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The Philippines Digital Project

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Philippines Digital Project Website, Next Steps + Outline

This is a detailed plan outlining the purpose of a proposed web site for the Philippines Digital Project. The outline encompasses various criteria for website building, including: navigation, usability, content, audience and language, and visualization. The outline is not meant to be exhaustive, rather, it provides suggestions focusing on the "soft" areas for a potential website. Features such as color, text, layout, and other aspects of the actual web design process will not be covered extensively in this outline.

As a part of this outline, I conducted informal interviews of four students at the University of Michigan: the three undergraduate MLibrary Scholars, and one School of Information (SI) graduate student working with Nerea Llamas. The interviews and subsequent data are not meant to be regarded as a formal study. Rather, the intent was to have a frank conversation with my peers about their research process as students, and what features they absolutely must have in a potential research site (such as an advanced search tab, contact information, a visual component, etc.). The information is also useful due to the fact that each student has a very specialized subject, as would the users of the Philippines Digital Project website.

A rudimentary Google Sites website can be found at the link below. As stated earlier, **the mechanics of the website (colors, text, layout) are not the focus of this template.** The template serves as an idea of what kind of **content** we would like to include for the final proposed product.

Rough outline of website: https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/philippines-digital-project/

See Figure 4 for a picture of the homepage of the website.

Summary of Next Steps:

Phase 1:
- Determine nature of the website and experiment with Google Sites. Compile preliminary data on repositories in Michigan and other states. Interview archivists and acquisitions staff at Special Collections, the Bentley Historical Library, and the Clements Library.

Phase 2:
- Work on content for website. Gather more data for final product by contacting repositories and speaking with staff. Investigate uncataloged materials at the Clements, and draft content covering materials. Determine whether Google Sites or Drupal/Fedora Commons would be most appropriate.

Phase 3:
- Decide whether a webmaster will need to be hired to design a website and write content. Wrap up all research and data, and begin to synthesize final product.

Phase 4:
- Last minute touches on the final web product.

OUTLINE:
1. Layout and Features
   a. Tabs
      i. About
         1. About the Project
            a. This tab serves as an explanation of the project scope, goals, and future steps. An image was used for aesthetics, however this is not necessary. The main purpose of the page is informational. If researchers and students are curious about the background behind the project, they can click here to read about the process, collaborators, and other information. It is also crucial to include text detailing the future of the project if the project is ongoing for those invested in the website's functionality. For the purpose of this outline, the page is hypothetical, and presents a sample text of what we would include on the final product.
         2. Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Michigan
            a. This page is mostly a links page to the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and relevant information. The goal is for browsers to find more information to suit their needs in the research process, and to direct them to the Center if they are interested in continued study (whether through an undergraduate major or a graduate or PhD program).
         3. Henry Luce Foundation
            a. This page highlights key information about the Foundation and thanks them for their generous grant (assuming the grant money is awarded). Again, it is mostly links with very brief descriptions intended as supplemental information.
         4. Contact Us
            a. This is a standard contact information page, with relevant information for the operator of the website. Whether that will be Susan or another person, this information will be included on this page. We will also include possible concerns that someone would want to contact the website manager about (Google map not functioning properly, further questions, meeting with Susan individually to discuss a research project).
         5. Technical Infrastructure
            a. This page details the software used for the website. This page was modeled off of a very similar page on the Southeast Asia Digital Library (also funded by the Henry

Luce Foundation.) The software used for that website would be a very good fit for this project. The software is discussed in Section 6: Software Suggestions of the outline.

6. Terms of Use
    a. As with every website, the Terms of Use page covers the necessary copyright language to ensure all images and text we use from the University of Michigan is not in violation of copyright law. Language will be taken from similar websites for the University, as well as contact information for DMCA office.

ii. Archives in the United States
    1. Interactive Map **(see Figure 1)**
        a. The interactive map is a feature that uses a Google Map plug-in on the web page for browsers to use as they please. The map is designed to feature archives in all fifty states as clickable buttons. Right now, the states of Wisconsin, Virginia, and Michigan are included, as well as the District of Columbia. In addition, there is also a list on the left hand side that browsers could use instead. The map might not be as desirable for older browsers, which is why detailed instructions were included on the side, as well as the additional listing of archives 'By State' and 'By Subject'. The map also satisfies the needs of visual learners, and researchers who are in the beginning stages of their research project.
    2. List by State **(see Figure 2)**
        a. This page features a simple list of repositories with links and a brief summary underneath. A table of contents is included on the left hand side so one can easily click to be taken to their state under the page, rather than scroll through all fifty states.
        b. Content
            i. The 'List by State' page should feature all relevant archive contact information, such as phone numbers, email, and the link to the website.
    3. List by Subject **(see Figure 3)**
        a. Although most Philippine history repositories pertain to political, economic, and military history, we thought it worthwhile to categorize any archives that do not fall under these fields of history, or contain significant collections that do not. This distinction is noted with a paragraph at the top. This function is still up for debate as for its usability.

