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INNOVATION FUNDING PROJECT FINAL REPORT: ExploreCU

Spring 2012 Award: \$13,450

Description of the project (from the original proposal, Spring 2012)

The goal of enhanced campus-community initiatives discussed in the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative Committee's report, *Project 2012: Transforming Illinois: Re-envisioning Diversity and Inclusion*ⁱ, will be furthered through the implementation of ExploreCU. ExploreCU is a mobile application built with the innovative Curatescape (formerly Mobile Historical) tool from the Center for Public History + Digital Humanities (CPHDH) at Cleveland State University, which will transform how Champaign-Urbana citizens experience their community through collaborative content creation and access to information. Using Curatescape, the University of Illinois Library will be able to deploy a branded, locally managed application that will engage mobile technology to foster community engagement.

Curatescape is designed for iOS and Android platforms, as well as mobile web browsers and desktops for those without a smartphone. It is a location based mobile app designed to "curate the city" through the use of geo-located historical texts, archival film and images, oral histories, audio files, and videos.ⁱⁱ For example, a user interested in learning about the University Library would select the library on Curatescape's map to find media such as archival images, maps, the history of the library, or even an audio file of a librarian describing services offered. A visitor or prospective art student wanting a tour local public art would find numerous art related locations organized into an "arts" tour.

The mobile application is built on Omeka, an open source archival content management system, and is designed for simple, low-cost deployment. Its full functionality, including social media integration, can be seen by exploring Cleveland Historical either on a mobile device on the web (www.clevelandhistorical.org).

Project activities

Website - <http://exploreku.org/>

Email: exploreku@illinois.edu

Early summer 2012

Adapting Curatescape to Champaign-Urbana has been a fairly straightforward process and moved forward as expected. First, Cleveland State set up the ExploreCU project using their Omeka installation at Cleveland State. We also worked with them to rebrand the application, which included new graphics. Mobile applications are available in both iOS and Android markets. While information about the exact number of downloads is unavailable, we do know that there have been 100-500 downloads in the Android Marketplace and we are unsure of the iOS downloads to date (they don't provide this information).

We hired a graduate student from GSLIS, Kara Brehm, to begin working on acquiring and developing content. We currently have seven tours: Champaign Park District; Landmarks and Lore: A Snapshot of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Libraries, Museums and Archives; Railways and Electric Transit; Robert Allerton Park; UIUC Public Art Tour; and Urbana Park District. These seven tours comprise over 200 total entries to date (We projected 5 tours and 80 entries in our original application). The entries include narrative descriptions, images that were purchased from the University Archives, images contributed from collaborating organizations, as well as newly scanned images.

A substantial amount of the original content came from Muriel Scheinman's "A Guide to Art at the University of Illinois: Urbana-Champaign, Robert Allerton Park, and Chicago," used with permission.

Content currently being developed includes a "Champaign-Urbana at the Movies" tour to coincide with Ebertfest, a "Champaign-Urbana in the Summertime" tour to coincide with an exhibition in the Marshall Gallery this summer, a cemeteries tour to be available for Halloween, and a homecoming tour for be available by late September.

Grad Hourly Activities (too numerous to list in entirety – this is a sampling)

- Collaborated with staff at Robert Allerton Park to use their language for tour of sculptures and took new photos to supplement existing offerings.
- Worked extensively in University Archives to identify materials appropriate for the app and do extensive searching for images on a tour about Homecoming.
- Working with images to make sure they are of the correct quality and size.
- During the research process, lots of tidbits about the community are uncovered and lead down new paths – this information is documented and kept for future projects.
- Writing new entries for content that does not exist elsewhere and gain permission for content that does – examples include Morrow Plots, Alma Mater, Blue Waters, Stock Pavilion.

Community Connections

- Allerton Park and Retreat Center
- Alpha Delta Pi Sorority
- Animal Sciences
- Art History Department
- Champaign Park District
- Champaign Public Library
- City of Urbana
- City of Urbana
- Grand Prairie Museum
- Institute for Genomic Biology

- Krannert Museum
- NCSA
- Orpheum Children's Museum
- Parkland College
- Pollinatarium
- Public Affairs
- Sousa Archives
- U of I Press
- University Archives
- Urbana Free Archives
- Urbana Park District

Budget

- Graduate hourly, 25% appointment for 1 calendar year (\$9,500)

A graduate hourly from the Library and Information Science program will be hired in order to assist in sorting through community contributed data and to ensure standardization, so that the finished product has a consistent look, feel, and tone. The graduate hourly may also assist in training volunteers, performing research, and assisting with marketing and publicity. *The money for this will be spent by early summer 2013.*

Note – We also had a GSLIS graduate student contribute to this project – Laura Miller contributed 25 volunteer hours.

