

IMLS Interim Progress Report 1

Interim Progress Report
IMLS Museum/Library Collaboration Grant
University of Michigan
Flora and Fauna of the Great Lakes Region
October 2000-April 2001

Our project was launched with a kick-off meeting in October 2000. The library team members and our partners from the Fish and Mammals Division of the Zoology Museum, the Fungus Collection from the Herbarium, and the Exhibits Museum met to review the grant and to outline early stages of project implementation. We also discussed new initiatives that had emerged on campus since our proposal was submitted. These included a major GIS initiative, supported by the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the award of a major NSF grant to the Animal Diversity Web.

We encountered several hurdles that had to be overcome during the early months of the grant. Most significantly, the hiring of a project librarian took much longer than planned. Although the job was posted in late October, it took until late January to build a reasonable applicant pool. We had anticipated being able to attract a number of qualified local applicants, but a competitive local hiring environment and the fact that the position was a term-appointment resulted in a dearth of applications. After a protracted search, we were pleased to offer the position to Ms. Terri Geitgey, a recent graduate of the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science. She is scheduled to begin work in early June 2001.

As we began to work more closely with the Museums staff to plan for digitization (the major project emphasis for Year 1 of the grant), we found that we needed to rework the detailed projections for what we would digitize, the methods we would use, and the overall schedule for capture and metadata creation. For instance, an examination of the Mammal Division field notebooks led us to determine that they had to be scanned using an overhead non-destructive method rather than a document scanner. This kind of discovery is not an unusual occurrence in the early stages of a collaborative project. We are working to ensure that changes to the scope of work will result in the same rich variety of data types, the same overall numbers of items digitized, and similar conversion costs. All of these changes will be reported in detail in our next project report.

A significant amount of digitization took place during the first six months of the grant. By the end of April, we had scanned the following:

349 watercolors
797 4 x 5 negatives
3525 page images from monographs

Detailed plans were developed for the remainder of the project's digitization component. We anticipate finishing most scanning by the end of October 2001 with a small amount remaining to be done in the early months of the second year of the grant.

Determining the project's metadata requirements also received considerable emphasis during the first six months. Since most of the Library team members were not very familiar with metadata standards in the natural sciences, we had to do an extensive review of current work in the realm. In addition, we began an analysis of the metadata structures of the existing collections management systems, with an eye toward what would be required to make them more accessible to the generalist user. We have begun to build a project metadata map that will guide this process. We also investigated resources available for providing access by common name, as well as for normalizing values for location information.

In addition, we spent considerable time familiarizing ourselves with the variety of projects and initiatives underway in the natural sciences to provide interoperability among various collection databases, to provide access to new audiences, to support biodiversity research and to support undergraduate science teaching and learning. We began to make contacts with some of these projects in the hopes of collaboration in the future.

A project website was developed and is available at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/programs/greatlakes/>. Many of the resources we utilized in the investigation of metadata standards and related projects are linked from the website. The project director attended the IMLS-sponsored workshop on Outcomes Based evaluation in March 2001. She reported back to the local project team and they began work on developing a plan for incorporating outcomes based evaluation elements in the overall project evaluation. In addition, the project team was invited to present at the upcoming Association of Systematics Collections annual meeting, to be held in Chicago in June.

Respectfully submitted,
Christie Stephenson
Project Director