

# Sample Application

## 2008 National Leadership Grants for Libraries

### Collaborative Planning Grant

#### University of Oregon

#### Planning for Northwest-Wide Access to Digitized Primary Sources

The Orbis Cascade Alliance (the Alliance) is a consortium of 35 academic libraries in the states of Washington and Oregon that collaborate on various initiatives. One of the Alliance's newest programs is the Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA), a 31-institution consortium of archives in the states of Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana. Between 2002 and 2007, with funding from the NEH and the NHPRC and before its integration into the Alliance, NWDA built a database of over 4,500 finding aids for archival collections at member institutions. Use of that database has grown from less than 100 to over 12,000 retrievals a month. Members of both consortia, which together include 48 institutions, have long envisioned a collaborative program that would deliver digital content as well as metadata.

The Alliance seeks a planning grant to help build a digital services program that will support the sustainable delivery of digital content from its member institutions. The Alliance has already begun a comprehensive and detailed digital program planning process that includes helping members identify institutional and user needs; hosting content for institutions without digital initiatives; aggregating content; facilitating training and consultation; and developing a cooperative approach to digital preservation. The work to accomplish these ends has been broken down into three stages. In fall 2007, the Alliance conducted a survey of existing digital programs at member institutions that provided detailed data on the content and the technical and administrative aspects of these programs. From that survey, which revealed the tentative nature of most digital initiatives, the central question emerged: What are the barriers preventing institutions from starting and sustaining digital programs? Work that will be completed during this stage includes further needs assessments of member institutions and their users; identifying best practices; and identifying problems that can and cannot be solved with current consortial resources. By October 2008, the Alliance will have identified and prioritized significant and common problems for which it will seek solutions.

This grant will support the second stage of this planning process, which will determine solutions to specific problems that are impeding the development of sustainable digital programs. The project will be a collaborative effort of the Orbis Cascade Alliance and Whitman College, Lewis & Clark College, Washington State University, and Whitworth University. Solutions will include the integration of existing systems and the determination of what can be centralized and what should remain local. Grant funds will be used to (1) bring together consultants from peer organizations with Alliance staff and its Digital Program Working Group to help the Alliance address the operational and technical issues that it has identified and (2) create a part-time professional technical position that will be dedicated to creating a working prototype for integrating commonly used systems, which is one pressing issue that the Alliance has already identified. With this help, the Alliance will create a comprehensive plan, including a set of actionable proposals, for developing a digital services program, and a working prototype for integrating systems.

The third stage of the Alliance's planning process will involve the full implementation of the proposals that emerge from the second stage. To support work during the third stage, the Alliance will apply for a National Leadership Grant in February 2010.

IMLS PG Narrative 20080129

Planning for Northwest-Wide Access to Digitized Primary Sources

### **Assessment of Need**

The Orbis Cascade Alliance (the Alliance), a consortium of 35 academic institutions in Washington and Oregon, was created when two state library consortia, Orbis in Oregon and Cascade in Washington, merged in 2002. The mission of the Alliance is to enhance and expand access to scholarly information for students, faculty, staff, and other users at member institutions. In addition to the Alliance's union catalog and borrowing system, Summit, the Alliance operates a courier service for the delivery of materials, facilitates access to electronic resources purchased collectively, and sponsors conferences, seminars, and workshops. In early 2007, the Alliance created and filled the position of Digital Services Program Manager, with the view of expanding the digital services offered by the consortium. The Alliance is under the administrative and fiscal umbrella of the University of Oregon.

The Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA) is a consortium of 31 Northwest libraries, archives, and museums in the states of Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana. Between 2002 and 2007, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, NWDA built a database of over 4,500 Encoded Archival Description (EAD) finding aids for manuscript and archival collections at member institutions. The database is available at <http://nwda.wsulibs.wsu.edu/>. Retrievals from that database have grown from less than 100 to over 12,000 a month. NWDA membership is composed of 45% public 4-year higher education institutions, 25% non-academic institutions, 20% private 4-year higher education institutions, and 10% public 2-year colleges. In the most recent fiscal or calendar year, NWDA institutions served almost 45,000 researchers, on- and off-site. The largest groups represented included college and university students, geneologists and family historians, local/amateur historians, and staff/administration from other institutions.<sup>1</sup>

In July 2007, because of a mutual interest in advancing access to digital resources—particularly in moving from access to metadata toward access to digital content—and seeing opportunities for exploiting synergies between the two consortia, NWDA became a program of the Alliance. NWDA is supported by annual member fees, which support a half-time NWDA Program Manager, part-time technical support staff at Washington State University, and the continuing work of NWDA to provide training, prescribe standards and best practices, and address emerging challenges collaboratively.

