Summary Report of 2014 Focus Group Sessions

Introduction and Highlights

Background

In September and October 2014, consultants Tom Clareson and Liz Bishoff held a total of 10 focus groups in Florida to gain feedback and information for the Florida Statewide Digital Action Plan. The purpose of these sessions was to obtain input from Florida's cultural heritage organizations on:

- Current digital collection development activities of focus group participants.
- The Statewide Digital Program Mission Statement draft.
- Identification of activities to carry out the goals of the project.
- Potential opportunities and challenges associated with carrying out the program.

Tom and Liz held focus group sessions of 90-120 minutes in the following locations:

- Jacksonville: September 9, 6 attendees
- Gainesville: September 10, 8 attendees
- Miami: October 14, 14 attendees
- Ft. Lauderdale area: October 14, 30 attendees
- Orlando: October 15, 10 attendees
- Tampa area: October 16, 7 attendees
- Tallahassee: October 30, 9 attendees
- Panama City: October 31, 5 attendees

In addition, Tom and Liz held one-hour presentations, which included focus group activities, at these conferences:

- Florida Association of Museums Conference, Jacksonville: September 9, 26 attendees
- Florida Public Library Directors' Conference, Tallahassee: October 29, 20 attendees

Key Elements of a Statewide Digital Action Plan

The focus group participants identified the following as key elements for a successful program:

- Information to convince our directors that this is a priority.
- Understanding of the nuts and bolts of the program, i.e., how to integrate what we already have into this approach.
- Immediate development of metadata best practices.
- Simple and understandable training.
- Funding to undertake such an effort as both a statewide initiative and at the local level.
- Definition of the statewide collection as collections about Florida as well as those held by Florida institutions.
- Training on everything.

What Are the Perceived Benefits of a Statewide Program?

In preparation for the public library directors' session, we developed a list of benefits identified by the focus groups:

- Expands statewide and national visibility of our libraries.
- Provides one-stop shopping, which will support research and education.
- Brings people to us – not Wikipedia.
- Drives up Web presence and usage.

- Gets patrons what they need.
- Encourages collaboration, funds for working with other libraries and my historical society; helps to identify partners.
- Engages community, demonstrates how to engage those interested in history.
- Showcases cultural heritage, heritage tourism.
- "It's the gateway to Digital Public Library of America."

Overall, the focus groups reached 135 participants and gained information that will be extremely helpful to the future of the program.

Focus Group Summary

The focus group sessions drew a wide variety of attendees, from volunteer staff at small historical societies to representatives of the largest academic and public libraries and museums in the state, as well as attendees with archival collections in the university and municipal environment. A number of focus group participants responded to an earlier statewide survey, however the focus groups also drew participants that didn't respond to the survey.

1. **We asked participants to share with the group an example of what they are currently doing to create or acquire digital content at their institution.**
   A large number of institutions attended the focus groups to learn about digitization and indicated a need for assistance on a variety of issues.

2. **We gave the participants an opportunity to review the following copy of the Florida Statewide Digital Program Mission Statement, drafted by the Statewide Digital Action Plan Advisory Committee, and asked them to share their thoughts on it.**

   Florida's archives, libraries, museums and historical societies provide the residents of Florida and curious citizens of the world with an interest in Florida cultural heritage barrier-free online discovery and access to the digital collections that promote Florida and enhance understanding of its heritage.

   Focus group participants suggested a range of changes to the statement.
   - One common theme was that many attendees saw the information as a Goal Statement or Statement of Purpose rather than a Mission Statement.
   - Many participants also felt that the statement was too long.
   - Specific questions/comments on or stemming from the statement, which were heard at multiple focus group sessions, included:
     o "What is barrier-free?" The groups mentioned lack of telecommunication, ADA barriers, language barriers, cost barriers and computer security activities as potential barriers to the activity, so in its current wording, this part of the statement had different meanings to different groups.
     o "What is a Florida Collection?" Is it about Florida? Held by a Florida institution? There was a strong sentiment throughout most of the sessions that the definition be as broad as possible – that the project cannot be limited to being just *about* Florida; it is wider in scope than the current *Florida Memory* project.
     o The statement "curious citizens of the world" was seen as being "cute" but unnecessary, because Internet access is global.

