Becoming Arizona will connect with social networking sites and provide a portal from its own content to digital repositories like the Arizona Memory Project and Arizona Archives Online.

Photograph by Kristin Smith.

authoritative
dynamic

Japanese American Internment
Arizona's Poston and Gila River Relocation Centers
By Tashun Wisemiller, Arizona State University

Though seldom associated with Japanese American internment during World War II, Arizona played a distinctive role in this controversial chapter of American history. The state was divided by relocation zoning and home to two relocation centers, Poston and Gila River, on American Indian lands. Arizona held more internees than any other state, while Poston Relocation Center had the second-highest internee population of all relocation camps. Although Poston and Gila River shared certain characteristics, the differences illustrate the extremes of the larger Japanese American internment experience throughout Arizona and the nation.

Dividing Lines

President Franklin Roosevelt's authorization of internment in Executive Order 9066 on February 19th, 1942, forced the relocation and confinement of 120,000 citizens and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry during World War II. Seen as a potential security threat to the military and industrial centers on the western coast of the United States, Japanese Americans were subjected to public distrust and suspicion. The order designated southern Arizona as part of the West

Coast's Military Area 1 and forbade anyone of Japanese ancestry from the zone.

Arizona was selected for two of the ten relocation centers in the nation. Its isolated deserts offered the security the War Relocation Authority (WRA) sought. Colorado River Relocation Center, known as Poston, was located in western Arizona near the town of Parker. Gila River Relocation Center was in south-central Arizona.

The line designating Military Area 1, which divided communities between forced relocation zones and areas excluded from relocation, entered Arizona near Needles, California, and zigzagged down various roads to Wickenburg. Entering the Phoenix-metro area, the line headed south along Grand Avenue, turned east at Van Buren Street, then went south at Mill Avenue before crossing the Salt River. At Apache Boulevard, it headed east again, through Tempe and Mesa, to the Miami-Globe area, and onward to the Arizona–New Mexico border. Japanese Americans relocated from the Phoenix area were sent to either Gila River or Poston, while those not relocated were restricted to certain areas.

Lands of Internment

Both of the relocation camps were located on American Indian lands, with Gila River on the Gila River Indian Reservation and Poston on the Colorado River Indian Reservation.

Located fifty miles south of Phoenix, the Gila River Relocation Center occupied nearly 17,000 acres of arid agricultural land and housed 13,000 internees. The WRA leased the land from the Bureau of Indian Affairs with the agreement to develop agriculture and construct roads to connect the site with state highways. The Gila River Indian Community objected to the use of tribal land for a relocation center, but reluctantly granted permit on October 7, 1942, after 13,000 internees from Tulare, Turlock, Stockton, and Fresno assembly centers had already relocated to the camp.

Gila River comprised two housing developments, Canal Camp and Butte Camp, which were situated just over three miles apart in west-central Pinal County and irrigated by the Gila River. Working with land that had long been leveled, irrigated, and cultivated by its American Indian inhabitants, Gila River became the most successful agricultural producer of all WRA camps. Growing forty types of vegetables on 2,000 acres, Gila River supplied all of its own needs as well as nearly 40 percent of the vegetables consumed at all other relocation centers and became known as the WRA's "vegetable capital."

The second largest WRA camp, Poston housed nearly 18,000 residents at its peak. Similar to the objections of the Gila River Indian Community, the Colorado River Indian Reservation Tribal Council opposed the use of tribal lands for internment. Evacuees arrived from the Mayer assembly center in Arizona, and the Salinas, Santa Anita, and Pinedale assembly centers in California. Unique in its design from all other camps, Poston was divided into three separate units, three miles apart, along a north–south axis. The site was selected for its apparent self-sufficiency, adjacent to the Colorado River with a water supply and irrigable land. However, the dry, loose soil of the Sonoran Desert received less than three inches of annual rainfall, thereby fueling major dust storms.

See the following sections when this entry goes live:
Living with Internment
Remembering Poston and Gila River

Jim Morikawa sprinkling water in an attempt to settle the dust at Poston Relocation Center on May 10, 1942.

Sustainability
By Patricia Roeser, Arizona State University

Arizona is a vast, complex state with natural wonders ranging from the Grand Canyon in the north to the saguaro dotted Sonoran desert to the south. Amidst this environmental diversity live 6.5 million people, most in highly urbanized areas and the vast majority arriving in the state during the boom years following World War II. The spectacular population growth that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century has strained the environment and revealed limitations to natural resources that early state boosters did not predict. In response, Arizonans have become increasingly concerned about their environment. Today, both public and private groups are busy creating and experimenting with innovative ways of preserving Arizona's rich natural heritage in ways that honor the state's culture, people, and economy.

Film and Arizona
By Benjamin J. Hruska, Arizona State University

Arizona's dramatic vistas and colorful landscapes provide settings for a full range of motion pictures, including classics of the black-and-white era, science-fiction pictures depicting other worlds, and the recent trend of presenting the challenges of the modern Middle East. Examples include the films *Stagecoach* (1939), *The Searchers* (1956), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Starman* (1983), and *Three Kings* (1998). Stories of Arizona also present a range of themes that have been explored via the medium of film. Movies like *3:10 to Yuma* (1957), *Tombstone* (1997), and *Windtalkers* (2002) portray Arizona's real and imagined past, while the Coen brothers' *Raising Arizona* (1986) provides a look at contemporary Arizona. Additionally, the filming industry has added to Arizona's economy. Cities like Sedona and Tucson offered not only dramatic backdrops, but also employees to work on the sets as animal handlers and extras.