Because Google Sites does not enable an advanced search function akin to Mirlyn or other comprehensive search tabs, 'By Subject' had to be included as a separate web page rather than a field of search. If significant Philippine collections are found that have a focus outside of the traditional narratives, a 'By Subject' tab could be useful for those researchers who study other areas, however it could be incredibly labor intensive.

    iii. University of Michigan Collections

        1. These pages would simply include slightly more information about the collections than the simple links would underneath the 'Archive in the United States' tab. Background about each collection would be included, as well as more information about hours, accessibility, and policies. It's not clear whether these pages would be entirely necessary for the final product since links would be sufficient, however too much clicking could be tiresome for a browser.

    iv. Hidden Highlights

        1. Content

            a. The content of any sort of showcase of primary sources (whether it is called 'Hidden Highlights' or not) should focus largely on how the documents relate to the researcher. Basic information from relevant finding aids should be included (but not copied word for word) as well as an analysis of the documents and the questions they raise. It is important to present as impartial an analysis as possible, yet make it clear that the reasoning behind this is to draw attention to understudied sources about social history, women's history, and etc. in Philippine Studies. The selection of these documents would be framed around 1) what type of topics are being studied and 2) how much time the project developers have.

            b. Subpages would be useful for this, however Google Sites does not allow this. Scrolling text adds to much clutter.

b. Organization

    i. The website should follow a coherent organizational pattern to direct the eye to the most important information. Each page should be as succinct as possible, and organized under appropriate titles. It would be logical to arrange tabs in order from least detailed to most, rather than the opposite. This would mirror the needs of a researcher in the beginning stages of a research project.

2. Navigation
    a. Complexity of layout
        i. During the Q&A session with the undergraduate interns, each intern noted that they **prefer a research website or guide to be as concise as possible.** This was also echoed by the SI graduate student. The interns stated that **something that is too complex could be "scary" and that the homepage shouldn't be "too complicated"**. That being said, the interns were not opposed to more complex **features**, such as the Google Maps plugin. Rather, undergraduates do not want to be distracted by an overwhelming amount of information, too many tabs and drop-down features, or have a hard time finding their relevant information. One intern who is working on developing a LibGuide noted that the LibGuides that get the most traffic are often the most simple.
            1. Navigation Strengths of the Template
                a. In the template website, this is conveyed through the use of a single horizontal navigation bar, as well as table of contents on pages with more information. Links and descriptions are limited to brief paragraphs (only 2-3 sentences maximum), and the homepage is deliberately left uncluttered.
            2. Navigation Weaknesses of the Template
                a. A potential weakness could be the 'Hidden Highlights' section, in that it is very detailed in some pages (such as the Parker Hitt Photograph collection). Again, because Google Sites does not allow flexibility with creating multiple tabs and sub-pages, all the information had to be cluttered on one page. For the final product, a table of contents with links to subpages would remove the clutter, however this also runs into the issue of crafting concise, yet informative titles of subpages.
                    i. The 'Hidden Highlights' section thus needs to be able to transcend audiences by using appealing language, but also including the necessary information for faculty.
                b. Another potential weakness could be that the 'Collections at the University of Michigan' tab and pages is not necessary. Some browsers may find that a simple description under the list is sufficient for the information they need about that collection. By eliminating this page however, you could lose more context about the collections, and have a website with a startlingly low amount of tabs.
    b. Search option

       i.   Advanced Search

          1.   Ideally, a search tab with an 'Advanced Search' option will be available for the browser. The search would enable browsers to search for an archive using more specific criteria. This should mimic the search tab on the Michigan Library website and other similar sites. Search fields could include type of archive (historical society, library, archive, museum, digital), type of source (manuscript, images) and state.

             a.   Subject Headings

                i.   On that note, the utility of allowing browsers to search by subject could prove to be incredibly time-consuming. **It is my opinion that allowing this would prove to be much too difficult, seeing as many of these repositories have their own search options as well.** The need for this could instead be answered through the 'List by Subject' list with more broad subject headings such as 'Missionary Work', and 'Women's History', and 'Religious Studies'.

   c.   User-friendliness

       i.   Undergraduates

          1.   For the Q&A session with the undergraduate students, I had each student use a number of different websites to try out some of the functions and evaluate the layout of each. **The goal of this was to get a sense of what sort of websites undergraduates like and dislike, and the reasons behind those preferences**. The three types of websites I had the undergraduates use were **archive/repository locators, subject special websites, and a website for a African-American Studies project here at the University of Michigan.**

             a.   For the archive finders, the undergraduates examined ArchiveFinder and ArchiveGrid. **All agreed that ArchiveGrid was much more user-friendly than ArchiveFinder due to its simple search options, interactive map, search by zipcode feature, and a simple list of states underneath.**

                i.   As touched upon briefly earlier, having both a list feature and an interactive map is **crucial** to the website. The interactive map allows more tech-savvy, visual learners to feel as if they are engaging with the website. In contrast, the simple list works well for researchers who do not have enough time to browse with a map, those who are

not as technologically savvy, or those who are not visual learners.

    ii.   ArchiveFinder was frustrating for the undergraduates because the information presented did not link the browser directly to the archive in question. In order to avoid this, links and **brief** summaries are presented for the 'Archives in the United States' tab.