- Permissions fees (\$450)

Fees for permission to use text from Muriel Scheinman's "A Guide to Art at the University of Illinois: Urbana-Champaign, Robert Allerton Park, and Chicago," 1995, Urbana: University of Illinois Press. Using text from this book would eliminate the need for extensive research for approximately 60 works of art, giving the project a significant start. *Paid.*

- Events (\$250 refreshment budget)

Events held to help publicize the ExploreCU project, as well provide instruction on how to contribute and answer any questions. *Spent as of 4/1/13: Magnets - \$93.24. Printing for bus ads - \$72.27 = \$165.51. Sarah Shreeves paid \$200 for the advertising space from her ICR funds.*

- Digital images from the University Archives.

Since this was more expensive than we originally anticipated, Sarah Shreeves generously donated funds from her ICR funds to cover the initial costs. *\$106.40 for the first batch, \$204 for the second batch = \$210.40.*

- Omeka and Omeka Hosting (\$250)

Omeka.org is used as the preferred content management system for Curatescape, and interfaces well with Cleveland State's source code infrastructure. Cleveland State has offered to host Omeka.org for a fee of \$250, as the University Library does not host an instance of Omeka on our own services. However, Curatescape is moving towards Omeka.net, which the Library does subscribe to through the Scholarly Commons, as its preferred content management system to avoid hosting issues. Once Curatescape is fully functional with Omeka.net, we will be able to migrate our content from Cleveland State's hosting system. *To be paid late Spring 2013.*

- Curatescape source code (\$3,000 over 2 years)

Cleveland State provides the source code to build the app, including updates, bug fixes, and improvements for a low cost. As estimated cost of developing a mobile app is approximately \$35,000, utilizing Cleveland State's code ensures the best possible value. *Contract pending, will be paid Spring 2013.*

Total: \$13,450

Marketing

- Christensen, Sarah and Kara Brehm. "ExploreCU: A Community Generated Digital Humanities Project." Panel presentation at the 2013 Mobile App Development Day, 31 January 2013.
- Christensen, Sarah. "ExploreCU: A Community Generated Digital Humanities Project." Lighting Talk at Fall 2013 Digital Humanities Symposium, 4 October, 2013.
- Official news release, February 2013 – worked with Heather Murphy from Library Advancement.
- CUMTD Bus ads, 3/1/- 3/31/2013.
- Public Art League Board of Directors Meeting, 2/20/2013
- Christensen, Sarah and Merinda Kaye Hensley. "ExploreCU: A Community Generated Digital Humanities Project." Poster presentation at the 2013 Public Engagement Symposium, University of Illinois, 28 February 2013.
- Christensen, Sarah and Merinda Kaye Hensley. "ExploreCU: A Community Generated Digital Humanities Project." Cyber Zed Shed presentation at ACRL 2013 Conference, Indianapolis, IN, 11 April 2013.
- Upcoming: Proposal submitted for the UIUC Faculty Summer Institute; local radio interview (working with Heather Murphy).

Lessons Learned

- Working with Cleveland State has been a positive experience, they have been helpful and accommodating. They most recently looked into why the site load was slowing down – the server needs to be updated.
- We had not anticipated the steep cost of acquiring images from the University Archives.
- Establishing community partners is going to take more planning time.

Sustainability

- Waiting to hear about a proposed grant, Creative Research Award Spring 2013, from School of Art and Design for \$5,130. Funding will be spent to hire .25FTE grad hourly to continue work on generating content.

- Challenge – Unsure about the long-term employment of the Visiting Visual Resources Curator, College of Fine and Applied Arts.

Future Plans

- Working with IHLC and RBML to put up a Library exhibit in the Marshall Gallery for summer 2013.
- Currently recruiting a practicum/independent study student from GSLIS for Summer 2013 in order to continue creating new content.
- Collaborations: Nicole Miller, GSLIS adjunct, on a campus cemetery tour and Ellen Swain, Student Life and Culture Archives, on a tour about student life.
- Increasing the pedagogical contribution by establishing new partnerships with UIUC courses, possibly in GSLIS and the History department.
- Maintaining community partnerships as well as with the School of Art + Design.
- Looking toward finding additional community content including community knowledge and resources, such as photographs, homemade movies, and memories in order to create richer and more personalized information.
- Looking toward the potential of new partnerships such as the 40 North 88 West arts organization and the local public libraries.

ⁱ Chancellor's Diversity Initiatives Committee (2007). *Project 2012 - Transforming Illinois: Re-envisioning Diversity and Inclusion*. Retrieved from: <http://www.inclusiveillinois.illinois.edu/printmaterials/2007%20-%20Project%202012%20-%20Transforming%20Illinois%20-%20Re-envisioning%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Center for Public History + Digital Humanities at Cleveland State (2012). *Mobile Historical*. Retrieved February 29, 2012, from <http://mobilehistorical.org/about/>