Photograph by Emilien Auneau.

Tonto National Monument
By Meaghan Heisinger, Arizona State University

Established on December 19, 1907, by President Theodore Roosevelt under the administration of the Department of Agriculture, Tonto National Monument has been a part of the National Park Service since 1933. Protected sites include the Upper and Lower Cliff Dwellings, which are the only examples of prehistoric Salado culture in the National Park system, along with other prehistoric and historic archaeological sites. The monument seeks to preserve, manage, and interpret these sites and other cultural materials, as well as the natural desert environment. In addition to the cliff dwellings, the park is currently expanding its research to encompass the historic period in which the dwellings were used.

The Civil War in Arizona
By William Stoutamire, Arizona State University

As Union and Confederate forces faced one another across Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, in 1861, tensions in the sparsely populated southern reaches of the Territory of New Mexico began to flare. For the next year and a half, Union and Confederate troops would engage one another, as well as local Apaches, for control of Arizona. Though relatively few troops were committed to this western theater, many historians argue that the ultimate Union victory in the region was crucial to ensuring the South's eventual defeat and the formation of the Territory of Arizona. On the other hand, conflicts between the Apache and both Union and Confederate troops throughout the war boiled over into more than thirty years of "Indian Wars" and led to the creation of Arizona's first reservations.

Aviation after World War II
By Mitchell Koffman, Arizona State University

Before World War II, Arizona's main economic output was a combination of cattle, cotton, and copper. After the war, Arizona transformed into one of the most technologically advanced states in the country. Many aviation and aerospace companies, along with government organizations, flocked to the state because of the beautiful weather and abundant land. With nearly 300 plus days of sun, pilots could not ask for a better location to fly. Currently, Arizona has 79 public access airports, along with smaller private airparks and a few military bases. Arizona is also home to some of the world's largest aircraft storage facilities, more commonly referred to as "boneyards." Arizona is a perfect location for storing aircraft, as its dry climate reduces the chance of corrosion and its soil is hard enough to support the weight of planes without pavement.

Photograph by Mitchell Koffman.

Identities: Understanding Islam in a Cross Cultural Context

Museum of History and Holocaust Education, Kennesaw, Georgia
Dr. Catherine M. Lewis
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In 2010, the MHHE received a Museums and Community Collaboration Abroad grant from the American Association of Museums to develop an online exhibition focused on understanding Islam in a cross-cultural context. This year-long project is in partnership with the Ben M'Sik Community Museum in Casablanca,Morocco. Our project addresses the question posed by the working group: How did you build a relationship with a community partner, and convert that into a digital initiative?

Background on the 2008-2010 "Creating Community Collaboration" Grant

Creating Community Collaboration was based upon the notion that extended conversations are the most meaningful exchanges between people and countries. Such conversations change the perspectives of the participants, dispel stereotypes, correct misinformation, and remind us that trust comes slowly and must always be earned. The Museum of History and Holocaust Education (Kennesaw, GA) and the Ben M'Sik Community Museum (Casablanca, Morocco) invested time and energy into making those conversations possible. To do that, both museums reached out and listened to each other as museum professionals, and, as importantly to their local neighbors as the resident experts. An oral history project, which resulted in the gathering of 60 oral histories, was the fundamental building block of project. Two "Coffee and Conversation" programs (one in Kennesaw and one in Casablanca) showcased what was learned from the oral histories and engaged public audiences in a broader discussion about

key issues. Overall, the goal of the project was to share information.

For the MHHE team, we focused on engaging an audience in Georgia that is largely uninformed, or ill-informed, about Islam. The BMCM team focused on showcasing the diversity of Moroccan cultures, while helping to promote new knowledge about the diversity of within a single neighborhood in Casablanca. The first step toward attaining this goal was an effort to change the attitude of the neighborhood communities about their respective museums and to change the behavior on the part of the two university museums to have them interact with and embrace these neighborhood communities. The ensuing exchange between the two museums and their communities ultimately led to increased knowledge about each other's culture and traditions and a heightened sense of community engagement. The purpose of this oral history project was not merely to cultivate new visitors for the two museums, but to create a vehicle by which residents living near the museums can have extended conversations about topics relevant to their lives and the history of their neighborhood, community, or city. This dialogue helped both museums change the way they engage with and represent community history by relying upon local voices instead of broad assumptions and stereotypes. The outreach process used in this project presents a replicable model for other university-based museums in many countries, which was a main goal of the grant. We now want to move into a second phase, entitled "Identities: Understanding Islam in a Cross Cultural Context" and create a web-based exhibition drawing from what we learned from the oral history project that will engage the interviewees, their communities, and the students, faculty and staff members at the two museums.

Background on the 2010-2012 "Identities" Grant

Building on the success of "Creating Community Collaboration," our new project ("Identities: Understanding Islam in a Cross-Cultural Context) continues working on changing

the perspectives of the project participants and dispel stereotypes and correct misinformation about the Muslim world more broadly. In curating this online exhibition, we plan to share information about the Muslim world with an audience in Georgia that is largely uninformed, or ill-informed, about the diversity of Moroccan cultures, while also helping to promote new knowledge about what it means to be Muslim in America with audiences in Casablanca. Once the exhibition is live, we hope to reach a worldwide audience to help build conversations and dialogue about what it means to be Muslim in North Africa and in North America.