Combined, the Alliance and NWDA represent 48 distinct member institutions, all of which are supportive of the development of a digital services program that will deliver

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<sup>1</sup> Survey completed by 20 of 31 member institutions as of 24 January 2008. Survey results available at [http://www.orbiscascade.org/nwda/Researcher Survey Compiled Results 20080123.xls](http://www.orbiscascade.org/nwda/Researcher_Survey_Compiled_Results_20080123.xls)

digital content in addition to metadata. Usability testing conducted on the NWDA finding aids database interface has helped improve the interface and showed the satisfaction level of key user groups, most of whom have indicated that what they want is not merely metadata but also digital content.<sup>2</sup> To identify the specific needs and desires of its member institutions and their constituencies, in the fall of 2007 the Alliance began a year-long needs assessment process of its institutions and their users. In October and November 2007, the Alliance conducted a Survey of Digitizing Initiatives that sought to answer the question, “What digital initiatives are currently in place and how well are they working?”<sup>3</sup> The survey revealed that forty-three out of forty-eight member institutions have already launched local digital initiatives on some scale. A few institutions have rather robust digital initiatives in place; some, such as the University of Washington, are pioneers in advancing digital resources. The survey confirmed that there is a strong desire for collaboration among all consortia members, especially with regard to aggregating content. Specific interests, however, ranged from broad support, including assistance with technological infrastructure and technical expertise, to very specialized interests in complex issues such as integrating separate systems and digital preservation. (See Appendix A for the report on survey results. ES only, provide link to full report.)

More significantly, this survey revealed that all institutions, regardless of the scale of their digital initiatives, face similar challenges in providing digital content to users. A variety of economic, operational, and technical barriers are preventing digital initiatives from becoming fully integrated into institutions’ more traditional services and workflows, and thus most digital initiatives are not developing into digital programs that can be sustained over time. This realization led the Alliance to ask a second question: “What are the barriers that are preventing institutions from starting and sustaining digital programs?” To answer this question—and formulate solutions to it—the Alliance is continuing its comprehensive and detailed digital program planning process. The outcomes of this process will include identifying institutional needs; gathering quantitative and qualitative information about users’ needs; hosting content for institutions who do not have digital initiatives; aggregating new and existing content; facilitating training and consultation on standards and best practices; and developing a cooperative approach to digital preservation. (See Appendix B for an outline of the Alliance’s digital program planning process.)

The Alliance seeks a planning grant to help find solutions for common and significant challenges that impede the development of sustainable digital programs at the Alliance and its member institutions. These solutions will be delivered through a consortial digital services program that will provide a suite of services to its members. NWDA members already support consortial work, having seen the benefit of five years of collaboration that have enabled them to do things they were not able to do before. The ultimate beneficiaries of this work, users, will get more of what they want—“online archives ...

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<sup>2</sup> Usability testing results available at [fill in URL]

<sup>3</sup> This assessment was conducted as the first step in any digital program planning as recommended by IMLS in Assessment of End-User Needs in IMLS-Funded Digitization Projects. Institute of Museum and Library Services, October 2003.

available 24 hours a day, from the comfort of your favorite chair and the silence of your own well-lit office.”<sup>4</sup> Further, it is expected that other libraries, archives, museums, and consortia of these and other cultural heritage institutions will benefit from the Alliance’s research findings and responses to issues related to the sustainability of digital initiatives. As reported in a recent presentation on an IMLS-funded study conducted by the Northeast Document Conservation Center, most institutions are still at a “digital project” rather than a “digital program” stage.<sup>5</sup> The Alliance’s digital program planning process will enable projects in the Pacific Northwest to advance to program status and enable the Alliance itself to create its own sustainable program. These accomplishments will be a model for others.

