

Project Abstract

Lead Applicant

Cliff Missen, Clinical Associate Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Plan, Community Needs, and Intended Audience

WiderNet@UNC, based in the School of Information and Library Science, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will build a coalition of librarians and educators from correctional institutions to increase the use of off-line digital education resources in the innovative Corrections Off-Line Education Platform, creating a whole host of opportunities to improve rehabilitation and reduce recidivism for millions in the U.S. prison system.

Underserved communities across America have specific information needs but lack the fiscal, infrastructural, and professional means to individually access, organize, and catalog information, nor create and manage digital portals and archives, integrate local resources, and deliver directly relevant collections to their audience. However, they can afford do so cooperatively and build collections that have a broader impact beyond their distinct communities.

This project aims to develop and demonstrate a cloud-based and off-line platform to “crowd source” the development of community-centric collections.

Time Frame: One year

Outcomes

We will convene a consortia of stakeholders, determine their capacities and constraints, and develop a collaboration platform to engage them, their staffs, and volunteers in the development of customized libraries and educational resources.

Outcomes will include a prototype collection and a blueprint for a long-term, sustained effort to improve information access for librarians, educators, and students in correctional institutions.

The larger outcome will be a prototype collaboration platform that can be used to develop custom collections for a multitude of underserved communities.

A Consortia to Develop and Manage a Secure Off-Line Information Platform for Correctional Education

WiderNet@UNC, based in the School of Information and Library Science, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and directed by Clinical Associate Professor Cliff Missen, seeks a \$50,000 planning grant to build a coalition of correctional institutions to increase the use of off-line digital education resources in the innovative Corrections Off-Line Education Platform, creating a whole host of opportunities to improve rehabilitation and reduce recidivism for millions in the U.S. prison system.

Statement of Broad Need

Underserved communities across America, like those behind bars, persons with disabilities, inner-city poor, rural families, and Native Americans, often have specific information needs but they and their champions lack the fiscal, infrastructural, and professional means to access, organize, and catalog information, create and manage digital collections and archives, integrate local resources, and deliver directly relevant collections to their audience.

Individuals or organizations may not be able to afford to set up, staff, and sustain a platform to produce community or culturally congruent collections. However, they can do so cooperatively and, with the help of volunteers, build collections that have a broader impact beyond their distinct communities.

This project aims to develop a cloud-based and off-line platform to “crowd source” the development of community-centric collections.

In the international arena, WiderNet has worked with partners like the Sparkman Center for Global Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Ponseti International (clubfoot), the United States International Council on Disabilities, the Zambian National Institute of Public Administration, the World Cocoa Foundation, and others to develop dozens of portals for off-line patrons of the eGranary Digital Library. (See <http://www.widernet.org/portals/>)

Project Design

Starting with a community with whom we have worked for many years -- state correctional institutions – under this planning grant we will identify the scope, needs, and capabilities of our

partners. We will develop prototype governance, communication, and development tools as we clarify goals and projects that meet the needs of a wide variety of correctional institutions.

Correctional institutions that have indicated they would like to participate: Iowa Medical and Classification Center, Coralville, Iowa; Lee College, Baytown, TX (provides services to Wynne, Ferguson, Ellis, Huntsville, Luther, Eastham facilities); Juvenile Detention Facility, NJ; Mill Creek, Salem, OR.

About WiderNet@UNC and the Corrections Off-line Education Platform

Librarians and educators in correctional institutions have no ready-made solutions for providing information access in their facilities. Internet connectivity is outright banned in most states and severely limited in the rest, given concerns about inmates using the system for illicit communications, gang activities, harassing the public, and creating more victims. In an era of budget cuts, fewer institutions have the staff or funding to maintain information access. Fewer still can afford the occasional for-profit education schemes that attempt to address inmates' needs by promoting a tightly focused curricula with limited scope.

Over the last 16 years, WiderNet@UNC has developed a 35 million resource off-line digital library, tapping into Open Educational Resources like Wikipedia, Khan Academy, and MIT's Blossoms as well as garnering permission to copy Web sites from thousands of authors.

As well, we've worked with prison educators, librarians, and administrators for eight years to organically build solutions that address their needs.

WiderNet@UNC is building a secure and consistent off-line information platform for providing high-quality education to incarcerated and recently-released individuals. The Corrections Off-Line Education Platform (COEP) is now installed in over 25 prisons in Iowa, Texas, Washington, and New Jersey.

We have worked with dozens of prison educators and librarians to develop an off-line alternative to the Internet that delivers abundant resources for teaching English as a Second Language, GED preparation, high school completion, post-secondary courses, life skills, and vocational training.