- Many of the participants said that the core of the project was about access, so this needs to be featured more in the statement.
- One group asked for a statement of who is responsible for managing the service.

At the final focus group session in Panama City, participants worked with consultants to revise the statement and arrived at the following wording:

Florida's cultural heritage organizations will provide Florida residents and citizens of the world online access to digital collections that promote Florida and enhance understanding of its heritage.

3. **We informed participants that to implement this mission, the Advisory Committee has been developing standards and best practices for metadata and content creation, developing a technical strategy for a statewide portal that would aggregate the metadata from Florida's cultural heritage organizations' digital collections, and exploring opportunities for integration with the Digital Public Library of America. We asked participants what they think is needed for their organizations to participate in such a program. We also asked them what additional information they would need on the program and whether they need information on the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)?**

There was a wide variety of responses to this question. By analyzing the content of the responses, we have developed the list below of the top issues and needs mentioned by multiple groups and have also made notes on sub-topics and sub-projects suggested.

- Staff training – 8 groups mentioned
  - Suggestions included hands-on, locally-focused and held, just-in-time training, some available on-demand via webinars; training needs to be simple and understandable
- Additional funding – 7 groups
- Staffing/manpower – 7 groups
  - Working with public history programs at nearby colleges and universities
  - Using interns on projects
- Help with selection issues – 6 groups
  - Have a digital collection development policy for the statewide collection
  - Digital collection development plans for individual institution
  - Site surveys/determine digital needs on a local level
- Statewide standards and best practices – 5 groups
  - "Metadata standards are needed ASAP"
  - A statewide metadata style guide would be helpful
  - More "getting started" documents
- Legal help on copyright issues – 5 groups
- Statewide newspaper project/working with digitized newspaper collections – 3 groups
- Bi-Directional Application Programming Interface and links to other websites with collections – 3 groups
  - The ability to link to other collections
- More staff time – 3 groups
- Collaboration and sharing – 3 groups
- Software to put metadata into – 3 groups
- Local partnership development – 2 groups

- o Possible limitation: need a group to join (a small public library with no organized system to join)
- Digital collection storage needs – 2 groups
- Means of ingest/upload instructions/information on how export and harvesting will work – 2 groups
- Content management system/software – 2 groups
  - o A regional content management system was suggested in one group
  - o Determination of which content management systems will be compatible with the statewide systems was a need identified in another group
- Make sure it is an inclusive project, with outreach to small institutions – 2 groups
- Multiple levels of buy-in and approval – 2 groups
  - o Messages to take to politicians
  - o Government agency approval
  - o Benefits statements, especially for administration
- Duplicate detection problems will need to be addressed; scrubbing is needed
- How do we address the issue of other states or organizations that have Florida content?
- What about materials held by Florida institutions that are not about Florida?
- Branding and marketing of the collections
- Resources to upgrade metadata if needed by the statewide project to get it into the schema needed for the program
- Will participants need to do the cross-walking?
- Who decides on keywords and subject headings?
- Can we use volunteers?
- A list of suggested vendors who can do conversion of collections
- Create working groups to address specific problems rather than having people solve problems individually
- Hardware and equipment to create the images
- Develop a consortium/network for communication
- Gifts/donations/deed of gift policies
- An idea of the cost of participation in the program
- How to deal with embargoed collections
- Resource people and mentoring groups
- Development of institutional digital plans
- Know the expectations of participating organizations, financially and time-wise
- "Get over the idea of revenue generation via digitization programs"
- Feedback from end-users to let us know if the program is working
- How to integrate what has already been digitized with the statewide program
- How can we harvest from a non-open archives initiative-harvestable collection?
- A strong link with Florida Virtual Campus

4. **We asked participants what they saw as the strengths and challenges of such a program.**
   For this question, there were a number of ideas discussed by multiple groups, and there were some excellent quotes about the potential strengths of the program from a number of the focus group participants, which are highlighted below.

