

# The Heritage Connection:

## Analysis of a digital portal project across varied cultural heritage sites

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**Setting:** Rural Titusville, PA, (pop. 5,158), birthplace of the commercial oil industry and part of the Oil Region National Heritage Area.

**Problems and Challenges in providing digital resources:**

- Multiple local cultural heritage sites receiving the same genealogy and local history queries. Duplicated efforts and wasted time.
- Differing site agendas, staffing, volunteer base.
- Some sites had little or no web presence that explained their holdings and services to family and local history researchers.
- Site staff had varied access to and knowledge of software and/or digital metadata standards,

**Goals:** 1) directing genealogical and local history traffic to appropriate cultural heritage site; 2) providing simple method of exhibiting digital content; 3) prepping for future upload to aggregators; 4) initiating indexing and display of cultural heritage resources beyond partner holdings, i.e. church records

**Partners:** Benson Memorial Library, Drake Well Museum (Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission), Titusville High School Alumni Society, Titusville Historical Society. Two Clarion University MSLS interns assisted (some grant funding from Clarion University for interns).

**Decision-making process:** Meetings held in person with representatives appointed by each site.

**Decisions on:**

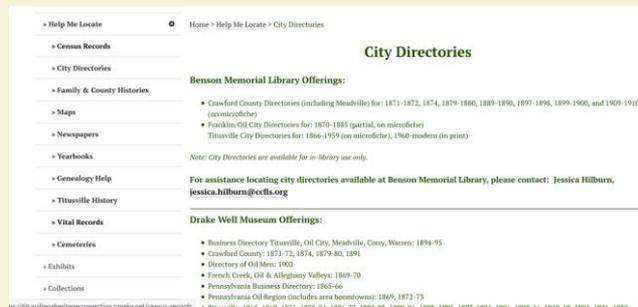
**Partner criteria-** Organization with collections that are intended to be accessible to the public on a regular basis. After time, consider participation of other partners.

**Software-** Omeka.net = low cost, online admin access, no server necessary, OAI-PMH harvestable.

**Major info and layout-** After much discussion– 1) emphasis is on the user and what info they are seeking by resource type. Under each resource type, include partner holdings and contact methods; 2) Exhibits, 3) Links to additional digitized resources, 4) partner information.

**Collaboration-** Excellent rapport among all, but bulk of applied work carried out by three persons: Clarion University intern Kerry Neely, Jessica Hilburn of Benson Memorial Library, and Rhonda Clark of Clarion University and the Titusville Historical Society.

**The fine print:** In order to launch the site, resource descriptions and reference email referrals by topic were completed. One small exhibit was created by Benson Library, with minimal metadata, based on what is required by Access PA. It was determined that not all partners were interested in future upload to DPLA, so flexibility was provided for that option down the road. Flexibility in watermarking exhibit photos was left up to individual partners. Copyright discussions resulted in very restrictive initial guidelines – only use public domain or with permissions granted by copyright holders. All decisions were maintained in meeting minutes. Meetings and/or email discussions held at least 1-2 times per year. Landing page provides main links and dropdown link for resource types:



**Launch – June 2019** with 1,500 pageviews and then about 300 pageviews per month thereafter.

**Analysis:** Initial viewing of Google Analytics\* shows specific interest areas, but traffic not sufficient to make conclusions. Breakdown of channels is ambiguous and needs more analysis.

**Critiques:** After one year, realization that we need 1) better analysis of direct traffic to site, 2) more advertising of site to increase usage; 3) more tracking of referral links to partner sites for reference queries. Additionally, partners should establish ongoing assessment criteria, rubrics, and methods.

**Big wins:** 1) just getting the site up with satisfied partners was the primary goal and that was attained; 2) partner brainstorming on desired digital content for future years worked to create synergy and collaboration; 3) linking to key local resources, i.e. the City of Titusville Design Guide for Historic Structures and Features (PHMC grant funded) published 2018.; 4) recognition and collaboration from the municipality, which features the Heritage Connection link on its home page.

**Questions and Feedback:**

- How do we assess our own partner effectiveness and workflow?
- How do we get better feedback on success/failure of resource reference query links to sites?
- Suggestions for automating updates and workflow?
- How to assess if this is the content the public wants?

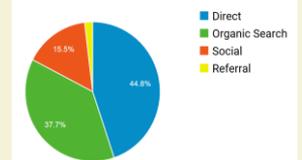
Selected references:

Clark Rhonda L. "Accessing and Creating Local Digital Services for Genealogy," in *Librarianship and Genealogy: Trends, Issues, Case Studies*, edited by Carol Smallwood, and Vera Gubnitskaia, 227-234. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2018.

LeFurgy, W. (2014). Taking preservation to the people. In K. Theimer (Ed.), *Outreach: Innovative practices for archives and special collections* (pp. 167–179). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

VandeBurgt, M. M., & Rivera, K. (2016). Effective Communication to Aid Collaboration for Digital Collections: A Case Study at Florida Gulf Coast University Library. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 22(2/3), 257–267. <https://doi-org.proxy-clarion.klnpa.org/10.1080/13614533.2016.1156001>

Top Channels



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\*Special thanks to Jessica Hilburn, Director of Benson Memorial Library for providing Google analytics site data.