It is hoped that digital technologies can be adapted for use by refugee populations in the United States. The United States accepts the largest number of refugees worldwide. This growing population has unique needs that must be met in order to adapt to life in the U.S. It is important that information scientists work with the refugee population in order to facilitate community health. Given the stressful history of the varying populations and the unique historical circumstances of these people emerging technologies can be adapted to meet community needs. The first provision in the ALA Code of Ethics, to "provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests" provides the impetus for libraries to develop resources for refugee populations. Librarians have the duty and ability to assist refugees so that these people may adapt to life in a new nation.

Refugees present a unique challenge and learning opportunity to the information specialist. If librarians seek to remain relevant in the present digital age they must develop instructional strategies so that digital tools will be usable by all patrons. Refugees present an imposing challenge, among the most disadvantaged of groups in the U.S., yet the lessons learned in servicing this population can be transferred to work with other marginalized groups.

Rhode Island has a large Liberian population, comprised mostly of refugees, estimated at 12,000 persons by the Liberian Community Association of Rhode Island, Inc. (LCARI), that digital information services can be developed for (Liberian). In Srinivasan and Huang's work they point out that Somali refugees in Boston seek "a means to tell stories to their community, as well as to incoming refugees and others outside of the community" (196). While the Somali refugee population has declined in

Rhode Island over the past few years as a result of relocation, the population of Liberian refugees share many similarities with this group. The similarities between Somalis (of which there are several different populations and no archetypal refugee community) and Liberians are related to an experiential background of trauma, displacement, and a history of exposure to the hardships of U.N. Refugee camps. They are both populations from Africa displaced by violence.

This project will seek to answer several questions by designing services for Liberians in Rhode Island: What technologies can aide refugees in maintaining contact with their culture? How can these technologies be used to remain connected with family, friends, and other personal relationships despite physical separation? How can these technologies help them to maintain contact with their homeland while also serving to preserve culture? What attributes of web design contribute to usability for novice populations? What are the best practices associated with acclimating novice users to new technologies? What incentives will contribute to technologies being integrated into the community?

While covering a disparate range of topics, there is work which helps to inform the development of information services for/ about refugees. Additionally, there is work relating to website design for use by various populations. No work has been specifically addressed to all of these questions, yet research and projects applicable to these problems prove very useful when taken in conjunction.

Veldof and Nackerud present an article informed by experience, having designed nine library websites between them. They have designed websites for the libraries at the University of Arizona and the University of Minnesota. While these activities are not directly related to the focus on technologies applicable to refugees, the findings from these endeavors provide valuable information regarding usability and web design. They

determine that seven areas of design are necessary to the creation of successful

library websites:

1 project management
2 Information architecture
3 usability
4 access for people with disabilities
5 graphic design
6 content creation
7 programming

Librarians and designers must recognize that many people are often necessary for

the design of an effective website. Project management refers to the importance of the

proper delegation of responsibilities in the design process and a correct assessment of

project members relative strengths. For example, dealing with information architecture

is a strength of those in the library field yet the creation of the site can be enhanced if

other input can correctly assess and direct the popular appeal of the information

architecture created for the site. Proper project management is essential to the other

areas of successful design. Often, librarians need to work with outside graphic

designers in designing a more effective site.

Information architecture is an important aspect of any website. It should be

designed to meet user needs. The question a designer or librarian need to ask is: Who

is this site being designed for? Is it being made for professionals, faculty, children, etc.

The recognition of a sites purpose will help designers to shape it. An understanding of

the uses of a site will be vital to its design alongside a recognition of the inherent

qualities of users. Will the site "be primarily designed to inform people about the library

or to be a gateway to online resources; to primarily serve the novice undergraduate user

or to cater more strongly to graduates and faculty–the 'expert' users" (Veldof &

Nackerud 18). While the authors terminology is directed towards academic users, the

same concepts are applicable to designing electronic resources for refugee users. An assessment of their capabilities and desired uses is essential to proper design. Seeking user input through focus groups proved especially helpful in the authors' experience.

Veldof and Nackerud believe "the most critical piece in the design of a Website, therefore, is ensuring the usability of that site by your target users" (20). Usability refers to the level which a user can learn to use a product, in this case a website, and get desired results. Although there are specialists and consulting firms that deal with usability, this is an area where the authors suggest that librarians develop competencies. This allows librarians to be better able to understand and work with their patrons. The authors point out resources in the text that help librarians to hone this skill.