We plan to serve three communities in each country. One is university-based (students, staff, faculty, administrators). The BMCM, affiliated with Hassan II University, is housed in the heart of the working-class Ben M'sik neighborhood and through the first MCCA grant has been engaging with the neighborhood in a number of meaningful ways. The MHHE, affiliated with Kennesaw State University, serves the university, K-12 schools, and the north Georgia community has, over the past two years, worked with Muslims in the metro Atlanta area. The second community this grant will serve is comprised of the residents who live in the neighborhood or town/county surrounding each campus who have been interviewed for the project. We will also extend invitations to participate in the exhibition project to members who may not have yet been interviewed but learned about the project through the "Coffee and Conversation" events held by both museums during the first MCCA grant. A third community is worldwide, that will come to know about the project via the Internet.

This web-based exhibition project will provide the support, energy, and opportunity to continue to engage in a dialogue about a clash of civilizations, and in strengthening the museum ties between the two universities we will continue to build bridges into the communities we have already begun to engage.

For the MCCA Continuing Grants Proposal, the Museum of History and Holocaust (MHHE in Kennesaw, Georgia) and the Ben M'sik Community Museum (BMCM Morocco, Casablanca) would like to build on the success of our 2008-2010 grant. In that first grant, project the team completed 60 oral histories, developed a website, and used social media to engage students, staff and faculty in two countries. We also published several articles and a book that was funded by Hassan II. The project team completed a short documentary to showcase at the 2011 American Association of Museums annual meeting.

Building upon our earlier successes, we are currently developing a collaborative web-based exhibition that engages the staff, faculty and students at both museums and the community members that have been interviewed. Our goal is to examine the themes of migration, identity formation, and the clash of civilizations that were discussed in the oral history interviews. In this phase, we will travel to Washington, D.C. and Morocco, complete 4 workshops, engage the community in several focus groups, and produce an online exhibition based on the oral histories gathered in the first MCCA grant.

This grant has been a wonderful place to create space for our museums and communities to share knowledge and to engage in collaboration in a non-traditional setting. We have overcome time zones, J-1 visa challenges, technology issues, and language and cultural barriers to build strong bonds across the Atlantic. But it has taken a long time; we began the collaboration in 2007. Students, both undergraduate and graduate, and good planning have been the key to the project's success. Most public history projects are local, and we strongly believe that global partnerships are not only possible but fruitful and sustainable.

Public History Online: Using the Web to Collaborate and Share
Justin Quinn Olmstead,
The University of Sheffield

I'm going to attempt to approach this reflection from two angles, the first being as a high school teacher and how I have structured my class around the web, and the second dealing with the digital opportunities that have either helped or hindered my research as I work on my dissertation.

As a classroom teacher at the high school level I have veered away from the traditional textbooks and towards the Internet and technology in general as much as possible. In doing away with textbooks my students are allowed to spend time in 'their world' as they learn about history. Outside of the traditional exercise of having students simply research assigned topics or answer specific questions, my classes have worked with students in one other country in order to exchange information and answer questions not simply about culture but about history. The first opportunity to do so was with a class in Riga, Latvia. The class was an English Language class so its primary purpose was to force the Latvian students to write and speak in English, but because of the way we approached the lesson history and culture were part of the curriculum for the unit. As teachers we had an initial Skype meeting to set up the guidelines, and then the students met via Skype to 'see' each other and have an organized discussion. Additional conversations dealing with cultural and historical specifics were done with simple email.

My current students will be attempting this same type of experience with students from Khabarovsk, Russia on 18 January 9, 2012 via Polycom equipment as part of the Global Learning Project. To date, the instructors have communicated via Skype and

email to set up the format for the meeting. After 18 January I will be able to fill in more information on how this experience was received by the students.

As a Ph.D. candidate with The University of Sheffield, I have had several opportunities to utilize digital history. From the University of Wisconsin's *Foreign Relations of the United States*, to BYU's World War I Document Archive, I have been able to do research without the expense of travel and hotel. This has allowed me to maximize my time and to even review documents at my leisure. At the same time this abundance of material at the fingertips can lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed, as there never seems to be an end to the documents one can view online.   Nevertheless, the availability and ease of viewing the documents does make research easier. Both websites are easy to navigate and allow visitors to view the documents without having to become a site member.

Through my research I was put in touch with the International Society for First World War Studies. This is a group of international historians whose main research focus is on the First World War. Because the Society's members are international the Internet is the primary source for communication between members. What I find fascinating about this is that it truly functions as a society that helps its members as they ask for clarification about a particular event, help finding both primary and secondary sources for themselves as well as for students, or just simply want to discuss events or their findings. The Societies website is mainly designed for collaboration between members but does allow non-members to view some material.

In additional I have had the opportunity to work as an educational specialist consultant with the History Department at Kansas State University as they began work on

a proposal to create an annotated guide to Online sources for World War II. My association with this project has long since ended and to be honest I don't know where it stands, but I can say that K-State did extensive work attempting to create a web-site that would be easy for anyone to navigate while at the same time offering teaching aids, an annotated guide, and 'maps in motion.' The content of this website was designed to use existing information on the web as a means of getting information to users with each site having been evaluated by a member of the University's history department. Sites that were to be selected were limited to those offering primary or important secondary sources. The collaboration between University and 7-12 educators added to the potential usability of this website.

