

Title: User Study Research

Issue Date: February 8, 2012

Due Date: April 2, 2012

Contact: Matt Shoemaker, Director of Digital Collections and Systems
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Questions concerning the RFP requirements can be mailed or emailed to the aforementioned contact. Phone calls are also acceptable, though email is preferred. Answers will be given via email unless a phone call is specifically requested. Questions must be submitted by 11:59PM on March 30, 2012.

Funding for this study will be sought from a granting agency. The final amount of funds that will be applied for has not been fully determined. Bid amounts on this RFP will be used in finalizing the grant application. Please contact HSP for more details.

Executive Summary

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP) seeks a third-party vendor to collaborate on a grant-funded user study. This study will assess the validity of the “More Product, Less Process” methodology (hereafter MPLP) versus full, traditional processing methodology. It will also assess the use of signposts versus mass digitization of documents and other items. Both the MPLP and signpost methods are used in institutions to reduce or eliminate backlogs and increase access to collections. The results of this study will be used to redesign the end user interfaces of the online catalog and the digital library (discover.hsp.org and digitallibrary.hsp.org, respectively) and presented to the archival community so institutions can make a better informed decision as to what works best for their staff and target users.

About the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1824 in Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania inspires people to create a better future through historical understanding. One of the oldest historical societies in the United States, it is home to some 600,000 printed items and more than 21 million manuscript and graphic items. Its unparalleled collections encompass more than 350 years of America’s history—from its 17th-century origins to the contributions of its most recent immigrants. The society’s remarkable holdings together with its educational programming make it one of the nation’s most important special collections libraries: a center of historical documentation and study, education, and engagement.

The society is one of the largest family history libraries in the nation, has preeminent printed collections on Pennsylvania and regional history, and offers manuscript collections renowned for their strength in 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century history. With the addition of the holdings of [The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies](#) in 2002 (and those of [The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania](#) in 2006 through a Strategic Alliance Agreement), the Society has become a chief center for the documentation and study of the ethnic communities and immigrant experiences shared by people whose American history began more recently-between the late 19th century and our own times. In 2009 HSP formally transferred ownership of its museum collection to the Atwater Kent Museum of Philadelphia.

Project Background

HSP began to direct attention towards providing new methods of access for its collections in late 2009 with the beginning of the Digital Center for Americana project series. The first project in this series focused on acquiring equipment and systems for providing access to digital materials online as well as digitizing and processing 52 Civil War era collections via signpost and MPLP methodologies.

In summer 2010, the second Digital Center of Americana project began. This iteration focused on 21 collections representing the breadth of HSP's ethnic and immigrant history holdings. These collections were chosen not only due to their high research value and lack of digital format, but also to provide comparable test cases for a user study. These collections were processed and digitized in a mixture of processing and digitization levels, which are described below in the Project Goals and Objectives section.

Target Audience

HSP serves a variety of audiences, including grade school, college and graduate students, journalists, filmmakers, artists, publishers and those with a passion for history. However, this project is meant to cater to four target audiences that HSP has identified as its core users:

Scholars – academic faculty members, college students (especially graduate students), and others conducting academic type research

K-12 Educators – teachers, primarily at the middle and high school levels, engaged in teacher training, curriculum development, or supervising primary research by their students

Genealogists and Community Historians – people researching the history of their families or communities outside of an academic setting, as well as people conducting such research for hire

History and Heritage Organizations – Organizations whose mission centers on preserving, documenting, or interpreting history, especially small institutions such as neighborhood historical societies, historic houses, and small history museums

For each visit our library receives in person, we receive more than 106 visits online at www.hsp.org. We expect that the amount of online visitors will increase as projects currently underway expand and improve our online presence.

Project Goals and Objectives

This study will test the effectiveness of different digitization and processing methodologies, and the study findings will be applied to the current backlog of collections. Depending on size, complexity, condition, and level of interest by researchers, each collection is subjected to one of the following:

	Basic Processing (MPLP)	Full Processing
Description	For collections smaller than 1 linear foot or 3 volumes: collection-level record only For larger collections: finding aid with brief background and scope/content notes, box- or folder-level inventory	For all collections: finding aid with detailed background and scope/content notes, folder-level inventory
Arrangement	To series or subseries level, with rough arrangement within series	To folder or item level
Housing	Replace non-archival folders only if damaged or do not fit in box	All unbound materials in archival folders
Estimated processing rate	5 hours per linear foot (2 hours minimum per collection)	15 hours per linear foot

Collections are also subjected to one of the following:

- Digital signposting – a methodology that gives online users the look and feel of a collection through representative documents.
- Mass digitization – digitizing and uploading entire collections that will enable researchers to work with the materials online, and will reduce the physical handling that can damage original documents. Digitization will also improve access by enabling researchers to enlarge and zoom in on hard-to-read documents.

HSP will work with the vendor to develop functional prototypes based on the aforementioned processing and digitization levels. These prototypes will then be used in a series of usability tests in order to determine the level of processing and description - along with the level of digitization and description - necessary to adequately meet user needs in terms of information retrieval. These findings will then be used to revise the user interfaces of our catalog and digital library.