        1.   When examining the two sites, the UM-SI graduate student noted that too much scrolling text on one page can be overwhelming for a browser. This was echoed by the undergraduates when examining other websites.

        2.   For the website template, the separation of 'List by State' and 'Interactive Map' solves this problem. It might be more intuitive to include the list of states underneath the map, however because the Google Map enables one to click on the list button to manually sort through the archives, this is not entirely necessary, in addition to it not being very user-friendly.

b.   For the subject websites, the undergraduate interns examined the British Endangered Archives, as well as the Southeast Asia Digital Library.

    i.   British Endangered Archives

        1.   Once again, the undergraduates echoed how there is too much text on the page, however they enjoyed the placement of the tabs and the sleek layout. A horizontal navigation seemed to fare better with the interns than a sidebar, although ideally both will be included.

    ii.   Southeast Asia Digital Library

        1.   The interns unanimously agreed this was the most pleasing and user-friendly website they had seen so far.

        2.   The students enjoyed the drop down tabs most of all. A consideration for the final website will be whether there will simply be one field of drop down tabs, or if the software will allow for there to be multiple

> sub-fields. The interns liked that there were multiple sub-fields on the website, as it provided a wealth of information without saying much, and limited the amount of labor put into searching for the relevant information.

    ii.   Graduate students

        1. Since graduate students are generally much more specialized than undergraduates, they might already have a concrete idea of what they want to research, and therefore wouldn't necessarily need the map function, or the list. The 'By Subject' feature would be especially useful for American graduate students, as well as the 'Hidden Highlights', given that it highlights understudied sources. However, the 'List by State' page does allow graduate students with a very specific subject to quickly find repositories within their state, and head on their way shortly after.

        2. International graduate students however would most likely use all the functions the website has to offer (Map, List by State, List by Subject, and Hidden Highlights) seeing as they are on average much less familiar with American repositories than American students would be.

        3. Graduate Students are not in as much of a rush as undergraduates to finish their research since they are much more familiar with their own research pace and style, therefore they would most likely browse more than undergraduates. The 'Collections' and 'Hidden Highlights' tab satisfies this need, as well as the 'List by Subject'.

            a. That being said, the interview with the UM-SI student indicated that short summaries and quick links are always preferred to longer paragraphs. Thus again the 'Collections' tab might not be necessary if the appropriate information is given under the 'List by State' page.

    iii.   Faculty

        1. Faculty in the United States will most likely be very familiar with Philippine repositories in the country. Foreign faculty however, will find all features of the site incredibly useful in their search for source material.

            a. The website must be easy to read for an older audience. A non-serifed font should be used, and an appropriate size.

            b. Contrasting colors should be used so it is also easy to read.

            c. The 'List by State' allows non-tech-savvy browsers to search for repositories in a more traditional style.

        d. The simplicity of the layout will also appeal to faculty who are not as interested in an interactive or "sleek" site, but who merely need the relevant information. Again, long paragraphs of text should be avoided. Less is more.

3. Content

The following information is an example of the format that the content of 'Hidden Highlights should follow. Not all pages are used in this as an example seeing as the layouts are repetitive.

  a. Hidden Highlights
    i. Dorothy A. Sims papers
      1. Content
        a. Basic information from finding aid
          i. Which collection is it from? Biographical information, archival information (how many letters, boxes, etc.)
          ii. Link to finding aid
        b. Historical interpretations
          i. Basic primary source analysis: who, what, when, where, why, how. What questions does this raise? What can we interpret from this source?
        c. Possible subjects of interest
    ii. Parker Hitt Photograph Collection
      1. Content
        a. Basic information from finding aid
          i. Links to digitized photos
        b. Historical interpretations
          i. Challenges of using visual material for history and social sciences, difference between analyzing print material vs. image
            1. Include example images and analysis
        c. Possible subjects of interest
    iii. Clements Library Uncataloged Materials
      1. Content
        a. Any relevant information provided from the Clements Library, information about usage for currently cataloged materials
    iv. Prisoner of War Biographies
      1. Content
        a. Basic information from MIRLYN + interpretation
          i. Where were these found? Are they primary or secondary sources? Why are they useful? Who is the author--the editor, or the witness in question?

