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Local history collections in public libraries provide access to valuable historical materials related to a specific geographic area. The World Wide Web has presented the collections with an innovative way to communicate to patrons the services the public library can offer through its local history holdings. This paper examines the amount of information and the presentation of information that local history collections in public libraries are offering to patrons in fifty of the most populated areas in the United States. The population and budget per capita of each of the libraries is examined to determine if these aspects have an impact on the effectiveness of the websites.

Headings:

Archives -- Technological Innovations.

Internet -- Public libraries.

Libraries -- Special collections -- Local history.

Local history -- Electronic information resources.

Public libraries -- United States.

MOVING OUT OF THE CORNER AND ONTO THE WEB: AN EVALUATION OF WEBSITES CREATED FOR LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by
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Contents

Introduction

Local history collections exist to preserve and provide access to resources describing the history of a specific geographic area. They cover subjects ranging from political strife to family histories and everything in between to create a comprehensive story of a community's past. Universities, museums and public libraries are three common institutions that maintain such collections. Public libraries in particular have a responsibility to the local community and its history. That responsibility can generate a demand for local history materials from the individuals who finance its continuing existence.

The size and diversity of a library's population can logically impact the success of its local history collection. With more individuals and groups to draw materials from and more users with an interest in their community, the local history collection can include materials from different ethnographic, socio-economic or religious groups. A library that serves a small population would have fewer organizations and different types of groups to collect for and from to create adequate holdings. The budget per capita of a library can also influence the depth and effectiveness of local history collection within a public library. Such collections are an added service to the overall main collections containing printed fiction and non-fiction materials. A higher income per capita would allow for more funding to be distributed to the local history collection.

Collecting materials on the local area is meaningless without communicating the availability of those resources. Traditionally local history collections published flyers,

gave talks to local groups and created exhibitions (Phillips 107). These promotional tools worked well in the past, but the internet has superseded traditional methods in publicity. Since the early 1990s, the World Wide Web (WWW) asserted itself as the new and innovative way to transmit information in a quick effective manner. Once only computer specialists, now Web users range from elementary age students to the elderly. For many individuals today, the Web is the first place to look during an information search. That reason alone provides the motivation for local history collections to design web pages that will reach out to users and increase awareness in the community.

Public libraries have realized the need to create a web presence in order to reach their patrons. Raymond Irwin and Chandra Prabha, examined the web presence of public libraries between 2001 and 2002. They found that 77% of public libraries had at least a basic degree of web presence in 2002 (Irwin and Prabha 65). Though they found that public libraries are using the WWW to publicize their services, these statistics do not necessarily indicate that local history collections are highlighted or even mentioned on these websites.

Literature on the creation of websites boomed in the last decade; however, very few of these sources have been directed to local history collections. There are books and articles written on the design of library websites, but these sources do not provide guidelines or recommendations specifically written for local history collections. The writings that discuss local history collections and the internet are largely concerned with digitization. Digitization is an important concept in the local history field, but at this time it is not feasible for the majority of collections. The creation of an excellent website is easily within reach for most local history collections.

This paper will present recommendations for website construction in local history collections held by public libraries. Through an analysis of literature available on traditional local history collections and website design, important content and presentation elements are identified and described. After an initial random sample revealed that few public libraries in small towns and rural settings had web pages for their local history collections, the final sample was drawn from public libraries in the most populous cities in 2003. An analysis is also conducted to determine if population size or budget per capita of public libraries has a correlation to the success of the local history collection web page.

Background:

Local history collections, as present in a public library, are usually the creation of one particular individual in the community or an organization, but the benefits stretch far and wide (Nichols 8). The motivation for Americans to write local histories to perpetuate their cultural memory and identity has remained true through these collections. By understanding what occurred in the past, a community can reflect on traditions, good and bad, and contribute to a better future (Conrad 4).

Local histories have documented not only local communities, but regional and national history as well. They play an integral role in representing the history of the United States. Writing and collecting local histories in the U.S. has risen, fallen and risen again in the last century and a half. The U.S. Centennial in 1876 was the catalyst for local history collection. At this time, President Ulysses S. Grant urged the nation to document their communities. In his mind, this would reflect the nation's history as a whole. A

heightened interest in history began to take shape in academia as well, rivaling traditional

subjects such as philosophy and the natural sciences (Kammen 18).

       The immigration influx that occurred in the late nineteenth century contributed to

the popular trend of local history. Americans feared a loss of their culture, and through

local history, they sought to preserve what they considered their real history. Local

history works at this time documented the original settlers, values of the community and

the prominent citizens who played a role in creating the history of the area. Through these

works, American born citizens felt they were securing their way of life before immigrants

could alter their society (Kammen 19).

       A significant decline in local history occurred between the turn of the twentieth

century and the Great Depression for several reasons. When women became involved in

the writing and the publication of local history works, many men felt that the field

became less professional, and they left to pursue other interests. Without men involved,

the publishers for local histories feared a decline in demand for the works and were

unwilling to continue printing these materials. The "Roaring Twenties" contributed to the

decline of local history in its ideology of breaking traditions and looking to the future.

Rather than motivating individuals to find their identity in the past, the common ideal

was for identity to originate from within the individual (Kammen 28-30). A resurrection

in the 1930s came from the newspaper industry. Newspapers found that reporting local

history stories entertained the public and filled unused space in the issues. Readers found

the stories intriguing and began to perform local history studies on their own once again

(Kammen 31-32).

During the 1960s, academic institutions began offering classes geared toward community history, and the Bicentennial in 1976 stimulated an even greater interest in local history for the nation as a whole (Phillips 2). Local history programs on public access channels or the <u>History Channel</u> prompt individuals to seek out information that could be found in a local history collection. This popularity is often coupled with the study of genealogy. Genealogy is the tracing of one's ancestors. Spurned on by movies like Alex Haley's <u>Roots</u> and organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution who require documentation of one's lineage, genealogy has drawn many researchers into local history collections (Conrad 173).

Materials

To have an effective local history collection, libraries collect a range of informational resources for patrons to consult. The combination of primary sources and secondary sources allow patrons to research the community's past through eye witness accounts and retrospective analysis (Conrad 1). No two collections are the same, but there are certain types of materials that are frequently held by local history collections. Published books, newspapers, serials, and city directories often fill the shelves of the collections. Indexes in many of these works offer quick reference tools to find information within the source. They can all be easily used by any age group with minimal help from staff. For older newspapers and city directories, the library could include microfilmed versions to prevent damage to the original print copies. This type of material requires microfilm readers and instruction from a staff member to access the information, but allows the information to remain available for a longer period of time (Phillips 5).

Other materials include maps, building drawings, audio tapes, artifacts and manuscript collections. All of the items mentioned can be part of an archival collection held by the repository. These are a central asset to the collection providing first hand accounts of social trends or important people and events in the community's past. A personalized view of history and human relations that cannot be found anywhere else can be viewed through these materials (Thompson 32). These items can vary in size, specialized treatment, and resources required preserving them, but they add to the historical experience a local history collection can give to its patrons.

Today, electronic resources are being added to the list of information sources available for users in local history collections. Databases on vital records, historic photographs and editions of historical newspapers provide similar information to what traditionally has been found in local history collections. These can provide quick searches on personal names or events that took place in the community. This newer technology is not as common as the more traditional print and archival materials, but is quickly becoming a reference point for many users.

Users

In the past, the traditional users of local history collection have been historians (Kammen 21-22). Now that general term is expanded upon and more specific types of audiences are described as potential users of local history collections. James Conrad indicates that users can be professional or amateur historians, experienced genealogists or beginners, members of political organizations, educators and everything in between (5-6). Individuals seeking information on the history of their homes could consult the local

history collection to discover who once lived at the home. Non-profit organizations could need information on what programs have been successful in the past with their community. Middle school students might turn to the local history collection for a class project on a prominent citizen from fifty years ago. There are many different types of users who could benefit from the materials and services offered by the collection.

The two largest identifiable groups of users are genealogists and historians. Genealogists are a continually growing group as seen through the increasing number of websites and organizations created to cater to their needs. For genealogists, almost any resource in a local history collection could be used to discover information on a part of their research. In Wendy Duff and Catherine Johnson's study on the information seeking patterns of genealogists, they found that the final stage of genealogical research is learning about the society in which an individual lived. The other two stages, identifying related individuals and finding specific information about those individuals could easily utilize sources in a local history collection (83-84). City and telephone directories offer name searches, maps indicate the locations of local cemeteries, and local histories provide context for the community of deceased family members. All of these materials located in one place present genealogists with convenience and perspective on the community.

Historians, professional or amateur, use the materials found in local history collections. With so many sources covering political, social or economic trends in the area, a local history collection presents the historian with varying viewpoints and types of materials. In a study associated with the Primarily History project, history professors from U.S. universities were surveyed and interviewed on the types of materials they used

and the way in which they went about finding those materials. Newspapers, unpublished correspondence and published pamphlets are listed as the three "most often used" materials. The sources that were "the most important" on average to these historians were newspapers, unpublished correspondence and diaries or journals (Tibbo 19). All of these materials could be consulted in a local history collection and incorporated into their research. To determine where to look for materials, the three most common methods used by historians were citation analysis, consulting bibliographies and using printed documentary editions (20). When it came to electronic methods of searching, 63% of the historians visited repository websites. The junior faculty members involved in the study reported a higher use of the Web in their information seeking process (23). These historians are considered professional rather than amateur; however, because these are educators in the study of history, their processes directs the way that local history collections should collect and disseminate historical information for a large audience base.