### **National Impact and Intended Results**

During the past ten years, and in some cases even longer, NWDA institutions have implemented a wide range of digital projects. These projects are in line with national trends and studies, including some with IMLS funding that suggest that researchers have become increasingly accustomed to looking for online digital content and that libraries, archives, and museums increasingly should find ways to deliver digital content online.<sup>6</sup> The Alliance’s 2007 needs assessment showed that among the problems encountered by institutions endeavoring to make their digital initiatives sustainable are issues related to staffing, training and expertise in evolving standards, and the costs associated with maintaining local digital collections. Not surprisingly, these are among the most significant problems in the development digital programs at a national level.<sup>7</sup> Fortunately the Alliance—and more particularly NWDA’s—consortial model is an effective

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<sup>4</sup> Jennie Benford, “Let Us Now Praise Archivists,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 53:24 (February 16, 2007), A55.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Claerson, “Digital Preservation Readiness: Trends Garnered from NEDCC’s IMLS Grant,” paper presented at the NEDCC conference *Persistence of Memory: Stewardship of Digital Assets*, November 28, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> *Assessment of End-User Needs in IMLS-Funded Digitization Projects*. Institute of Museum and Library Services, October 2003; Diane Harley, *Use and Users of Digital Resources: A Focus on Undergraduate Education in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Berkeley, CA: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 2006); Clifford A. Lynch, “Institutional Repositories: Essential Infrastructure For Scholarship In The Digital Age,” *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 3 (April 2003), 327-336; *Report of the Workshop on Opportunities for Research on the Creation, Management, Preservation and Use of Digital Content*. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, September 2003; *Report of the Workshop on Opportunities for Research on the Creation, Management, Preservation and Use of Digital Content*. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, September 2003; *Status of Technology and Digitization in the Nation's Museums and Libraries*. IMLS, 2002 and 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Diane M. Zorich, *A Survey of Digital Cultural Heritage Initiatives and Their Sustainability Concerns*. (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2003).

organizational structure for confronting and dealing with some of these problems.<sup>8</sup> It is the conclusion of the Alliance that its member institutions' challenges with digital initiatives are common to institutions and consortia across the United States and that some of these issues can be resolved at the consortial level. Therefore solutions to the Alliance's problems should have broad relevance, nationally and beyond. The Alliance's planning process has wide support from researchers and other digital programs alike. (See Appendix C for letters of support.)

The first step toward solving sustainability issues was the recognition of a need to begin conceptualizing a digital services program for member institutions that will find solutions to specific, shared, and significant challenges. The Alliance already recognizes that among these challenges are the integration of commonly used digital library systems, such as CONTENTdm and DSpace, and developing a model for consortial solutions for both local and consortial programs. Other critical and broadly relevant issues will be identified prior to the beginning of this grant.

Below are the outputs from this grant and the methods the Alliance will use to evaluate them.

**Output #1: A plan for developing a digital services program that will meet the needs of member institutions and their constituencies.**

Output Measures: Agreement among grant personnel and consortia members that a viable plan for a digital services program has been developed.

Data Sources: Responses of Alliance/NWDA members.

When/how often: Once, at the end of grant period (July-August 2009).

Target: 90% approval.

**Output #2: A prototype that will bring together data from existing separate systems.**

Output Measures: Agreement among grant personnel and other invited reviewers that a functional prototype has been developed.

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<sup>8</sup> Kenning Arlitsch and Carol Hixson, *Western Waters Digital Library: Building a Multi-State Aggregated Collection Using CONTENTdm®* (University of Utah Libraries & University of Oregon Libraries, 2004). Jim Dwyer, "Consortial Review and Purchase of Networked Resources: The California State University Experience," *The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances* 12 (Mar. 1999), 5-11; Karen Estlund and Anna Neatrou. "Utah Digital Repository Initiative: Building a Support System for Institutional Repositories," *D-Lib Magazine* 13 (November /December 2007); Faye Phillips, "Managing the special collections department in the digital world: a case study of cooperation and innovation," *OCLC Systems & Services* 18 (2002), 51-58.

Data Sources: Responses of grant personnel and other reviewers.

When/how often: Once, at the end of grant period (July 2009).

