

By the People, With the People: User-center crowdsourcing at the Library of Congress

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Abstract: This presentation will share the methods used to build and evaluate a user-centered crowdsourcing platform and program for enhancing discoverability, accessibility, and computability of digital collections at the Library of Congress. By the People (crowd.loc.gov) invites public participation in the collective development of cultural memory through exploration, transcription, and tagging of digitized archival collections. It embodies and fulfills the Library's strategic goals of creating a user-centered, data-driven library and actively engaging learners of all ages. The project platform and program center the principles of trust and approachability to engage the public to connect to the Library of Congress, valuing their contributions as they open Library collections to others. Volunteers work collaboratively to create and review transcriptions of historical materials to improve access through search and legibility of digital collections. By the People utilizes volunteer feedback, user research, and iterative user-centered product and program design to check assumptions and ensure volunteers have the tools they need to engage, understand, connect, and grow. The project builds on the skills and technologies developed at the Library and shares them back to the public and wider library and cultural heritage communities via the open source code base for the underlying application—Concordia. This presentation will share the agile and iterative process of creating Concordia and the By the People engagement program, as well as how we are measuring success of the platform, program, and product quantitatively and qualitatively.

About the Author:

Lauren Algee is a Senior Innovation Specialist on the Library of Congress Labs team where she serves as Product Owner and Community Manager for By the People, an open-source crowdsourcing platform and program. She previously led digital projects for DC Public Library, Special Collections and held archivist positions at the National Gallery of Art and Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. Lauren holds an M.S. in Information Studies from the University of Texas at Austin.