News

06-01-2015

TARO Brown Bag at SSA meeting May 21 a big success!

A group of about 60 people interested in TARO's future gathered at the TARO Brown Bag during the Society of Southwest Archivists' meeting in Arlington, on May 21, 2015. Representatives of the TARO Steering Committee shared background information on TARO and a description of the NEH Planning grant which will be underway starting in July 2015. Questions from the group were answered and will be used to help direct work in the planning grant. Participation in the grant process is welcome, and a good number of people signed up for various working committees. Thank you everyone who joined us!

We are also very happy to announce that Danielle Plumer, archival consultant and expert in digital archival systems in Texas, will serve as the Project Manager for the grant, and Jodi Allison-Bunnell, of the Northwest Digital Archive (a peer consortium), will be serving in an advisory capacity.

If you have questions or would like to participate in the process, please visit http://bit.ly/TARO_SSA2015 or e-mail us at tarograntproject@gmail.com.

04-14-2015

Great news! TARO's NEH planning grant application was successful! The one-year project will be the first steps towards making much-needed changes to the site. The project description is at the end of this announcement ; the full grant application is available on the TARO steering committee wiki.

The TARO Steering Committee will be holding a brown bag lunch at the annual Society of Southwest Archivists meeting in Arlington to discuss the project, answer questions, and address ways that interested folks can get involved. The lunch will be held on Thursday, May 21st from 11:30-1:30pm. Participants should plan on bringing their own lunch. More details to follow soon. We'll send out an update to this listserv after SSA to keep folks who aren't attending the meeting in the loop, too.

As we embark on the grant project, we anticipate that this listserv will become much more active with announcements and requests for feedback from member institutions. Occasionally, we will use the list to request information from the "official" TARO contacts at each institution or make announcements that should be passed along to the appropriate staff members at the contacts' home institutions, so keep an eye out for those emails. Moving forward, we envision TARO contacts playing a vital role in communication about TARO and the site's success—to this end, we'd like the TARO meeting at SSA to turn into an annual event. Also, while we'll plan on sending out updates through this list, TARO contacts should periodically check the TARO wiki for news. Not sure if you're an official TARO contact member? Log in here with your TARO info to see the current list. Have questions or problems logging in? Email me and I'll answer your question or direct it to someone who can.

Project description: TARO Planning Grant
Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) to the 21st Century Collaborative Planning Project The Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) consortium, based at The University of Texas at Austin Libraries, seeks funding for a Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Foundations Grant to conduct strategic planning that will address our researchers' need for better intellectual access to TARO's holdings. The project will produce a detailed project narrative, work plan, staffing and budget for a subsequent implementation phase to update the TARO online reference resource; create best practices that enable standardization of existing finding aids; generate policy documents to support the future operation of the TARO consortium; test alternate technological frameworks; devise strategies for programmatic sustainability; and produce a white paper articulating our issues and methodologies. UT Libraries, in partnership with the TARO Steering Committee and their respective institutions, requests $35,204 (with $x in

contributed cost share from the University of Texas Libraries) to assist with the one-year collaborative planning, assessment and pilot testing project. NEH grant funds will support the following activities and services: project manager and intern salaries, two stakeholder meetings and outside speaker fees.

Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) is a freely accessible platform for searching finding aids from repositories across Texas (see http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro and Appendix A, TARO Fact Sheet). The scope of primary source material available on TARO is as historically-rich and diverse as the state itself; from literary manuscripts housed at the Harry Ransom Center at UT Austin, to the papers of medical pioneers at the Moody Medical Library, to records of Republic of Texas heroes at the Alamo's Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, TARO has proven a rich resource for historians, documentarians, educators and students since its establishment in 1999. Participating institutions include the state's larger repositories such as the Texas State Library and Archives, Texas A&M University, and Rice University; smaller archives including the Old Jail Art Center and San Jacinto Museum of History; and over thirty other archives and libraries around the state. Widely known and well-appreciated by researchers, the website receives thousands of daily hits, with over 800,000 hits in May 2014. TARO is the central, and sometimes only, online research tool for member repositories, with archives using it many thousands of times each year to assist researchers. TARO has successfully fulfilled its original purpose, to serve as a place where, "citizens of the state...find historically significant resources relating not just to Texas but to the entire world."

Despite TARO's continued importance to the state's primary source research landscape, the site's underlying infrastructure has remained static since its debut, and as a result, falls short of researchers' modern standards. Rather than providing browse capability, TARO is limited to a keyword search, and a lack of ADA-accessibility further impairs access. Behind the scenes, contributors are hampered by the site's technical limitations, causing some contributing repositories to move away from TARO. Outdated upload procedures and narrow editing guidelines make it difficult for repositories to contribute finding aids once they've adopted more sophisticated archival management software, and differing descriptive standards limit our ability to add browse capabilities. In response to these issues, TARO stakeholders have identified the following priorities to improve TARO: moving towards shared best practices; enhancing usability through aesthetic, functional and technical improvements; improving training documentation for new members; conducting outreach to current and potential TARO members and users; and establishing a funding model that will make these changes possible and sustainable. After completion of our one-year project, TARO will have a road map for project implementation and joining the 21st century.

09-16-2014

In the interest of updating the TARO website and expanding its reach, the TARO Steering Committee has submitted a planning grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities, and eagerly awaits the response, expected in March 2015. If funded, the planning project would run approximately July 2015-June 2016, and would potentially be followed by an implementation grant application.

> **Planning project description: "Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) Consortium to the 21st Century"**
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> The Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) consortium based at The University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas Libraries, is applying for a **Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Foundations Grant**, for the purpose of collaborative planning, assessment and pilot activities. Our TARO Project seeks to enhance intellectual control and solidify our collaborative framework for complex reference. Specifically, our Project would create editorial plans for standardization of existing archival finding aids and updating of EAD best practices documentation, **devise strategies for technological and programmatic sustainability, and produce a concrete plan for critical changes to our online reference resources.**

In the meantime, the TARO Steering Committee is meeting regularly to plan and carry out steps which can be conducted before this grant would begin. More information is available online at http://bit.ly/YhRZu7.

Old news can be found at http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/admin/old_news.html.