White Paper Report

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Institution: Kansas State University

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Final Performance Report

Grant number: HD 5063009

Title: "Lost Kansas: Recovering the Legacy of Kansas Places and People"

Project Director: Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, PhD

Kansas State University

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Narrative

Direction: Compare actual accomplishments with goals established for the report period.

Text of the original project description is as follows:

"The *Lost Kansas* digital humanities will use NEH funds to identify the organizing threads of student research in a new Kansas Communities class that will be used as the wireframe for a collaborative space. To convey these concepts , we will create a protected three part dynamic web based community that includes a workspace we have named the 'Field,' a physical e-space repository we call the 'kitchen,' and a written narrative that reveals the history of Kansas Communities and helps students evolve into practicing historians. Finally, this program will foster experimentation across disciplinary boundaries and create a culture of undergraduate training in the use of digital technology to discover and share the stories of lost communities and people. *Lost Kansas* will disseminate the results of students' research through open source web based publications, the Kansas State Historical Society's Kansas Memory site, the Kansas Humanities Council and links to local historical societies, government agencies and small town libraries."

Section A. Project Activities

New Kansas Communities Class: A new class, Kansas Communities, was introduced to the general curriculum for history in the fall of 2009 and has been offered each and every semester since that time for a total of five consecutive semesters. Enrollment in the class varied greatly from a low of only 8 students to more than 20. An average of 15 students was found to be ideal for the heavily research based goals of the class. In addition to the Kansas Communities class, two other undergraduate classes have participated by including the primary assignment of researching and digitizing the history of a "lost" town in the state of Kansas (History of Kansas, Fall 2011 and Capstone Class for History majors History 586, Fall 2011). The total number of students who have participated in the primary lost town assignment was approximately 100 from August of 2009 to December of 2011.

As this Digital Humanities Grant was a level one planning grant, the actual creation of a web-based workspace (the field) and an e-based repository (the kitchen) were not undertaken during the reporting period. Instead, planning for the creation of these two work spaces became the focus of the grant team members. The third goal of the project, "a written narrative that reveals the history of Kansas Communities and helps student evolve into practicing historians" was undertaken as a pilot during the granting period and resulted in a substantial body of student work. This work was then shared through an open source publication platform (K-rex, aka, Kansas State University Research and Exchange: see section g "grant products" and a new digital archive called the Lost Kansas Project).

The primary activities undertaken during the overall grant period included visits by two professionals in the fields of bibliographic digitization and teaching with technology. These two visits were held in the spring semester of 2010. Committees formed by key personnel to consider the recommendations of the consultants meet throughout 2009 to discuss their implications and make plans for their eventual implementation. Two pilots projects were then undertaken in the fall of 2010 and spring and fall of 2011. The first pilot was the creation of a digital archive and the second was an interdisciplinary publication. Both these pilots were undertaken to meet the stated additional goals of the grant, "program will foster experimentation across disciplinary boundaries and create a culture of undergraduate training in the use of digital technology to discover and share the stories of lost

communities and people." The pilot for this interdisciplinary undergraduate work was supported by a third party agency (Kansas State University Center for Engagement and Community Development) . Students in two Kansas Communities classes (College of Arts and Sciences) with students from two History of American Cuisine classes (College of Human Ecology) worked together to produce a digital (and print) monograph entitled, *Filling the Larder: Feeding our Families*. This pilot project also met another goal of the original Lost Kansas project which was to provide "links to local historical societies, government agencies and small town libraries." Students additionally participated in service learning projects at several different levels of engagement over the life of the grant.

While the Lost Kansas Project met its originally stated planning goals, some of the initial thinking that went into the application did evolve through the planning process. The most significant change that occurred was an increased appreciation for the technical difficulties of creating truly digital spaces for student collaboration and research. Although the idea seemed simple in theory, it turned out to be devilishly difficult to plan and achieve in practice. With the notable exception of Rebecca Gould, who was the most knowledgeable about new platforms for student collaboration, few in the planning group had any direct experience with platforms like wikis or even blogs, although we eventually developed those skills. Most problematic for the group was setting standards and developing practices for creating lasting digital content. The definition of "digital content" evolved into a lengthy discussion about collection and archival practices. What were students likely to find? How would we preserve and store that information? Who would be responsible for maintaining those items and collections? How would we develop intellectual property standards, resolution standards, meta data tagging protocols etc.? These turned out to be the most difficult questions to answer and in some ways, pushed the project down paths that were secondary to the main goal which was to increase student learning and build networks of communities of scholars on and off campus.