Target: 75% satisfaction

### **Project Design and Evaluation Plan**

During the latter half of 2007, the Alliance, working through its NWDA program, began a digital program planning process to realize the desire of both consortia to deliver aggregated digital content. The first stage of the Alliance's planning process began with the formation of a Digital Program Working Group (DPWG). The NWDA Steering Team, which has governing responsibility for the NWDA program and acts on behalf of all the institutions involved, appointed these members of the DPWG in September 2007. Members were chosen through an application process in which they indicated their areas of interest and expertise. In addition, the Steering Team made the working group a fairly representative sample of NWDA membership by geography and institution type. The process continued with a comprehensive assessment of regional digital initiatives, ambitions, needs, and desires. This survey made it clear that, to meet the diverse needs of Alliance member institutions and their users, the Alliance's digital program planning process could not proceed as do most projects, focusing on a discrete problem or solution. Rather, the Alliance needs to confront a range of broader issues associated with developing and sustaining cost-effective digital programs at institutions and at the consortial level. Factors that create this situation include the diversity of institutions involved and the various stages of maturity of their digital initiatives. This continuing planning process has now been broken down into three stages, the second of which would be supported by this grant.

The remainder of the first stage of Alliance's planning process involves consolidating information about best practices and conducting additional assessments and analyses of the needs of member institutions and their users. The NWDA Program Manager conducted a survey to identify existing priority user audiences in December 2007-January 2008.<sup>9</sup> NWDA members indicated that their general priority audiences are students from their own academic institutions, staff/administration from their own academic institution, faculty from their own academic institution, alumni of their academic institution, and local/amateur historians. For a digital content program, their highest priority audiences were identical. A third stage of assessment will occur during the spring and summer of 2008, when members will gather qualitative information about their researchers to help determine their requirements for an Alliance digital services program.

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<sup>9</sup> Survey completed by 20 of 31 member institutions as of 24 January 2008. Survey results available at [http://www.orbiscascade.org/nwda/Researcher Survey Compiled Results 20080123.xls](http://www.orbiscascade.org/nwda/Researcher_Survey_Compiled_Results_20080123.xls)

In addition, between January and September 2008, the NWDA Program Manager and Digital Services Program Manager will be identifying common and significant barriers to starting and sustaining digital programs and determining what can and can not be solved with current consortium resources. By October 2008, the challenges associated with these barriers will be identified and prioritized. One clear and immediate issue that has already been identified as a priority is the need to integrate the systems and metadata schemes most commonly used within the consortia. The most commonly used systems for digital content are CONTENTdm and DSpace, both of which use Dublin Core as a metadata standard; the NWDA database uses EAD as a metadata standard. A specific component of this issue is the association of EAD finding aids in the NWDA database with related content in CONTENTdm.

The second stage, which would be supported largely by this grant, involves bringing together an advisory board of individuals who can help develop solutions for challenges that the Alliance has identified as priorities. These individuals have administrative and technical expertise in specific aspects of building and maintaining large digital programs. Board members have expertise in the following critical areas:

- 1) Data harvesting and meta-searching. This individual will consult on limitations of technology and data as they affect search and retrieval of digital materials in a multi-institution environment.
- 2) Digital consortium administration and business planning. This individual will consult on economic and operational challenges to maintaining a sustainable consortial program.
- 3) Digital preservation. This individual will consult on successful large scale digital preservation projects and best practices for maintaining integrity of resources through evolving technology cycles.

Funds from this grant will be used to pay modest honoraria to advisory board members and cover travel expenses associated with attending two meetings between advisory board and DPWG members. Out of these consultations a comprehensive plan, including of a set of actionable proposals, will be developed for the Alliance to implement.

A second important component of the second stage of this project involves hiring an infrastructure specialist who will develop a working prototype of a technical solution for integrating existing systems and metadata schemes used within the consortia.

The second stage of this planning process will be successful if the Alliance's digital program planning process moves from the identification of key problems to the identification of practicable solutions that meet the needs of member institutions and their users. These solutions will enable the Alliance to proceed to the third stage of its planning process, which involves implementing solutions to develop a suite of services that will enable member institutions to develop local programs that are supported at and can be scaled up to the consortium level. One anticipated issue that the Alliance will take up in the third stage will involve seeking a consortial approach to issues related to digital

preservation. For support of work in the third stage, the Alliance will apply for a National Leadership Grant in February 2010.