Veldof and Nackerud point out the importance of recognizing disability access in the design process. This is especially important when designing products for refugees, as the incidence of disabilities, learning and physical, is high in this population. It is important that designers attempt to be inclusive by taking into account disabilities such as deafness by not including audio-only materials where possible. The authors provide resources which help designers such as citations for guides and government documents about disability access. There coverage of this topic should prove very helpful in formulating services for refugee populations.

The importance of graphic design is pointed out. The authors suggest that it can be an extremely important factor in the other aspects of design. Good graphic design can make a site more usable and accessible. While it may not seem vital to producing good library websites, it is often a cursory factor that can enhance other aspects of the site. The authors point to experience in design as an important factor in website creation and suggest that it is often preferable to hire specialists when designing a site.

The content creation area is one that will be important in developing a site for

refugees. It will be important to focus on user needs while designing the site. Veldof and Nackerud reference their experiences in redesigning sites. The content already existed, they were just making it more usable. In their experience in redesigning websites, it is important that content be edited and reformatted so that it may better meet user needs.

Programming of websites is important in reaching the goal of a successful website. Whereas previously online materials had been merely a source of information "interactivity is now a big part of its appeal" (Veldof & Nackerud 29). In creating sites at libraries, the goal is to create "dynamic, data-base driven sites" (Veldof & Nackerud 29). The authors break library websites down into three layers: the interface, the intermediary layer, and the database. The intermediary layer serves as the middle-man between both layers fostering usability. In order to successfully develop programing, it is necessary to understand web design languages such as PERL or JAVA.

In conclusion, Veldof and Nackerud feel "no one person would be able to adequately develop the expertise and give the time to handle all seven of the areas described here" (31). This article is very detailed and draws directly from the authors' experiences. It would be an excellent source of information for those developing an information services website. It provides valuable insight into the design process of large information repositories from experience. The authors' respective experiences relating to website design inform their research and help to form the design strategies explained within.

Allen and Boland present a case study in developing a network to provide health information to Hmong immigrants and refugees. They believe that in creating information services we need to understand that:

information is just one piece of the huge task of adapting and surviving in a

new country. We need to 'walk in their shoes' and listen to their stories before rushing into solutions based on our personal world-view of libraries and the World Wide Web as free sources of knowledge on a wide variety of topics (Allen & Boland 301).

Cultural sensitivity should prove an important consideration in constructing information services for refugees, as is pointed out by Srinivasan and Huang as well.

Health care providers must, by law, provide health information that is culturally and linguistically sensitive. This is a fertile ground for studying information services for refugees because it is an area where these services must be developed. Central to developing successful information networks for refugees is an understanding that "plans need to be ?eexible with room for changing methods and approaches" (Allen & Boland 303). The librarian must attempt to address the needs of the patron base by viewing them with a large lens.   Rather than undertaking steps that are traditional to librarians, an assessment of the target market is essential. Allen and Boland's findings are applicable to developments of all information services for refugees, not just health-care

The authors cite successful health information networks developed by librarians, such as EthnoMed, in order to learn about the task. The case of EthnoMed proves important because it is a program successfully developed while also maintaining an understanding of sources of funding.

Background information on the Hmong, the subject population of the authors' efforts, is provided so that readers will have a cursory understanding of the task at hand. Additionally, the challenges faced when dealing with a Hmong population may be present in other cases of developing networks for refugees. The major challenge in developing networks for the Hmong rests in English proficiency. Many refugees arrive with no ability to speak the language, let alone the possession of any literacy skills.

This will be present when designing any information services for Liberians. In contrast to the Hmong, most Liberians speak English (albeit a patois similar to that spoken by Jamaicans). Yet, many Liberians are illiterate or have very limited literacy skills. Any design of information services for Liberians must address this issue. Many other programs, such as the Vietnamese American Project (VAP) and Village Voice, circumvented these issues by incorporating oral history components. In creating health-care information networks for the Hmong, Allen and Boland utilized visual tools.

There are many cultural mores which hinder or prevent appropriate translation on issues relating to sex and disability. Even when translating documents into written Hmong, the efficacy is in question because even in their own language very low levels of literacy exist in the community. Because of this, many of the participants in development of a network felt that audio and visual materials would be most appropriate. The authors point to standards developed for those engaged in the creation of audio/ visual materials on health issues for those with limited English abilities (Allen & Boland 307). This reference should be relevant to a project developing information services.

The authors address further difficulties in constructing health-care and health information networks for the Hmong such as the presence of a traditional herbal medical history. They also address the efficacy of various mixed-media tools such as picture books in sharing health related information. In order to develop effective networks "librarians must develop partnerships with a wide variety of community organizations to support health literacy initiatives" (Allen & Boland 313). This point indicates that it will be valuable to include Liberian community groups in any project.

