

September 11 Digital Archive <911digitalarchive.org>

Saving America's Treasures grant, PT5019111

Final Report

September 12, 2014

Principal Investigator: Sheila A. Brennan

Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason University

Over three years of this Saving America's Treasures Grant, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (RRCHNM) at George Mason University (Mason) completed its major deliverable, to migrate the *September 11 Digital Archive*, <http://911digitalarchive.org> (*911DA*) to the standards-based, open-source platform Omeka to insure near-term preservation and access to the digital collections within for years to come.

During the grant period, RRCHNM completed the following major tasks that supported the major deliverable of re-launching the *911DA* on September 11, 2014:

1. Survey of *911DA*, which included creating an inventory and metadata crosswalks to insure a complete and proper transfer of every item in the *911DA* along with all associated metadata;
2. Customization of the newest version of *Omeka* software to adhere to structure of *911DA*, including modelling a new database architecture, creating a set of custom item types that represent the unconventional elements of the collection, and using the metadata crosswalks designed in deliverable 1 to write custom scripts for importing data;
3. Migration of original *911DA* data and the merging of independent databases into a new *Omeka* installation on its own new server, tested multiple times to prevent data loss and maintain integrity of the collections;
4. Automated testing and server load testing;
5. User interface design testing and minor design tweaks to *Omeka* theme.

The result is that the *911DA* materials are significantly easier to navigate, browse, and search. Additionally, a range of video collections are available that were not being served previously. The site offers range of data feeds (RSS, ATOM, XML, JSON), and eventually we will be offering API access for researchers and developers who would like to explore the collections in new applications and interfaces.

Throughout the project, Digital Archivist, Jim Safley led the technical team in engineering the technical components of the migration. Safley worked closely with RRCHNM's former Webmaster Ammon Shepherd to prepare and configure the new server where the migration occurred. Safley also worked closely in the first two years of the project with Dan Cohen and Tom

Scheinfeldt, veterans of the *911DA*, regarding the required customizations for *Omeka* and metadata crosswalks. The project team transitioned in 2013 to a new project PI, Sheila A. Brennan, following the departures of Dan Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt from RRCHNM. Brennan managed the final steps of the migration and launch, and implemented necessary web design theme configuration in the new *Omeka* site to ensure that users may easily browse and search through the collection in its new system. Under direction of Brennan, the team conducted end-user testing of *911DA* before re-launching the project and announcing it publicly on September 11, 2014.

We announced the re-launching of the *September 11 Digital Archive* on the RRCHNM blog, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/news/a-new-look-and-improved-access-and-stability-for-the-september-11-digital-archive>, and the digital collections site received over 6,500 unique visitors viewing over 50,000 pages on its debut.

RRCHNM is grateful to the National Park Service and the National Endowment for the Humanities for granting funds through the Saving America's Treasures Grant that made a crucial intervention in saving and stabilizing the *September 11 Digital Archive*. Migrating this collection of over 150,000 digital items to a stable platform has ensured its near-term preservation. RRCHNM can now better care for the *911DA* in the years to come and can better manage changes needed to keep the contents accessible for researchers.

The *September 11 Digital Archive* is a nationally-significant digital collection that is widely used, as evidenced by the millions of page views from people who are accessing the materials each year. It is a central location for the history of September 11 and a place for members of the general public, teachers and students, and scholars to access and reflect upon the historical significance of the events surrounding that late summer morning.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have about this report or the project's final deliverables.

Sincerely,
Sheila A. Brennan
Associate Director of Public Projects
Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media
sbrennan@gmu.edu