

Summary

Purposes and Goals of the Project

The Center for History and New Media, George Mason University seeks to build an open source tool to enable researchers to contribute document transcriptions and research notes for nearly 45,000 documents comprising the *Papers of the War Department* website <wardepartmentpapers.org>, thus harnessing the power of the community of users to improve the discoverability and usefulness of the archive. Digital archives and documentary projects need a viable solution that lowers both the cost and the investment of staff time involved with transcribing of large numbers of historical documents. Crowd sourcing transcription has the possibility of changing what is possible in the world of digital documentary editions by facilitating faster, more complete, useful work drawing on fewer resources. There will be significant benefits for both the editorial staff and for interested users, whether they are scholarly researchers, students and teachers, or members of the general public. This grant seeks to address these long-term resource challenges facing *the Papers of the War Department* and many digital documentary editing projects.

Plan of Work

July 2010-September 2010: Planning

October 2010-June 2011: Production of the transcription tool and accompanying PHP library

July 2011-December 2011: Authoring the *Guide to Crowd Sourcing Documentary Transcription*

July 2011-December 2011: Implementation

July 2011-December 2011: Evaluation

December 2011-December 2011: Dissemination

Products and Publications

1. An open-source transcription tool that brings together 1) a modified wiki package with versioning, user login and authentication, and the ability for discussion; 2) a based-based document viewer that allows users to zoom in on high resolution images of documents.
2. A CMS adapter interface that allows for the connection of the transcription tool to potentially any content management system (Omeka, Drupal, Wordpress, etc.), allowing both for the call of the document images and the return of the transcription text to the main archive.
3. *A Guide to Crowd Sourcing Documentary Transcription* that provides both technical and practical advice for editors of digital documentary archives who wish to deploy the tool.

Project Personnel

Christopher Hamner, Co-Primary Investigator and Editor-in-Chief, George Mason University, 703-258-9300, (v), 703-993-4585 (f), chamner@gmu.edu

Sharon Leon, Co-Primary Investigator and Project Director, Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, 703-993-3831 (v), 703-993-4585 (f) sleon@gmu.edu

James Safley, Technical Director, George Mason University, 703-993-9277 (v), 703-993-4585 (f), jsafley@gmu.edu

Chris Raymond (Web Designer), George Mason University, 703-835-9039 (v), 703-993-4585 (f), craymon5@gmu.edu

Performance Objectives

- To build an open source transcription tool that will allow users to contribute work to digital documentary editions

- To build a CMS adapter interface that allows that tool to function with standards compliant system
- To implement the tool with the Papers of the War Department project
- To test the tool with three project partners
- To author a *Guide on Crowdsourcing Documentary Transcription* that will provide both technical and practical advice to editors
- To disseminate the open source tool widely to digital archivists