Involvement with local efforts such as a 2-1-1 line tend to make development considerably easier. They also suggest involvement with broader efforts like "A

Librarian at Every Table (ALAET), a mailing list that announces resources for community building" (Allen & Boland 313). Other potential partners include larger medical establishments such as hospitals and universities. In order to ease integration into the community "psychologist Mary Pipher includes taking immigrants to the public library in her list of cultural brokering activities" (Allen & Boland 316). In the view of Allen and Boland "librarians have the organizational, technical, and teaching skills needed to develop partnerships to meet the health information needs of consumers and their health providers" (326). Their findings should provide generalizable assistance to a project for Liberians.

Kabbar and Crump attempt to identify the characteristic which contribute to use and adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by marginalized groups. They present a qualitative study of refugee communities in New Zealand within which the government sought to incorporate digital forms of communication. The government is concerned because "New Zealand reports show that despite various initiatives to bridge the divide, individuals on low incomes, sole parents, older people, those with no or low qualifications or poor literacy, the unemployed, and people with disabilities are at risk of exclusion from the digital age" (Kabbar & Crump 111). The New Zealand government is interested in ensuring that these groups do not become alienated from the processes of modern life in the digital age. The authors found little previous research into this topic. Because of this dearth of information, "identifying the factors that influence adoption or non adoption of ICTs is therefore an important first step to understanding what is required to promote ICTs adoption among this group" (Kabbar & Crump 112).

Kabbar and Crump studied the use of personal computers and the internet by volunteer participants. The authors are very thorough in elucidating their research

process. They focus on immigrants to New Zealand who have arrived in the last five

years. The authors use the terms refugee and immigrant interchangeably in this paper.

The research was clearly performed with an informed understanding of

participants' respective pasts. The interview method was designed so that participants

became comfortable with the researchers because "many of the participants had

suffered traumatic experiences that may have caused them to approach the interview

with feelings of trepidation and reluctance to participate openly if there had been just the

one-off interview" (Kabbar & Crump 113). This will be a concern when designing

services for Liberians. They enlisted participants from various immigrant communities.

Rogers' Theory of Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) provided the theoretical basis for the

work. This is a "a five stage linear model to identify and explain the different stages

individuals follow, over a period of time, before they decide whether to adopt or reject an

innovation" (Kabbar & Crump 114). Kabbar and Crump describe the model and its

stages in detail in the paper. The results of the research were interpreted according to

the DOI model. The five stages of Rogers' model are Knowledge, Persuasion,

Decision, Implementation, and Confirmation (Kabbar & Crump 114). Knowledge refers

to an understanding of a potential innovation and its potential uses and functions.

Persuasion occurs when a individual form positive or negative ideas about an

innovation. Decision is the stage when a person decides weather to adopt or discard an

innovation. Implementation refers to a user actually using an innovation. When an

individual evaluates the use of an innovation, confirmation occurs.

The research interviews were analyzed and re-read to codify the results and find

patterns. In addition, they were run through a qualitative software program. The

researchers found that among a population of 32 refugees, only 13 did not adopt ICTs.

Certain characteristics, such as old-age, gender, and a lack of formal education, were

common amongst non-adopters. Many participants experienced difficulty using ICTs

due to limited English proficiency. In addition, others saw ICTs as a tool of younger

generations. A further impediment was a lack of peer use. Many adopters of the

technology reported the sharing of skills between peers. The paper characterizes the

adoption of ICTs by family and friends as primary in encouraging adoption by other

users.

> For example a 17-year-old Somali female participant, when asked about
> her motivation to learn about computers, stated, "I think it is because
> everybody is using it so you know you just want to copy them. Another 44-
> year-old female participant, when answering the interview question "What
> made you decide to use computers and the Internet?" said: "It is a new
> technology. Everybody is using it, everyone in the community talks about it
> so you do not want to be sitting without knowing anything when they talk
> about it. (Kabbar & Crump 116-17)

The authors found Rogers' model very helpful while each stage did not occur as

distinct from one another. In their study, Kabbar and Crump often found that

"Knowledge and Persuasion occurred over varying time spans" (117). Other important

factors in adoption of ICTs were a pre-existing interest in the technology and the

presence in the community of opinion leaders who adopted ICTs. In addition, if

community members with a higher social standing adopted ICTs or an economic benefit

was clearly seen in adoption, these factors would persuade study participants to adopt

them. Many adopters of ICTs used them for limited purposes, such as contact with

distant acquaintances. The authors felt that it was important to make new users aware

of the various benefits of ICTs like information retrieval and English literacy assistance.