Some personnel changes happened rather quickly as the project took shape and especially after the campus visits by consultants. Our partnership with the Kansas Historical Society's Kansas Memory project ended when the director of that project was unable to justify time away from the society to attend meetings (a 90 mile round trip). The Historical Society was, and continues to be, under severe financial pressure to meet its mission with fewer and fewer staff. While the goal of linking our digital collections together in a mutually beneficial manner was valued by all parties, it was deemed a luxury by the staff of the Historical Society at that time and they opted to end their relationship with the Lost Kansas project (Pat Michaelis and Matt Veatch). This meant that one of the grant objectives, i.e. the dissemination of student research through the Kansas Memory Project was no longer viable.

Other changes in personnel resulted from the reassignment (and general re-organization) of the entire University library staff during the grant period. Jane Schille continued in her capacity as a specialist in digital collections management. Lynn Carlin's participation in the project ended when her temporary position with Information Technology was transferred to a permanent one in another part of the University. Lori Goetsch, Dean of Libraries, relinquished her responsibilities to other library staff to oversee. This meant that several people with expertise in collections and archival management were added to the team: David Allen, Marty Courtois, Tony Crawford and Michelle Turvey-Welch joined that portion of the grant team. Rebecca Gould, (Director, Information Technology Assistance Center) and Karin Westman (Head, Department of English) and MJ Morgan, (Research Director of the Chapman Center for Rural Studies), continued as originally submitted.

Public presentations given by visiting consultants for the grant were heavily publicized and well attended. Several press releases tracking the grant were written and widely distributed during the grant

period. Announcements of public meetings and presentations were posted on the Technology news website and sent directly to interested departments, faculty and students.

b. Accomplishments

As noted above, most of the goals of the Lost Kansas Project were met and exceeded with the exception of any solid planning for a collaborative e-space as we first envisioned it. In the group's experience, collaboration of a few students on a single project was accepted as a good idea. As an example, the four undergraduate interns who work collaboratively in the Chapman Center for Rural Studies have produced amazing work, including two lengthy monographs, two article length publications, interactive maps and a short film. The amount of time, however, to oversee this kind of work by undergraduate students is substantial and project staff realized early on that this would only be amplified in the case of an e-space with 15 to 20 students. Additionally, it is much more difficult to evaluate individual effort for a grade in circumstances where all information is shared among students in an effort to meet a singular goal. Teams of three to four students working collaboratively made more sense to us than a class-wide based project. This was a positive outcome for us as the limitations of our original concept became clearer with experience.

In addition to the creation of a new class, a new interdisciplinary project that resulted in a monograph and the establishment of new networks between the campus and small historical societies and libraries, the training that we received from our consultants led directly to two other projects. One project was accidental and the second one was planned. In early 2011, the news of our digital humanities planning grant led a well known corporation to contact us about digitizing a major collection of ephemera and small artifacts. This led to a two year digitization contract with the Chapman Center for Rural Studies. We purchased and learned to use a powerful archival program that taught a graduate student assistant how to tag using Dublin Core. Our undergraduate interns, in turn, learned how to operate and manage two new digital scanners purchased by Hale Library in 2010.

The second project we undertook as a result of the NEH consultants we hosted was the creation of a new "Lost Kansas" portal of student research that anyone with a computer could add to by uploading their own stories, photos, videos etc. The model for this web based portal was the Hurricane Katrina Memory Project developed and hosted by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. Mills Kelly, who is an associate director of the now re-named Rosensweig Center for History and New Media, was our consultant for teaching with technology. His recommendations of ways we could share our student research and provide a space for others to add their own materials led us to hire a web developer (also recommended to us by our BRI consultant). That site is still being populated with student research, but there is a substantial amount of work already posted (www.ksu.edu/history/chapman/)Although it is a wiki in form, it will not be an unedited site, and materials that are uploaded by viewers (online collaborators we are calling them) will be fact checked and authenticated by our student researchers and a faculty editor before they are allowed to be seen by others. We are still contemplating how to integrate this project into a broader curriculum for undergraduates on campus.

