



NORTHEAST
DOCUMENT
CONSERVATION
CENTER

Award # LG -22-03-0284-03

Surveying Digital Assets in Museums

Northeast Document Conservation Center

Interim Performance Report

Reporting Period: January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007

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**Northeast Document Conservation Center
Surveying Digital Assets in Museums
LG-22-03-0284-03
Grant Award Period: 12/31/03–12/31/07**

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTION

Purpose

The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) is working with the Museum Computer Network (MCN), Heritage Preservation (HP), the American Institute for Conservation (AIC), and the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) to develop a methodology for assessing the preservation needs of digital collections in museums, libraries, and archives. The goal of the Research and Impact Study is to create and disseminate practical assessment procedures and tools that will help institutions address longevity issues and adhere to standards and best practices as they develop significant digital assets.

Project Activities:

January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007

During the reporting period, the project team scheduled three additional digital surveys to apply the pilot procedures to larger institutions that already have digital preservation procedures in place. The three institutions were: the Florida Center for Library Automation, Emory University, and the Connecticut State Library. The purpose of conducting these surveys was to take a snapshot of digital preservation practices as they exist in institutions today. The survey results will be contrasted with those from smaller institutions and analyzed in the surveyor's report on trends. This step was not part of the original project plan but the surveyors felt it needed to be done, because no one has surveyed or described current best practices at this time, and this information is indispensable for anyone conducting surveys. The three surveys also provide an opportunity to involve three new potential surveyors in the surveys teams.

A meeting of the Project Review Committee was held on April 2, 2007 to react to a draft version of the Surveyors' Handbook. Committee members present were: Liz Bishoff, Tom Clareson, Steve Chapman, Richard Kim, David Green, Steve Dalton, and NEDCC staff members Lori Foley, Aimée Primeaux, and Ann Russell. Edits and additions were suggested, and feedback was gathered from meeting participants. Committee members identified a need for a cover letter to survey recipients explaining the various steps of the survey process. They outlined next steps for the project and discussed a vision for sustaining the digital surveys beyond the grant period as well as for training additional surveyors. Participants concurred that it would be important to continue to provide centralized coordination to ensure quality control, to enable surveyors to share findings and evaluation data, and to be able to modify the survey procedures,

based on the surveyors' experiences, through an iterative process. The group felt that NEDCC was the right organization to provide coordination, at least for the short-term.

Over the last six months, work continued on producing the written products including the draft Surveyors' Handbook, the Pre-survey Questionnaire, the sample survey reports, the cover letter describing the procedures for survey recipients, a Digital Readiness Webliography, and an updated version of the Digital Survey Trends report that summarizes the surveyors' key findings. Project staff made arrangements with evaluation consultant Maxine Sitts to perform follow-up evaluation of the three most recent digital surveys.

Project team members disseminated information on the project at professional meetings throughout the six-month period. NEDCC's Executive Director, Ann Russell, spoke about the project at IMLS's WebWise Conference in Washington DC on March 1, 2007 as part of the panel on digital preservation. She presented the project activities, results, and lessons learned. Subsequently she contributed an article on the subject for "First Monday's" online publication of the WebWise proceedings. Project consultant Liz Bishoff gave a paper about the digital surveys at the DigCurr 2007, an international symposium on digital curation at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. Project consultant Tom Clareson's session proposal on digital surveys was accepted for the Society of American Archivists' conference in August 2007.

On May 9, 2007, the project team participated in a conference call to discuss methods of streamlining the survey process to reduce the future cost of a survey for institutions that request a survey on a fee-for-service basis. Thus far, all of the surveys have been conducted by a team of two or three consultants, making them very expensive. The group decided to experiment with planning a survey with only one surveyor conducting the site visit and writing the report. Plans were made for Liz Bishoff to perform a survey on her own at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, building on her previous survey experience.

Project Outputs and Outcomes: January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007

- Tool box section created on NEDCC's Web site to provide Web access to products of the project
- Three surveys completed
 - FCLA Florida Center for Library Automation
February 9, 2007
Liz Bishoff, Tom Clareson, Erin Rhodes
 - Connecticut State Library
March 19, 2007
Liz Bishoff, Aimée Primeaux, Richard Kim
 - Emory University
March 27, 2007
Liz Bishoff, Tom Clareson, David Green

- Review Committee meeting, April 2, 2007
- Written products revised and edited
- Project staff speak about the project at professional meetings
- Project team conference call, May 9, 2007
- Scheduled streamlined survey at the University of Wyoming

Additional Comments

During the final six months of the project, the project team will finish all written products, mount them on the NEDCC Web site, and announce the results broadly to museums and related fields. The revised trends report will serve as the basis for an article for publication in professional journals. Evaluation data for the three surveys of larger institutions will be compared to data for the previous surveys for smaller institutions and incorporated into the trends report. The final survey at the University of Wyoming will be conducted and evaluated. Discussions will continue with partners about future opportunities for training more surveyors based on the Surveyors' Handbook and for advocating for a national technical assistance program on digital preservation, incorporating the survey procedure developed by the project.