

Building a Statewide Digital Readiness Community of Practice Semi-Annual Narrative Report

Award Number: RJ-103067-20

Award Recipient: Wisconsin Library Services

Reporting Period: April 1 – September 30, 2021

Submitted to NHPRC October 29, 2021

Performance Objective: *Hold one statewide Digital History Fair and four regional Digital History Fairs to increase awareness of and build support for the Community of Practice, promote digital concepts and the value of creating digital collections, provide opportunities to learn about what other repositories are doing, build community connections through social and learning opportunities, and promote the Digital Readiness Levels document and other resources.*

With the recently approved no-cost timeline extension to our grant, we will offer a statewide Digital Readiness Fair in October 2021 in conjunction with the Wisconsin Historical Society's annual Local History and Historic Preservation conference. In June-August 2021, we facilitated four virtual Digital Readiness Fairs, reaching a total of 269 individual registrants from 121 organizations. These free, half-day events were offered virtually via Zoom and were open to anyone. A Wisconsin library or historical society partner acted as the local convener for each Fair. Designing the virtual events with regional "hosts" was an opportunity to build on existing regional networks and encourage participants to form connections with other practitioners in their region.

We originally intended to convene in-person regional events, but pivoted to virtual gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual format offered some advantages as well as disadvantages. In addition to missing the face-to-face, interpersonal element of community-building, some individuals in our intended audience may not have been able to participate due to a lack of stable internet access in rural locations. In response, two of the four regional Fair hosts convened safe and socially distant "watch parties" in central locations for community members to gather and participate together in the virtual events. Conversely, the virtual format provided an opportunity to engage for those who may not normally attend in-person events due to the time and cost investments needed for travel. The virtual format also expanded participation by enabling participants to easily attend more than one Fair and for practitioners from outside Wisconsin to join in as well. After announcing the Fairs through the DPLA Hubs Network email list, at least 15 individuals from 7 different states (Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, and Vermont) registered for one or more Fairs. Finally, the Zoom interface made it simple to record and share presentations for future viewing.

We convened small working groups, made up of members of the overall Digital Readiness Launch Committee, to help plan and support each event. We created an event planning template and an internal outreach schedule to facilitate event promotion. We also created reusable graphics and a customizable media kit and managed registration and technical support for each virtual fair and host organization.

Each of the four regional Fairs included brief presentations from **Janet Seymour, Kristen Leffelman, or Liz Arbuckle** of the Wisconsin Historical Society Office of Programs and Outreach about the Society's Local History Affiliates program and from WiLS staff **Kristen Whitson, Vicki Tobias, and Emily Pfotenhauer** about the overall NHPRC-funded Digital Readiness Community of Practice initiative, Recollection Wisconsin, and the Digital Public Library of America. Each Fair also included an informal opportunity for attendees to chat with a representative from the WHS Outreach team. During breaks, we displayed a rotating "[brag deck](#)" of slides submitted by community members to spotlight their digital collections work. Each Fair included multiple invited guest presenters, who were practitioners from local or regional repositories identified by the Launch Committee and the local hosts. All presentations were recorded and are available on [Recollection Wisconsin's YouTube channel](#). Links to those videos, as well as Fair agendas, slide decks, and related resources, were shared with registrants over email and are collated on the [Recollection Wisconsin website](#).

Digital Readiness Fair 1: Appleton Public Library, June 29

Region: Northeast

Registered: 65

Attended: 46

Guest presentations:

- "Those Two Boxes of Tapes," **Dorothea Salo**, Distinguished Faculty Associate, University of Wisconsin-Madison Information School
- "Digitize Oconto County," **Kitty Werner**, Oconto County Historical Society
- "Making the Most of Digitization on Demand," **Lina Rosenberg-Foley**, Archivist, Lawrence University (Appleton)

Digital Readiness Fair 2: Crandon Area Historical Society, July 16

Region: North-central

Registered: 63

Attended: 41

Guest presentations:

- "Forest History Association of Wisconsin Digital Archives and Outreach," **Jim Bokern**, President, Manitowish Waters Historical Society and **Brad Casselberry**, Archivist, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

- “Local History At Your Fingertips: Using TheClio.com,” **Bonnie Byrd**, Executive Director, Waukesha County Historical Society and Museum and **Dr. Kimberly A. Redding**, Carroll College (Waukesha)

Digital Readiness Fair 3: Pioneer Village Museum/Barron County Historical Society, August 3

Region: Northwest

Registered: 71

Attended: 51

Guest presentations:

- “Why and How: Baby Steps to Digitization,” **Russ Hanson**, Technical Specialist, Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical Society; **Jodi Kiffmeyer**, Archivist, Chippewa Valley Museum; **Jennifer Gurske**, Program and Technology Manager, Madison Trust for Historic Preservation
- “Standardized Rights Statements 101: Easier Than You Think,” **Molly Huber**, Outreach Coordinator, Minnesota Digital Library