### **Project Resources: Budget, Personnel, and Management**

#### Budget

Grant funds will be used to support honoraria and travel expenses for three advisory board members; travel expenses for DPWG members and Alliance staff; and a six-month, half-time position of infrastructure specialist.

#### Personnel

##### 1. Alliance Project Staff

NWDA Project Manager Jodi Allison-Bunnell will serve as Principal Investigator on this project and will be responsible for all coordination, logistics, and reporting on the project and for communicating progress to the NWDA Steering Team as well as NWDA and Alliance members. Alliance Digital Services Program Manager Kyle Banerjee will collaborate closely with Allison-Bunnell and the DPWG and supervise the work of the Infrastructure Specialist.

##### 2. Digital Program Working Group

Members of the DPWG represent their institutions and institution types and are charged to help plan an Alliance-wide digital program for archival and special collections materials. They will attend two in-person meetings with the advisory board and Alliance staff and actively participate in email and telephone conversations on the digital planning process. Although the DPWG is appointed as a representative sample of NWDA members, the NWDA Program Manager will be responsible for communications with the larger membership.

Michael Paulus, Whitman College, Chair  
Al Cornish, Washington State University  
Karen Estlund, University of Oregon  
Janet Hauck, Whitworth University  
TBD, historical society/museum member<sup>10</sup>  
Jeremy McWilliams, Lewis & Clark College  
Jeremy Skinner, Lewis & Clark College

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<sup>10</sup> This position became vacant very shortly before this grant proposal was submitted due to that individual's family emergency. The NWDA Steering Team will fill this position in February 2008 so that a suitable historical society or other non-academic representative will be involved in the planning process. That organization will, as part of this appointment, be added as a formal partner to this grant.

### 3. Advisory Board

The advisory board will meet in person twice with Alliance project staff and the DPWG to help find solutions to identified challenges and shape the Alliance's digital planning process. Advisory board members will also participate in intermittent phone and email conversations throughout the term of the grant that will be equal to one additional day. Advisory board members will share their knowledge and experience in the following areas:

1) Data harvesting and meta-searching. Candidates identified and interested in this position include Terry Reese of Oregon State University and Thomas Habing of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Reese is well-known as a pioneer in the digital libraries world; Habing is part of the Digital Library Federation's Digital Collections and Content (DCC) initiative.

2) Digital consortium administration and business planning. Candidates identified and interested in this position include Leigh Grinstead of CDP@BCR, Kenning Arlitsch of the Mountain West Digital Library, and Ricky Erway of OCLC Research. All have experience and are recognized experts in this area.

3) Digital preservation. Candidates identified and interested in this position include Fynnette Eaton, formerly a central figure in digital preservation at the National Archives and the Smithsonian Institution who is available for consulting in retirement.

### 4. Infrastructure Specialist

In collaboration with the NWDA Program Manager and the Alliance Digital Services Program Manager, the infrastructure specialist will develop a prototype to integrate metadata and search member institutions' systems that contain digitized archival and special collections materials. The infrastructure specialist will identify appropriate hardware, software, and procedures to create an infrastructure that will support the requirements of a consortium digital program.

**Schedule of Completion**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Oct 08</b>	<b>Nov 08</b>	<b>Dec 08</b>	<b>Jan 09</b>	<b>Feb 09</b>	<b>Mar 09</b>	<b>Apr 09</b>	<b>May 09</b>	<b>Jun 09</b>	<b>July 09</b>	<b>Aug 09</b>	<b>Sept 09</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Staff/AB/DPWG meet</b>		XX											\$5050
<b>Hire Infrastructure Specialist</b>		XX	XX										Cost share
<b>Infrastructure Specialist works on prototype</b>				XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX				\$18,188
<b>Staff/AB/DPWG meet</b>								XX					\$5050
<b>Present outputs to Alliance/NWDA membership</b>										XX			Cost share
<b>Measure success of Output #1</b>											XX		Cost share
<b>Measure success of Output #2</b>											XX		Cost share
<b>Final report writing</b>												XX	Cost share
<b>Attend required IMLS meeting</b>	<sup>1</sup>												\$2000

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<sup>1</sup> IMLS has not provided dates for this meeting.