

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Scholarly Communications and Information Technology Program

GRANT REPORTING COVER SHEET

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Principal Investigator(s) and Title(s)		
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Sustaining Digital Humanities Training Through THATCamp

A Report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
26 March 2014
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Objectives

Our objective is to ensure that thousands of humanities scholars and professionals all over the world are able to learn digital methods cheaply, enjoyably, and well for many years to come by ensuring the survival and flourishing of THATCamp, The Humanities and Technology Camp.

Deliverables

We promised five things for the two-year grant period:

1. To support at least 30 more THATCamps between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2014;
2. To add social networking features to the THATCamp website;
3. To review and expand the help documentation for THATCamp organizers and participants;
4. To hold an event called THATCamp Leadership that will garner support for the THATCamp model from academic leaders; and
5. To establish a volunteer THATCamp Coordinating Council that will assume the responsibilities of the THATCamp Regional Coordinator by March 31, 2014.

Accomplishments

In the first year of the grant period, we have met or greatly exceeded the first three of our five goals. Instead of supporting 30 THATCamps in two years, we have supported or will support 95 THATCamps held or planned between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2014. Of those 95 THATCamps, 58 have already been held as of July 1, 2013, and 37 more are planned for 2013 and early 2014. A searchable and browsable list of THATCamps is available at <thatcamp.org/camps> (note that this list does not currently include THATCamps whose websites are hosted externally, e.g., THATCamp Games at

<thatcampgames.org>. Most THATCamps, as anticipated, do include digital skills training workshops as an integral part of the unconference.

With the help of web developer Boone Gorges and web designer Tammie Lister, we released the first set of social networking features for the THATCamp website network in November 2012 and released the second set in early June 2013. These features include “befriending” other users (there are currently 5364 users on thatcamp.org), “favoriting” blog posts, taking collaborative notes in real time with Participad, searching for previous and upcoming THATCamps by region, subscribing to automatic notifications of new THATCamps by email, seeing a list of all activity across the THATCamp network, and searching for THATCamp users by name. We also redesigned the look of the main THATCamp website, made improvements to the THATCamp Registrations plugin that enables THATCamp organizers to manage unconference registrations, developed three new mobile-optimized themes for THATCamp organizers to use on their THATCamp sites, and enabled automatic creation of THATCamp sites for people who sign up to organize a THATCamp.

In April of 2012, we hired Rebecca Onion (now Dr. Rebecca Onion) as our part-time Documentation Coordinator, and she has conducted several surveys of THATCamp organizers and has written several new pages of THATCamp help documentation. This new documentation, available at <thatcamp.org/help>, includes (but is not limited to) a page listing actual expenditures from previous THATCamps, a page on coordinating a THATCamp with another event such as a large scholarly conference, a page on how to organize and conduct lightning talks, and several pages aimed at THATCamp attendees rather than THATCamp organizers. In addition, Dr. Onion has generated a downloadable ebook of all the THATCamp help documentation. Dr. Onion is currently producing two videos, as well, with footage from previous THATCamps as well as original content: one on how to organize and run Dork Shorts and one on how to manage the on-site session scheduling that is characteristic of an unconference. These videos should be ready within the month.

Our final two goals are on track: we have reserved space, sent invitations, and built a website for THATCamp Leadership, which is scheduled for October 10, 2013. On that date, after the main part of THATCamp Leadership is over, we have scheduled a meeting with the 15 selected THATCamp organizers invited to that event; at this meeting, we will discuss and determine a procedure for electing and sustaining a THATCamp Coordinating Council.

Challenges

The chief challenge of the past year has been a minor one: development of the social features of thatcamp.org has taken more time and money than we thought it would, although we have stayed within our overall two-year budget for personnel and have

released all promised website changes within less than three months of our originally projected date (in early June 2013 rather than by the end of March). Fortunately, writing additional help documents took less time and money than we thought, and so funds for the Documentation Coordinator will not be needed for the second year of the grant period. Moreover, the changes to the website are complete and have been highly successful; the social and note-taking features were much used and much admired at RRCHNM's own THATCamp on June 7-8, and have since been used and admired at THATCamp Publishing 2013 and THATCamp Performing Arts 2013.