Digital Readiness Fair 4: Kenosha County Historical Society, August 18

Region: Southeast

Registered: 75

Attended: 43

Guest presentations:

- “The Evolution of JMM’s Oral History Project,” **Jay Hyland**, Archivist, Jewish Museum Milwaukee
- “My Experiences as a Young Person with Dodge and Jefferson County Genealogical Society,” Volunteers from Dodge and Jefferson County Genealogical Society
- “Top 10 Digital Projects Questions,” **Chris Allen**, Executive Director, Kenosha County Historical Society and **Cynthia Allen**, Archivist, Kenosha County Historical Society

After each Fair, attendees were emailed a brief feedback survey. Survey responses indicated that the majority of participants found the Fairs engaging, informative, and applicable to their current and future work.

Digital Readiness Fair	Attendees*	Survey respondents*	Response rate
Appleton Public Library	46	14	30%
Crandon Area Historical Society	41	10	24%
Pioneer Village Museum (Barron Co.)	51	12	24%
Kenosha County Historical Society	43	8	19%
TOTAL	181	44	24%

**These are not unique attendees. Some attendees attended multiple fairs and/or filled out the survey more than once, for each fair they attended. This data also includes responses from Launch Committee members and guest presenters.*

***Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience at the Digital Readiness Fair?
(1-5, Very Unsatisfied to Very Satisfied)***

Option	Number of respondents	% of respondents
3	1	2.5%
4	14	32%
5	28	64%
No answer	1	2%
TOTAL	44	

***My understanding of digital readiness concepts has increased because of this event.
(1-5, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)***

Option	Number of respondents	% of respondents
3	1	2%
4	15	34%
5	27	61%
No answer	2	4%
TOTAL	44	

I am confident I can apply what I learned at this event to my own or organization's digitization project work. (1-5, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

Option	Number of respondents	% of respondents
2	1	2%
3	6	13%
4	12	27%
5	24	55%
No answer	1	2%
TOTAL	44	

The following is a summary of responses to the open-ended questions posed in the feedback survey:

(1) What ideas, projects, tools, or activities presented at the workshop were especially thought-provoking or you think will be especially useful to you or your organization?

Participants appreciated sessions related to multimedia digitization, media formats' lifespans, and an introduction to workflows for digitizing various A/V formats. Many were intrigued by

[Clio](#), an introduction to “digitization on demand” and related workflows, and advice for launching a digitization program or project. Participants appreciated discussions about grant funding and learning about Wisconsin-based projects that have received funding in the past. There was interest in hearing about newspaper digitization projects and workflows, recruiting and using volunteers to complete digitization projects (including students and seniors), and using Google-based tools for digitization projects. Other topics of interest included advice on purchasing and opportunities to share digitization equipment, a new awareness of Wisconsin-based digitization projects and the Wisconsin Historical Society outreach program, advice on how to build expertise and skills within an organization, and an introduction to the Digital Readiness Toolkit and Levels.

Key quote: “I appreciated learning that we're not alone with our digitizing problems!”

(2) What barriers do you face when approaching or planning for digital projects work?

Common barriers include lack of funding, staff and volunteers, and adequate time to develop and manage digitization projects. Specifically, participants relayed their concern for lack of stable or institutionalized funding including an increasing reliance on grant funding. Some commented on the amount of time and resources necessary to train and sustain a skilled volunteer force. Other barriers mentioned include helping staff and community members understand that digitization is “more than just scanning” and should include a storage plan.

Key quote: “Funding is always the barrier for small historical societies. Time and volunteers follow in level of importance.”

(3) What digital projects work are you hoping to complete that you don't have the time, resources, or expertise to accomplish?

Participants expressed interest in developing projects to digitize all sorts of formats and content including photos (prints and negatives), documents, newspapers and newspaper clippings collections, albums and scrapbooks, organizational newsletters, publications (directories, catalogs, magazines), audio formats (cassette tapes), video/film formats (VHS), oral history collections, and maps. Participants also expressed interest in building collections in Clio, digitizing their own organizational files, capturing websites and social media that document their community and its history, and narrowing the scope of their digitization projects by offering digital access to high-demand items.

Key quote: “30 tubs of documents, photos, news articles, scrapbooks, newsletters, catalogs, magazines, etc. All the things!”

(4) What other topics are you interested in learning about from Recollection Wisconsin or the Wisconsin Historical Society?