Surprisingly, the economic challenge of acquiring personal computers as a relatively

impoverished person did not present as striking a barrier as skill factors.

Tranguyen attempts to document the VAP and the ways it has helped to preserve cultural memory among the Vietnamese diaspora in "Orange County, Yellow History: An Intimate Encounter with Vietnamese American Lives". The VAP "is an open forum that enables community assessment, self-education, public memory preservation, and the first step toward understanding Vietnamese America and the Vietnamese diaspora" (Tranguyen 5). The author attempts to elaborate on the effects the VAP has had on promoting cultural and inter-ethnic relationships with others. Orange county is the focal point of the VAP because it is the hub of Vietnamese emigrant life in America. The largest population of expatriates as well as many vital cultural institutions are located there. Because of Tranguyen's "commitment to communicate about the Vietnamese immigrant reality of Orange County, and as an effort to bridge the disparities between interest and research, (he) initiated the Vietnamese American Project (VAP) in 1998 to document the personal histories of community members in the context of twentieth-century Vietnam and the Vietnamese American experience" (Tranguyen 7).

The project is composed of oral interviews, conducted mainly in Vietnamese, which reconstructs the past and tells personal histories. The interviews are conducted with Vietnamese expatriates nationwide yet is housed at California State University in Fullerton. Among the numerous benefits of oral histories is the important role they play in Vietnamese culture. Tranguyen discusses the methods he employed in collecting these oral accounts. He points out many of the challenges faced in documenting the oral histories. Many of the five difficulties he faced related directly to cultural characteristics while others related to common problems for qualitative researchers, such as time constraints for participants. Difficulties related to finding supporting materials were largely mitigated by the authors own background as an ethnic

Vietnamese.

Tranguyen does not tire of collecting these oral histories, having "found that there is not really one concrete pattern, except that all narrators work hard to achieve their dreams and support their family" (Tranguyen 12). He also finds that "the open structure of the project plays a crucial role in the process of reconstructing the past, as each story is told in its entirety without the interruption of another voice" (Tranguyen, 12). The stories do serve to construct a somewhat consistent narrative as they interconnect.

Tranguyen points out that language serves as an impediment in many ways. Often narrators use English and Vietnamese interchangeably. It would seem necessary that the researchers in such a project be grounded in the community. Even if they are not of the community, possession of the necessary language skills would seem a prerequisite for all researchers. In addition, a knowledge of certain cultural characteristics of Vietnamese help to inform the research and allow for fluidity.

Much of this article is devoted to the resulting interviews of the VAP project. Tranguyen pieces together a narrative history by combining the results of his work. The discussion of his methods provide valuable background for anyone attempting to undertake an oral history project with refugees. Tranguyen finds that "the project helps members realize their roles in the making of the community, and their place in the history of contemporary society" (Tranguyen, 10). One of the major benefits the author sees in his work is its elucidation of parts of history where documentation is slight, such as feudal Vietnamese life. In addition, oral history is a more social and egalitarian record, valuing the contributions of all classes and genders (provided it is done with equal representation in mind). Tranguyen's work provides valuable insight regarding the collection of data from refugees despite the high degree of specialization inherent in his project. It presents a documentation of the project which is not applicable, yet the

methods employed by Tranguyen are of interest.

Srinivasan and Huang seek to identify effective ways of organizing digital information on cultures so that it may be accessed by the community and interested parties. The authors set out to examine the matter by addressing other digital repositories and their merits. Ontology, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is "the science or study of being; that branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature or essence of being or existence" (Ontology). It is helpful to understand the authors vocabulary in addressing their research. They are developing a concept of knowledge structures helpful to their task of creating digital repositories for marginalized populations. The concept of fluid ontologies is central to their ideas of organizing information.

> Fluid ontologies are ?exible knowledge structures that evolve and adapt to communities' interest based on contextual information articulated by human contributors, curators, and viewers, as well as artificial bots that are able to track interaction histories and infer relationships among knowledge pieces and preferences of viewers (Srinivasan & Huang 193).

