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Erenst R. Anip
University of Vermont, eanip@uvm.edu

Jodie Mattos
University of Hawaii at Manoa, jodie@hawaii.edu

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Bringing the Past to the People: Outreach Efforts and Value-added Content for Chronicling America in Hawaii and Vermont

Erenst Anip[1]
Vermont Digital Newspaper Project, University of Vermont, Burlington, USA.
Email address: eanip@uvm.edu

Jodie Mattos
Hawaiian Collection, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, USA.
E-mail address: jodie@hawaii.edu

Abstract:

Since 2008, the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) Library has digitized over 200,000 pages of historical English language newspapers in Hawaii published between 1836-1922. This is being done under the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress (LC) grant funding. Starting in its second two-year grant cycle, the Hawaii Digital Newspaper Project (HDNP) focuses more on bringing the news to the people through digital and in-person outreach activities that foster community research on genealogy or local history. By adding value to the digitized content using social media (i.e. Flickr albums and Facebook/Twitter cross-postings) and integrating it with a library-wide outreach, the project is exposed to audiences who might not have been aware of the resources previously. These initiatives were further validated by NEH through their encouragement to other grantees to follow suit with these ideas. In addition, NDNP/Chronicling America's content has been presented in college classes, informing users about a valuable primary resource useful for research. Meanwhile, outreach efforts outside UHM have also been done and more plans are afoot. Past events include talks at public libraries, high schools, conferences, and national park. This is especially useful for non-UH groups and residents on islands other than Oahu, who can utilize the full-text search capable primary resource database for research.

In April 2013, the first author moved to the Vermont Digital Newspaper Project (VTDNP) as Project Librarian for their second grant cycle. Though Vermont and Hawaii are both relatively small states, they have different (and some similar) approaches in outreach and raising awareness about Chronicling America. The latter part of this paper will explore how VTDNP plans to execute its outreach.

This paper attempts to illustrate different approaches taken by HDNP and VTDNP, two relatively smaller project under NDNP, in spreading the word and raising public awareness about Chronicling America. What's the point of a multimillion dollar project to provide free online access to historic newspapers if nobody knows about it?

Keywords: NEWSPAPER DIGITIZATION, OUTREACH, SOCIAL MEDIA, NDNP, CHRONICLING AMERICA

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[1] Hawai'i Digital Newspaper Project Manager & Library Social Media Lead, 2009-2013, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, USA.

HAWAII DIGITAL NEWSPAPER PROJECT

Since 2008, the state of Hawaii, through the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) Library, started the Hawaii Digital Newspaper Project (HDNP) as part of its involvement in the National Digital Newspaper Project (NDNP), a joint effort by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress (LC). According to the NDNP website, it "is a long-term effort to develop an Internet-based, searchable database of U.S. newspapers with descriptive information and select digitization of historic pages. Supported by NEH, this rich digital resource will be developed and permanently maintained at the Library of Congress. An NEH award program will fund the contribution of content from, eventually, all U.S. states and territories."[i] The content collected from participating states are freely accessible online via the Chronicling America website.

In the first two phases of HDNP (2008-2010 and 2010-2012), 16 titles (with title essays) and 216,946 pages were digitized.[ii] Three more titles will be added in phase 3 (2012-2014): Pacific Commercial Advertiser, The Garden Island, and The Polynesian.[iii]

When NEH and LC first granted funding for HDNP, we were given a 'training wheel' fund where we received only half of a full cycle grant to start the digitization effort. Once enough images were accepted based on LC's standard, we were able to secure supplementary funding to finish the 2008-2010 cycle and delivered approximately 107,000 pages.

With that in mind, HDNP applied for and received funding for phase 2, 2010-2012, to digitize another 100,000 pages of historical newspapers published between 1836 and 1922. While HDNP focused more on the technical aspects of the project in phase 1 (i.e., delivering batches of digital files that are up to LC's standard or reworking them to meet the standards), the project team decided to focus more on outreach and spreading the word about this freely accessible resource to the public and utilize the Project Manager's (first author) background and experience in marketing.