Some examples:

- we developed a way for institutions to "quarantine" inappropriate Web pages and Wikipedia articles, drawing from a crowd-sourced list of resources (some of which were identified by inmates themselves)
- since our partners had limited financial resources to assist with developing custom collections for corrections, we recruited volunteers from UNC's School of Information and Library Science and the local community to assist WiderNet staff in developing collections that met the needs of the corrections population

- we developed a secure Web browser to meet unusual institutional PC security requirements
- we customized the built-in course management tool (Moodle) to prevent undesired communications between inmates.

WiderNet has surveyed over 300 inmates on their information needs. They identified their greatest needs as information on health (physical, emotional, family...) and life skills (managing money, being a good parent, finding and keeping a job.)

We have already attracted a half-dozen institutions to the COEP consortium model and have identified major concerns and opportunities. We have a clear ideas on creating a path to sustainability and believe we can accomplish it in three years.

Focus on Corrections

After consultation with our partners in corrections, we have identified the need to expand the program to serve many more institutions and build a sustainable consortium of educators and librarians who can direct the development of critical resources, modules, courses, and certificates customized for the corrections milieu.

Most importantly, the broader adoption of this community-supported platform will address several key issues in corrections education. As inmates are frequently moved from one facility to another, they typically lose out on the progress they have made and have to start over. Successful reentry requires basic digital information literacy which is nearly impossible to teach without Internet access or a reasonable facsimile. Many individuals find their schooling grinds to a stop when they are released. Teaching vocational IT skills, like Web and database design, are extremely difficult off-line. And few institutions have instructors with time and IT talents to develop courses.

By combining our efforts, we can develop and deliver consistent education inside and, eventually, outside the walls – exposing offenders to new ideas, new skills, and returning them to society better able to integrate and find employment. This will give states the ability to provide a platform for uninterrupted instruction, both in state prisons and local jails (where some inmates are now spending years of their lives.)

Planning Grant Activities and Outcomes

This planning grant would provide WiderNet@UNC the logistical support to develop this prototype consortia, increase membership, and define a broader proposal for developing and sustaining this off-line education and information service.

The grant would be used to hire a quarter-time graduate student to support logistics and deploy communications/collaboration tools as we recruit new members and identify consortia roles and requirements. It will also provide for a small portion of the project director's salary.

The outcomes of this activity will include a platform for close collaboration between prison librarians and educators, a far-reaching plan to deliver information and education to more correctional institutions in the U.S., and a couple demonstration projects with paroled individuals in underserved communities in the “free world.”

Measurables:

- A ten-member consortium with a clear mission statement
- Defined roles and expectations for consortium members
- A prototype on-line collaborative platform that addresses the unique needs of the members
- A draft project plan with well-defined goals
- Hours spent on the project by consortium members
- 100+ volunteer hours by library and information science students
- Field testing and evaluation by volunteer ex-offenders
- Project evaluations by all participants

Diversity Plan

This project has the potential to directly impact over 2 million incarcerated individuals, as well as another 4.5 million on parole or probation. (Numbers derived from US Bureau of Justice Statistics.)

The American prison population is disproportionately African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Puerto Rican. As well, young people, the elderly, and LGBT individuals are more likely to get caught up in the corrections system.

More importantly, there is evidence that some inmates become information intermediaries to their families and communities, broadening the impact of their exposure to new information and ideas in the prison library or classroom.

National Impact

Short-term Impacts

The inmates’ communities and the society at-large benefit from better education. Every year over 700,000 prisoners are released to the “free world.” Those receiving education and vocational training while in prison are far more likely to find a job and less likely to commit more crimes. As well, their ability to use digital tools for job applications, accessing benefits, and furthering their education correlates to their success after parole.

While America has been slow to adopt education as a tool to reduce recidivism, many other countries have for decades. Recent research in the U.S., like the Rand Corporation report “How Effective Is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from Here?” have helped to reframe the conversation. (https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR564.html)

They report...

“Inmates who participate in any kind of educational program behind bars—from remedial math to vocational auto shop to college-level courses—are up to 43 percent less likely to reoffend and return to prison, the study found. They also appear to be far more likely to find a job after their release, and the social stability that comes with it.”

Interest in protecting the public safety and reducing the costs in incarceration are moving many policy makers to adopt prison education. Today there are bipartisan efforts to reduce recidivism through education and vocational training.