Public Libraries and Local History Collections

Public libraries have included local history collections since the turn of the twentieth century. The New York Public Library has maintained a collection of local history materials since 1910 (Phillips 7-8). For public libraries, local history collections can range from an extension of another service offered by the library, to an entire floor of a building well staffed with information specialists (Phillips 8). Each collection is as unique as the public it serves.

Public libraries are considered a "perpetual, permanent" institution created to provide information to a specific geographic area (Conrad 7). The general public can feel that these entities will last for generations and that the materials in them will be safe and accessible for as long as is possible. Karen Balas points out in her article that all public libraries should keep the goal in mind that they are in existence to contribute to the community in which they serve. With this in mind, it is her beliefs that every public library should reflect the community's past as well as present (Balas 40).

Public libraries must comply with the demands of their patrons. If there is little or no interest expressed from the public on having a local history collection, then few resources would be collected on this topic. For some public libraries, this means that the local history collection might require only a few shelves in the space of the general collection. If the public desires more materials on history of their community, then the local history collection could encompass an entire floor of the library building. Even if there is one person who donates a large collection of works to the library, it is only through the commitment of the community and the library that the overall collection can manifest into a large body of literature and useful works.

With the vast degree of differences in sizes of collections, the staff sizes will vary accordingly to meet the needs of the materials. Some collections will have paid staff managing the collection development, preservation and usage of the materials, while others might only have a volunteer assisting with the materials. Since the local history collection is only a part of the overall mission of the public library, hiring and training staff to work mainly or only on the local history materials will be a reflection of the budget and needs of the patrons. Volunteers might be retired librarians, but the inclusion

of library staff can give the public library administration more control over the state of

the collection (Phillips 121-122).

Urban Settings

During the 1930s, the history profession saw a rise in documenting urban centers

across the nation. Local historians already saw the potential in recording and collecting

information on all types of cities, but this shift for professional historians in general gave

the local history profession a revival. Historians studied changes over time within the

urban areas and the aspects of the communities that remained the same while enduring

economic, social and political shifts. Prior to this time, the local histories were written in

such a style to memorialize and evaluate only the positive aspects of the area. The new

arena of study asked for a balanced look at what happened with communities, how

organizations contributed to the overall society and how national events impacted social

groups (Kammen 33).

In the following decades, this paradigm shift defined a new way of thinking about

communities and their cultures. Urban studies is now a field of investigation with serials

and books published to discuss popular and historical trends in highly populated areas. It

augments the subjects and resources applicable to local history collections in

metropolitan areas. With more people, there is a higher likelihood for having diverse

communities that reflect the popular trends and debates that once occurred in the area and

urban studies professionals examine those issues.

Not only is there more written about urban areas, there are more records generated

by heavily populated centers. Individuals in such areas will have documented their own

life story which might contain primary source information on the city and contribute to the understanding of attitudes and events. Large cities often have more newspapers, newsletters, and government records that could be acquired by local history collections and frequently be requested for reference questions (Conrad 33).

Public libraries in urban centers do not necessarily have more money to spend on special collections. Several metropolitan libraries have many different special collections, and the local history collection is dependent upon the resources allocated to the library as a whole. This is based on the amount of money derived from the city, county, state and federal levels. More people funding the library through taxes also means that there are more people to provide information for and more demands to meet. The children, adult fiction, and nonfiction departments most likely would still require the majority of the attention from the library. Higher per capita budget implies that more funds are given to special collections, but the community must support the collection to receive such funding. Without their explicit encouragement, the library could feel that money is better served in other departments.

Disseminating information

Regardless of the amount of materials held by a local history collection, the library must actively work with the community to create an awareness of the research value and informational attributes the materials they possess. Faye Phillips discusses the idea that librarians or any individuals managing a collection need to do both outreach and public relations to generate success. She differentiates the two by stressing that outreach entails educating possible users on the types of materials available and proper use of

those items. Publicity, or public relations, is the advertisement of the collection to a wide audience without incorporating education techniques. These logically go hand in hand and one might argue that they are almost interchangeable. The common public relations and outreach mediums for local history collections once were newsletters, journals, brochures, newspapers and public appearance (Phillips 99). Television and radio are considered two additional modes of communication when they are feasible to the collection (Nichols 117).

A relatively new type of technology should be added to this list. The World Wide Web (WWW) offers a searchable medium for researchers to locate information quickly and on their own time. "A library's website is no longer an add-on service, but has become the library's presence to more and more users." This is a statement found on the first page of *Web Site Design with the Patron in Mind* (Davidson and Yankee 1). The statement applies to more than just the overall institution of a library.

For over a decade the Web has grown and become the major source of information for millions of Americans. People see it as the easiest way to find what they are looking for quickly. In a study done in 2003, twice as many participants said that they used only the internet to find information than those only using the library as a source of information (Irwin and Prahba 62). This statistic impresses onto the staff members responsible for publicizing the local history collection that without reaching out to members of the community through the Web, they could lose their place as information facilitators.

Dr. Elizabeth Yakel discusses in her article "Listening to Users" that often users depend upon other professionals to point them to an archival repository to locate

information. It is not always apparent in institutions where unique materials could be, but the searching capabilities on the internet can act as a new shortcut to specific sources (116). It can act as a tool for expressing where possible informational sources are without the information seeker first locating a general librarian before reaching the special collection.

Public libraries already have a considerable investment in the internet. In a survey conducted in 1994, it was shown that 21% of public libraries were connected to the internet and by 1996, the total was up to 44%. However, in 1997, only 11% had their own websites accessible for the public to reach from their homes. Those websites ranged in content from a picture of the library with the hours of operation to having and online catalog and online reference communication (Champelli and Rosenbaum xxii). Providing connections to the internet is still a goal for many public libraries as seen through a study done by researchers at Florida State University. They found that 99.4% of public libraries had internet connection in 2004 (Bertot, McClure, and Jaegar 5). It seems obvious that if a library realizes the need for facilitating the use of other websites, they would recognize the importance of having a Web presence themselves.

Many professionals in the field are well aware of the impact the Web has on libraries and that libraries can have on the Web. Local history librarians and archivists can use the Web to create unique and accessible exhibits to reach out to a large audience who work primarily through computers (Glogoff and Glogoff 16). There are several books available specifically for librarians to design and manage their own websites. Archivists such as William Landis have also written articles concerning archival presentation on the Web. Landis wrote an article in 1995 addressing issues that were

present in archival websites. He discussed the basic features found on the web pages and some topics that should be considered to improve web pages for archival repositories. Of the four websites, none were created by local history collections in public libraries, but they did discuss themes central to special collections (Landis 129-147). Combining literature written on public libraries, special collections and archives can give the local history collection a comprehensive idea of what requirements need to be met from all sides in creating a good website.

Howard Falk discussed several library websites in his article "Projecting the library onto the web." He witnessed that special collections will vary with the amount of information they present to the world without many commonalities between the sites. Creating standards and guidelines have been a trademark of the information profession for the past few decades. It is understandable that in 1999, professionals were still trying to understand what users wanted online and how they could best provide that information. By 2004, information repositories understood more fully how to communicate with researchers online. Dr. Elizabeth Yakel and Jihyun Kim presented a website evaluation they conducted in 2003-2004. They found that the websites of twelve archives covered by the Midwest Archives Conference had consistent layouts between web pages, used similar labeling systems to aid researchers in identifying helpful content, and had focused on specific user groups. The websites were overall more attractive in their presentations than the websites the researchers had witnessed in years prior to the study (50-53; 60). This study focused solely on historical societies and state archives rather than public libraries, but indicated that there was a movement underway for collections of historical materials to present information clearly to their users.

A study on the public libraries in Kentucky revealed that there is a better chance for libraries in areas with a higher per capita budget to create and maintain a website. The study was conducted in 2004 and the researchers only examined official library websites in the state of Kentucky and compared their web presence with the amount of income available to the library (Ashman and Sharp 9). Population is also a factor to be considered in analyzing Web presence. Irwin and Prabha discovered that the larger the population size of a library, the higher the likelihood would be for a website to exist for that library (67). These elements combined with the impact that funding and population size has on the extent of a local history collection could predict that the higher the population and budget per capita a public library has, the more likely it will be that the local history collection will have a good Web presence.

Information Elements

Using literature written about local history collections, general website design and library specific website design, the researcher decided upon the content and presentation elements to evaluate the websites. Also, the websites of five well known local history collections were viewed to get a fuller understanding of how much information could be expected from the evaluations.

Basic Information

The website capabilities will vary between institutions largely based on available resources. The very basic components that a website should have are discussed in this section. These are elements that a user could discover easily by a phone call or a brochure located at a reference desk in the main collection.

The **hours of operation** should be clear and easy to locate on the page. This could be the only information the individual is looking for, and they should not have to search heavily for it or resort to calling the library to discover the hours of operation. Often, the hours of a special collection differ from those of the regular, main collections. Materials can be harder to locate or use in a special collection, and the library might adjust the temporal availability for that reason. To protect the order and physical strength of archival collections, they are commonly held in a location restricted to staff members, and their assistance is required in producing and monitoring the use of the materials (Conrad 15). Depending on the available staff for the collection, it simply might not be possible to always have a librarian or volunteer available all of the time. Patrons would need to know that there will be someone to provide assistance for those items. If the local history collection is available during the same hours as the main collection, then it should be explicitly stated on the collection's Web page.

Special collections can be held in separate rooms or floors, away from the main collection. In cities or counties where several branches cater to the needs of the community, only one might have a local history collection, and the patrons are uninformed as to which one it is. By including the physical location of the collection on the website, the library is providing critical information for a new user and welcoming them to visit.

