

Amigos Fellowship Program - Final Report

Project Title: Discovering Our Local Treasures: Incorporating the New York Heritage Digital Collections Project Into the Common Core Learning Standards

Awardee: Deirdre Joyce, Central New York Library Resources Council

The key objective of this effort was to create assistance, encouragement, and incentives for teachers to create and deposit training plans that would use the rich resources of New York Heritage, especially with the advent of the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. We did see a substantial increase in training plans, but these came entirely from our project assistant hired to work on the project, with no significant contribution from the teachers in the area. This was partially a failure of the project to reach these teachers (more on this below) that was complicated by issues related to the rollout of the new curriculum standards coming from the State of New York's Education Department.

In talking about this project publicly, we believe that we were able to establish a strong basis for a relationship going forward, though as yet - the full objectives of the project are incomplete.

The strategy that was set out to complete the project includes the following:

- **Create a single, interactive synchronous online tutorial (approximately 2 hours in length).** This included one set of presentation slides, one set of participant materials, and one set of instructor materials, including the script. This was completed by Jessica Stewart, the project assistant/contractor who was a second year school library program student at Syracuse University's iSchool. This process was originally conceived of to take three months at the beginning of the process, but the timeline suffered a disruption from an unannounced site redesign, followed by a catastrophic failure of the New York Heritage digital collections server. As a result of the redesign and server failure, the timeline for the beginning of the project was seriously compromised and work on this key activity was postponed until January. The work did take place in an iterative manner (as anticipated in the original plan, but it took longer than anticipated, with a final version not submitted/accepted until July of 2012).

Even with the slides fully completed in 2012, the project was subject to another, more complex disruption due to the challenges faced by New York State educators with the rollout of the Common Core curriculum standards. According to our partners in the school library systems (SLS), this process was confusing and contradictory as the state issued and revised curriculum several times during the initial 2011-2012 school year. The standards began to stabilize in the 2012-13 school year, but - as we brought the completed session to our partners in the school libraries - they had further changes they wanted to make to the tutorial, which would require a substantial overhaul. Unfortunately, this was well past the period for our contractor/project assistant to revise the program, so this was largely left to Deirdre Joyce, the primary applicant for the award. Ms. Joyce will continue to work with SLS directors to align the project with these goals.

In large part, the project suffered timing issues, first with technical difficulties and then, perhaps more profoundly, with administrative issues in both New York State's Education department and our partners in the School Library Systems as they worked to comply with

state-mandated change. We are confident, however, that we have created a solid basis on which to proceed and are optimistic about revisions to come as the educational environment continues to stabilize.

- **Create three informational videos.** The second part of the strategy involved creating video tutorials that would teach users asynchronously. Due largely to the disruptions listed above, this strategy goal was revised (submitted to Amigos in January 2012) and, in its place, Ms. Stewart created a template for lesson plans as well as **six new sample lesson plans**. She also created revisions to four lesson plans that needed to be brought into compliance with the Common Core standard. It is our hope to create these videos in the future.
- **Up to nine scheduled tutorials sessions** were to be given, with a minimum of three. We delivered two sessions, both of which suggested revisions to the finished product. The revisions were made, but - as indicated above - the continued changes in the standards deployment from the state required additional changes after the fact. A third session was scheduled, but was not conducted due to a lack of registrations. In conversations with our project partners at the School Library Systems, we learned that such a significant overhaul in the educational standards left little room for a new initiative (such as ours) though it did fit well with the stated Common Core objectives. Despite this challenge, Ms. Joyce was able to develop some relationships with initiatives like Project LookSmart (out of Ithaca College), with which there may be an opportunity for future collaboration. This was an unintended outcome, but a positive development overall.
- **Three scheduled sessions** that introduced the project to our partners at the school library systems did take place. They will continue to work with us to revise and update the programs as we move forward.
- **A poster was created for the Common Core regional conference in May 2014.** CLRC presented the project and lesson plans to educators during this time. It will continue to maintain a presence at all local school library conferences going forward. Ms. Joyce also presented on this initiative at the MARAC New York Caucus meeting in the fall of 2013.
- Review and follow up. As a result of the disruption outlined above, the review and follow-up was severely compromised. While we did use feedback from some of the initial sessions to revise the synchronous tutorial

Additional thoughts.

We feel very confident that this is a good product, but rather than do our planned rollout during what was to have been the second year of the project, we found ourselves in a state of continued revision after the departure of the project assistant, which largely blocked our planned deployment of the training materials. As we continue to work with our school library systems, we feel confident that this will be a workable program, we were just unable to complete the deployment during the planned period.

We do consider the project a “successful failure” in that we learned from some mistakes (never plan a project at the beginning of a new, untested educational initiative as that is bound to change), and that we do have all the project deliverables, including six project plans posted to the website and a synchronous training program that should soon be ready for deployment.