Participants expressed interest in learning more about community fundraising for digitization projects, grant opportunities, template language to use for digitization grant proposals. Many

expressed a desire to learn more about copyright and fair use, and newspaper-related projects - specifically Newspapers.com and NewspaperArchive.com. Participants are interested in learning more about born-digital collections and how to provide access to them, and what to do with both digital and analog items after they have been digitized and shared online. Several expressed interest in learning more about archiving websites and providing access to social media sites such as Facebook. “How to get started” is a commonly expressed theme – folks really want more information about developing a digital project including equipment and best practices.

Key quote: Anything that can be shared on effective grant application language for digitization projects would be deeply appreciated!

(5) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience attending the Digital Readiness Fair?

Overall, participants shared positive feedback including an appreciation for the online and virtual environment and recorded sessions to watch later. They expressed gratitude for an introduction to digitization projects and work happening in Wisconsin and the upper Midwest region. Several commented on the accessible and actionable information that was provided in a relaxed yet informative atmosphere and offered high praise for the diverse lineup of sessions and scheduling. They loved hearing about Connor (the youth volunteer from Dodge and Jefferson County Genealogical Society) and his work. The copyright session may have been too complex for this audience, a few of whom expressed a desire for more basic information on this topic.

Key quote: It was wonderful to hear from small organizations like ours!

Performance Objective: *Finalize and promote throughout the state’s archival community a Digital Readiness Levels document for small repositories to use to plan digital stewardship activities and benchmark their progress.*

In early 2021, we finalized and began to promote the community-reviewed [Digital Readiness Levels](#). This document includes seven focus areas and three levels of capability benchmarks within each area. It also includes “Check As You Go” questions to guide planning and decision making as a repository moves through each level. During the current reporting period, we used the Levels as the foundational framework to shape other learning opportunities and resources we are actively developing, in particular the Recollection Wisconsin [Digital Projects Toolkit](#). During this reporting period, we consulted with the Launch Committee on the content, layout, and presentation of the Toolkit. In the coming months, we will work with this group and other experts and community members to finalize both print and web-based versions of the Toolkit structured around the Levels.

Performance Objective: *Provide virtual community-building resources such as a listserv to facilitate peer-to-peer networking, a resource directory that will serve as the central location for training materials and other resources gathered or created by the Community of Practice, and at least eight case studies showcasing exemplary digital work at small institutions.*

Following the Fairs, participants were given the opportunity to join the Digital Readiness Community of Practice by subscribing to the Wisconsin Digital Stewardship email list and 29 new people joined that list. In addition, 24 Fair feedback survey respondents indicated they would like to be involved in reviewing digital readiness guidelines and support materials. We will use this list to gather community input as we continue to revise and update the Digital Projects Toolkit.

During this reporting period, we published three new [case studies](#):

- **Door County Library**, focusing on the library’s newspaper digitization project and their oral history collection kits
- **Chippewa Valley Museum**, sharing the value of documentation, workflows, and training checklists for volunteers doing digitization work
- **“Sharing Local History Resources,”** showcasing a range of examples of the dissemination and creative re-use of digital collections, including projects from the Sterling Eureka Historical Society, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, and Waukesha County Historical Society (in collaboration with Carroll University)

In addition, we published an article on the Recollection Wisconsin website summarizing some of the [common questions raised during the Fairs](#) and key resources to answer those questions.

Dissemination and Publicity

- [Midwest Archives Conference, May 2021](#)

Two members of the project Launch Committee, **Robin Untz** (Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society) and **Janean Mollet-Van Beckum** (Washington County Historical Society), joined project staff **Kristen Whitson** and **Vicki Tobias** for a panel discussion about the project and digital readiness concepts at the annual Midwest Archives Conference, held virtually. Attendance: 90

- **Upcoming: National Digital Stewardship Alliance (NDSA) conference, November 2021**
Kristen Whitson will present about the project with **Kristen Leffelman** (Wisconsin Historical Society), Launch Committee member **Jennifer Gurske** (Madison Trust for Historic Preservation) and planning grant participant **Dustin Mack** (History Museum at the Castle, Appleton).
- **Upcoming: Wisconsin Library Association conference, November 2021**
Kristen Whitson will share digital readiness project work in a panel with Community of Practice members **Steven Rice** (Door County Historical Museum) and **Beth Renstrom** (Sturgeon Bay Historical Society Foundation).
- **Upcoming: Midwest Archives Conference, May 2022**
Kristen Whitson will share lessons learned about accessible language and content in educating local history practitioners on digital readiness concepts in a panel presentation with **Elizabeth Morris** (Bensenville (Illinois) Community Public Library), **Nancy Webster** (Highland Park (Illinois) Archives and Local History Collections), and **Stevie Gunter** (Denver (Colorado) Public Library).

This fall, we are using Recollection Wisconsin's Facebook and Twitter channels to spotlight individual recordings and resources from the Digital Readiness Fairs in a "Fair Friday" series. The social media format allows us to connect with and tag partner organizations, guest speakers, and funders for increased community reach and visibility.