Sampson Family Recipes Digital Library Walkthrough
http://sampson.info

The Capstone Project was the primary reason I was excited to take this course. This is my first course in the degree program, and this Project enabled me to work in an area outside my experience. I am very grateful that the Collection Builder authors created excellent documentation to complement the digital library tools. Several roadblocks presented themselves, but the documentation often provided the clues for effective problem solving.

Getting started with Collection Builder was very easy. Sydney's demonstration was a helpful starting point, and the video guides published along with the Collection Builder documentation made the initial setup process very smooth. With the infrastructure established, I turned my attention to gathering my subject matter. As detailed in the About page, the intended user base is my extended family. Many of whom have probably eaten most of these dishes! The physical items were the most straightforward to scan into PDF format. Many of the recipes my wife and I have developed, though, are stored in an application called Paprika. The version of the app that I used previously did not have export functionality. Thankfully, I discovered a newer version of the app that I could purchase to export the recipes. The export was not all that useful, however. The app exported the recipes as comma separate values (CSV), so I had to figure out how to make those useful for the Library. I settled on copying the CSV data into an HTML template and then printing the HTML document as a PDF. Many of the users of this Library will not be technology savvy, and that consideration made PDF the most user-friendly option. The way a PDF displays upon printing is much more predicable than an HTML document.

With the recipes in hand I set about building the metadata CSV file. Nearly all of the elements are represented in Dublin Core. The subject matter is straightforward and did not require much creativity. I did enjoy crafting interesting descriptions for the objects. The most useful custom element is meal type. This also serves as the basis for the cloud visualization page. Prior to this class, selecting the appropriate metadata would have left me paralyzed by lack of knowledge. The course material made me feel confident that the included elements were appropriate and that the controlled vocabularies made sense. There were some metadata elements that I was not able to locate that would have been interesting. For example, I do not know the dates of when any of these recipes were created. Partly that is a reflection of the subject matter. A recipe does not become a favorite right away, it takes repetition and building memories associated with the food for something to become an indispensable part of one's history. Also, I would have liked to have photos to go along with each recipe. Unfortunately I could only find three. Initially I was not going to add any images, but I found that the site felt very basic and uninteresting without some visual appeal. I have greatly enjoyed remembering all of the good times associated with these favorite foods, and I hope my users will too.

The most unexpected challenge was figuring out how to edit the Markdown in the About page. I have never used Markdown before. I would have greatly preferred editing the page HTML directly. I spent an entire Sunday discovering that Jekyll does not like the .bak files generated by Notepad++ and that caused the interpreter to incorrectly generate the page HTML.

I feel that I just scratched the surface with this project. With more time, I would liked to have experimented with including HTML formatted objects and linking objects to each other. I look forward to tinkering with this project further as a I move through the MLIS program.