Another concept that is required for a basic web page is **contact information**. Apart from patrons who can easily visit the library, users need to know who and how to discover information from outside of the library building. Telephone numbers and mailing addresses are essential components of the contact information. Since the patron is

looking online for this information, an email address is extremely helpful. The researcher

obviously has some basic internet experience and could find that electronic

correspondence is better for his or her needs. It would be easy for that individual to send

an email to the library while viewing the page about the collection. Including the name of

the individual to contact allows the communication to become more personalized, and the

librarian is better able to discern the information needs of the patron.

Mission statements are encouraged in all type of information repositories

including local history collections. For the local history collection, the mission statement

should compliment and fall within the mission of its public library. The purpose or

mission of the collection can convey to the researcher whether or not the subject or

materials they need are within the goals of the collection (Phillips 12-13). Placing the

mission statement on the web page can be easily done as a portion of the page that

discusses general information on the collection.

Collecting policies compliment the mission statement by stating what must be

acquired by the library to fulfill the directives in the mission statement. They can include

the objectives of the collection, what criteria the materials have to meet to become a part

of the collection, and who has the responsibility for the ultimate selection choices

(Conrad 27-28). A detailed collection development policy will describe for the librarian

and the user what materials should be accessible in the collection (Phillips 10). The

advantages of allowing the user to view the collection statement are facilitating the patron

to recommend appropriate materials that the library might have been unaware of, guiding

the users on subjects that could be fully researched at the repository and explaining what

donations would not be acceptable for the collection.

The resources in these collections require special handling and **use policies**. This type of policy instructs the user on what can or cannot be done with the materials. Often, none of the resources are allowed outside of the library to ensure that all users can view the materials upon their visit. Also, copyright and photocopying restrictions are in place to prevent the destruction of the intellectual and physical properties of the works (Phillips 86-96). Many online viewers might not be aware of the special limits they face in using the holdings of the collection and could be unprepared for the amount of time that must be spent in the reading room to gather information from the resources.

The materials held within local history repositories can come in a plethora of formats, and the **description of materials** on the website is the best way for researchers to assess the collections possible uses. A basic list of "Newspapers, pamphlets, directories, etc" will at least give the researcher an idea of the formats he or she will find on location. It is even better for collections not only to indicate the formats, but to include titles, dates, and geographical areas of the works (Yakel 117). With this knowledge, the researcher can compare the holdings in the collection to their own particular needs.

Local History or Archival Specific Information

Subject guides are also an excellent way of sharing knowledge on how to find materials in the collection. These could include materials in both the main collection and the special collection and show users the benefit of combing types of sources for study (Wilson 57). These are not necessarily a new idea to local history collections. Harold Nichols, in his work *Local Studies Librarianship* published in 1979, advocated librarians create these for patrons, and for themselves, as reminders of searches they had already performed (106-107). By placing these online, researchers can see the benefits of the

collection on a particular topic without doing several catalog searches and are introduced to available materials in unconventional formats such as audio tapes or manuscript collections. Also, hyperlinks to resources outside of the library can be included directing patrons to trustworthy websites.

Web-based instruction is a concept that has become more popular in recent years. It is an essential tool, or set of tools, that a professional can construct to educate users on concepts of importance (Wilson 55). Tutorials are a form of web-based instruction that are commonly interactive and can educate users in fun, quick ways. It is also a good way to show users that the library wants to offer more than just their physical holdings, they want to help the user become more confident in searching and using the materials (Wilson 59). Tutorials can take a lot of time and effort to construct, but local history collections can bypass this by including a hyperlink from their website to a tutorial created by another repository on the use of materials. The "Manuscript Research Tutorial" at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and the Yale University "Manuscript and Archives Online Tutorial" provide a comprehensive look at what are in such collections and how to use those materials. Both of these include references to their own collections and some location specific information, but by explaining to the user that these are the same types of materials, the user can still acquire more understanding than he or she had before examining the tutorial.[1]

Manuscripts and archival collections are especially difficult to handle on the web page. Listing the titles of the collections is acceptable, but often that will not tell researchers nearly all that they need to know. Providing a short description of the

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[1] To view the "Manuscript Tutorial" at UNC Chapel Hill visit: http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/manuscripts/ ; To view Yale University's "Manuscript and Archives Online Tutorial" visit: http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/tutorial/tutorial.htm.

collection along with subjects addressed, noteworthy names included in the collection and dates that it encompasses can present a much richer understanding of the information available. **Finding aids** and the newer Encoded Archival Description (EAD) are the best modes of communication for the collections. They describe the creator or creators and detail the contents to enable patrons to search the collection without handling the materials.

The literature shows that archivists have had a very positive reaction to finding aids placed online. It saves time, money, and effort on the part of researchers and the librarian. For the researchers, they do not have to take an unnecessary trip to a repository, spend money on a photocopy of the finding aid being sent to them or pay for long distance phone calls. The librarian can spend less time photocopying and time on the phone with researchers (Altman and Nemmers 124). The easiest way for archival repositories to include finding aids on the Web is to create PDFs. These are not as user friendly as HTML, XML or SGML, but providing the information in any form is better than excluding the finding aids.

Donations can make it seem as though collections appear within the repository without any effort on the part of the library, but that is hardly the case. Librarians, and archivists, employed by the institution need to create a working relationship with community members to acquire collections that will hold real value**. Donor information** is a valuable asset to have on the web page. For libraries that have to search out materials from the community, it can be a tool to express to patrons what materials are considered desirable to the collection. On the other hand, if a repository is often approached about materials to be given to the library, this can be a good way to inform the public on what

materials do not fit within the scope of the collection (Conrad 26-32). The library should also include specific details such as who to contact for potential donations, what formats are acceptable, and the guidelines that the repository has for the conditions of the materials.

Along those same lines, communicating to the local community about **volunteer opportunities** available can invite new interest in the collection and increase the availability of materials in the collection. There are many libraries that have a link from their homepage to "volunteer opportunities." This is good, but providing information on volunteering with the local history collection might offer different jobs than in the main collection. Volunteers can assist in vertical file organization and maintenance, reference work, collection processing and presentations to the community (Conrad 33). For individuals that like to work with older materials or those with a special connection to the community, local history presents a mutually beneficial situation for the library and the individual. This is not a concept that would be helpful to potential patrons located outside of the general area of the library, but it does aid in establishing stronger relations between the collection and the community which it serves (Phillips 111).

Electronic Information

The Web provides opportunities to library collections beyond supplying researchers with information on materials held in the physical repository. The collection can educate and facilitate good research methods from the computer screen. **Hyperlinks** are the most common electronic elements that a collection can include on their own web page. The internet is full of unreliable historical accounts that appear to be legitimate.

The local history collection can provide links to websites they have evaluated and found to be historically correct (Barber 147).

Linking to other historical organizations in the area can also be beneficial for the local history collection for two reasons. The first reason is to provide researchers with alternative collections that contain similar types of information sources like those held by the local history collection in the public library. Especially with unique archival materials, another repository could hold a collection that includes information not present in the public library's holdings. The second reason is to build good relations with those collections. That professional relationship could already exist outside of the public eye, but in displaying to the world that the collections acknowledge one another can solidify that relationship. The mutually beneficial relationship will promote users from other repositories to be directed to the public library for additional research.

Databases are another electronic method to disseminate historical information to patrons. These can include obituary databases, census records and marriage records. Subscriptions to databases are often held by the public library to databases created by other organizations and can be accessed via a library card number (Wilson 75). Regardless of who created the database, these can allow for users to perform quick searches for names of individuals and events. These can lead to other clues or sources for researchers to investigate within the collection. Often, genealogists and historians are trying to find a simple name and databases can make this process quicker and easier than searching through other records (Conrad 6).

The **digitization** of documents, photographs and oral histories has become a growing trend in the field. In fact, the majority of recently written articles on local history

collections in public libraries focus on particular institutions that have chosen to digitized objects and present them online. Depending on the resources available, a local history collection could do this, and it would give the distance users an easy way to investigate the collection without having to travel or pay for photocopies. Even for local users, this is a much faster way to access images from their homes or businesses. If the collection has the ability to create and maintain those images, they can be used to entertain and create interest in their collection.[2]

With the vast amount of information available on the internet, displaying examples of materials to patrons enriches their experience with the web page and increases their curiosity of what resources are available (Falk 395). Images of documents, audio files, or photographs are considered "sticky content" and the content keeps users involved in the web page. The "sticky content" gives users the chance to sample what is held by the collection and to connect with the materials before actually visiting the repository. The images can be low resolution scans for the purpose of presentation. High resolution and master copies would be important in large scale digitization projects designed to produce research quality images. Used for the purpose of showcasing, the materials could be scanned at a lower resolution. These can increase the interest of a user not necessarily interested in informational content (Wilson 41-42).

Presentation

Deciding on appropriate content is only half the battle to creating a good local history collection website. The presentation of that material is just as vital in

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[2] For more information see Matthew Kern's "Digital Neighborhoods: An analysis of local history materials in the digital world." Masters paper, UNC Chapel Hill, 2002.

communicating to local and long distance patrons. From usability studies performed in libraries and from website design literature, there are common trends and features that are considered good Web design techniques.

The first important concept to keep in mind is that a website cannot benefit anyone if it cannot be found. Search engines on the Web use different methods to return a list of results on a particular search. Currently there are thousands of search engines that are available to users (Schlein 81). It is believed that search engines provide access to less that twenty percent of web pages currently available. The search engines use crawlers to scan the Web for pages and then ranks them according to specific criteria decided upon by the creators of the database. Before a web page can appear as a result from a search, it must be indexed. This is the categorization stage of the process whereby the database will allow for retrieval. The decision of relevancy of results to a search query can be based upon the number of pages that link to the desired result, hubs, or authorities (Schlein 83-84).