We are currently having some difficulty in recruiting academic leaders to come to THATCamp Leadership on October 10, 2013: out of 65 invitations sent, only 22 invitees have so far confirmed their attendance, and most of those who have confirmed are THATCamp organizers who are already THATCamp enthusiasts. (We also learned too late that our chosen date conflicts with a Mellon Foundation staff event.) However, we have another 62 names of alternates to invite from our carefully composed list of graduate deans, executive directors of scholarly associations and state humanities councils, university librarians, museum directors, and foundation officers. In our next round of invitations we will emphasize the names of prominent academic leaders who have agreed to come, including Deanna Marcum from Ithaka, Josh Greenberg from the Sloan Foundation, Max Marmor from the Kress Foundation, and Donald Brinkman from Microsoft Research.

Project Personnel

In July 2013, Dr. Tom Scheinfeldt is leaving the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media to join the faculty of the University of Connecticut and direct the digital strategy of the libraries there. Dr. Amanda French, THATCamp Regional Coordinator, will assume his duties as principal investigator on the grant. These duties include overall responsibility for program vision and implementation and particular oversight of staffing, budgets, technology development, quality control, and THATCamp Leadership planning. Dr. Rebecca Onion, whom we hired as Community Documentation Coordinator, will complete the work we hired her for in September, after which her position will be terminated.

Publications and Blog Posts (selected)

Adams, Jennifer L., and Kevin B. Gunn. "Digital Humanities Where to Start." *College & Research Libraries News* 73.9 (2012) : 536–569. Print. 26 Jun. 2013.

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- Pannapacker, William. "Stop Calling It 'Digital Humanities'." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 18 Feb. 2013. 26 Jun. 2013. <<http://chronicle.com/article/Stop-Calling-It-Digital/137325/>>.
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- Scheinfeldt, Tom, and Monica McCormick. "Invisible College: THATCamp as Scholarly Society." (2012) : n. pag. 26 Jun. 2013. <<https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/ac%3A150609>>.
- Tansey, Eira. "Guest Post: An Archivist at THATCamp New Orleans." *ArchivesNext* 22 Jan. 2013. 26 Jun. 2013. <<http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=3322>>.

Intellectual Property

All code developed for the THATCamp website is publicly available on GitHub at <github.com/chnm/thatcamp-org>. The Participad plugin for WordPress is separately available at its own website at <participad.org>, on GitHub at <github.com/boonebgorges/participad>, and in the WordPress plugin repository at <wordpress.org/plugins/participad>. The THATCamp Registrations plugin is available

on GitHub at <github.com/chnm/thatcamp-registrations>. Links to these repositories are available on the THATCamp website at <thatcamp.org/website>. All the above code is released under the GNU General Public License, available at <<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html>>. All written and video documentation for THATCamp is marked with a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license, available at <creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>.

Future Plans

Our plans for the last six months of 2013 and the first three months of 2014 are to hold a successful THATCamp Leadership; to form an enthusiastic and committed international THATCamp Coordinating Council that meets online at least twice a year; to post the help videos currently in production on how to organize a THATCamp; to write help documentation for Participad; to set up separate code repositories on GitHub and on the THATCamp website for all THATCamp themes and plugins; to incorporate externally-hosted THATCamp websites into the main index of THATCamps; and, finally, once the THATCamp Coordinating Council exists, to phase out the email support given by the THATCamp Regional Coordinator at info@thatcamp.org in favor of public support on the new user forums on thatcamp.org.

In addition, we are thinking about ways to provide better access to the large and ever-increasing body of knowledge produced at and after THATCamp. In a separate project funded by the Sloan Foundation, we have promised to produce a “Proceedings of THATCamp”: once the THATCamp infrastructure is self-sustaining, the Proceedings of THATCamp project may well become the focus of RRCHNM’s future work on THATCamp. Moreover, it seems time to step back from the last few years of THATCamp and engage in some reflection and analysis of the role of THATCamp in the emergence of the digital humanities, or, more broadly, the role of face-to-face conferences and unconferences in the scholarly communication practices of our digital era.

Financial Narrative

Total planned expenditures for the first year of the project were \$117,852; actual expenditures were \$143,364. Expenditures were \$24,512 higher than anticipated, mostly due to higher than expected costs for the CHNM Web Designer and Developer and consultant time to make social networking features available and make other improvements to the THATCamp web network. However, there will not be any personnel costs for the Documentation Coordinator after all in the second year of the grant. The other unanticipated cost was travel for the THATCamp Regional Coordinator to personally attend THATCamps held in various parts of the country. There is a continued large demand for the Coordinator to participate and help these events be successful, but the Coordinator has ceased travel for the remainder of the grant period. Under the supply budget line item, the overage was mostly from the unplanned printing

of stickers to help promote THATCamps. Under the software budget line, the overage is for a necessary purchase of a subscription for security software to help protect the THATCamp website network.