

**Interim Performance Report for National Historical Publications and Records Commission
Grant NAR10-DS-50017-10
Implementing Crowdsourcing Transcription for Archives and Documentary Editions
January 31, 2011**

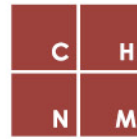
Executive Summary

Since July 1, 2010, the Center for History and New Media has made significant progress on the user testing and development of *Scripto* <scripto.org>, our open source tool for crowdsourcing documentary transcription. We are slightly ahead of our development plan, and have recruited a number of documentary editors and projects to test the tool.

User Testing

As indicated in the proposed work plan, Sharon Leon, Ken Albers (CHNM Web designer) and Jim Safley (CHNM Digital Archivist and Web Developer) conducted three rounds of user interface design testing for *Scripto* during the development of the basic tool. In August, once Safley had sufficiently mapped out the functional requirements for the tool, the *Scripto* team met with the editorial team from the *Papers of the War Department* to review wireframe drawings and possible layouts for the tool's functional web interface. Albers proposed a layout that was quite similar to the design mock-ups submitted with the initial grant proposal, which included a vertical split screen with the digital image to be transcribed in a left window and the editing/transcription window on the right. After interacting with this basic layout the PWD editors expressed their concern about the narrow image viewer and the ways that it would constrain a user's ability to view a whole line of script at once. This critical feedback resulted in the first revision to the tool's user interface.

In September, Albers, Leon, and Safley returned to the editors with a functioning mock-up of the tool, which included a horizontal split screen with the image viewer on the top and the editing/transcription window on the bottom. The PWD editors reacted much more positively to this interface because of the increased width of the image viewer window. They were also quite pleased with the ability to rotate, pan, and zoom the images. During this round of testing, the users offered suggestions about the location of the page navigation and the links to helper materials such as the style guide. Albers and Safley integrated this feedback into the subsequent build of the tools, which they then implemented with the administrative interface of PWD. This implementation represents the third iteration of the initial user testing. We will be collecting ongoing feedback from the editors



over the course of the early part of 2011, in preparation for making the tool available to general users on the PWD site.

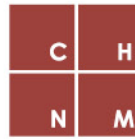
Implementation with the *Papers of the War Department, 1784-1800*

We are happy to report that we are ahead of schedule with the planned implementation of *Scripto* for PWD. Though we initially planned to open the transcription tool to the public in April 2011, we are confident that we will be able to launch that functionality by the end of February. As indicated above, the tool is currently functioning and in place for the PWD editors to test. Additionally, we are moving forward with four steps necessary to allow for public contributions of transcriptions to the PWD site. First, we are undertaking styling and layout revisions to the PWD site to accommodate *Scripto*. Second, we are in the midst of developing an administrative workflow to account for the creation of transcription accounts and the oversight of contributions. Third, we have created a working draft of a transcription styleguide that will support the public in their work. Finally, we are developing a set of incentives and outreach strategies to encourage users to participate in the transcription process with PWD. We see this element of the work as central to the success of crowdsourcing transcription, and we are carefully documenting our choices and their results so as to share them with other projects that would like to adopt *Scripto*.

Outreach

We have embarked on the process of doing outreach for *Scripto*. In September, we launched the tool's website: <<http://scripto.org>>. This website is a central place of information about the tool, its development, and its user community. The site provides periodic updates from the designers and developers on the tools progress. Additionally, the site offers links to *Scripto*'s code base on GitHub, a repository for open source software <<https://github.com/chnm/Scripto>>. The availability of the tool on GitHub means that any interested user or developer can download the code for testing and implementation. Finally, we have secured a twitter account for the tool (@ScriptoTool), and currently have 31 followers. We expect this number to increase as the tool develops a user base.

In December 2010, *Scripto* received press coverage in the *New York Times* <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/28/books/28transcribe.html>>. The article generally dealt with efforts of documentary projects to experiment with crowdsourcing, and did not refer to *Scripto* by name. We regret that the article failed to mention that NHPRC is a major funder of the tool, though it does include a link to the NHPRC website. We have tried, to no avail, to obtain a correction or an addition to the article on this matter. Despite the oversight, the article resulted in eight documentary editors volunteering to test *Scripto* with documentary projects and documentary editing courses. The volunteers include among others Cathy Moran Hajo of New York University and the Margaret Sanger Papers Project, R. Darrell Meadows of the Papers of the Kentucky Civil War Governors DDE and the Kentucky Historical Society, Amy Rudersdorf of the State Library of North Carolina, and Mark Shelstad of the Archives and Special Collections at the University of San Antonio Libraries. We are excited about the widespread interest in *Scripto* as contributing to one element of the larger process of documentary editing.



Center for History and New Media
[Building a Better Yesterday, Bit by Bit]

Overall, we are pleased with the progress of the project and we have high hopes for the coming year. We welcome further input from and discussion with the NHPRC staff as our work continues. Please feel free to contact either of us at any time, should you wish to visit the Center or to discuss developments in digital humanities more broadly.

Sincerely,

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