Our Americas Archive Partnership: Charting New Cultural Geographies

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Collaboration a Key Concept for the Digital Humanities

DH Twitter Wordle by John Walsh, 6/23/09
“Collaboration” Integral to the Digital Humanities

- 48% of articles in *Literary & Linguistic Computing* between 2004 and 2008 were collaboratively-authored.
- 41 of 116 (35%) abstracts for posters, presentations, and panels given at the DH2008 conference include a form of the word "collaboration."
- 67 of 104 (64%) papers and posters presented at DH 2008 have more than one author.

What Do We Mean by Collaboration?

- **Data**: “Re-use as non-concurrent collaboration”
- **Standards** as collaborative technology
- **Organization**: “a National Collaboratory”
- **Infrastructure/Tools**: “a research infrastructure for collaborative textual processing”
- **Interdisciplinary research**: “collaborations of imaging and preservation scientists, information technology professionals, conservators and researchers”
- **Knowledge production**: “collaborative authoring”

- Quotations taken from DH 2009 Abstracts
The Our Americas Archive Partnership (OAAP)

http://oaap.rice.edu

- Collaboration between Rice (Fondren Library & Humanities Research Center) & U of Maryland (MITH)
- Goals:
  - Digitize unique archival collection
  - Provide common interface between partners’ repositories, enabling additional digital archives to be added
  - Offer tools for organizing, visualizing and sharing items
  - Foster innovative research and teaching
- Supported by $1 million IMLS National Leadership Grant, with additional $1 million in cost share
- Currently in Year 2
Our Americas Archive Partnership: Collaboration and Complexity

- Collaborating among scholars, technologists, librarians, and scholars(technologists)(librarians)
- Collaborating across institutions to develop content and tools
  - Building on open source software
- Developing a framework to federate content from multiple repositories
  - Balancing standards conformance and low barriers to entry
- Enabling scholarly collaboration through social tagging, etc.
Hemispheric American Studies
“What topics and questions become salient if we reconceive our field with the transnational at its center? What roles might comparative, collaborative, border-crossing research play in this reconfigured field?” (Shelly Fisher-Fishkin, 2004)

Characteristics of hemispheric American studies:
- Multi-lingual
- De-centered
- Heterogeneous
- Comparative
- Hybrid
- Fluid
How Digital Research Environments Can Support Hemispheric American Studies

- Access to **open collections** of multilingual research materials from throughout the Americas, *not* organized by categories like “nation”
- “New research **tools** that simultaneously capture spatial and temporal data”: multidimensional, multidirectional, multilayered, dynamic
- “Interactive research **community**” that supports “ongoing, interactive virtual engagement”
- “**Pedagogical** innovation” that engages with the complexity of the Americas

The Partners

- Rice University
  - Fondren Library & Humanities Research Center
  - Digitization, transcriptions, translations, metadata, markup, research modules, scholarly introductions

- University of Maryland
  - Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH)
  - Integration of collections, development of web 2.0 features including social tagging and a geospatial interface

- Instituto Mora, Mexico City
  - Not part of initial grant
  - Digitizing materials relating to the socioeconomic and historical conditions of Mexico
User Studies

- Surveys of participants in 2 NEH Summer Seminars led by Caroline Levander
- Meeting with leading scholars of Hemispheric American Studies, co-sponsored by the Council on Library & Information Resources (CLIR)
- Presentations/demos to scholars at meetings and conferences throughout 2009 to gather feedback
- More formal assessment planned for year 3 of the project
What Scholars Want from OAAP

- Access to wide range of materials
  - Broad geographical & temporal range
  - Diverse media
  - Place content in conversation
- Sophisticated search tools
  - Search tool as “a friendly archivist,” pointing out relevant materials that you weren’t aware of
  - Cross-lingual searching
- Support for collaboration
  - Sharing queries & information
  - Supports collaborative research projects
  - Acknowledges contributors
COLLECTIONS
Based at U of Maryland (MITH)

“texts originally written in or about the Americas from 1492 to approximately 1820”

Project originated in digital anthology prepared for the 2002 Early Ibero/Anglo Americanist Summit

TEI encoded texts
Americas Collection, 1811-1920

- Manuscript & printed materials “documenting the political and cultural relationships between the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, Cuba, Spain, and Portugal”
- Held at Rice’s Woodson Research Ctr.
- Includes:
  - Government documents & decrees, such as constitutions
  - Journals
  - Letters
  - Books
  - Ephemera
Instituto Mora

- Collections documenting social history of Mexico & Latin America, e.g.
  - Latin American independence movements
  - Women’s history

- Collaborative connection: a fellow at Rice’s Humanities Research Center (now faculty member in History Department) is associated with Mora
How OAAP Handles Metadata

- OAAP aims to:
  - Move past nation-based ways of organizing knowledge
  - Bring into view “political and cultural relationships along and across national borders” (Levander 2009)
  - Test different approaches to metadata creation
- OAAP’s metadata approach:
  - All metadata captured as Dublin Core, as well as in TEI Headers
  - Catalogers create Library of Congress Subject Headings
  - Scholars add OAAP keywords
  - OAAP users create their own tags
Library vs. Scholarly Vocabularies

**Library of Congress Subject Headings**
- Mexico -- Foreign relations -- United States.
- Slavery -- Brazil -- History.
- Chile -- Constitution -- 1833.
- Goliad (Tex.)-- Description and travel.