In this work the authors look at several attempts to organize cultural data in an attempt to determine the best practices for storing and cataloging it. The technical details of developing digital archives are discussed in detail. Various file formats and their respective benefits and disadvantages are addressed. The various ways in which each file format relates to others is addressed. While discussing these formats the authors note that fluidity and adaptability are central to developing a successful archive because things are changing so rapidly in this digital age. Srinivasan and Huang believe that "one of the most important characteristics of ?uid ontologies is that they are not pre-de?ned but emergent (and adaptive) structures for knowledge representation"

(195). In formulating a concept of fluid ontologies, Srinivasan and Huang developed

four general design premises that could be characterized as best practices:

1   involvement of content creators

2   metaview sharing- ways of using the content is made visible by the user and

    other users to the present user

3   adaptive to user experience, changes that occur over time

4   bots and personalizations- use of adaptive technologies and software programs

    that can change with user needs

        they should be able to anticipate user expectations and interests

        (195)

In order to explain their concepts, they discuss projects they were directly involved

in, such as Village Voice. This project, undertaken by Srinivasan in Boston, sought to

record Somali refugee's experiences and store them digitally in a usable repository.

Traditionally in Somalian culture, oral history was primary in the transfer of history.

Therefore, in order to be culturally appropriate, Srinivasan heavily incorporated the use

video to record stories. In addition, in the review of these videos he heavily involved the

Somali community. Their input while reviewing videos allowed the structure of the

ontology to change. The article provides valuable visual aids in order to illustrate the

findings of the project. Flow charts are included that help to explain difficult concepts

visually, such as the construction of the Village Voice ontology. In addition, helpful

screen shots are included to illustrate the actual functioning of the Village Voice

repositories' interface. Srinivasan designed a quasi-experimental effort to determine

whether the fluid ontology structure was actually effective in creating a more usable

digital museum. While not framed as a research study, the results are interesting in

evaluating effectiveness of fluid ontologies. The subjects were far more successful in

using the digital repository for their purposes when ease of use was facilitated by bots and adaptive technologies. This work should prove particularly relevant in relation to constructing digital museums for refugee populations in Providence.

The Sudanese Education Fund at Brandeis University in Boston is a project with similar programs to those envisioned for the Liberian community in Providence. It is an effort which attempts to educate Sudanese refugees in the use of technology while also performing services related to cultural preservation. It's scope seems related to services envisioned for Liberians, yet there was no academic material on the program available at present. The projects website supplied information which merits further investigation. Additionally, an effort to preserve traditional forms of Palestinian dance (Page) provides insight into cultural preservation related to practices. The Online Burma/ Myanmar Library presents one form of document preservation which might be studied and incorporated with the concept of fluid ontologies is designing services for Liberians.

Research regarding the specific construction of digital information repositories for refugees is not common. Srinivasan and Huang's work regarding digital museums is very applicable to this topic.   It is valuable for it's practical applications, as the authors base their work on experience. They are not constructing a theoretical model but rather using their work experience in projects such as the Village Voice to develop a list of best practices when working in this field. In combination with Tranguyen's work developing oral histories of Vietnamese refugees' experiences there are valuable lessons to be learned in pursuing this work. Tranguyen's work is very similar to elements of the work done by Srinivasan in the Village Voice project in developing a repository for information generated by refugees. Srinivasan and Huang's work with fluid ontologies is more generalizable because they also deal with ways or organizing information for refugee

populations. The concept of fluid ontologies works on a meta level, providing a framework for organizing information so that it is usable by many different populations, from the refugees who generated it and who it relates to directly to researchers who have an academic interest in the subject matter. Srinivasan & Huang point to the importance of developing information services for refugees in noting that "empowering communities to create their own stories stimulates a process of re?ection, which in turn facilitates the sharing of values, knowledge, structure, and dreams" (195). These works, in particular that of Srinivasan and Huang, provide excellent insight into the development and implementation of digital repositories of refugee knowledge.

The best way to research the process of developing digital resources for refugees would be begin developing resources, informed by the aforementioned work. Srinivasan's work with the Village Voice project seems to present a reasonable model for the process. In the course of his work, Srinivasan assessed the applicability and effectiveness of his ideas through quasi-experimental processes. By testing his concept of fluid ontologies in developing it he ensured that changes could be made in the course of the work to make it more effective. Instead of developing the project and resources apart from the practical applications of the theory, his ideas and practices were developed symbiotically. The process allowed the resulting work to be much more complete. By allowing the project to adapt as conditions dictate the digital resources will be more effective in meeting the needs of the project.

It would be best to attempt to develop the digital museum for cultural preservation prior to resources for communication with other peoples of a refugee diaspora in light of the prevailing literature. As indicated in Roger's DOI, users need to be persuaded to adopt ICTs based on perceived benefits. If refugees are presented with tangible benefits through a digital museum, this will help to convince them to adopt ICTs. This

will help to accustom them to the use of ICTs and build up a level of trust between

researchers and refugees, making the development of methods for communication with

the homeland or other displaced community members easier.

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