Engaging with Local History Online and Offline
Emily Pfotenhauer, Outreach Specialist, Wisconsin Heritage Online
National Council for Public History Working Group Case Statement

As the Outreach Specialist for [Wisconsin Heritage Online](#), a collaborative statewide digitization program, I work with Wisconsin libraries, archives, historical societies and museums to help them image, catalog and share online their photographs, maps, manuscripts, artifacts, and other historic materials. Although this digitization effort has the potential to create new ways for the public to access and interact with hidden collections throughout the state, as Jordan and Will put it in the initial working group statement, "old hierarchies and one-way information streams have endured." In the case of the Wisconsin Heritage Online (WHO) program, hierarchies of knowledge and expertise persist in the long and complex set of rules and requirements for image resolution, Dublin Core metadata, and other digitization standards developed by library and museum professionals for use by WHO Content Providers. These standards are the building blocks of quality, sustainable digital collections but can become stumbling blocks for small, minimally staffed or volunteer-run organizations with limited budgets. The emphasis on proper digitization procedures requires these organizations to learn an entirely new set of skills, leaving little room for them to reflect on historical context, local significance, or community outreach as they create their digital collections. The result is often a "one-way information stream"—an aggregation of content that provides increased exposure for collections but misses the opportunity to understand these materials in new ways.

In this statement for the working group, I'll share two case studies of local historical societies that have made the effort to engage with their local communities and collect new information about their holdings in the process of building a digital collection for Wisconsin Heritage Online. In both examples, outreach efforts were based on face-to-face non-digital interaction, in which the local organizations gathered historical information from conversations with community members in order to create a more informative digital collection. Collaboration and communication took place *around* digital work, but not actually *in* the digital realm. This points to one of the central questions the working group seeks to address: "How do we create spaces where visitors can freely share their objects and their opinions?" What makes an online space for collaboration different from a physical space, and where do the two intersect? How can collaboration in physical space encourage sharing and participation in a digital space, and vice versa?

In the central Wisconsin city of Wisconsin Rapids, the South Wood County Historical Society is engaged in an ongoing project to scan and share online the photographs of two local mid-20th century photojournalists, Don Krohn and Lawrence Oliver. In 2011, the Society hosted a series of four public events—what the staff, with their usual sense of humor, called "photo thingies"—in which unidentified photographs were projected on a screen and attendees were asked to share whatever information they could about

the people and places depicted. These events attracted an unexpectedly large audience, around 40 people at each session, and resulted in a significant amount of information—attendees, all area residents, were able to identify themselves, family members and friends in the images. This information was added to the metadata for the digital items, and local people continue to contact the Society to provide more information about the photographs they see online.

My second example of the collaborative creation of a digital collection reflects a more complex web of relationships that continues to unfold. The Langlade County Historical Society, based in the northeast Wisconsin community of Antigo, is home to an extensive collection of photo negatives and postcard prints by Andrew Kingsbury, a professional photographer who documented Menominee and Ojibwe people living in the region in the 1910s and 1920s. A volunteer at the Society initiated a digital project by scanning these images, then contacted the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, historians and curators for each of the represented groups (Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and Lac Vieux Desert Band of Chippewa) for assistance in researching the images. The tribal representatives were able to identify many of the people and places depicted in the images and also identified a number of images that they deemed inappropriate to share publicly on the web, i.e. graves and ceremonial events.

At the same time, WHO helped the Society connect with the Tribal Libraries, Archives and Museums (TLAM) course at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS). The TLAM students were able to apply the issues they were learning about in class to a real-world example by researching culturally sensitive approaches to making this kind of material available online. The Society's photographs are now online with minimal metadata (minus the items culled at the request of the tribal representatives) and a second group of TLAM students is creating expanded descriptions and subject headings based on the recommendations from the previous course group and the information gathered from tribal representatives.

As I mentioned, the community-based research that went into these digital collections took place almost entirely offline. In both cases, it is highly unlikely that an online effort to gather information about the photographs, such as a "comments" feature added to the digital images, would have yielded the same rich results. For South Wood County, the social experience of local residents gathering together to share stories and memories was a key component of their participation in the project. With Langlade County, the culturally sensitive nature of many of the images meant that contributors were more comfortable sharing information in one-on-one or small group conversations rather than in a public online forum. So what then is the role of the web in these kinds of community digitization projects?

One answer is that the digital realm can be a flexible and dynamic venue for documenting the knowledge contributed by the community. In both of the examples I've provided, the organizations simply updated their descriptive metadata as they

learned new information about specific images. A digital interface that tracked changes in metadata, or even an additional data field used to record information about when, where and how the information was acquired, would help to position the digital collection as a growing and changing resource rather than a static entity. A second answer is that "going digital" should never be considered an end in itself but rather viewed as a tool to support knowledge sharing and community engagement. In my experience, the most successful digital local history projects are those that avoid getting hung up on the nuts and bolts and bells and whistles of technology and keep the focus on the historic materials themselves and the learning experiences they have to offer.

Kyle Roberts
Loyola University, Chicago

As an Assistant Professor of Public History and New Media at Loyola University Chicago, I am charged with enabling our Masters and PhD students to do public history online. In thinking about how to accomplish this, I find myself building on my own experience in the field (*Dissenting Academies Online: Virtual Library System* - vls.english.qmul.ac.uk – published August 2011) and the expectation of colleagues about the competencies students will need as public historians. New Media technologies continue to evolve at such a pace that it can be daunting. Do we follow the adage of exhibition designers not to use any new technology until it is 3-5 years old? Or is there something about web-based New Media that requires always looking for the newest trend to exploit? As a practitioner, I find myself regularly checking the tweets and blogs of colleagues in a range of disciplines and institutions for ideas about the next best practice. This, of course, is the appeal of the field – practitioners never have time to get bored with what is available for them. Given the array of possibilities, the challenge becomes how to best select what students need to learn, especially when you only have a semester to work with them. I realize that I come to this group with a slightly different interest than others, but I hope by learning how others do public history, I will know better how to train the next generation to do so as well.