- b. Possible subjects of interest
    - i. POW accounts
- b. Audience and Language
    - i. Undergraduates
        1. Archive vs. Repository
            - a. When conducting the Q&A session with the undergraduates, all three interns did not know the distinction between an archive and a repository.
                - i. This is why on the template website, 'Archive' should be used, NOT repository.
                    1. Extra care should be taken to mimic these choices with the 'Hidden Highlights' tabs, and any other pages that delve more into primary source analysis. Most undergraduates (save for history students) are not familiar with historical language. A "sweet spot" must be found in the type of language used for all three target audiences.
        2. Titles
            - a. When examining the Arabella Chapman Project, the undergraduates noted that the title pages had vague, mysterious titles that were confusing. Succinct, clear titles should be used instead. While a portion of the website will be devoted to exploration ('Hidden Highlights'), the majority of it will not, and thus titles must be as neutral as possible.
                - i. Titles can be catchy, but should not be unclear. Example: 'Hidden Highlights' or 'Hidden Gems' or 'Hidden Gems at the University of Michigan'
    - ii. Graduates
        1. Language for graduate students generally should not be an issue. Library Science and PhD students have a more advanced command of relevant language, thus the only concern is making the language accessible enough for undergraduates.
    - iii. Faculty
        1. See section above.
- c. History and public audiences
    - i. Conveying the importance of the project
        1. Uncataloged materials
            - a. Uncataloged materials are especially important for researchers given that they are not easily accessible, let alone even widely known about. **This must be conveyed in the website, and I believe the next steps of the**

       project should be focused on working with the uncataloged material at the Clements Library.
        i. Working with the Clements and bringing attention to their uncataloged materials on the Philippines could raise the Clements' collections up to the status of the Worcester Collection or Bentley, strengthening Michigan's reputation as a collector of Philippine materials, as well as providing access for researchers.
      b. In the website, appropriate language should be used to describe how important this is rather than convince. This is not so much for current historians or scholars, but rather for the average student taking a class on Philippine Studies who does not have a deep interest in the subject matter.

    2. Understudied resources
      a. The importance of understudied resources should be conveyed without seeming as if the website is pushing a politically or socially motivated agenda. **Explanation must be given as to why the study of social history is crucial for the Philippine narrative. We should explain that we don't diminish the importance of traditional narratives, but wish to explore other narratives as well so as to make the history as cohesive as possible.**

    3. Heavily used resources
      a. Heavily used resources can be reexamined to find things that are missing from online finding aids for the researchers. One exception to this should be the Bentley Library, since the finding aids are very thorough.
        i. The danger in this is being accused of a loose historical argument or interpretation. **For the purpose of this project, I believe reexamining heavily used resources is not a good use of our time, and attention should be given elsewhere.**

  4. Copyright
    a. Images
      i. Under Section 107, if the images used are for "Fair Use" you are not in violation of copyright law. This constitutes a limited number of images (no more than 20-30), contextualizing the image, and not allowing the image to be available for download.
    b. Language

      i.   There should be no copyright problems with language taken from websites to describe repositories and/or collections, especially anything from the University of Michigan.

      ii.   It would be in the project's interest to take rights language from MLibrary, as well as a creative commons license that indicates the images used on the website are in the public domain.

5. Software Suggestions
   a. Drupal and Fedora Commons (Islandora)
      i. As part of the Southeast Asia Digital Library, the developers used Islandora to link Fedora Commons and Drupal. **Because the website was so popular with the interviewees, and was also part of a project funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, I believe Drupal or Islandora would be the best software to use to develop the website.**

HOME   ABOUT   **ARCHIVES IN THE UNITED STATES**   COLLECTIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN   HIDDEN HIGHLIGHTS   SITEMAP

List by State

CONTENTS

1 District of Columbia
2 Michigan
3 Wisconsin
4 Virginia

District of Columbia

- U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office
  - Contains the Florence Ebersole Smith Finch and Robert Smith oral history interviews. Florence E. Finch was a Filipino-American member of the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II. Robert Smith was a World War II veteran who served in Subic Bay at the end of the War. No findings aids online; available in the Manuscript Collection by appointment only.
- Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University
  - Contains the papers of African-American Walter Howard Loving, most famous for organizing the Philippine Constabulary Band. A full finding aid is available online.
- National Museum of Health and Medicine
  - Contains the Ash, Mills, and Maus collections. Primary involves medical and public health records in the Philippines. Both the Mills and Maus collections have online finding aids, while the Ash collection does not.
- Smithsonian Institution Archives
  - Materials primarily pertaining to the history of American scientists, with some materials on scientific research in the Philippines. Full finding aids are available online.

Michigan

Figure 1 above, Figure 2 below

Figure 3

Figure 4