The concepts to be validated are as follows:

- Processing – this will yield insight into the effect on users in regards to using full processing, MPLP, and/or aspects from both methods.
- Digitization – this will yield insight into user behavior and acceptance around signposts versus mass digitization approaches.
- Description – expanding further on full processing versus MPLP, we will discover the level of description required to adequately meet user needs, in-house as well as remote. This is mainly for finding aids (documents that describe what is contained within a specific collection – an example can be found [here](#).) It will determine how the information is presented and used.

Technology Platform Requirements

The following platforms will be used in designing the new user interfaces:

- [CollectiveAccess](#) – the DAMS (Digital Access Management System) for the digital library. It uses a cloud computing infrastructure that allows HSP to dynamically allocate resources based on usage trends.
- [VuFind](#) – the library resource portal for the online catalog. An open source library search engine, it can be customized for HSP’s needs and will be hosted by a cloud computing service provider. Version 1.3 will be released January 30th, 2012.

Vendor Activities and Deliverables

- Development of criteria to help assess and prioritize new user interface elements
- Prototypes of new user interfaces to run usability tests on
- Review the results of the usability tests in light of MPLP vs. full processing and signposts vs. mass digitization
- Lead the implementation of the new user interfaces (with subcontracting firm if needed)
- Compilation in writing a white paper of the results of the usability tests (“lessons learned”) that will be disseminated throughout the archival community

Dissemination

HSP will publicize the project’s results. Our online finding aids and the digital facsimiles stored in our DAMS will be web searchable, and search optimization is part of the plan for a systematic overhaul of our organization’s website over the next two years. We will contribute finding aids and catalog records to the OCLC-sponsored national databases [WorldCat](#) and [ArchiveGrid](#), and to the University of Pennsylvania-hosted Philadelphia regional finding aid repository that is currently in development.

It is our hope that this study will assist the archival community with integrating MPLP and/or signposting methods in their own collection process, provide an understanding of important factors to consider when selecting and prioritizing content to be described, and help overcome the challenges associated with archiving content.

Archival institutions can determine which collections will benefit from the streamlined processes depending on size, condition, number of staff on hand, and funding currently available, amongst other factors; this will aid in the prioritization process of backlogged collections, and may allow institutions to focus more on users rather than collections. The results of this study will also help to guide user interface design decisions to improve the usability of information and access tools.

The vendor will be allowed to publicize their role in the project as well as the results, add it to their online and physical portfolios, and present their findings in online and print articles, blogs, manuscripts and conference sessions.

Proposal Process

Proposal Submissions

Questions Due Date: March 30, 2012, 5:30 PM

Response Due Date: April 2, 2012, 5:30 PM

Contact: Matt Shoemaker, Director of Digital Collections and Systems
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
1300 Locust Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-732-6200 ext. 201
Email: mshoemaker@hsp.org

Proposals that meet the outlined requirements and sent by mail or email to the above contact will be accepted until 5:30 PM, April 2, 2012. **All proposals not received by this date will be deleted/discarded.**

Proposal Format

Completed proposals submitted to HSP must include the following information in the order listed below:

- Cover letter with contact information
- Executive summary
- Brief background of company
- Featured projects
- Client references
- List of key personnel who would be involved in the process and their field(s) of

expertise

- List of subcontractors hired for this project (if applicable)
- Project scope and approach
- Timeline estimate
- List of planned activities
- Pricing summary
- A schedule of costs for providing planning services, data gathering and analysis, usability testing and other miscellaneous costs in a table format

Sample Project Timeline

Deliverable	Begin	Review	Deadline	Launch
Online catalog UI prototypes				
Digital Library UI prototypes				
Usability testing of prototypes				
Review with staff of test results				
Implementation of new UIs				

Sample Project Budget

Deliverable	Number of Hours to Complete	Average Cost Per Hour to Complete	Price
Design			\$
Implementation			\$
Miscellaneous			\$
		Total cost	

Evaluation of Proposals

The contract approved by HSP will include the following elements in the evaluation process:

- Proposed plan of action, including timeline for project milestones (35%)
- Detailed list of costs, broken out by major features or work process (25%)
- Vendor track record, including references and previous projects (20%)
- Timeliness of response (10%)
- Completeness of response (10%)

Special consideration will be given to women- and minority-owned businesses, as well as local businesses.

Vendor Questions

Questions concerning the RFP requirements can be mailed or emailed to the aforementioned contact. Phone calls are also acceptable, though email is preferred. Answers will be given via email unless a phone call is specifically requested. Questions must be submitted by 5:30 PM on March 30, 2012.

Questions must be directed to the attention of:

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RFP Conference Call

A non-mandatory conference call will be held on Thursday, March 1, 2012 at 10:30 AM. This call will recap the RFP as well as the overall archival and digitization processes used at HSP. Vendors will have the opportunity to ask questions. All questions and answers will be recorded and transcribed into a PDF document for distribution.

Notification of Contract Award

The vendor awarded the contract will be notified by mail around April 20, 2012. All other vendors will be notified by mail of the outcome.

Challenges and Disputes

If a vendor would like to challenge or dispute the awarded contract, the dispute must be submitted in writing to the aforementioned contact by May 1, 2012. The vendor must outline the grounds for dispute with supportive information.