My Public History New Media (HIST 479) course seeks to balance discussion of theoretical readings about new media and cultural heritage, practicum for learning basic skills in the most important digital technologies, and peer critique. My class is limited to fifteen masters and PhD students, about half from Loyola's Public History program and half from the History program. This composition can be attributed to the fact that this course qualifies as a skills course within

our graduate program (on par with statistics and foreign languages) and because many of our students have a strong interest in the digital humanities. As a new offering in the program, the course is an elective rather than a required course for the Public History degree. The course meets once a week for 2.5 hours, time split between a campus Mac lab and discussion classroom.

The course commences with a discussion to what we mean by "Public History" and "New Media" followed by an introduction to WordPress. Both Public History and New Media are such broad topics, encompassing so many different approaches and technologies, that the discussion inevitably ranges far and wide. By the time we get to the practicum, one of the challenges of providing technical training during the class period is abundantly clear: previous knowledge and competencies of the students ranges broadly. Polling friends and colleagues in other schools revealed a divergence of opinion on the matter. Half recommended telling the students to search the web for online tutorials before class, to teach themselves, and to bring in any questions they might have. The other half recommended giving a basic overview of the software and hardware and then showing them where to look for instruction about more advanced work they might want to do on their own. I opted for the latter approach and the students seem to appreciate it. Advanced students know they have my support to do other work while less familiar students work through the fundamentals in practicum.

Throughout the semester, students develop their own blogs. The challenge of creating an online persona and finding a "voice" often strikes many as harder than they expect. Most come to agree that blog writing functions as a new literary genre, transcending formal academic writing, private diary keeping, and journalistic practice. I stress throughout the semester that the blog is a work-

in-progress and that I would rather have students try something and fail than play it safe. Students publish their assignments to their blogs instead of writing papers. In addition, because blogs have so many potential functions, students are expected to play around with these. In conjunction with their blogs, students establish Twitter accounts to think about blogging on a micro platform and the larger usefulness (or not) of Web 2.0.

Throughout the first half of the semester, the class discusses how we historicize changing media and the distinct issues that arise from the intersection of new media and cultural heritage. We then turn to important aspects of new media that are essential to public history institutions today. A week on digital image making provides students with an introduction to the differences between image files, copyright, and how to use file-sharing sites like Flickr. While I had not intended when I first made up the syllabus to do a week on HTML give the pervasiveness of web design programs like Dreamweaver, but then thought better. A very old and simply designed website for a historic house museum in the city provides the perfect text to give students a chance to see very basic HTML and to do a series of exercises on how to fix a broken website. Familiar with the content of the website from the previous week, students took on the task of redesigning that website in WordPress the next. They have to use all of the website's text and imagery, but are encouraged to explore WordPress's robustness in creating a new visual and organizational design.

The second half of the semester is devoted to the construction of narratives and the opportunities and limitation of social media. Students explore how they can use the materials of their respective interests – texts, material objects, born digital files – to create online exhibitions using

Omeka and an audio guide or short film after a practicum on audio and video editing programs. By the end of the course we move from the student as producer to the user as producer. The course culminates with a return to our discussion of Web 2.0 principles and technologies and a final project in which students create a social media campaign of their own design for an area institution building on the skills they have already learned. The primary goal of the campaign is to create something that would convey content while fully engaging consumers/users of the institution in novel ways.

Challenges inevitably arise. A primary (and somewhat unanticipated) difficulty came from the institutional structure of the university's Information Technology Services (ITS). I opted to have the students use blogs hosted on the university's server rather than WordPress.com, the cloud hosted site. My expectation was that the students would have access to a broader range of functionality for their sites. That should be true, except for the constraints put on the software by university IT in the name of security. New widgets had to be tested on a development blog before they could be installed, themes were limited to customized ones made for the university, and the code to embed videos from Youtube and Vimeo was automatically stripped out of posts when saved. As my students came to realize the very real limitations of what they had to work with, I turned this into a teachable moment. Students could either take this as an exercise in working within institutional constraints (a very possibility in their work outside the academy) or to move over to the cloud-hosted site and to start again.

NCPH Working Group "Public History Online: Using the Web to Collaborate and Share"

Case Statement: Including the Public in a Digital Civil Rights Archive

Charles Romney
History Department, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

In our case we have a digital public history project, we have initial funding, we have university partners, we have community partners, and we have plans to build a digital infrastructure so that the public can access our archive online. We need to find a way to include people in the creation of the archive by creating a community online.

Our digital project focuses on law and civil rights in Arkansas. The Civil Rights movement in Arkansas—as in many other areas of the American South—often took place within the American legal system. African Americans turned to litigation to obtain the equal rights guaranteed by the constitution and opponents of racial integration used local laws to retain the structure of racial separation. "Law and Civil Rights in Arkansas" seeks to expand the public image and scholarly understanding of the legal aspects of the struggle for racial equality throughout the state of Arkansas by collecting rich but seldom used legal documents into a physical and digital archive. The project team (archivists, professors, technology experts and librarians) will use methods and tools from public history, oral history, and the digital humanities to ensure "Law and Civil Rights in Arkansas" draws on insights from the academic, scholarly, and local communities.

