Gavin Nelson

28 August 2019

LIS 644 – Digital Libraries

Dr. Fatih Oguz

Assignment 1 – Digital Collection Evaluation

Introduction

For this assignment, I have chosen to conduct an evaluation of a statewide digital library called the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center (NCDHC). Located within the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the NCDHC is a digitization program that works with state local institutions to digitize and publish North Carolina cultural materials online for the state community to see. Working with a variety of institutions, which includes libraries, museums, archives, etc., this heritage center aims to help state local information establishments promote and share their collections to the community. With the backing of these institutions in the interest of promoting cultural learning, the NCDHC strives to lead the charge in igniting the spark that is North Carolina cultural pride and fanning that flame through the means of the latest in digitization technology.

Community

As was previously mentioned, the NCDHC is constantly working to promote learning and engagement within communities by promoting North Carolina's cultural heritage through digital means. As its stated in their Mission statement on their website, "The North Carolina Digital Heritage Center supports community engagement and

lifelong learning by promoting and increasing open access to North Carolina's heritage."[1]

The ultimate goal of the NCDHC is to make as many North Carolinians, who are the

force that drives this mission, aware of their home state's history and culture as they

possibly can.

In order to make sure that this goal continues to get accomplished, the program

needs passionate, dedicated, and diligent library professionals to keep the cogs and gears

in the machine greased and moving. According to the information that I have uncovered

on their website, the NCDHC seems to have been created by the program coordinators

and digital librarians at UNC Chapel Hill, who also seems to maintain it as well. Along

with the staff, they also have assistance from graduate assistants in maintaining this

project as well. Lastly, how they are getting the money to make all of this possible is

through funding that they get from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, as well

as the university library itself.

Content

The NCDHC is home to diverse, historical materials that connect users to North

Carolina's history. The materials that that the digital heritage center has are the

following:

- Yearbooks

- Newspapers

- Images

- Memorabilia

- City Directories

---

[1] North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, *DigitalNC,* http://www.digitalnc.org/about/
    (accessed August 28, 2019).

- Audiovisuals

All of these materials make up the collections and exhibits that the site digitized, which all relate to North Carolina culture. When I went to look for their collection development policy that governs the relationship they have with these collections, I couldn't seem to find it anywhere. However, when I checked their "Policies" tab, I did find other policies that cover different areas of collection management. These policies range from accessibility to digitization to copyright and more. While I didn't find one definite collection development policy, I feel that these different policies can be seen as the development policy as a whole.

These policies also cover who can add new materials to the site's collections. How the NCDHC approaches this is that they leave the decision of what materials get added up to the contributing institutions that they partner with. As they state it on their "Selecting Materials for Scanning" tab, "We leave selection of materials for digitization up to the contributing institutions, which best know what their users would like to see made available online."[2] Based on this statement, it seems that the contributors themselves add objects to these digital collections through the Chapel Hill library staff, which maintains them.

Once these partner institutions have selected the materials that they want to add to the heritage center, the Chapel Hill library staff then has to decide how to properly get them organized. After adventuring through their collections, I can see that they not only organize it alphabetically, but they also organize it by both subject and location as well.

---

[2] North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, *DigitalNC*,
	https://www.digitalnc.org/partners/selecting-materials-for-scanning/
	(accessed August 29, 2019).

Location is the method that stands out to me the most, because it is amazing that someone can look at different historical materials that potentially come from their own hometown and county. It also strengthens the relationship that these digital materials have to its physical counterparts that are housed in the respective library as well.

While the NCDHC is physically located at the Chapel Hill library, it is actually made up of multiple state libraries that come together online to connect North Carolinians to their cultural roots through these digital materials. The different institutions that are contributors to this heritage center seem to be the ones that make the decisions as far as these collections are concerned, since they each know first hand what the state community's needs are. The Chapel Hill library staff that is in charge of managing this digital library seems to be the one that put those decisions into action. Overall, while UNC Chapel Hill may have been the one that started the digital heritage center, it is actually the libraries and institutions across this state of North Carolina that makes it happen.

Services

Since users are at the heart of libraries in general, services are probably one of the most important aspects of a digital library. When a user is conducting research in a digital library, they expect to have instant access to what they are looking with little to no hassle. In this case, the NCDHC seems to be doing a good job of making sure that their targeted users, which are the state residents of North Carolina, have unhindered access to their cultural history. For the most part, anybody can access the content by clicking on any of the aforementioned materials on the home page. The only obstacle that could prevent users from having full access is that some of the materials don't have full text or

captioning, which is talked about on their accessibility policy.[3] However, they came up with a solution to this by giving users a full, accessible version of a specific material upon request.

All of these things fulfill the purpose of making sure that the user can browse, search, and select materials without jumping over a lot of hurdles. In the case of this site, I have found that I could perform these tasks without encountering a lot of hurdles. How this works is that it gives you the complete list of materials that come from each respective collection. As you begin typing in the search engine on the site, it will filter the list to include only the words that you have typed in, making it easier for you to find the specific material that you are looking for. Even so though, on major search engines like Google, I couldn't seem to find any of these materials when I used a couple of broad search terms. Lastly, from what I could see, there doesn't appear to be any instruction or reference that guides you in how to research these collections.

Technology

Everything that has be evaluated up to this point would not be possible without the technology that is being used in giving North Carolinians that instant access. For this digital library, I have found on their digitization policies page that the hardware/software they use are CONTENTdm, the Internet Archive, and ChronAm.[4] They use this software to describe, organize, and present North Carolina's cultural history to its residents. Last but not least, since each and every material has been added to this digital library by

[3] North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, *DigitalNC*,
https://www.digitalnc.org/policies/accessibility/
(accessed August 29, 2019).
[4] North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, *DigitalNC*,
https://www.digitalnc.org/policies/digitization-guidelines/
(accessed August 30, 2019).

partner institutions, there are links in each material that leads to each institution's respective digital library.

Conclusion

Overall, the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center seems to be an excellent digital library for North Carolinians to go when they want to learn about their culture and history. All the materials that have been added to this site seem to cover almost every county in this state. Along with that, the system that is used to keep this site running is running smoothly. Ultimately, the NCDHC is a vital asset towards continually telling the story of North Carolina.

Works Cited

North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, *DigitalNC*, https://www.digitalnc.org/

(accessed August 30, 2019).