From the comfort of HDNP office in UHM Hamilton Library, project staff (project manager, a graduate student assistant, and a student assistant) started creating HDNP's digital presence and footprint. A wiki was created in early 2009 using the Google Site platform to document administrative activities and technical items[iv]. As the project manager oversees the daily operation, the graduate student assistant was charged with drafting title essays in consultation with the HDNP Principal Investigators; and creating essays and topic guides from the digitized newspaper content. HDNP was fortunate to have (had) Monica LaBriola (2009-2010) and Alice Kim (2011-present) as Graduate Research Assistants. Monica paved the way with in-depth historical research for the title essays and updates to the Guide to Newspapers of Hawai'i 1839-2000. Alice continued with the essay writing and created many topic guides, feature articles, instructional materials, and curated image clippings discussed below.[v]

Meanwhile, a student assistant was charged with clipping images and interesting parts of the digitized pages for repurposing. These clippings eventually were curated by the graduate student assistant and uploaded to the UHM Library Flickr account in topical sets under the 'Chronicling America' collection, i.e. ads, quips and quotes, and photos. These 'value-added' content were featured in NEH's first two instalments of 'Chronicling America Dispatches'. Alice's article 'Hula on the Mainland United States' was featured first (9/20/2012) as it demonstrated the use of news sources from different states with references to Hula and perceptions of Hawaii on the mainland.[vi] For its second 'Dispatches', NEH featured HDNP

Flickr sets as part of 'Alert the Social Media! Chronicling America brings history to virtual life' (*see Figure* 1) and other state partners were encouraged to create and contribute such value-added content to the mix.[vii]
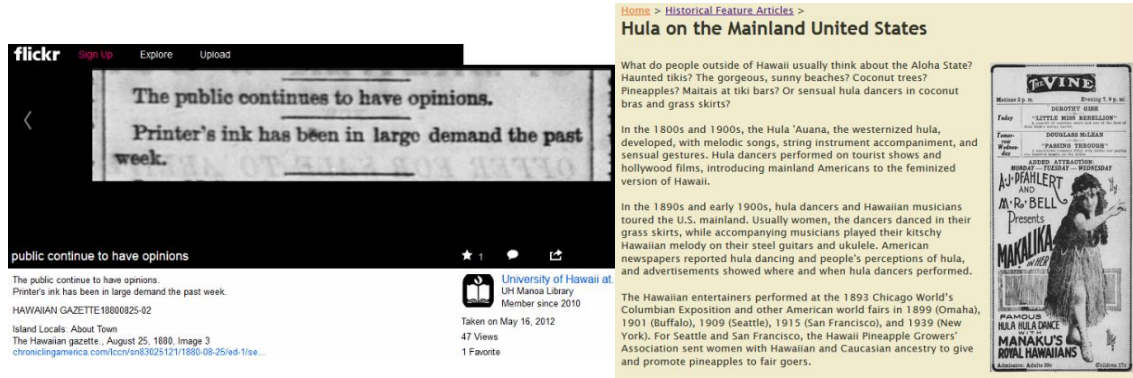

Figure 1 HDNP value-added content that are featured in NEH's *Chronicling America Dispatches*

Social media was the next stop. Seeing it as the next frontier for outreach, the project manager focused his efforts there. After initial discussion with the library's social media stakeholders, a Social Media Group (SMG) was created and tasked with maintaining social media presence of the library on the Internet as a way to communicate with (potential) users. HDNP chose to promote its resource under/within the banner of the UHM Library social media channels. Although undertaken without much conscious deliberation, this move was made to maximize exposure as the main social media channel of UHM Library (Facebook page) was already in existence and had a respectable number of likes. Rather than starting from scratch, HDNP proceeded to post items as part of UHM Library updates on social media.

The outreach effort via social media expanded to many different channels after the Facebook pages and locations: Twitter, Foursquare, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, Google Plus, Instagram, Yelp, and Vimeo (*see Figure 2*). Widgets leading to the first five channels can be found via the UHM Library website homepage under 'Follow UHM'. Right beneath these widgets, visitors can see the three latest tweets from @UHMLibrary, which was another move suggested by the SMG to replace the static 'News and Events' content.[viii] The type of Facebook and Twitter updates specifically from HDNP include reposts of LC's "100 years ago in America" events series, Hawaii's own version of 100 years ago events (original content), and posts connecting current hot topics with events that occurred between 1836-1922. The HDNP-related tweets were marked with #NDNP.