Our project "Law and Civil Rights in Arkansas" secured initial funding for the 2011-2012 academic year. UALR's Graduate School, Office of the Chancellor, and the Center for Arkansas

History and Culture generously contributed $45,000. We hired four Graduate Assistants to collect the first batch of archival material, bring it back to Little Rock, and make the archival copies available in digital form. So far this year we have collected 6,000 pages of archival case files from federal district court cases in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s located in the National Archives in Fort Worth. We have also collected 300 pages from federal case files from the Eighth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals held in the National Archives in Kansas City and 500 pages from the Arkansas Supreme Court case files and state legislation stored in the Arkansas Supreme Court and the State Legislature in Little Rock. We in are in the process of digitizing our first phase of 7,000 pages of archival material on Law and Civil Rights in Little Rock.

We have plans to build a digital infrastructure to expand public access to these records of Arkansas's civil rights struggle. We need to fit our web architecture into various technologies the university already uses: Content DM for digital asset management and WordPress for creating web pages. And we need to create mobile applications to fit with future strategic goals of our university. We will work with professors and graduate students in the disciplines of Geography and Computer Science to build software that delivers our documents to people using any mobile device and provides historical context for those documents based on a person's location. Our new digital infrastructure might enhance the existing digital platform created by other digital public history projects (such as the "Cleveland Historical" project). Our digital infrastructure will make it easy for students, scholars, citizens, and tourists to look at digital copies of our records on their mobile devices without losing the historical context or geographical specificity crucial to understanding "Law and Civil Rights in Arkansas." We hope digital access to these documents

will let students and all Arkansans place the stories of the civil rights movement in Arkansas in particular places, connecting those individual stories to the places we live today.

All these technologies will help us deliver our digital archive to the public. We need to find a way to include the public in building "Law and Civil Rights in Arkansas" by creating an online collaborative community. We have a local partner who has long experience in engaging the public: the Central Arkansas Library System (the public library system of Little Rock and beyond). We have various digital tools that we can choose: blogs, wikis, and social media. We also have experience in the university and in the public library system in holding public events where people bring their own artifacts and experiences to share with us and with each other.

We find our project at the stage where we need to sort through these digital options to find the best way to persuade individuals in the community to collaborate on the creation of a new archive and exhibit focused on the legal struggle for civil rights in Arkansas. How do we design a digital space that will encourage sharing by the community? And how do we plan local events off-line that will increase community involvement in the digital archive? One main consideration is the time of our project team: everyone from the professors to graduate students and university and public library staff have jobs that will allow them to contribute only part of their time. I could provide a series of options that we will consider, but instead I'm looking to the experiences of other people in the working group to get ideas for our own project and to compare notes on the various tools we might all use.

Lessons Learned Building the "Community Documentation Initiative" Website

By Will Tchakirides, American University

What makes for an effective public history website? In my opinion, the best serve a distinct purpose, feature balanced content, provide simple navigation, and include various opportunities for user interaction. Until recently, museums, universities, and cultural resource centers have focused too much on presenting text-heavy, one-dimensional websites interspersed with mishmashes of media that discourage everyday users from learning, communicating, or collaborating effectively. Trained to write lengthy research papers, articles, and books, scholars are only gradually recognizing that issuing content on the web demands new modes of contextualization in line with an ever-changing digital environment. Creating a public history website that is easy to use and interact with requires identifying an audience, simplifying goals, and accounting for new forms of online consumption. Jordan Grant and I kept these criteria in mind as we built a soon to be released website for the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Community Museum: "The Community Documentation Initiative" (CDI).

The CDI website called for ACM curators to "gather, organize, and make accessible to the public historical and contemporary information on the social and economic life and development of communities east of the Anacostia River." The initiative's primary objectives: deepen the museum's engagement with the local community, make the museum more relevant, and empower citizens to communicate with each other and the museum through educational activities. For curators, realizing these lofty goals meant featuring content that ranges from digital representations of exhibitions to audio and video clips of oral histories to local artist galleries and archival documents.

For all intents and purposes, the museum hired Jordan and I to transform its physical exhibitions and digital content into an online resource that embraces Web 2.0 standards of interoperability, collaboration, and user-focused design. However, building an interactive and serviceable website demands more than simply reproducing existing content and hoping for community dialogue to ensue; allowing for community input is essential to the collaborative process in all stages of a public history website's life. For instance, our web-team never fully considered how to market the CDI site to Anacostia residents or maintain user interest/interaction before the development process began. This forces the museum to rely on a modest number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers for feedback and participation, a positive development if properly channeled and/or cultivated.

Other challenges included clarifying the CDI website's overall purpose, winnowing down content, and figuring out how best to connect with an Anacostia community that consumes online information in new and diverse ways. Public history websites serve many purposes. They are used to collect, exhibit, collaborate, or, as is the case with CDI, all of the above. While not an inherently wrong-minded approach, meeting all three objectives requires thoughtful discussion of how best to visually represent the different elements that make up a site. Regrettably, rushed deadlines, unfinished exhibit pieces, and limited funding hampered efforts to create, in my mind, a truly effective online resource that accomplished all of the ACM's stated goals. Nonetheless, Jordan and I waded through the various content types and settled on a site architecture based on the initiative's four main themes: The City, The

Environment, The Arts, and Cultural Encounters. In doing so, we united different content types, balancing text and media across a handful of sub-pages that served these four themes directly.