The location of the link to the local history collection should be clear from the public library's homepage. If there is no link for it off of the homepage, patrons must search through several links to find information on the local history collection. When the link is within two pages of the homepage, there is a better chance that a patron will find it than if it was hidden under four or five pages.

In organizing the content elements for a particular repository, libraries should consider the four concepts of usability discussed by Susanna Davidson and Everyl Yankee. The first three concepts were original conceived of by the International Standards Organization, but the fourth is an addition by these two authors. The first is the

effectiveness of the presentation. Can the patron find what they need to answer their question? This is the most basic element and requires presenting information in a manner that would be logical to a user. The second concept is the efficiency of the search. This is a measurement of the degree of difficulty the patron had to overcome to find the information. Satisfaction, how accepting the patrons are of their results, is the third concept. Patrons need to know if they discovered the best information possible. The addition Davidson and Yankee made to the concepts was learnability. This relates to how easy it is for patrons to learn how to achieve their goal. If the site is well organized and designed, all of these factors should be addressed. (Davidson and Yankee 11)

Information is only valuable if it is usable. Websites that are full of great content could prove to be worthless if no one can find what the need. This is why the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency are so important. For the library to have both effectiveness and efficiency, it would have to include good content and use simple language. Avoiding verbose language allows for patrons to identify terms they are searching for easily and they do not have to scan over paragraphs of unnecessary statements. Direct language keeps the user interested and prompts them to continue looking at the website (Norlin and Winters 13). On a computer screen, there is only so much information that can be presented and users do not want to scroll through several screen lengths (Norlin and Winters 15). Providing links to different topics addressed on the page will allow the user to jump straight to the topic they need without becoming frustrated with the organization of information.

Layout for the web page or pages should be consistent with the other pages of the public library site. This takes into consideration Davidson and Yankee's learnability

concept. Once a user has become familiar with the other pages of the library, they will be accustomed to the arrangement of links and the presentation of information. Patrons will waste less time and comprehend concepts on the page more quickly with pages that share the same background, font schemes, and navigational tools as the library's homepage (Wilson 33; Norlin and Winters 12). Whether the collection has two or twenty pages, they should all appear common in presentation with content being the only feature altered. The local history collection should be recognized as a distinct compilation of materials, and at the same time fit within the overall structure of the organization.

In addition to the name of the public library and the local history collection, the top of the web page should be reserved for important information. The librarian must consider what information the patrons would be most likely seeking. This could prevent the user from enduring excess scrolling or reading through unnecessary details. If there are multiple subjects covered on a longer page, they should all be mentioned at the top of the page. Patrons could glance at a page, read the topics addressed and choose to look only at the portion of the page that applies to their information needs. (Norlin and Winters 15).

Terminology is a key content issue that local history collections should address on their website. Terms such as "finding aid" and "EAD" are two prime examples of jargon used in archival repositories that do not have equivalents in other subject fields. In Dr. Yakel's study, she noted that some college level participants were not even sure they knew what "archives" meant (115). Considering the wide range of viewers on the internet, the collection's web creator needs to conscious of words that could be new or foreign to onlookers. Before the Web, findings aids would have been viewed in a

physical collection and a professional could answer questions concerning the meaning of archival terms. Without that easy reference source, professionals need to compensate and look with new eyes at what they are expressing to the researcher. One way to handle this would be to use more self explanatory terms. By choosing different terms like "collection description" or "collection contents" users might understand more easily what they are viewing (Wilson 69).

Images can be a huge attraction for internet viewers, however the library must be thoughtful in their choices of which to include. The special features should tie into the theme on that particular web page (Davidson 74-75). Placing an image of World War II soldiers on a page concentrating on the Civil Rights Movement would confuse the user and detract from information on the page. Also, special features like images should not require extended loading times. Users could be viewing the website at a slow connection speed and waiting for images to load could be frustrating (Norlin and Winters 14; Barber 147).

Hyperlinking to other websites is helpful in providing users with recommendations for other sites and groups that contain information on subject areas relating to those addressed by the local history collection. Explanations or descriptions of the websites connected to the local history should be included either as a brief statement following the link or in a list at the bottom of the webpage. Participants in a study at the Winona State University Library explained that the most helpful hyperlink presentations were those with annotations provided at the bottom of the page. The most difficult to understand were those where hyperlinks were embedded into paragraphs and might not be noticed at all by the user (Dennison et al. 21).

The organization of the web pages of the local history collection should be logical and easy to understand for the user. Using a hierarchy for the construction of the website is strongly endorsed by the literature. Users can go through several levels of topics narrowing their search for information and they can view the interconnected nature of the materials in the collection (Dennison et al 23). The organization of a website, no matter how well planned out it is, will not be logical to every possibly user. To be thorough, a website should contain a "search box" that allows users to type in what terms they are trying to locate, and a list of results will appear hopefully containing the exact page that they need (Wilson 26).

Goals of this study

The goal of this study is to determine the current trends and practices in the local history field on the Web. With a focus on local history collections, the investigation uses content analysis to present a picture of how well, or how poorly, the field is communicating information to its users. The secondary goal for the study is to determine if either the population of the jurisdiction of the library, or the per capita budget of the library, has an impact on the website of the local history collection. The elements for examining the websites are based on the concepts presented in the literature review, and through additional website design sources.

The Sample

An initial sample of public libraries was taken from the *American Library Directory*. The American Library Association is the largest professional library

organization in the United States, and annually requests information from all types of libraries to compile a comprehensive directory. The survey requests information on type of library (public, academic, government, or corporate), contact information, personnel, branch names, circulation statistics, special collections or interests population and income. There is no requirement for inclusion and the information submitted by libraries is dependant upon the responding agency. The directory is arranged by state and then by city. Fifty four libraries were identified using random sampling from the U.S. section of the directory (vii). Starting on page seven, every fortieth page number was documented. The first public library with a special interest or special collection on local history was chosen to be included in the survey. Using the search engine Google, simple searches were performed using the name of the public library. If there was a local history description or page from that public library, it was evaluated for elements described in the literature review section. Of the 54 websites reviewed, thirty had any discussion of the local history collection. Half of those only stated that there was a collection available and one or two other elements such as the location of the collection and contact information. Five of the fourteen collections that discussed more than four of the elements were listed as among the 75 most populous cities in the U.S. In order to find and describe those websites that could serve as role models for the local history collection community, it was determined that examining websites of heavily populated cities could provide better examples of what the field should aspire towards.

The *County and City Extra: Annual Metro, City and County Data Book*, contains a list of the seventy-five most populated cities in the United States. This resource gathered data from the 2003 US census and displayed the cities in rank order with the

population totals listed by the city names (897). The *American Library Directory* was then used to identify the names of the public libraries available to the citizens of those cities. In some cases, the public library system was only for the city, in other cases there was collaboration between city and county. If there was only a county level public library system, it remained part of the study because it still catered to the populous area. Eighteen of the public libraries identified were lacking in sufficient information and were removed from the sample set. These libraries either did not include user population or total income. One additional public library was removed because the public library catered to the entire state and included rural areas with populated ones. The remaining library sites were undergoing construction either on their building or on their website which could affect the current website presentation and content. A complete list of the libraries included in the study can be found in the *Appendix: Table of Libraries Studied.*

The population and the total income for each of the libraries were noted for later analysis. The data for per capita budget was determined by dividing the total income by the total population. This reflects the amount of money that the library could spend per person in making monetary considerations. There was no connection between the size of the population served and the budget per capita. For specific information on population and per capita income see the *Appendix, Table 2: Data on Population Served and Budget Per Capita.*

The Survey

Specific Elements

As mentioned, the elements for this study was based on the information provided in local history literature, public library literature and Web design sources. These elements reflect information that could be integral or beneficial to users visiting the website in search of details on local history (to view the protocol used see the *Appendix, Table 3: Survey*. The basic elements included in the study are listed below:

- Hours and Location

- Contact information

- Mission Statement

- Collecting Policy

- Use Policy (special handling, in-house use only, etc)

- Description of Materials

Due to the special nature of some of the materials and the subjects covered, local history specific elements were also included. These include elements that reflect attributes that should be separated or tied directly to the local history collection from the main library website. These include:

- Subject guides

- Web-Based Instructions

- Inventory or EAD of Archival Materials

- Donation information of materials and monetary resources

- Volunteer information for tasks with the local history collection

Since the study focuses on the evaluation of electronic information, it is especially useful to view what electronic resources are available to patrons via the web page. Some users may not be able to visit the collection easily. Through hyperlinks, databases, and digitized images, the local history collection can exhibit to users what they consider authentic information associated with subjects in the collection, other organization that might assist the patron, and readily available information that can be transmitted at a distance. For these elements, the following were examined:

- Links to in-house resources other than the online catalog

- Links to other sites on the WWW

- Links to other local history organizations or collections

- Databases

- Digitized materials

Rating the Content and Presentation

A protocol was designed to reflect the state of a webpage, or site. Each element included categories of "Content" and "Presentation." Content relates specifically to the amount of information presented, not how well it is communicated. This is information that a user could comprehend regardless of the layout of the web page or the font that is used by the library. The presentation takes into account the appearance of the content and the location that it has on the web page or within the website.

In both categories, a rating of "Poor", "Average", "Good", or "Excellent" was attributed based upon what the researcher witnessed. To avoid bias, the protocol included details on what would have to be included to receive each ranking. For each element,

different characteristics were listed to justify each rating. Each type of ranking suggests how much information a user could gather without the help of talking with a staff member at the library. A general description of each ranking is given below.