Long-term Impacts

All of these activities, from consortia building to collection development and delivery platforms, will be designed to scale. The long-term plan is to build a platform that empowers hundreds of underserved communities across America – like persons with disabilities, inner-city poor, rural families, and Native Americans – with the tools and best practices to attract collaborators, develop and integrate congruent content, and create meaningful collections that can be distributed on- or off-line in their environments.

Budget:

Half-time graduate student = \$16,972
Director’s release time (15%) = \$17,471
Communications and documentation = \$2,314
Travel and expenses for demonstrations sites = \$4,500
Indirect Costs = \$8,742

TOTAL - \$50,000

WiderNet@UNC Schedule of Completion

ACTIVITY	2018			2019								
	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Identify and onboard grad student	█	█										
Recruit/Convene inaugural board	█	█	█									
Set goals for planning grant period	█	█	█									
Meet monthly to plan and review progress				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Recruit additional consortia members					█	█	█	█	█	█		
Gather data on consortia membership and capacity				█	█	█						
Assess consortia building efforts							█				█	
Create alpha communication platform				█								
Assess alpha communications platform					█							
Create beta communications platform						█	█					
Assess beta communications platform								█	█	█		
Assess consortia membership capacity				█	█							
platform					█	█	█					
platform								█	█	█		
Recruit collection editors and volunteers				█	█	█	█					
Produce first collection(s)					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Assess collection(s) and processes								█				█

DIGITAL PRODUCT FORM

Introduction

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is committed to expanding public access to federally funded digital products (i.e., digital content, resources, assets, software, and datasets). The products you create with IMLS funding require careful stewardship to protect and enhance their value, and they should be freely and readily available for use and re-use by libraries, archives, museums, and the public. However, applying these principles to the development and management of digital products can be challenging. Because technology is dynamic and because we do not want to inhibit innovation, we do not want to prescribe set standards and practices that could become quickly outdated. Instead, we ask that you answer questions that address specific aspects of creating and managing digital products. Like all components of your IMLS application, your answers will be used by IMLS staff and by expert peer reviewers to evaluate your application, and they will be important in determining whether your project will be funded.

Instructions

X Please check here if you have reviewed Parts I, II, III, and IV below and you have determined that your proposal does NOT involve the creation of digital products (i.e., digital content, resources, assets, software, or datasets). You must still submit this Digital Product Form with your proposal even if you check this box, because this Digital Product Form is a Required Document.

If you ARE creating digital products, you must provide answers to the questions in Part I. In addition, you must also complete at least one of the subsequent sections. If you intend to create or collect digital content, resources, or assets, complete Part II. If you intend to develop software, complete Part III. If you intend to create a dataset, complete Part IV.

Part I: Intellectual Property Rights and Permissions

A.1 What will be the intellectual property status of the digital products (content, resources, assets, software, or datasets) you intend to create? Who will hold the copyright(s)? How will you explain property rights and permissions to potential users (for example, by assigning a non-restrictive license such as BSD, GNU, MIT, or Creative Commons to the product)? Explain and justify your licensing selections.

At this juncture, we will prototyping collaboration platforms using off-the-shelf tools and cloud solutions. Our open-source Web-based cataloging interface has been in production for several years. We may be making preliminary changes as the collaborators see fit, but real production work will happen in subsequent stages.

A.2 What ownership rights will your organization assert over the new digital products and what conditions will you impose on access and use? Explain and justify any terms of access and conditions of use and detail how you will notify potential users about relevant terms or conditions.

Everything WiderNet@UNC produces has been and will be available under a Creative Commons license.

A.3 If you will create any products that may involve privacy concerns, require obtaining permissions or rights, or raise any cultural sensitivities, describe the issues and how you plan to address them.

While a significant portion of our digital library's content is in the public domain or covered by one or more open licenses, WiderNet@UNC has been working with authors and publishers for years to gain the rights to make copies of their copyrighted works under the auspices WiderNet.

Content contributors have the option of negotiating the terms of reproduction.

Part II: Projects Creating or Collecting Digital Content, Resources, or Assets

A. Creating or Collecting New Digital Content, Resources, or Assets

A.1 Describe the digital content, resources, or assets you will create or collect, the quantities of each type, and format you will use.

At this juncture, mostly lists, agreements, and protocols.

A.2 List the equipment, software, and supplies that you will use to create the content, resources, or assets, or the name of the service provider that will perform the work.

None.

A.3 List all the digital file formats (e.g., XML, TIFF, MPEG) you plan to use, along with the relevant information about the appropriate quality standards (e.g., resolution, sampling rate, or pixel dimensions).

B. Workflow and Asset Maintenance/Preservation

B.1 Describe your quality control plan (i.e., how you will monitor and evaluate your workflow and products).