   Strengths
   - Networking: will build new collaborations and partnerships – 8 groups

- Access: one access point, one-stop searching – 8 groups
  - "Will make it easier for end users to find what they are looking for"
- Will help get more funding – 6 groups
  - Finding collaborative opportunities and grants
- Will improve visibility – 6 groups
  - "The public gets access to collections they never knew existed from organizations they never knew about. We can get in front of people, raising the profile of cultural heritage institutions."
- Marketing and promotion of institutional collections – 4 groups
- Able to avoid duplication, find out if someone has already digitized an item – 4 groups
- Availability of standards-based best practices – 4 groups
  - "Guidelines and expertise mean we don't have to start from scratch."
  - Increased consistency in digital practices
- Better access for researchers/enabling research – 4 groups
  - "This will help researchers. One researcher at my institution recently asked where to go for everything on Florida history, and I had to make a long list."
- Showcases what's publicly available – 2 groups
  - "The state's treasures can be revealed – the project will illuminate what's available to the public"
- Cultural tourism – increase in tourism dollars once people (both in-state and nationally) know what institutions have – 2 groups
- Support for smaller institutions – 2 groups
  - "Works really well for everyone – especially the little guys"
- Impetus to do more preservation and digitization – 2 groups
  - "Maybe people will be more careful with the materials that they take in in the future (keeping better donation records, taking better care of materials)."
- A gateway to the Digital Public Library of America – 2 groups
- Good for education/school systems – 2 groups
  - "Students will really benefit for history days, science days."
- Frees up resources/redirects resources (for example, from microfilming) – 2 groups
- Central leadership – 2 groups
  - "If we are assuming the state is taking a leadership role in implementation, that may be the biggest strength, as it will help smaller organizations to get a leg up."
  - Having an identifiable advocate/central organization running the project would be helpful to gain local and state support
- Will position the library as a value-added organization for historical resourcesUnified knowledge
- Shared negotiation of rights
- Opportunity for crowd sourcing projects
- Search results display flexible
- Highlights smaller institutions
- Sustainability
- "Other states are doing this, Florida needs to"
- "The quicker, the better to start this"
- "This type of project would increase professionalism in cultural heritage institutions across the state"
- "It's glamorous to have local collections digitized – it helps the institution politically"
- "We have amazing history and don't have a voice"

- "This brings people to us, not Wikipedia."
- Drives up hits and usage
- An argument to stop cutting budgets
- Will improve return on investment
- "If people know we exist, they will donate materials to us; this is a way to expand awareness of our organization."
- Training will be huge for staff – they will have a new set of skills and know more.

Challenges
- Metadata Issues – 7 groups
  - Metadata maintenance
  - Quality control for metadata and content creation
  - Standard versus unique metadata
  - Updating metadata for harvesting – cost and staffing
  - We have minimal metadata – how will the program support this?
  - Everyone is currently doing something different for metadata
  - "Smallest organizations are run by volunteers, they have digitization knowledge but when you say metadata they are turned off, it's a fear factor, need to understand that and adjust."
  - Digital collections exist without metadata – adding it is a major labor issue
- Funding and budget issues – 4 groups
  - Need recurring, ongoing funding
  - Need legislative funding
  - Who will decide the priorities? Who will decide who gets the money?
- Staffing and manpower issues – 4 groups
  - One organization expressed concern that their volunteer base is dying
  - This project will bring more attention – we can't support increased activity that digital collections bring
  - Getting qualified staff to work on a program like this
  - Staff turnover and interest level of staff assigned to work on this
- Training – 3 groups
- Rights and copyright – there's a big education issue – 3 groups
- Sustainability – 2 groups
  - "We've gone down this path before. Changing priorities, territoriality, etc., are all problems that need to be addressed."
  - "Credibility is needed to get buy-in: there has to be a lot of activity. Some other projects haven't been sustained. Good project examples are the Digital Library of the Caribbean and the Internet Archive."
- "Retrospective conversion of digitization" – 2 groups
  - If an institution has already done a project, will they have to do it over for this program?
- Get people past the worry of losing control of their collections (Georgia has done a good job of this) – two groups
  - Fear of putting things online and the library becoming obsolete
- Standardization/getting everyone on the same page
  - Standards – are they too high? Standards cannot be a barrier
- Technology can be a challenge, even though standards have stabilized
- Expertise
- Hardware and software at the local level – lack of equipment