- Poor- element not addressed
- Average- website gave very basic information
- Good- website included more description than a listing
- Excellent- website included detailed information on what was available, or multiple examples of the element

An example of the application of these ratings and their requirements can be seen through the element of "Description of Materials." For an "Average," the website had to include a list of types of materials such as census records, newspapers, maps, published works, and/or archival materials. A "Good" rating would mean that the repository included titles of the materials in the collection. To receive an "Excellent," the website had to include the titles with either years of publication (especially for newspapers and census records), or subject matters addressed by that type of material. To view all concepts considered for each element see the *Appendix, Table 4: Considerations for ratings*.

Terminology used by websites could also indicate how good the content was. The extra effort of a repository to include definitions of professional jargon would indicate that a higher ranking should be awarded to the website. A higher ranking would also be given if the repository chose to use easily understandable terms.

Within the presentation category, the rating system was similar. If there was a lack of depth to the information, then the presentation rating was limited. Aspects such as

how long it took for the web page to load, font style, size and color, paragraph versus lists, and similarity to other pages in the parent library's website determined how well the presentation was ranked. This information was gathered to use cumulatively at the conclusion of the study for determining the success of communication the website had to the researcher, and a potential user.

Overall Navigation

Some features of the web pages did not fit into any of the above elements or their presentation, but are important in judging a website. These characteristics have less to do with the type of institution creating the page, and more with the usefulness to the user. All of these aspects were derived from Web design sources as features that make a web page appear more professional, aid in locating the web page, and allow for easy logical navigation. These elements were marked as either available or not and could not be judged as the earlier elements. For example, the presence of the library catalog is either available or missing altogether. These elements aided in judging the presentation of the web page to the user through organization and user friendliness:

- Library online catalog always available and visibly separated from other information
- Search function for the web page
- Hierarchical structure to pages
- Additional elements (copyright dates, revision dates, site creator, navigation bar, etc.)
- Feedback option to the design of the page

- Metadata description tags

- Metadata keyword tags

Website Identification

Google was chosen for this study as the search engine to locate websites. In November 2005, of 5.1 billion online searches conducted, 46% of searches were performed through a Google search engine. This includes all of the Google identified websites including Google.com, Google scholar, Google images and the several other websites that are Google affiliated (Sullivan).

For this study, two types of Web searchers were assumed. The first type does not know that there is a local history collection available at the public library in the city they are researching. In this case, individuals might key in the name of the city and the term "local history." The second user group is aware of the local history collection in the public library and would start from the public library's homepage. For this reason, the researcher searched for the local history collection using both methods.

The first search on Google conducted used the name of the city, or county depending on the official name of the public library, and the terms "local history." No Boolean operators were used between or around terms to simulate how a beginner Web searcher might conduct his or her search. The exact number of the result was noted for each public library collection for later comparison.

To learn how a user who knows that the public library has a local history collection, the second search was only the name of the library as presented in the *American Library Directory*. No terms associated with a local history collection were

included with this particular search. After locating the homepage for the public library, the local history collection page was identified and the level of difficulty in finding that page was noted.

Findings:

For all fifty websites examined, the search on Google using the name of the city and "local history" produced positive results in returning the local history collection web page. Seven web pages for the local history collection were returned as the number one result and twelve were shown within the top ten results. Ten were on the second and third pages being somewhere between eleven and thirty in the order of results. Only twenty one of the websites were not returned at all in the first three pages of results. It is possible that they were on following pages, however a user is only going to view a limited number of results before changing the search criteria or choosing another method altogether to view the pages (Spink and Jansen185-186).

All fifty of the repositories could be quickly located by their public library name. The library homepages could be found within the top three of the display results from Google.com. This was expected because of the specificity of the keywords used and the number of query terms (Schlein 77). Only if the repository did not have a website at all or the website had not yet been indexed would it be expected that there not be a result on the first page.

The navigation of the public library sites to locate the web page for the local history collections varied greatly. Fourteen sites contained a link of "Special Collections" or the name of the collection from the public library homepage. The majority of the other

websites had their local history collection located within three clicks from the homepage.

Before resorting to the "site index," all of the links from the library homepage were

exhausted, and there was no indication of where the local history collection's page could

be found. The following table displays title listed on the homepage that can be used has

to find the local history collection:

**Figure 1. Summary of Terms to Locate Local History Collection
from Public Library Home Page**

Total number of websites	First link towards local history collection
14	Link to "Special Collection" or the name of the collection
8	"About Us" section
6	Collections/Services
6	Locations/Hours
5	Research/Researchers
4	Drop down menu
3	"Site Index"
2	Library departments
2	"History"

Discussion of Population Served Compared to Nature of Website

The average population served for all of the public libraries surveyed was 787,738

people. Of the top ten websites reviewed, the average population served came to

1,067,666 people. With the removal of the outlier, New York City, the average for the

remaining libraries in that group is 801,955 people. This figure is more similar to the

other libraries in the group. Within the top ten websites, only two were over one million

and the lowest had 504,000 people served. The average for the remaining forty websites

was 738,298 people per library, thus falling below the average for the group as a whole.

These figures are displayed in the table below:

Figure 2: Summary of Populations Served

	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Range
All Libraries	787,738	3,200,000	233,700	2,966,300
Top Ten Websites	1,067,666	3,200,000	504,350	2,695,650
Remaining Websites	738,298	2,896,016	233,700	2,662,326

Discussion of Budget Per Capita Compared to Nature of Website

The budget per capita totals reflected the same slight different in more per capita being available to those libraries included in the top ten. The average for all websites was $35.26 per capita. The top ten was $2.50 more on average totaling $38.78, and the other websites had an average of $34.37. Considering the range of budget per capita data, there is not a strong pattern to base a conclusion on the impact that it has on the development of good content websites for local history collections. The following table illustrates the exact range of per capita values:

Figure 3: Summary of Budget Per Capita

	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Range
All Libraries	$35.26	$68.68	$13.43	$55.25
Top Ten Websites	$38.78	$68.68	$20.48	$48.20
Remaining Websites	$34.37	$65.00	$13.43	$51.57

Results of the Evaluation

The top ten websites were determined through the combination of how much content was present and the effectiveness of the presentation. None of the websites met the expectations of "Excellent" for all elements. The list of top ten best websites is displayed in the *Appendix, Table 5: Top Ten Websites.*

All of the websites in the study included some degree of information on the local history collection. The lowest twenty percent of the websites little more than the most basic features and in the case of the lowest ranked website only met the "Average" definition through two of the elements.

Even considering the results from the top ten websites, there was an apparent disagreement on what is fundamental to a website for a local history collection. Some elements were ignored by virtually the entire sample and other elements were addressed in depth on several of the websites. All of the percentages for basic elements can be found in *Appendix, Table 6: Basic Content Element Results*; percentages of specialized elements in the *Appendix, Table 7: Local History Collection or Archival Specific Elements Results*; and results for electronic resources in *Appendix, Table 8: Electronic Resources Elements Results*.

Basic Elements

Hours and Location of the repository

Surprisingly, there were ten local history web pages that did not address this element at all. The hours of operation and the location of the library in general were addressed on other parts of the website, but the local history collection did not make an effort to express their specific location or hours of operation to the public. The requirements to have an "Average" rating for this element were that the branch name be included on the page and the basic hours of operation. For anyone who had not already been to the location, this information would be essential in making a decision on the option to utilize the resources; and yet, ten libraries did not see the need to include such

information for their internet users. Thirty-two percent of the websites met the

requirements to be in the "Excellent" ranking. They provided information on how to get

to the library branch, and special hours of operation. Of the top ten websites, 70% were

marked as excellent. Three of these websites embedded a map link allowing users to view

a map from Mapquest.com to understand where the library is in relation to the streets

around town.

Contact information

A quarter of the total number of libraries did not include any contact information

on the local history collection web page. All of the top ten websites contained some

degree of contact information. In fact half of those libraries were categorized as

"Excellent" meaning that they included phone numbers, mailing address, the name of a

person to contact at the repository and/or an email address. Of the remaining libraries,

four other websites merited "Excellent" ratings.

The best example of presenting contact information came from the Detroit Public

Library. This collection's website provides a great example of presenting information is a

logical, effective way:

Contact information:

Location:
Main Library, 1st Floor
Phone:
(313) 833-1480.
Hours:
Tu, W: 12:00 - 8:00 pm; Th, F, Sa: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Coordinator for Special Collections
Mark Patrick
E-mail: mpatric@detroit.lib.mi.us

In contrast to this presentation of contact information, one web page in the ten

best sites had the local history collection's phone number, mailing address and email

address displayed as a sentence. This was harder to read and because it followed other

content on the web page, it was difficult to locate.

Mission Statement and Collecting Policy

These two concepts are reported on together because the majority of the websites

presented these attributes together. A paragraph was usually placed at the top of the page,

or at the beginning of the content, stating the goals of the institution with the types of

materials that the repository collects. Out of all the websites viewed, 70% did not

mention why the collection exists or the services it provides to its community. Those that

did mention any type of goal for the collection mainly provided one sentence indicating

that the collection served the community through making research materials accessible.

Additional information provided with a mission statement focused on the founding and

history of the collection. An example of what was considered an "Excellent" mission

statement can be found on the San Francisco Public Library's website:

> The mission of the San Francisco History Center is to illuminate the founding,
> growth and development of the City by providing primary and secondary
> resources. Located on the 6th floor of the Main Library, the Center serves all
> library users and levels of interest, from the merely curious to those engaging in
> scholarly research. Because of the Center's archival function, it also administers
> the collections of the Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center.

This gives the user an understanding of who the collection serves and the

potential research information in the collection.