The overall social media effort did not go unnoticed. LibraryScienceList.com, a website that keeps track of the library science world, listed UHM Library at number 20 on the '100 Most Social Media Friendly College & University Libraries for 2013'.[ix] This is a major achievement considering the fact that the library has virtually no major budget line for marketing and outreach, let alone social media efforts.

In terms of non-virtual outreach efforts, Chronicling America was integrated into pertinent UHM instructional sessions, as well as sessions targeting outside groups. UHM faculty and students in departments such as History and Ethnic Studies were very excited about Chronicling America, due to its easy searching, full-text PDF results, and coverage of the 19th and 20th centuries. Currently, the UHM Library does not subscribe to any online resource that provides full-text access to such content. More importantly, the field of history

stresses primary resources, documents and publications that provide first-hand accounts of people, places, and events. Primary sources that provide full page, full-text content such as Chronicling America are valued as quality sources. Many primary resources will simply provide HTML text (due to the cost of scanning full pages into PDF and making it searchable) without the advertisements and other news coverage that give the reader perspective of what else is happening that day as well as the placement of the article they are reading on the page. While Chronicling America provides faculty and students full-text access to Hawaii events, overall it is a useful historical resource that gives insight on how such events were reported on the U.S. continent. It reminds the reader of the political and geographical importance of Hawaii and its rich history.

While much effort was made to market Chronicling America to UHM classes, significant outreach was also made to community groups. UHM librarians visited other UH campuses as well as public libraries to give presentations about Chronicling America. Often, UH campuses outside Manoa or on other islands have great difficulty accessing resources (due to licensing restrictions as well as distance), however, Chronicling America bridges that gap since it is freely available on the web. Students working on History Day projects continue to be a targeted group for presentations on Chronicling America, as well as genealogists searching for their relatives. Since Chronicling America is freely available on the web, the general public and researchers outside of Hawaii can access 19th and 20th century newspapers to do their research.

Another effort to promote Chronicling America was its use in a 2012 UHM Library exhibit on paddling called Hoena wale no! Only paddling. The UHM Library's Events Coordinator integrated newspaper accounts she found on Chronicling America about paddling into the exhibit, thus introducing it to visitors of the exhibit, many of whom were from the general public.

Furthermore, promotional items such as flyers and bookmarks produced by LC about Chronicling America were heavily distributed. These items were available at various reference desks in the UHM Library and were included in orientation packets for incoming students and visiting groups. The visually appealing bookmarks and its varying subject coverage were an attractive, free take-away to market an important resource. Those working on promoting Chronicling America plan additional efforts to make a HDNP specific bookmark available, as well as other promotional presentations to the general public (especially those outside UHM).

Figure 2 – Screenshot of UHM Library Social Media channel icons, created as a Libguides, recommended for use in subject guides[x]

WAY ACROSS THE POND: VERMONT DIGITAL NEWSPAPER PROJECT

The Vermont Digital Newspaper Project (VTDNP) became part of NDNP in 2010. It is a collaborative effort between the University of Vermont (UVM) Library, Vermont Department of Libraries, Ilsley Public Library, and Vermont Historical Society with the VTDNP office and production site situated at UVM Bailey/Howe Library in Burlington.

During VTDNP's phase 1 (2010-2012), they contributed 129,873 pages and 36 titles (along with 8 title essays).[xi] For phase 2, aside from finishing 2 titles from phase 1, another 11 titles will be digitized for an approximate total of 120,000 pages.[xii]

In terms of outreach in phase 1, many events and activities took place.[xiii] Presentations were given in several library-related conferences such as the Massachusetts Library Association Conference (2011), New England Library Association Conference (2011), NDNP Awardee Conference (2012), and North American Serials Interest Group 27th Annual Conference (2012). Presentations were also given to a wider (non-library) audience such as at UVM's Pechakucha (2011), Turning Points in American History (2012), and the Genealogical Society of Vermont meeting (2012).

On the Internet, VTDNP has a website[xiv], WordPress blog[xv], and Facebook page[xvi]. The project also created a branding package that included a logo, banner, and VTDNP bookmark (*see figure 3 below*) to accompany Chronicling America bookmarks produced by LC.