- "The ever changing political environment in Florida"
- Efficient, consistent workflow
- Scalability
- How to integrate with what Florida Virtual Library is doing
- Getting it actually started/getting the ball rolling
- What is allowed (e.g., printing)?
- Awareness of other efforts, especially big national projects
  - Successful models from other states
- Timing
- How to do cross walking, data-wrangling
- Digital security issues including firewalls at local sites
- Educating users on how to get content at local sites
- Various formats – user device format and display at local sites
- "I didn't hear about a centralized focal institution for this effort – where does the buck stop?"
- Identifying who is doing what – avoiding duplication
- Need for resource people
- Selection/prioritization issues: "My family is more important than that family, why did you digitize materials on their family?"
- Impact on revenue from photocopying
- Everything will be centralized by the state, this is a local activity, there needs to be a combination state and local role
- Digital preservation – need to address this as we go along
- Coordination on state level – what will it look like, what manpower will be available, what people and resources?
- Communication – we need strong communication – advocacy and promotion
- Explain the benefits – that it will grow visitors to the site
- Resource/capacity question: if the metadata record in Digital Public Library of America reflects back to a small institution, does that organization have the capacity to host and store digital collections?
- Getting local cultural heritage organizations to buy in
- Digitization needs to become a program at institutions
- Where do you start? Institutions new to digitization will ask this
- Front-end bureaucracy, back-end administrative issues
- Presentation of the digitized materials – website design
- It's glamorous once the material is on the website, but it is very labor-intensive to do. Administrators want to only see the pretty website and don't recognize all of the work that goes into it.
- Collection development and cataloging librarians are territorial and are concerned when digital librarians start talking about metadata, digital collection development
- "Way that state disperses Library Services and Technology Act funds has to change – currently most of the funds go to state library/archives digitization projects – if this project goes forward we need to build digital collections statewide. Grants need to be made to all types of organizations."

5. **Finally, we asked participants if there was anything they came to say that the consultants didn't ask them about.**

- Is there any thought of a statewide e-book project like the one in Massachusetts?
- How will rights information be dealt with?
- (With their current workload and staffing levels) "You can't ask institutions to do a lot more work to be able to participate"
- Make it an aesthetically nice site – easy to navigate
- Pride in place – be proud of it – don't want to be part of something we're not proud of
- Participants will need a means of networking/connecting with people – Southeast Florida Library Network has a Listserv and group
- Need a set of resources on digitization
- What other states have done this? (Facilitators provided a list of states and suggested participants go to the Digital Public Library of America website)
- At each institution, need to have a dedicated digital initiatives person to work on this; can start small but can't continue to be just 20% of someone's time; need contact or point person who is willing to be listed
- Budget needed for people, hardware
- Avoid the low-bid mentality
- Try to be inclusive, don't go too fast, start small
- "Tallahassee forgets there is a South Florida."
- More public library presence is needed
- Perseverance needed
- Work with all sizes and types of organizations
- Couldn't find information about "Florida on Florida" in Google
- Branding is important
- Focus Group participants can do outreach to friends in other organizations to get them interested in the project
- Will the Library for the Blind content be included?
- "Need to get the right people, interested people, people who can influence involved"
- Marketing program to cultural heritage organizations at the county level is needed; will help develop collaborations between museums, libraries and archives; how to make it viable, attract content providers
- Are there free and low-cost content management systems?
- What is the timeline?
- End user – can we know what the geographic location is for the physical object as part of the portal?
- It seems like a big project, a challenge to bring everyone together
- Participation is voluntary, correct?
- Important to adopt best practices
- Copyright and permissions are an issue – state can't really do anything about this; training will be important
- Interest in getting progress reports on the project – there is a need to disseminate information about the progress of the project
- The focus group provided a good understanding of project goals