Detailed collection policies that a library staff probably uses to judge materials

were not available on any of the websites. That was not a requirement for the website to

receive an "Excellent" rating because many users might find it unnecessary. The

"Excellent" websites for this element listed the formats of materials in the collection, and

specific subjects addressed by the materials. In two cases, the library informed the user

that some materials commonly found in local history collections would not be represented in their collection.

Use Policy

The use policy protocol requirements centered on the rules the patrons would have to observe during a visit. The content on this subject varied widely between repositories, and no two libraries included the same aspects in their descriptions of what guidelines users had to observe. The top ten websites differentiated themselves from the other websites as a group on this aspect. All ten gave at the least a statement on rules or limitations for using materials. Five of the top ten addressed at least one of the following issues: copyright, special handling of materials, or photocopying policy and thus receiving an "Excellent" score for this element. Clearly stated, these websites instructed the user on what could or could not be done with the collection. The Sacramento Room in the Sacramento Public Library provided the best use policy in content and presentation. Located all on one page within the site, the library gave a list of "Rules for use of the collection," "Services available," "Photocopying," and "Photo-reproductions." Each of the categories stated directly what was allowed and what was unacceptable in the reading room.

The remaining forty websites had scattered results on the use policies for the collections. Five ranked as "Excellent", eight were "Good", and seventeen mentioned at least whether or not any of the materials could be removed from the library.

Description of Materials

The most promising results for the basic elements came from a description of the materials in a collection. Only one repository did not provide some information on what

types of materials were currently available for use. The highest number of repositories that ranked as "Good" in any category where associated with this element. Compared to other elements evaluated in this study, description of materials constituted the largest amount of content on a site. Thirty percent of the websites listed what types of materials were currently housed by the library's collection. Forty eight percent of the libraries included types of materials with the prominent titles in that format. Ten libraries, six of which are ranked in the top ten websites, included notes on the geographical area specifically addressed by the title, the years included, and/or the subject matter of the content. Some of the libraries chose to create links through their page to a formulated search in the library's online catalog. Following this link allowed the user to view catalog records of the materials which included the date of publication and the Library of Congress subject headings for the titles.

Local History or Archival Specific Elements

Subject Guides

Subject guides received poor attention from the websites in this study. Over half of all the libraries did not include any online subject guides to the collection; however, those that did provided a wealth of information. The best subject guides were found on the Denver Public Library website. These ranged in subjects from African American history to the Gold Rush and all contained many different types of sources, including newspapers, books, and archival materials. They were easy to find and obvious to researchers from the main page of the collection.

Web-Based Instructions

The employment of tutorials on the websites was disappointing. Of the fifty libraries, 80% did not include any web-based instructions. These are especially important for libraries holding archival collections and many of the repositories explicitly stated they collected such materials. Twelve percent of the repositories rated "Average" meaning they had one web page devoted to defining particular materials and the most efficient way to use those materials. From the ten best websites, three deserved a "Good" ranking for having either a series of pages on one type of material, or one interactive tutorial. No repositories outside of the top ten merited such a ranking. The library that used the internet the most to instruct users came from the Tampa Hillsborough County Public Library. Their instructions were all based in the subject of genealogy, but could be used by any researcher trying to access materials outside of published books. The presentation of the instructions rated poorly because the library chose to only post what appear to be brochures of information in PDFs. A list of the materials covered includes census records, military records, city directories and genealogical periodicals. The Denver Public Library on the other hand had a single page for instruction, but it was not in PDF and it included links from the bottom of the page back to the top along with illustrations complimenting the text.

Inventories/EADs of Archival Materials

Forty percent of the top ten websites contained full inventories or finding aids for the collections. Three of the top ten sites along with four additional public libraries in the entire sample provided only a list of the collections with statements of description. The New York Public Library provided in depth EADs for their manuscript collections that

compliment the holding in the local history collection. These finding aids included

biographical and other significant information for why the collection is in the library and

what subjects could be researched using their materials.

Volunteer and Donation Information

By far, the most unaddressed topics were volunteer and donor information. An

overwhelming 92% of libraries did not have a statement or link concerning volunteer

opportunities within the local history collection. Of the four websites that did mention

volunteers, three merely stated that volunteers were welcome to assist with the materials.

The one library that provided specific projects for volunteers in the local history

collection was not among the ten best websites. In fact, none of the ten best websites

provided obvious links or information for users on volunteering.

Donor information fared little better. There were two websites in the top ten

websites that did give detailed information to users on what formats of materials were

appropriate, what subjects the collection was especially interested in, and who and how to

contact someone specifically for this matter. Eighty-four percent of the sites did not

mention any information on donating materials; however, some did provide information

on monetary donations.

The website presenting the most information specifically for donor was the

Denver Public Library. A link from the main page of the local history collection labeled

"Information for Donors" brought potential donors to an entire page of information on

donating materials to the collection. They attributed the value of their entire collection to

the gifts made by donors over the years. Following the scope of the collection and the

formats that the collection welcomed was a list of reasons for donors to give to the public

library collection. The most informative part of the page including transferring of ownership, appraisal for monetary compensation, the acquisition agreement and working with the staff at the library was located at the bottom of the page. In addition, the library gave the name of the person to contact on donating materials and how she could be reached for more information.

Electronic Resource Elements

Links to In-house resources

These results relied heavily on the presentation of information from the parent library, and reflected the idea of keeping similar page layouts from the main page. Links provided at the top of the page that remained constant throughout the navigation of the site were included as a part of this analysis. Twelve percent of the libraries included additional statements within their content on using other divisions of the library to retrieve information during a search. These also included subject guides that were not necessarily only connected to the local history materials. Fifty-eight percent of the libraries contained some valuable links to other resources in the library.

Links to the WWW

A high percentage of the websites merited "Excellent" ranks in regards to including links to other sources on the Web. It was apparent that many repositories saw the advantages that the Web could provide and took advantage of that. Links presented as part of subject guides were included in the evaluation of this element. The New York Public Library listed fifty links on U.S. history broken down into subject groups. The St. Louis Public Library, for example, gave links to genealogy researchers with statements

following the many of the links describing the information found on that particular page. Of the 62% of libraries that included valuable links to the Web, more than half gave more than five sources and several included helpful notes on the websites.

Other Local History Organizations Links

It was impressive to see how many repositories included links to other local history collection's websites in the city, county or state. These ranged from the city historical society to the state archives. They usually included additional contact information for that group such as phone numbers and locations. Once again there were 62% of the libraries presenting some information on the topic. The results were more evenly spread on this topic though. Fourteen percent rated as "Average" containing at least one link to a local information organization outside of the library. The sixteen percent of websites that received a "Good" rating had between three and five links available for additional information. Of the top ten websites, all but one included some links to other local repositories.

Databases

After half of the websites had been evaluated, a trend in database information became evident. Many of the libraries subscribed to databases, but they were only mentioned or accessible through other parts of the website. These databases could be beneficial to local history researchers if they were aware of their availability. Frequently, there was a tab or hyperlink on the page that carried over from the parent library's homepage titled "Databases." If the tab was consistently on the page, then those databases were considered as part of the content in the website for the local history collections.

Ten percent of the websites had "Excellent" database content for users. The majority of the websites including databases had *Heritage Quest Online* and *Ancestry Library Edition* available. The databases had paragraphs or statements discussing the content of the information they held more frequently than the hyperlinks to other sources on the Web. Almost half of the websites did not provide any obvious inclusion of databases within the library. Databases might be provided by these libraries, but the researcher could not connect those with the local history information.

Digitized Materials

Digitization is still a controversial concept for libraries. The literature shows that there must be a commitment made to those digital objects created which requiring expertise and monetary resources for those newly created objects. The top two websites overall presented the best examples of digitized materials on their websites. The Denver Public Library and the New York Public Library both had thousands of images available and indexed for users to view from their homes. This is not a possibility for all libraries, but these two collections can be used as models for other libraries that have the staff, collections and resources. Two additional libraries used a few digital images of collection materials as "sticky" content to provide samples of the documents contained in the collection. One of these libraries used digital images from the Library of Congress *American Memory* project depicting photographs of scenes in that city. No audio files were accessed from any of the websites.

Overall Navigation Features

The features for overall navigation and ease of use were the most commonly contained elements of the evaluation. Eighty-two percent of the websites constantly had a link to the libraries online catalog. This is a simple tool to include and it was easily identifiable in all cases. The search function for looking through the website was available for 46% of the libraries. These would allow searching through the entire library's website. In cases where the library's web pages were in the domain of the local government website, the search function had an option to examine only a particular category of the web pages and was considered to act as a search function for only the library once the correct box was marked.

The vast majority of the pages, in total 80%, applied a hierarchical structure to their web pages. The remaining 20% contained only one page for the local history collection and could not be considered hierarchical. There were logical orders to discovering information through these sites and the researcher was overall impressed with the total organization of the web pages. All of the websites within the ten best websites had a hierarchical structure in their organization of information.

Additional elements like navigation bars, copyright ownership and creation dates for the page were included to some degree on 74% of the websites. Ninety percent of the best websites noted some of these aspects on their page. The researcher found that if the main library homepage included these elements, then so too would the local history page.

Feedback options were surprisingly common on these websites. Sixty-two percent included some method for the user to address elements on the page or ask questions regarding the organization of information. Some libraries chose to use the terms "Contact

Us" rather than "feedback." In these cases, the "Contact Us" link was located at the bottom of the page with other pieces of information such as the revision date and the copyright information. Six of the top ten websites included a method for users to make comments concerning the website.