c. Audiences

The primary audiences for our project are college students and community members in the nine county area surrounding Kansas State University. We anticipate a highly diverse audience of college age participants through retirement age volunteers. We have found that our digital projects are equally appealing to men and women of all ages. The research our college students do is in the context of their

classwork, so we do not anticipate that our project will be used by students high school, or below. The research that students produce is written at a college level and contains all the conventions of professional historical writing, including references, bibliographies and original images. On the other hand, the contacts that have been made through this NEH grant work, have generated a wide range of other audiences such as the authors of small community memoirs (who wish us to publish their work on our site) family history researchers, speakers bureaus, local museums and libraries, local government officials and publishers of regional histories. Through the creation of a Facebook pages and a wordpress blog, which are maintained by our grad assistants, the work of our undergrad researchers and interns have been featured several times in local newspapers, on the radio (most recently on February 19th, 2012) and at public events held by retirement communities and local interest groups.

While not all of the increase in the size of the staff and the number of students now affiliated with the Chapman Center can be attributed to the digital planning work sponsored by NEH, we have seen phenomenal growth in several aspects of our program. In 2008 the Center consisted of four people: the Director, the Research Director and two grad assistants. Today, in 2012, the Center consists of 17 people: A Director, a research director, three part time office staff, a part time web designer, three graduate assistants, four paid undergraduate interns, two graduate student editors, a managing editor of the journal *Kansas History* and a book review editor for the same. During this same period, funding for the Center has increased as well with gifts of over $1.200,000.00 and dedicated funding from the University in excess of $150,000 (to be expended over the next five years). All of these contributions recognized the work of the Center as a leader in teaching and learning through digitial technologies and the dissemination of undergraduate research through web based technologies.

d. Evaluation

The past three years have been a veritable run downhill for the Center and the PI for this grant, and planned evalution of our project was not conducted until just recently. Using a template from another research based curriculum, MJ Morgan, our research director created an evaluation form for students in her Kansas Communities class and a similar instrument for our paid research interns. While the goals of this grant are not isolated specifically in our evaluation, those goals that touch upon them are included such as measuring the strength of students' connection with local collaborators off campus, the effort they put in to make their individual research projects worthy of online publication through K-rex or the Lost Kansas digital archive, their increased desire to learn more about local history and the skills that they believe they learned for their research projects.

Other evaluation tools are planned for the future. These will include an evaluation of our projects and web based interfaces by our off campus "affiliates" in local historical societies, a evaluation of our webpage and digital archive by users of our site and perhaps a more casual canvass of our presence on campus through our faculty colleagues (in both colleges and in the library), central administration and student advisors.

As the PI, I have a few observations to make regarding the initial goals of the project and the results we generated. Right off the bat, my own lack of technical knowledge made the conversation with librarians and technical specialists more difficult than I anticipated. Similarly, the digital specialists, archivists and librarians, as well as the web designers and technicians, had problems connecting with our goals for student learning. As a history professor, I was focused on creating new research and teaching undergraduates how to become professionals at their craft including critical thinking about sources, context, evaluation and summary. As librarians and archivists, my colleagues were concerned with long term storage, universally accepted retrieval tags, image resolution, hardware, software, intellectual

property, publication rights and server space. We seemed to talk past each other incessantly without really coming to any solid crossroads or common understanding of how we might help one another. A major breakthrough occurred only after months of group work and summaries. It turned out that we had never really discussed the volume of archival "finds" that students might encounter in the field. What I had in mind was the digital storage of a few rare artifacts a year—an original diary, a photo in someone's private collection, a list of post offices—things that others might find useful and unlikely to be deposited in a professional facility for long term preservation. Well, it turned out that this was precisely what the library and archival specialists were worried about—except they were concerned about collections and preservation process and they believed we were discussing the collection and digitization of *hundreds* of objects annually. The source of our mutual misunderstanding was now clear—it was a problem of scale.

Unfortunately, not long after this realization, the Chapman Center's newly renovated space was nearing completion in a different part of campus. The digital humanities project was put on hold as we spent weeks boxing materials, ordering new desks, chairs, carrels, files, etc. and then started the long process of re-imagining ourselves as a Center and not just an accidental collection of students and profs sharing a single office. At the same time we moved ourselves physically, we also reorganized and re-iterated the Center's mission and structure to create a board of directors, application procedures for interns, prize procedures, internal evaluation instruments and the like. We also had our first book published and were awarded a second grant to work on a new book with a colleague in Human Ecology. All of this activity left little time to take up the recommendations of our consultants as a formal group.