Utilizing the open-source web application WordPress to design and build the site, Jordan and I created a space for ACM curators to release new information relative to the CDI website's thematic structure and designated specific areas on the site for user interaction. Online visitors can remark on a blog post or exhibit page using the WordPress commenting system Disqus, a "plug-in" that filters spam, provides email notification, and aggregates social mentions among other features. The CDI website's design also features a "Community" page that aggregates public mentions of the initiative and integrates comments from different social networking platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Nevertheless, institutional inertia and security precautions barred Jordan and I from testing certain plug-ins on our WordPress dashboard, or "back-end" interface. While designing a previous WordPress site for the National Museum of American History (NMAH), we avoided this problem by hosting the website beyond the Smithsonian Institution's own network. This gave us the ability to make quick design changes, upload new content, and test WordPress plug-ins on that site's official HTTP address. Conversely, ACM curators wanted to ensure that the Smithsonian's own IT professionals could fix or respond to issues on their website directly. Jordan and I welcomed the Smithsonian's hosting of the site, since the museum hired us as temporary employees who eventually needed to leave the project for curators and IT personnel to maintain. Nonetheless, working in tandem with the Smithsonian's IT staff presented obstacles that hindered our larger vision. In addition to not being able to test plug-ins, limited access to back-end file-types forced us to email file copies to IT whenever we made changes to the design or wanted to see how the CDI website looked live. Presently, we do not even know how our final product appears to the public.

Initially designed for the blogging community, WordPress's ability to feed new content to RSS subscribers fits the ACM's goal of maintaining relevancy in the digital community. Knowing that curators may be too busy to maintain weekly blog posts, we suggested scheduling release dates for newly established or existing content so that the site features new subject matter on a regular basis. Jordan and I first tested this concept working on the American Enterprise pre-exhibition website for the NMAH. Moreover, "The Cotton" WordPress theme we employed features "portfolio" layouts for certain pages, allowing us to present digital images and artistic pieces in a visually stunning way that avoids clutter.

While other content management systems (CMS) permit digital cataloging/archiving without compromising site design (i.e. Omeka), WordPress allows the more "technically challenged" museum professional to showcase new content promptly and efficiently. The platform's easy to use back-end interface includes helpful labels and a devoted online community eager to explain how WordPress functions for new users. Still, Jordan and I drafted a comprehensive manual for ACM curators that details using WordPress and "The Cotton" theme.

Perhaps successfully connecting with local community members represents the greatest challenge when building any public history website, including the CDI. How do inner-city museums best connect with poverty-stricken communities that face online access restrictions? For example, not every family can

afford the pricey packages offered by Internet service providers, let alone afford a computer. One solution presented itself last spring. While not every Anacostian can afford a laptop, recent studies show that smart-phone use is rapidly increasing in urban communities. Although building a smart-phone app that specifically caters to certain demographics would go a long way toward increasing the ACM's technical relevancy, it would not solve the initial problem of getting community members interested in or involved with the CDI website in the first place.

Ideally, outreach efforts (for the purposes of raising interest in public history websites) should include educational components that feature collaboration with community centers, libraries, and schools. Coupled with social networking campaigns, such endeavors will almost certainly raise greater awareness for a public history website and foster more meaningful collaboration. Had we continued on with the CDI project, we would almost certainly have pushed the ACM in this direction.

All told, Jordan and I managed to help curators build a website that celebrates, explores, and asks questions of a vibrant, largely African American community within the heart of the nation's capital. Regardless of whether or not the project accomplished its stated goals, we learned several valuable lessons throughout the development process. When designing a public history website, it is important to have a clear sense of purpose, limit text and media appropriately, and understand who your users are and how they consume online content. If your team of museum professionals faces a high technical learning curve, seek outside help from an established design or new media agency. Granted, funding an online digital history project can prove challenging. Therefore, I suggest contacting local colleges and universities with students eager to improve their own technical skill-sets and gain real-world experience. Public historians are still learning how best to communicate with their online publics. Any efforts to advance this process, no matter how the final product turns out, should ultimately prove rewarding.

NCPH 2012 Annual Meeting

Working group 9 --- Public History Online: Using the Web to Collaborate and Share

April 18-22, 2012 Milwaukee, WI

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Building an online community for historians in The Netherlands

Introduction

The Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands (Huygens ING) and the Royal Netherlands Historical Society (KNHG) are currently in the process of redesigning the website Historici.nl with the aim of turning it into an online community. The redevelopment of this website is funded by the KNHG, which is the largest professional organisation of historians in The Netherlands.[1] The website is hosted by the Huygens ING which is part of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts & Sciences (KNAW) and the biggest humanities institute in The Netherlands. As the KNHG is a department within the Huygens ING, all work takes place at the institute in The Hague.

The current version of the website (HIST1) provides users with information, news, events and especially (digital) resources about all aspects of Dutch history. The future, enhanced, website (HIST2), of which a beta version should be ready by summer 2012, is intended to become a platform for discussion and online sharing and collaboration for professional historians (whether academics or those employed in the heritage sector), students and the public at large. My role is to develop and build HIST2, together with help from our IT department and input from the editorial board of the current HIST1 website and a special preparatory group. This group consists of the Huygens ING director, the KNHG director, two web editors, two researchers, our communications/outreach officer, the head of our IT department, another IT person, and me. When we enter the testing phase we will also create a special test group that will include institute employees, KNHG members and current users.