Most of the documents created under this proposal will be shared in a cloud folder, while the outcomes will become public Web pages at the widernet.unc.edu site.

B.2 Describe your plan for preserving and maintaining digital assets during and after the award period of performance. Your plan may address storage systems, shared repositories, technical documentation, migration planning, and commitment of organizational funding for these purposes. Please note: You may charge the federal award before closeout for the costs of publication or sharing of research results if the costs are not incurred during the period of performance of the federal award (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.461).

Documents created will be backed up to servers at the university of Chapel Hill and stored in the LifeTime Library repository.

C. Metadata

C.1 Describe how you will produce any and all technical, descriptive, administrative, or preservation metadata. Specify which standards you will use for the metadata structure (e.g., MARC, Dublin Core, Encoded Archival Description, PBCore, PREMIS) and metadata content (e.g., thesauri).

C.2 Explain your strategy for preserving and maintaining metadata created or collected during and after the award period of performance.

C.3 Explain what metadata sharing and/or other strategies you will use to facilitate widespread discovery and use of the digital content, resources, or assets created during your project (e.g., an API [Application Programming Interface], contributions to a digital platform, or other ways you might enable batch queries and retrieval of metadata).

D. Access and Use

D.1 Describe how you will make the digital content, resources, or assets available to the public. Include details such as the delivery strategy (e.g., openly available online, available to specified audiences) and underlying hardware/software platforms and infrastructure (e.g., specific digital repository software or leased services, accessibility via standard web browsers, requirements for special software tools in order to use the content).

Documents from this consortia building program will be available online at <http://widernet.unc.edu> as well as archived in the LifeTime Library.

D.2 Provide the name(s) and URL(s) (Uniform Resource Locator) for any examples of previous digital content, resources, or assets your organization has created.

Part III. Projects Developing Software

A. General Information

A.1 Describe the software you intend to create, including a summary of the major functions it will perform and the intended primary audience(s) it will serve.

None.

A.2 List other existing software that wholly or partially performs the same functions, and explain how the software you intend to create is different, and justify why those differences are significant and necessary.

None.

B. Technical Information

B.1 List the programming languages, platforms, software, or other applications you will use to create your software and explain why you chose them.

This will be determined during the planning grant.

B.2 Describe how the software you intend to create will extend or interoperate with relevant existing software.

B.3 Describe any underlying additional software or system dependencies necessary to run the software you intend to create.

B.4 Describe the processes you will use for development, documentation, and for maintaining and updating documentation for users of the software.

B.5 Provide the name(s) and URL(s) for examples of any previous software your organization has created.

C. Access and Use

C.1 We expect applicants seeking federal funds for software to develop and release these products under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. What ownership rights will your organization assert over the software you intend to create, and what conditions will you impose on its access and use? Identify and explain the license under which you will release source code for the software you develop (e.g., BSD, GNU, or MIT software licenses). Explain and justify any prohibitive terms or conditions of use or access and detail how you will notify potential users about relevant terms and conditions.

C.2 Describe how you will make the software and source code available to the public and/or its intended users.

C.3 Identify where you will deposit the source code for the software you intend to develop:

Name of publicly accessible source code repository:

URL:

Part IV: Projects Creating Datasets

A.1 Identify the type of data you plan to collect or generate, and the purpose or intended use to which you expect it to be put. Describe the method(s) you will use and the approximate dates or intervals at which you will collect or generate it.

A.2 Does the proposed data collection or research activity require approval by any internal review panel or institutional review board (IRB)? If so, has the proposed research activity been approved? If not, what is your plan for securing approval?

A.3 Will you collect any personally identifiable information (PII), confidential information (e.g., trade secrets), or proprietary information? If so, detail the specific steps you will take to protect such information while you prepare the data files for public release (e.g., data anonymization, data suppression PII, or synthetic data).

A.4 If you will collect additional documentation, such as consent agreements, along with the data, describe plans for preserving the documentation and ensuring that its relationship to the collected data is maintained.

A.5 What methods will you use to collect or generate the data? Provide details about any technical requirements or dependencies that would be necessary for understanding, retrieving, displaying, or processing the dataset(s).

A.6 What documentation (e.g., data documentation, codebooks) will you capture or create along with the dataset(s)? Where will the documentation be stored and in what format(s)? How will you permanently associate and manage the

documentation with the dataset(s) it describes?

A.7 What is your plan for archiving, managing, and disseminating data after the completion of the award-funded project?

A.8 Identify where you will deposit the dataset(s):

Name of repository:

URL:

A.9 When and how frequently will you review this data management plan? How will the implementation be monitored?