Out of all the navigation elements, metadata had the poorest representation. More websites included metadata description tags in their source code than did those including metadata keyword tags, but only by a small percentage. Because not all search engines still require the use of metadata elements to index their sites, these are not as necessary as they once were. Depending on the search engine that the user chooses though, this could be important. There was no correlation found between the websites that included these metadata elements and those that ranked high on the results during the search for the city name and "local history." This is most likely because the algorithms used by Google to retrieve results include full text searching and link analysis (Glossbrenner and Glossbrenner 79). To view the results for all elements, see *Appendix, Table 9: Overall navigation results.*

Overall Presentation

The ratings for presentation relied heavily on the inclusion of content. The more content was presented, the better chance there was that the library employed a visually appealing method of display. For this reason, the discussion on these results will focus solely on the ten best websites which included both content rich and effective presentation together.

The majority of the top ten sites committed themselves to maintaining the look and feel of the parent library. Consistently the top of the screen was reserved for links and tabs that were present on the homepage of the main library. Color schemes were also similar to the overall organization. Of the ten best websites, seven had the same principle information and layout as their main library's homepage. Two of those had different color schemes from the homepage, but with the same links. For one library, their heading and layout was similar not to the homepage, but to other departments pages after a user had left the homepage.

The Denver Public Library's local history collection website did not share a similar layout or color design with the library's homepage; however, the pages presented from the collection's main page maintained a similar layout to one another. Thus if a user began using the local history collections pages, they would acquire a sense of the learnability concept discussed in the literature section. In fact, the collection's homepage included frames and scrolling which are discouraged. The reason for their higher ranking on presentation came from the order of information on the screen and the divisions of categories which were very logical. The top of the page contained visual depictions of materials in the collection including two photographs, a map and a portion of a painting. The background for the page was a light brown which was simple and contrasted well with the font color of dark brown used on non-hyperlinked words. Blue was used for the font on the hyperlinks which is commonly used on the internet. Terminology on the website was simple and could be understood by many users and with the web-based instruction for use of manuscripts, some of the more professionally used terms were explained.

Somewhat contrasting the presentation of information from the Denver Public Library was the New York Public Library. The page for the collection contained the same header that was present on all other divisions of the library. The toolbar on the left side of the page changed within the divisions to include specific information for that particular department. One of the best aspects of the presentation on this page was the lack of scrolling required on the pages. The main page for the collection presented a series of well labeled links to pages providing information on to several divisions of information and managed to include one digitized image. The colors were simple in black and white presenting a strong contrast of color.

The Fort Worth Public Library's website, though overall effective in presenting information, had a few aspects that were undesirable. The tool bar on the left side of the page to link to information in the collection appeared to be in a dated "button" style. These "button" links were broken up by a paragraph of general information on the collection and content information. This information was important, but compared to library websites that used a separated block of text, the information seemed longer than it really was. Pages that present a block text on two thirds of the page rather than one that spans the entire width of the page appear to be less tedious for a user to read.

The websites that ranked the lowest contained only a short statement about the collection and where it was within the branches of the library system. Some of the local history collections did not have their own web page and would be included as a part of the special collection department's web page.

Conclusion

The time spent examining the websites varied greatly upon the organization of information on the local history collection's web page and throughout the parent library's website as a whole to find those elements that could be used in conjunction to the collection. If an element was in a website, and the researcher could not find it, then it can be assumed that neither would a patron of the collection.

Despite that they all had websites, twenty one local history collections in the public libraries were not returned on a search for "local history" and the name of the city was disheartening. Not all patrons are going to think to look at the public library for an in depth look at the history of the community, especially if they want to include archival materials in their research. During the search on Google, local history societies, museums and individual's websites focusing on the general history of the area were returned as helpful resources. These repositories are good research repositories for local history, but a library that has already spent time and money on creating a great web page should try to ensure that all possible users are going to know about the benefits of the collection.

It is clear from the websites examined in this study, that there is no set of standards employed by the libraries to present their local history collection online. The range of contents included in the websites and the manner in which they were presented showed no common trends other than the most basic information. Even of these elements, at least one repository did not address the required information. All of the websites presented identifying names for their collections, but that is the only aspect which 100% of the libraries shared.

One very interesting fact was that far more repositories included descriptions of materials than the number of websites that included hours/location and contact information. Because these collections are all held within a larger body, it was perhaps assumed by the library that users would seek out the hours of operation and location of the branch containing the collection and would use contact information for that collection as well. For beginning users, this might not seem out of the ordinary, but for researchers who regularly use special collections, this could be an aspect they would need to contact the repository about. For many special collections, differing hours of operation are observed so that library staff can be available for consultation or retrieval of materials. It seems erroneous for collections that observed the same hours of operation as the general collection not to include at least a statement that this was the case.

For the more specialized elements, there is definitely room for improvement. With all of the emphasis in the last two decades placed in archival and library literature on connecting with the user and understanding how much they know, it would seem obvious that tutorials and web-based instruction should be present on the website. Contributing to the education of users on special materials in these collections is a part of the librarian's tasks in the repository and it should be transposed onto the Web to reach users who are not able to visit the collection in person.

The inclusion of finding aids online was a little more prevalent than web-based instructions. It was expected that there would be many finding aids available in PDF, but those were very limited. Archival materials need a descriptive tool of some kind for visitors to the collection to determine the usefulness of the materials, so these should already exist in physical form. Scanning and providing files that can be downloaded from

a link requires minimal work depending on the size of the collection, but it can benefit the online researcher to a great extent. With only 26% of libraries including any lists of archival collections at all, it appears that these libraries have not realized the aid that this information can give to researchers.

Also, based on the literature, it would seem that the involvement of members of the community through volunteering and donations would be pointed out on the website. So few websites included any information on these topics that it would appear actively recruiting from the community is not a primary goal of the local history collections. This disconnect from the patrons shows that the local history collections need to focus more on communicating to its users the mutual benefits of working together to create a better collection.

The following recommendations were designed based on what was witnessed through this study and how difficult some information could be to find. These were all content and presentation features that were expressed on many of the repositories pages, but could use some work to become excellent in presentation or organization. These are all factors that should not take extensive time or research to complete and could increase the viewer's satisfaction with using the website.

- Hours and location should be at the top of the page close to the name of the collection. Hours should not be listed in one line (Mon. 8-5, Tues. 8-12, etc.). They should be in a table format with the days of the week in one column and the hours of operation in another.
- Contact information should also be at the top of the page. Depending on the amount of staff in the collection, a link to a separate page including staff names

and duties and their contact information should be created. Rather than a "Contact Us" (used often for the general feedback on the page), a link for email reference questions with a more direct meaning should be included such as "Email a Question" or "How can we help?"

- The description of materials should be in a list form. Users can scan a list much faster to identify helpful sources than a paragraph. If there are several screen lengths of descriptions, include a list with hyperlinks at the top of the page that can be used to jump to various sections on the remainder of the page.

- Links to sources only on the Web should be separated by subject matter or type of institution.

- Catalog and Search boxes or links should be at the very top of the page along with a link to the home page of the parent library or branch where the local history collection is maintained.

- Subject guides should be present for several different communities. Providing specialized information on African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans opens up a communication channel to the repository with those groups.

- Use the same color scheme on the web page as the parent library as well as the same layout. Both aspects facilitate locating types of information on the page more quickly.

- Rather than using images of the reading room for the collection, scan one or two interesting images of materials in the collection. Though these might not be high

enough quality for research, they can add excitement to an otherwise average page.

In comparing the best websites with their population size and budget per capita, no direct correlation existed for either. All ten websites served a population above five hundred thousand patrons which can indicate that to an extent the population served directs the size and depth of a collection. However, just outside of the ten best websites was the Wichita Public Library serving only 344,284 people. This indicates that it is the quality of individuals maintaining a collection rather than the quantity that drives the collection to have a more comprehensive representation on the Web. Throughout the rankings, there was a complete mixing of how many people were served and how well the repository performed in addressing the elements of the evaluation.

As the average of the populations in the best websites was higher than the average for the entire sample population, so was the budget per capita. And just as the population could not act as a defining measure of how well a site rated, the per capita budget showed no connection to the success of a website. Within the top ten websites, only two were above $50 per capita and five of the best ten libraries had between $20 and $31 per capita.

From this study, it might be said that it is all up to the individuals in the repository. Populations and per capita budget could bear a portion of the responsibility for the success of a website, but because of the different results between those two variables, the effectiveness and depth of a website is most likely reliant more on the person or persons responsible for overseeing the collection. It could be that a library with

lower per capita budget has a volunteer devoted to compiling subject guides or keying in descriptions of the types of materials the library already has.

A full investigation into the staff of a local history could shed more light on the subject. Since many libraries have paid staff members who spend a select amount of hours directly with the collection, the survey could focus on the number of hours spent rather than how many different people work with the materials. Also, the professional education that the staff has and any organizations they might actively be involved in could lead to a discussion on the commitment to a user-centered archival and special library approach to providing access to these unique compilations of materials.