Figure 3 VTDNP Logo and Banner designed by K. Heather Kennedy

As VTDNP phase 2 started, the Project Librarian and Digital Support Specialist from phase 1 moved on to other opportunities. The HDNP Project Manager accepted the VTDNP position of Project Librarian and started his work in early April 2013. A Digital Support Specialist (part-time position) was hired quickly and started work in mid May 2013.

While focusing more efforts on workflow and producing deliverables to LC, the VTDNP team also restarted the outreach efforts with a fresh perspective. Currently, the outreach efforts are limited to the cyber world through an increase in social media activities. Utilizing the HDNP social media approach, there has been regular Facebook posting. Small tweaks and improvements to the VTDNP website were also made. Following the HDNP footsteps, blog posts, essays, articles, and Flickr sets of interesting photos, quips, quotes, and ads are also slowly added. These are the seeds of VTDNP's value-added content that will be developed overtime. Such content along with those from Chronicling America will then be rebroadcasted in various social media channels to increase our digital presence and increase people's awareness in general. Furthermore, when VTDNP eventually goes on a roadshow to public libraries, historical societies, and genealogical societies, the staff will have enough resources to point people to for further exploration.

A comprehensive outreach plan will be proposed by the production team to the Advisory Group in the near future to map out not only the social media activities but also plans for roadshows, webinars, and other events that will involve colleges, public and school libraries, and genealogical societies within the states. Capitalizing on a relatively active and in-tune advisory board that comprised of representatives spread out among the counties, VTDNP can potentially cover a lot of ground in Vermont.

Going beyond the state and outreach activities, Vermont (and the recently-added Connecticut) is the only New England state participating in NDNP. VTDNP can provide expert advice and even become technical partners to other New England states interested in participating in NDNP and contributing to Chronicling America.

COMPARING OUTREACH EFFORTS OF HDNP AND VTDNP

Relative to other states in the Union, Hawaii and Vermont are small, both in terms of land mass and population. That might just be the only comparisons to draw between HDNP and VTDNP, however, some elements make them unique. The advisory board for HDNP consists of 4-5 members; a historian, the director of the state's historical society, a state library librarian in charge of Hawaii Pacific, state archives officers, and a UHM Library staff member. They meet once at the beginning of every phase to determine the newspapers title to be digitized. Most communications are done via email or phone. Meanwhile, the VTDNP advisory board consists of 12 members representing various local public libraries, museums, newspapers, and historical society. They have access to Basecamp, a wiki-style project management website. Many things can be communicated using Basecamp.

Thus, in Hawaii, with the lack of robust outreach connections, a lot of the activities were confined to cyber space. Furthermore, dedicated human resources for HDNP consist of 1.0 FTE staff position and two part-time student assistants. Most on and off campus outreach activities were conducted by the librarians from the Hawaiian Collection. Meanwhile, HDNP staff did a few on campus sessions i.e. guest lecturing in a history or librarianship class.

In Vermont, the connections provided by the state partners and advisory committee members already cover much ground. On top of that, the new Digital Support Specialist has excellent experience in outreach in public libraries, and has even worked and driven a book truck for a rural public library. The potential to combine both cyber outreach, mainly through social media, and physical outreach is very promising.

In closing, as NDNP adds more states, big and small, to participate in digitizing historic newspapers from 1836 to 1922, more outreach will and should be done to increase the public awareness of this freely-accessible primary resource. As seen from the case of HDNP and VTDNP, each state, even those similar in size, has different challenges and advantages in their effort to reach out and promote the resource. As more state projects share their outreach and marketing experience, others can learn from them and apply them accordingly.

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[i] http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/about/

[ii] http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/awardees/

[iii] https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/ndnp-hawaii/

[iv] ibid

[v] https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/ndnp-hawaii/Home/team-members

vi   http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation/featured-project/chronicling-america-dispatches-hula-the-mainland-united

vii   http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation/featured-project/chronicling-america-dispatches-alert-the-social-media

viii http://library.manoa.hawaii.edu/

ix http://librarysciencelist.com/100-most-social-media-friendly-college-university-libraries/

x http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/sea

xi http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/awardees/

xii http://library.uvm.edu/vtnp/titles.html

xiii http://library.uvm.edu/vtnp/presentations.html

xiv http://library.uvm.edu/vtnp/index.html

xv http://vtdnp.wordpress.com/

xvi https://www.facebook.com/VTDNP