

Request for Supplemental Funds

We are requesting \$10,000 in supplemental funds for our project "Images of the French Revolution." The reason for the request is to take advantage of technological changes—largely the emergence of the World Wide Web as a key medium of distribution—that have emerged since we originally proposed the project. This supplemental award will allow us to make the entire "Images of the French Revolution" project (with a few small exceptions) available online and for free, which will significantly enhance (and democratize) the impact of the project.

In this era of rapid technological change, two years can be a very long time. When we submitted the proposal for "Images of the French Revolution" in April 1997, the Web was already clearly an important medium, but it did not have the same ubiquity that it enjoys today. For example, many schools—particularly high schools—did not have Internet connections. In addition, most home connections were at 14.4 or at best 28.8. The Web browsers of that period were limited in their ability to display context documents. In that context, to rely centrally on the Web meant to plan something that might be both incompletely available and presented poorly. Finally, we were uncertain at that time whether we could win permission from rights holders to present all our materials online. Nevertheless, we did build some Web experimentation into the proposal, but it was only presented as an experiment--we said that we would place one of four major sections of the project online.

Now with the Web available in most schools and at much higher speeds, the need to present this project online is, we think, very compelling. Doing so will make it much more widely available--and for free. Moreover, improvements in connection speeds and browser capabilities mean that we can do this much better than before (although still not as well as we will do on CD-ROM). And, we have been fortunate in getting legal permissions to post almost all of our materials. So, the only missing ingredient is adequate funds to carry out this vital work. Since much of the necessary work--e.g., editing text documents and cleaning up images--will already be done as part of our preparation of the CD-ROM, creating a full fledged Web version of this project will not be anywhere near as expensive as it would be if we did it from scratch. Nevertheless, the creation of the html pages, the set up of an online database to serve up the documents and images, the programming of Javascript popup windows will incur significant expenses beyond what was already covered in our original proposal. Since most of the production expenses are being handled through our colleagues at the American Social History Project, we have

budgeted the supplemental request as an addition to the existing subcontract to ASHP.

If granted the money, we would be able to proceed quite rapidly to completion of the project. Currently we have completed a very substantial part of the editorial work and are well into the planning for the creation of the CD-ROM. The construction of the web site can follow that process very quickly. We would be aiming to have both Web site and CD-ROM available by late spring 2000 (and portions of the Web site earlier) and are confident that both of these electronic products will be widely used. We have tested preliminary forms of this project in high school, community college, and university classrooms in Virginia, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Nevada, and received very positive reactions from teachers and students. We also demonstrated the "beta" version of the redesigned Web sites to French historians at the recent French Historical Studies meetings; the response was extremely favorable. These reactions convince us that this Web site, CD-ROM, and book will have a broad and lasting impact on the teaching of Western Civilization, World History, and French history. Even more important, the additional funds will allow us to make these important teaching resources available for free to teachers and students across the country.