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Appendix
Table 1:
List of Public Libraries Surveyed

Albuquerque Public Library	Phoenix Public Library
Arlington Public Library	Plano Public Library System
Atlanta-Fulton Public Library	Sacramento Public Library
Baltimore Public Library	San Antonio Public Library
Birmingham Public Library	San Diego Public Library
Boston Public Library	San Francisco Public Library
Buffalo and Eire County Public Library	San Jose Public Library
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	Seattle Public Library
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library	St. Louis County Library
Chicago Public Library	St. Paul Public Library
Cincinnati-Hamilton Public Library	Stockton-San Joaquin County Library
Pikes Peak Public Library	Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library
Columbus Metropolitan Library	
Denver Public Library	Toledo Lucus County Public Library
Detroit Public Library	Tucson-Pima County Public Library
District of Columbia Public Library	Tulsa City-County Public Library
Fort Worth Public Library	Wichita Public Library
Fresno County Public Library	
Houston Public Library	
Jacksonville Public Library	
Jersey City Free Public Library	
Kern County Library	
Las Vegas-Clark County District Library	
Lexington Public Library	
Lincoln City Libraries	
Louisville Free Public Library	
Memphis Public Library	
Minneapolis Public Library	
Nashville Public Library	
New York Public Library	
Newark Public Library	
Norfolk Public Library	
Oakland Public Library	
Omaha Public Library	

Table 2:
Statistics for Population and Library Budget Per Capita

Library	Population	Library budget Per capita budget in dollars
Albuquerque Public Library	556,678	15.63
Arlington Public Library	353,597	14.73
Atlanta-Fulton Public Library	807,096	37.96
Baltimore Public Library	644,500	47.83
Birmingham Public Library	265,000	52.03
Boston Public Library	574,283	61.89
Buffalo and Eire County Public Library	950,265	35.84
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	1,336,449	21.63
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library	723,200	37.09
Chicago Public Library	2,896,016	34.93
Cincinnati-Hamilton Public Library	845,303	64.4
Colorado Springs Public Library	481,366	38.63
Columbus Metropolitan Library	762,235	60.3
Denver Public Library	562657	61.11
Detroit Public Library	951,270	40.12
District of Columbia Public Library	571,822	49.69
Fort Worth Public Library	504,350	25.55
Fresno County Public Library	815,400	27.08
Houston Public Library	1,953,631	17.87
Jacksonville Public Library	716,912	31.52
Jersey City Free Public Library	240,000	59.52
Kern County Library	687,600	13.43
Las Vegas-Clark County District Library	1,255,364	30.68
Lexington Public Library	260,512	39.23
Lincoln City Libraries	250,291	27.58
Louisville Free Public Library	693,604	24.16
Memphis Public Library	896,013	25.52
Minneapolis Public Library	382,618	14.73
Nashville Public Library	565,352	35.84
New York Public Library	3,200,000	37.17
Newark Public Library	273,000	46.11
Norfolk Public Library	234,403	22.66
Oakland Public Library	430,900	38.27

Omaha Public Library	437,599	22.66
Phoenix Public Library	1,397,500	19.84
Plano Public Library System	233,700	43.32
Sacramento Public Library	1,223,499	20.48
San Antonio Public Library	1,513,800	13.96
San Diego Public Library	1,250,700	29.35
San Francisco Public Library	793,600	68.68
San Jose Public Library	925,000	27.5
Seattle Public Library	571,900	59.74
St. Louis County Library	870,000	30.43
St. Paul Public Library	287,151	47.73
Stockton-San Joaquin County Library	553,000	20.7
Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library	1,001,910	24.68
Toledo Lucus County Public Library	455,054	65
Tucson-Pima County Public Library	885,069	21.63
Tulsa City-County Public Library	564,079	38.27
Wichita Public Library	344,284	18.1

Table 3: Survey

Name of Public Library		
Name of local history collection		
Ease of accessibility from parent to special collection		
Content:	**Completeness**	**Presentation**
Mission statement		
Collecting policy		
Hours and Location		
Use Policy		
Description of materials		
Subject guides		
Tutorials/Web based instruction		
Inventory or EAD of manuscripts		
Volunteer information		
Donor information		
Contact information		
Electronic Resources:		
Links to electronic resources in the library		
Links to electronic resources on the WWW		
Links or contact information on other local historical organizations		
Database (obituary, census, etc)		
Digitized material		
Overall Navigation/Technological features	**Available**	**Not Available**
Link to catalog		
"Search" option for the page		
Hierarchical structure		
Additional Elements: Site creator, navigation bar, web page title, copyright date, revision date		
Feedback option		
Metadata description tags		
Metadata keyword tags		

Comments

Table 4: Considerations for Ratings by Element Name

Element	Concepts Considered
Hours and Location	
Average	Which branch holds the materials; What days the collection is open.
Good	Where in the building the collection is located; What hours the collection is open.
Excellent	Directions or maps are available to the location.
Contact Information	
Average	Phone number or mailing address.
Good	Phone number and mailing address.
Excellent	Phone number, mailing address and either the name of the person to contact or an email address.
Mission Statement	
Average	State the mission in a brief sentence.
Good	Describe the mission of the local history collection with 2 sentences.
Excellent	Who the collection serves, its main mission and then smaller goals, and how it is trying to reach those goals.
Collecting Policy	
Average	Statement that the collection collects materials only discussing local topics.
Good	Basic definition of local history and a few format descriptions.
Excellent	All formats included and subjects addressed by the collection.
Use Policy	
Average	Stated that materials could not leave the reading room or library.
Good	Stated rules in the reading room, or any special handling aspects.
Excellent	Addressed two or more of the following: rules in the reading room, photocopying rules, copyright restrictions, or how to appropriately handle the materials.
Description of Materials	
Average	Listing the types of materials currently held.
Good	Including titles of materials.
Excellent	Providing the years, geographic area, and or subjects addressed in the works.

Subject Guides	
Average	Three of fewer sources.
Good	Four to six sources.
Excellent	Seven or more sources.
Web-based Instructions	
Average	One brief page on how to use materials.
Good	Series of pages on one topic, or one to two interactive tutorials.
Excellent	Many pages on different formats of materials and their uses. Three or more interactive tutorials.
Inventory or EAD of Archival Materials	
Average	List of archival collections.
Good	List of archival collections with descriptions.
Excellent	Information on the arrangement of the materials, subjects addressed, and the volume of the collection. (EADs should cover all of this information and would merit such a rating.)
Donor Information	
Average	Statement welcoming donations in general.
Good	Stating who to contact concerning a donation.
Excellent	Describing what materials would increase the research value of the overall collection, what the donor's rights are and what to expect from the institution.
Volunteer Information	
Average	Statement welcoming volunteers to help with the collection.
Good	Providing descriptions of tasks for volunteers.
Excellent	Posting an application for volunteers, stating who to contact, and describing tasks currently available.
Links to in-house resources	
Average	Links to descriptions of other resources or departments in the library.
Good	Links to calendars describing upcoming events, access to library user account, and contact information for the overall public library.
Excellent	Electronic reference, subject guides to other collections held by the public library, or electronic books applicable to local history.
Links to other websites	

Average	Links to search engines.
Good	Links to one or two local history or genealogical websites.
Excellent	Links to five or more helpful websites.
Links to other local history organizations or collections	
Average	Links to one or two other local history collections in the area.
Good	Three to five links to other repositories.
Excellent	More than five links to other repositories.
Databases	
Average	Link to one genealogical database.
Good	Links to two or three databases.
Excellent	Links to more than three databases.
Digitized materials	
Average	One or two images used as examples on web page.
Good	Exhibit style presentation of images.
Excellent	Full database of images.

Table 5:
Libraries with the Top Ten Websites

Rank	Public Library
1	Denver Public Library
2	New York Public Library
3	Public Library of the District of Columbia
4	Fresno County Public Library
5	St. Louis Public Library
6	Sacramento Public Library
7	Fort Worth Public Library
8	San Francisco Public Library
9	Detroit Public Library
10	San Jose Public Library

Table 6:
Basic Content Elements Results

Elements	All websites	Top Ten
Hours/Location		
Poor	26%	10%
Average	24%	10%
Good	18%	10%
Excellent	32%	70%
Contact Information		
Poor	26%	0
Average	24%	20%
Good	32%	30%
Excellent	18%	50%
Mission Statement		
Poor	70%	30%
Average	16%	30%
Good	10%	20%
Excellent	4%	20%
Collecting Policy		
Poor	20%	0
Average	18%	10%
Good	42%	30%
Excellent	20%	60%
Use Policy		
Poor	34%	0
Average	22%	10%
Good	24%	40%
Excellent	20%	50%
Description		
Poor	2%	0
Average	30%	10%
Good	48%	30%
Excellent	20%	60%

Table 7:
Local History Collection or Archival Specific Elements Results

Element	All websites	Top Ten
Subject Guide		
Poor	54%	20%
Average	16%	10%
Good	16%	30%
Excellent	14%	40%
Tutorials/Web based Instruction		
Poor	80%	60%
Average	12%	10%
Good	6%	30%
Excellent	2%	0
Inventory or EAD of archival materials		
Poor	74%	20%
Average	2%	10%
Good	14%	30%
Excellent	8%	40%
Volunteer Information		
Poor	92%	100%
Average	6%	0
Good	2%	0
Excellent	0	0
Donor Information		
Poor	84%	60%
Average	8%	10%
Good	4%	10%
Excellent	4%	20%

Table 8: Electronic Resources Elements Results

Element	All websites	Top Ten
Links to in-house resources		
Poor	42%	30%
Average	20%	30%
Good	26%	20%
Excellent	12%	20%
Links to the WWW		
Poor	38%	10%
Average	8%	10%
Good	20%	10%
Excellent	34%	70%
Links to Historical Organizations		
Poor	38%	10%
Average	14%	0
Good	16%	30%
Excellent	32%	60%
Materials in Databases		
Poor	44%	30%
Average	24%	20%
Good	22%	40%
Excellent	10%	10%
Digitized Materials		
Poor	64%	30%
Average	4%	10%
Good	12%	20%
Excellent	20%	40%

Table 9: Overall Navigation Features

Feature	Available	Total
	All websites	Top Ten
Catalog	82%	70%
Search	46%	40%
Hierarchical Structure	80%	100%
Additional Elements	74%	90%
Feedback	62%	40%
Meta Description Tags	24%	50%
Meta Keyword Tags	18%	50%