**OAAP Keywords**
- BORDERS
- COLONIALISM
- FEDERALISM
- INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS
- LABOR
- MIGRATION
- SLAVERY
TEI Encoded Texts

- Provide access beyond Dublin Core metadata through TEI-encoded full text
- Markup focused on basic structure (although we use <orig><reg> and <abbr><expan> for manuscripts to enhance searchability and flexibility in presenting content)
- Keep it simple to:
  - Enable digitization of 25,000 pp.+ of text
  - Facilitate participation by other archives
The Multilingual Challenge

- Provide translations from Spanish or Portuguese to English of key documents
- But there is a real desire among scholars for a cross-lingual search interface

Letter from José Martí to the presidents of Cuban exiled clubs in Florida, 3-18-1893

[Electronic Version]

DELEGACION
Del
Partido Revolucionario Cubano

New York, 18 de Marzo de 1893

Sres. Presidentes de los Clubs en el Cuerpo de Consejo de Key West,
Sres. Presidentes:

Por la Secretaría de ese Cuerpo de Consejo llega á conocimiento de la Delegacion la dificultad existente de mediar en la forma individual

[Translation Version]

Letter from José Martí to the presidents of Cuban exiled clubs in Florida, 3-18-1893

Delegation of the Cuban Revolutionary Party

New York, March 18, 1893

Association Presidents on the Board of Advisers for Key West

Dear Gentlemen:

By way of the Office of the Secretary of the Board of Advisers, the Delegation has become aware of the practical difficulty of implementing the assistance plan for the El Yara newspaper, which requires individual
Message of the President of the United States
1849 Gorham Parks, George William Gordon, United States. President (1845–1849: Polk)
Rice Americas Archive, Rice University

Letter from James Cramp, 12-12-1835
1835 James Cramp
Rice Americas Archive, Rice University

Founding of New Sweden
1700–1750 Israel Acrelius
Early Americas Digital Archive, University of Maryland

Character of the Province of Maryland
1650–1700 George Alsop
Early Americas Digital Archive, University of Maryland
How OAAP Federates Content

- Federation enables partners to share content while retaining unique identity
- Offer common search & browse interface to multiple repositories
- Each partner contributes descriptive elements that can map to Dublin Core metadata
- Scholars can add their own keywords via tagging layer
- Harvester collects objects, which are then stored in MySQL database
- Uses a data exchange standard based upon OAI's Static Repository XML model
TOOLS
Beta Temporal Interface

- View search results on timeline
- Uses SIMILE’s Timeline interface
- EADA uses date range; Americas uses a specific year for each item
Beta Geospatial Interface

- Displays items in collection on a Google Map
- Scholars did not want a map displaying current political boundaries, so we used the satellite view
COMMUNITY
Building Community

- Work with scholarly community in defining and developing digital archives
- Set low barrier of entry for other archives to share content
- Provide social tagging interface to enable scholars to
  - Describe resources in their own language
  - Share what they’ve found with others
Journal of George Dunham, 1853

Title: Journal of George Dunham, 1853
Author: Dunham, George F.

These excerpts, taken from a much longer journal, provide a glimpse into the history of slavery in Brazil and some of the parallels that existed between Brazilian and African societies. Slavery had been a part of Brazilian culture almost as soon as European colonization began. This was partly because attempts to enslave the native American population failed. The Portuguese and Spaniards turned to import slaves directly from Africa. The slave trade would continue until 1850 when, following decades of pressure from the English, Brazilians passed the Quebróz Law ending the importation of slaves to Brazil. Because slavery was such a central aspect of the Brazilian economy (slaves accounted for 3 million of Brazil’s 7 million inhabitants), the end of the slave trade did not bring an end to slavery.

Tag Item
Please enter your tag below: [journal]

OK Cancel
Browsing by Keywords

OAAP Keywords

User-contributed keywords
PEDAGOGY
Pedagogic Innovation

- Developing teaching modules based on archival materials using Connexions, an open educational repositories
- Conducting sessions on teaching with the OAAP for AP teachers

Using untranslated materials in research

By: MELISSA BAILAR

Summary: This module explores the value of using untranslated materials in research purposes. Its intended audience includes educators who are native speakers of English and their students. NOTE: TRANSLATIONS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE. VISIT THIS MODULE AGAIN LATER.

Using original documents on the Mexican American War

By: MELISSA BAILAR

Summary: This module will explore how to use original documents on the Mexican American War for research purposes. Its intended audience is undergraduate students.
Challenges

• Figuring out how to incorporate other archives with rich collections but lack of technical resources:
  ◦ How flexible to be in applying standards
  ◦ Who should host and sustain collections?

• Developing metadata framework that doesn’t reinscribe rigid, nation-based epistemologies
  ◦ Beyond bias & hierarchy

• Representing fluidity and movement across space and time
  ◦ Beyond points on a map, fixity
Desired Outcomes

- Allow scholarly examination of American literature from a hemispheric perspective:
  - develop a collection of texts, curricular models and teaching materials that embody a hemispheric approach to the study of the early Americas
  - generate professional and intellectual exchanges among scholars from various fields and from around the world

- Create digitized version of primary sources not previously available to wide range and physically dispersed audience

- Support addition of other digital archives with minimal barrier to entry
Collaborative Possibilities and Challenges

Possibilities
- Scholars contributing keywords & annotations to OAAP to aid discovery
- Collaborative research projects, incorporating multiple skills/ perspectives
- Collaborative scholarly publication
- Collaborative learning, as students explore different perspectives on objects

Challenges: How To...
- Encourage participation
- Validate & cite tags and filter out the noise
- Balance scholarly needs & library standards
- Recognize & reward collaboration
- Make collections components of collaborative environments
- Open up data so that it is useful in multiple contexts
Collaborators

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