One additional obstacle we encountered in the planning project was a lack of student readiness in terms of creating digital materials, refining them for the web and packaging them in ways that made manipulation of their files easy. Our team innocently presumed that students would need less training than ourselves in using wikis, blogs, digital cameras and videocameras, scanners, ipod recorders and of course downloading all of this information into pdfs, sound files, video files and the like. We imagined that this you-tube generation would understand how you-tube videos are produced. This turned out to be highly optimistic. Not only did a majority of our students not understand how to create and manipulate "born digital" materials, they were generally overwhelmed by the requirements we asked for in terms of file types, uploading them to a google or K-State online platform or even using the "insert footnote" function of their word processing programs. Much of the work of creating the digital archive was actually done by our graduate student assistants who had to work hours and hours on undergraduate papers and files to prepare them for a searchable database. While we realize now that students could have been trained in these skills, an intense one-on-one training session with each and every student was not something we could have managed without sacrificing their field trip and basic research hours. Our only option at that point was to take enough time to train our grad assistants who then became web editors of the undergraduates' final projects.

In the fall of 2010, the Center launched our pilot to test out our consultant's recommendations and expanded our knowledge base by taking on new projects (a digitization project for a corporate donor.) It became clear that the money set aside in the NEH budget for follow up by our (to help us with planning our launch) was not going to be needed. We used a small portion of the funds to continue our work over a summer (planning our work with the College of Human Ecology and for the Lost Kansas portal) and then we were done.

e. Continuation of the Project

There is no doubt that this project will continue, although not precisely in the format it was initially conceived. As stated above, the resources needed to maintain and oversee a digital classroom where students could upload, share and organize their research turned out to be enormous. This was something that we were warned about by our consultant Mills Kelly from George Mason and he was certainly correct about the long hours that were required to create a digital upload pathway. One of the most valuable aspects of the grant was, in fact, the emergence of a pathway from student research to completed digital entry on a live website. Our pathway includes ten potential steps, from the initial instruction by our Center to the students enrolled in our project courses, to intellectual property agreements, to fact checking by our grad assistants to the final selection of Dublin core tags.

Another significant result of the planning process led to a change in University policy regarding external platforms. Before the start of the granting period, Kansas State University developed a new Content Management System to house all of the digital and web based projects on campus. A virtual ban on platforms not developed in-house posed a significant challenge to our planning because we determined that the platform product OMEKA, developed by historians at George Mason University, would be ideal for our pilot project on lost Kansas towns. As a result of that pilot project, and after many months of deliberation and negotiation, Kansas State has agreed to host our OMEKA based portal, which will open the doors for similar projects across campus and allow an expansion of the pilot project well into the future.

f. Long Term Impact

As a result of our work on our pilot project, a local researcher contacted our Center recently to extend a hand in our search for missing, lost or about-to-be forgotten places. He explained that he had spent the bulk of his retirement, more than eleven years, researching and cataloguing the state's forgotten places. His research is first rate, and he has amassed a list of over nine thousand place names (an average of 85 places in each of the state's 105 counties). Needless to say, his work has given the student researchers in the Chapman Center an enormous boost and will keep them busy for many classes and years to come.

The next step for this project is disseminate our experience to other professors, departments and colleges so that they can incorporate student based research into their curriculums in ways that are appropriate to their disciplines but maintain student enthusiasm through the promise of web based and other forms of publication. I have recently joined a University wide task force designed to expand undergraduate research opportunities on our campus—another extension of the Lost Kansas Digital Humanities Grant.

g. Grant Products

As a result of the award of an NEH Digital Humanities Level I grant, the Chapman Center for Rural Studies, during the course of the grant period, published a full length monograph, *Broughton Kansas, Portrait of a Lost Town* (2010), a second book in paper and digital format, *Filling the Larder: Feeding our Families* (2012), two student authored occasional papers that we send out to local historical societies as samples of our research, a short film/video about the work of our interns written and produced by a former intern who now runs his own production company (Beside Myself Productions),and more than 70 entries, in three collections, on the Kansas State University Research Exchange. As of March 5, 2012, Collection #1 (African American Kansas) had 733 "hits." Collection #2 on Kansas History and Life had received 310 "hits" and Collection #3, Lost Kansas Communities had 542 "hits." Finally, the Lost Kansas

digital archive went live at the start of March, 2012, and will have more than 70 entries posted by April 1, 2012. This digital archive can be found at www.ksu.edu/history/chapman.