We have just finished the planning stage, basically consisting of two months of circulating draft outlines and discussions/meetings with the preparatory group, and have recently begun to design the new website using Drupal Commons (DC). This is a specific installation profile of the well-known Drupal CMS, designed to build online communities. Meanwhile we are also introducing Web 2.0 elements in the existing website (sort of a HIST1.5) – such as a comments function – in order to prepare our existing readership for the coming transition and encourage active participation.

As I see it, the group's major questions (how do we create spaces to share / opportunities for the public to work with experts / convince users to use us) relate to both content and design: the question is *what* we offer

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[1] From the website: "The RNHS serves more than 1500 history professionals: academics, students, teachers, and historians working in museums, archives, libraries and the heritage industry. As the umbrella organisation for the profession the RNHS offers a platform to its members and to the historical community at large. It plays an important public role as a leader and public advocate for the field."

and *how* we offer it. Content and design cannot be separated: a website can have brilliant content, but poor design will prevent users from finding any, and will hamper them to actually use a website to its full potential.

Planning

The crucial difference in the transition from HIST1 to HIST2 lies in the realm of interaction between user and website: instead of allowing users to merely absorb information passively, they will be able to contribute information and participate in discussions. Users will also be able to present themselves through a user profile and can subscribe to new content via their profile.

The rationale for creating the new website is that we aim to promote and facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration and engage users in a new way. It is also a way for the KNHG to modernize itself. The new, interactive website will function as a platform with four main user goals:
1. to find information, receive personalised updates and contribute content
2. to present themselves via a user profile
3. to participate in discussions
4. to collaborate online

At the moment, we offer mostly static content: descriptions of sources and links to digitized content; news and events. On HIST2 users can contribute to this static content by sending us information on important websites and/or (digital) resources that we should include. But most importantly, HIST2 will become much more dynamic by allowing for user-generated content. The existing userbase is gradually prepared for this change by the phased implementation of more interactive elements on the current site. On HIST2, there will be links to reviews and articles from historical journals with the possibility to discuss them; discussion groups to which users can subscribe or which they can start themselves; blogs & wikis that users, or groups of users, can start; etc. Users will thus be able to participate on several levels: they can comment on general news items, for instance, but also participate in (or create) specific groups that focus on a particular interest. All content on HIST2 will be linked by using tags. These form the basis for the search function and also allow us to offer users personalized content because users can subscribe to specific tags (for example a period, a theme, a type of source, etc). We are currently thinking about using both controlled vocabularies and a free tagging option for users.

Technological choices

We had a lengthy internal discussion on the system that we would use for HIST2. The current website is based upon the Zope framework and is essentially a frontpage with a lot of databases and applications linked to it. Whatever system we will use for the new website, it entails migrating the current content (mostly descriptions of sources, news and agenda items) to a new CMS. It also means that the digitized sources of the institute (20+ years of publications, databases and applications in various formats) will have to be linked to the new CMS.

After an initial survey we ended up with two possible out-of-the-box online community systems: Buddypress, a plugin for Wordpress, and Drupal Commons. A try-out of both systems quickly revealed that using Buddypress/ Wordpress would limit us in creating the functionality we would like to offer. By contrast, Drupal Commons does not pose such functional limitations (of course in general Drupal is a more powerful and flexible CMS

than Wordpress but there is a very interesting example of a [Buddypress online community at CUNY](#) that we found very attractive).

Functionality is only part of the story of course. We also had to consider the question of who possesses knowledge of which system, what implications our choice would have for the IT department (think server maintenance for instance) and how to train staff to use the new CMS. As I am currently the only one with Drupal knowledge this is an important issue.

Engaging users

This is of course the tricky bit: one can build a beautiful website, but people have to be encouraged to become active users; merely providing the infrastructure is only part of the work. In our case, we have already started to add social elements to HIST1 while thinking about a strategy for HIST2. As mentioned above, we now have a comment function for news items and have actively begun solliciting reviews of exhibitions and movies to broaden the scope of content. As to the latter, one thing we realized is how important it is to diversify our contributors and guide them a bit; elderly historians in particular often do not realize that writing for the web is different from writing a review for a journal. This also points to another issue; in The Netherlands there are a couple of well-known pundit-/columnist historians. We would like to have a regular blog on general historical issues in the news for HIST2 but we need to make sure we engage younger historians. One way to do this is through the membership of the KNHG which is very broad. And fortunately for us there are also some new organizations (one literally called "Young Historians") with whom we plan to collaborate.

Our particular challenge is to broaden our audience. We compete with several historical journals/magazines and websites that focus on the public at large while we have academic origins and try to attract both audiences. The most important thing that distinguishes us from other websites/portals is that we offer digitized sources (that are produced within the institute). HIST2 will also include descriptions/links for digital content and relevant websites elsewhere, effectively making us the primary portal where people looking for historical source materials will go. Our ultimate ambition is to create a comprehensive portal for anybody with an interest in Dutch history, where one may find both relevant content as well as participate in discussions, or collaborate online. The latter is a big challenge, though; there are for example several groups on LinkedIn where discussions relating to Dutch history now take place and of course we would like to see these take place on our website in the future.

In the coming months we will develop the portal as well as a strategy to engage existing and new users. As to the latter, this entails defining which audiences we would like to attract and reach and think about the ways in which we can best target them. In terms of usability and design of HIST2 we will also create a beta user group, consisting of 'digibets' as well as more computer-savvy users, to test the website.