

# Great Rivers Cultural Heritage Network Project

## PROGRESS REPORT

31 JULY 2007 MEETING

MINNESOTA HISTORY CENTER, ST. PAUL

### Background

On 31 July 2007, staff from MHS met with representatives from Anoka, Blue Earth, Nicollet and Olmsted county historical societies to discuss the Great Rivers Cultural Heritage Network (GRCHN) project. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a project update, demonstrate a federated search prototype, and discuss data standards and branding. Appendix A contains a meeting agenda.

### Participants

<i>Minnesota Historical Society (MHS):</i>	Jaime Haire, Bob Horton, Marj Kelly, Irene van Bavel, Rose Sherman
<i>Anoka County Historical Society:</i>	Todd Mahon
<i>Blue Earth County Historical Society:</i>	Jessica Potter
<i>Nicollet County Historical Society:</i>	Ben Leonard, John Byrnes
<i>Olmsted County Historical Society:</i>	Sherry Sweetman

### Discussion

Irene van Bavel started the July 31, 2007 meeting with an overview of recent GRCHN activities that included the purchase and implementation of Autonomy's IDOL server, hiring a project data consultant, and our early focus on PastPerfect and Content DM. Also mentioned was a June meeting with North Dakota partners and July meetings with representatives from Twin Cities Public Television, MINITEX, University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Digital Library.

Marj Kelly demonstrated a prototype for PeopleFinder, a federated search tool that provides integrated access to existing online resources at MHS. She explained and showed how IDOL was configured to search for names within the MHS birth and death indexes, finding aids, photo and art database, library catalog, and website.

We discussed institutional identity and user access points, reiterating that each institution will have a local search, with their "skins," searching only their collections. That "local search" will link to the GRCHN site and the GRCHN site will link back to each of the collaborating institutions.

## Great Rivers Cultural Heritage Network Project

Seeing the prototype generated a great deal of discussion regarding user interface design. Participants expressed concern for both the input (search) and output (results) screens. Indeed, as we integrate more resources into GRCHN, efforts to display the underlying resources and organize results will be a top priority and essential to the success of the project. Although we will conduct a full user study later in the process, Appendix B is a summary of our initial conversation.

Jaime Haire followed with a talk about metadata, the development of data standards and thresholds of participation. She updated on early work with Nicollet County to extract and analyze data from PastPerfect, describing common data issues and how they might be addressed with global clean-up and, going forward, with guidelines for metadata creation.

The group reviewed a preliminary collection survey that will help us learn more about the resources each partner has available in a digital format. This information will help direct our early efforts and focus on materials that have a strongest potential for aggregation. We plan to finalize this form and send it out within the month.

Bob Horton concluded with a discussion on branding issues, identifying potential issues with the GRCHN brand. Among the possible issues are “identity overlap” with Great River Energy, the limitations of the term “cultural heritage”, the length of the name, and connotations with the acronym GRCHN.

Feedback from the county partners on the brand was positive. We agreed the use of the term “cultural heritage” relates more to the material, not the mission of the organization, and should not suggest exclusion of Twin Cities Public Television (TPT), Prairie Public Television and future partners who do not primarily identify as cultural heritage institutions. Even with the initial approval of GRCHN, we encourage partners to share any branding ideas they may have.

## Great Rivers Cultural Heritage Network Project

### Action items

#### *August 2007*

- Write and distribute meeting and progress report – MHS (*done*)
- Finalize and send out survey form for inventories of existing digital content – MHS
- Complete survey to describe data and data structures for evaluation – GRCHN Partners
- Launch web site to communicate project information and make GRCHN demo accessible to partners – MHS

#### *Ongoing*

- Identify relevant standards for digital content and metadata - MHS
- Continue to test Autonomy IDOL search engine application with internal databases and learn more about integration with ContentDM and PastPerfect - MHS
- Develop outreach and education resources for local and county historical societies
- Review regional web sites for digital content currently online – GRCHN Partners
- Explore additional funding sources for digitization projects
  - NEH grant for National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP)
  - MN state grants-in-aid for county newspaper digitization

APPENDIX A

*Agenda – 31 July 2007 Meeting  
Pillsbury Room - Minnesota History Center*

12	Lunch
12:45	Introduction - Irene
1:00	IDOL demo - Marj
1:30	Data analysis - Jaime
2:00	Break
2:15	Branding - Bob
2:30	Review, summary, action items – Irene

## APPENDIX B

### User Interface – Input (search) screen

In order for users to understand and have control over which resources they are searching, we will explore ways to display the collections and/or database options. This would likely take the form of a hierarchical file structure, using a collapse/expand function to navigate the underlying resources in GRCHN.

Presumably, the user could search GRCHN at any degree of granularity – selecting all data or any combination of databases. The example below organizes resources by 1) State, 2) County and 3) Database/Collection. Each resource could also link (or pop-up) to a brief description to inform the user (e.g., “MHS Birth Record Index contain information from YYYY to YYYY.”)

---

#### Fully collapsed

- + Minnesota
- + North Dakota
- + South Dakota

#### Minnesota Expanded:

- + Minnesota
  - + Anoka County Historical Society
  - + Blue Earth County Historical Society
  - + Minnesota Historical Society
  - + Nicollet County Historical Society
  - + Olmsted County Historical Society
  - + TPT
- + North Dakota
- + South Dakota

#### Minnesota Historical Society Expanded

- + Minnesota
    - + Anoka County Historical Society
    - + Blue Earth County Historical Society
    - + Minnesota Historical Society
      - Birth Records
      - Death Records
      - Veterans Grave Registration
      - and so on
    - + Nicollet County Historical Society
    - + Olmsted County Historical Society
    - + TPT
  - + North Dakota
  - + South Dakota
-

Other methods include resource selection based on record type (e.g., vital statistic, cemetery index, probate) or “life event” (e.g., birth, death, marriage, census) as illustrated in the example below.

---

### By Life Event

- + Birth
- + Death
  - + Cemetery Indexes
  - + Death Records
  - + Obituary Index
  - + Probate Records
  - + Veteran Grave Registrations
- + Marriage
- + Census

### Cemetery Indexes expanded with the cemeteries for Anoka County fully expanded

- + Birth
  - + Death
    - + Cemetery Indexes
      - + Anoka County Historical Society
        - Graceland Cemetery
        - Pioneers Cemetery
        - XYZ Cemetery
      - + Blue Earth County Historical Society
      - + Nicollet County Historical Society
      - + Olmsted County Historical Society
    - + Death Records
    - + Obituary Index
    - + Probate Records
    - + Veterans Grave Registrations
  - + Marriage
  - + Census
- 

While it is important for users to have control over the resources they would like to search, there are concerns users will miss valuable information by assuming a database does not contain relevant information. For example, people may eliminate Olmsted County from a death record search because the person was not a resident. In fact, because of the medical facilities in the area, a significant percentage of the county’s death records will be for non-residents. This type of issue could be addressed in a FAQ or Help section of GRCHN.

### **User Interface – Output (results) screen**

To help users manage large returns, participants suggested filtering, sorting and clustering search results. Other enhancements include saving and printing selected records. We will also review relevancy algorithms and research popular search tools as we develop our interface.