

STATEMENT OF NATIONAL NEED

The University of North Texas (lead applicant), in collaboration with the Center for Research Libraries, the University of Missouri, the University of California at Santa Barbara, Stanford University, and Yale University propose a project to address national concerns regarding the preservation of at-risk electronic government information (PEGI) by cultural memory organizations for long term use by the citizens of the United States. The PEGI project proposal has been informed by apprehensions highlighted in a series of meetings from 2014-2016 between university librarians, information professionals, and representatives of federal agencies, including the Government Publishing Office and the National Archives and Records Administration. This project will take the form of a one year National Forum Grant in the IMLS category of curating collections. The amount of IMLS funds requested for this project is \$87,024.

There is a growing awareness nationally of the serious and ongoing loss of government information that is electronic in nature. This issue has loomed larger in recent years, reaching a point of criticality that has driven intense discussions by information management thought leaders from across the United States. Summits held in April and December of 2016 sought to explore ways of undertaking urgently needed cross-sector activities to preserve and provide access to electronic government information.¹ These two meetings built on extensive prior discussions of the issues conducted at *CRL's 2014 Global Resources Collections Forum*, which ultimately resulted in the *Leviathan Report*² summarizing serious threats to the long-term integrity and accessibility of electronic government information.

The core problem discussed in these events and addressed in this project can be summarized as follows. The well-understood workflow of the pre-digital era of government information production and preservation has been disrupted by the rapidly changing landscape of digital information. Previously, federal agencies created content and when that content was ready to be disseminated or archived, appropriate print material was sent to NARA, GPO, and depository libraries. These workflows were effective in the print era. However, today, most government information is produced and disseminated digitally. Digital workflows are neither as predictable nor systematic as print workflows; further, the amount of digital information has exploded.³ There are now grave concerns that federal agencies may be either defunded or discouraged from taking effective steps for long term preservation and access to the information they produce.

PROJECT DESIGN

The PEGI project will collaboratively develop a national action agenda and plan for distributed preservation and access to government information. To this end, the PEGI project will establish an extended series of national planning forums to align activities by cultural memory organizations to preserve and ensure access to electronic government information. This series of eight public planning forums will be held at relevant national meetings throughout the project period to analyze, develop, vet, and set forth a plan for collaborative work to implement this goal. These planning forums will be facilitated by project staff hired to collate community input, write up results of discussions, publish and disseminate report outs. The planning forums will have several goals: 1) to broadly engage different stakeholder groups, especially including government information experts, library leaders, digital preservation technologists, federal agency

¹ Halbert, Martin; Skinner, Katherine & Sittel, Robbie. Digital Preservation of Federal Information Summit: Reflections. UNT Digital Library. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc826639/>. Accessed January 10, 2017. Note: This was the report from the first meeting of two.

² Center for Research Libraries. *Leviathan: Libraries and Government in the Age of Big Data*. CRL Focus on Global Resources, Summer 2014, Vol. 33, No. 4. <http://www.crl.edu/focus/summer-2014>. Accessed January 10, 2017.

³ Reilly, Bernie. *Governments and the Digital Record: The Historian's Perspective*. Report on a Panel Discussion on Government Information and Societal Memory convened by the American Historical Association, January 2014. http://www.crl.edu/sites/default/files/d6/attachments/pages/AHA%20Meeting%20of%20Historians_final3.pdf Accessed January 10, 2017.

representatives, and other concerned parties, 2) to examine and document strategies for better orchestration of digital collection, preservation, and access mechanisms by collaborating organizations, identifying both opportunities and barriers, 3) to apply a triage conceptual approach to preservation of electronic government information, 4) to prepare a plan for aligned national action by cooperating institutions. This planning effort will be informed by successful examples to date of such collaborative efforts, notably the End of Term (EOT) Web Harvest efforts,⁴ although digital preservation technologies beyond web archiving will be examined.

To reach the broadest possible variety of potential collaborating stakeholders, a progression of public planning forums will be held in conjunction with the following professional conferences: 1) the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) Membership Meeting from December 11-12, 2017 in Washington, D.C., 2) ALA Midwinter from February 9-13, 2018 in Denver, CO, 3) CNI Membership Meeting from April 12-13, 2018 in San Diego, CA, 4) the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries (JC DL) from June 3-7, 2018 in Ft. Worth, TX, 5) ALA Annual from June 21-26, 2018 in New Orleans, LA, 6) the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Annual Meeting from August 12-18, 2018 in Washington, D.C., 7) the International Conference on Digital Preservation (iPRES) from September 24 - 28, 2018 in Boston, MA, and 8) the Depository Library Council (DLC) Meeting circa October 11-12, 2018 in Washington, D.C. A project plan articulating the agenda for national action by stakeholders will be published and disseminated in conjunction with DLC culminating forum.

NATIONAL IMPACT

The PEGI Project will engage a broad group of experts, institutional leaders, and stakeholders to develop a cooperative national action agenda for preserving and providing access to at-risk government digital information of long term historical significance, addressing fears by historians and public scholars now concerned that “the age-old conflict between the interests of historians and those of government agencies has become only more problematic considering the ease with which electronic records can be altered, encrypted, or destroyed.”⁵ Ensuring the distributed survival of the official information of the nation in this critical period of increasing information loss should be a major priority for cultural memory organizations.

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

This project will take place during a twelve-month period from 11/1/17 to 10/31/18. The project will include collaborating participants from the named partner institutions, as well as 0.5 FTE of qualified project staff hired specifically for the period of project activity, to serve in the roles of facilitators and analysts. The project partners putting forward this proposal include experts from several university libraries and the Center for Research Libraries, all of which are deeply concerned about and committed to ensuring the long term preservation and access to electronic government information of a critically important and lasting historical value to the citizens of the United States. Partners include: *Martin Halbert* and *Roberta Sittel* (UNT), *James Jacobs* (Stanford University), *Marie Waltz* (CRL), *Shari Laster* (UC Santa Barbara), *Marie Concannon* (University of Missouri), *Scott Matheson* (Yale University). The University of North Texas, the project lead applicant, has for years sought to preserve at-risk electronic government information, and regularly participates in the national EOT web archiving effort.⁶

PROJECT BUDGET

IMLS funds of \$87,024 are requested for this project. This budget will cover \$25,200 in project travel funding for the various public planning forum meetings, salary and fringe of \$43,867 for project staff, and federally negotiated indirect costs of \$17,957.

⁴ Peet, Lisa. “Government Website Harvest Enlists Librarians, Educators, Students.” *Library Journal Online*, December 13, 2016. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2016/12/industry-news/government-website-harvest-enlists-librarians-educators-students/> Accessed January 10, 2017.

⁵ Reilly, p. 5.

⁶ Peet, *ibid.*