

Outreach Project: Collaborative Community Curation

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## Collaborative Community Curation Project

Hosted by USU Special Collections and Archives & American West Heritage Center

### **Project Description**

Utah State University (USU) and the local historical community are invested in building relationships with longtime residents of Cache Valley, Utah. The intention of this project is to increase representation of local histories, knowledge, and story within the university archives and special collections. Jennifer Duncan, Head of Special Collections at USU, and Clint Pumphrey, Manuscript Curator and digitization specialist, will partner with USU Department of Anthropology and the American West Heritage Center to facilitate this digital preservation and archive development workshop by creating a space for the local community to connect with university students and faculty, as well as representatives of the local historical community.

Local community members will be invited to preserve photographs, documents, and other items related to family histories, using digital archiving tools provided by the USU Special Collections and Archives. The event will be hosted by members of the local historical community, taking place at the American West Heritage Center. USU students will use scanners provided by the university to create digital copies of items provided by community members. The community members will receive a copy of this digital file and will be able to keep the original item. The university will also catalog these digital files, to expand university Special Collections and Archives.

The Collaborative Community Curation Project will take place on Saturday, November 14 from 12pm to 4pm. Community members are invited to drop-in anytime during the event. Light refreshments will be provided for community members and event coordinators. If the event is

successful, the university Anthropology Department and American West Heritage Center hope to host additional sessions in the future. Light refreshments will be provided.

To generate interest in local history organizations, the American West Heritage Center will provide information about their work in the local community. Similarly, USU will provide information about resources available through the Museum of Anthropology and the Special Collections and Archives. Students enrolled in Anthropology courses will be encouraged to participate in the event by earning credit for assisting in scanning items, educating patrons regarding resources available through USU, and bringing non-student community members to the event.

Interested students will have the opportunity to enroll in an elective course, through which they will be trained to operate the digitization tools used during this event. Students enrolled in this course will attend the event, working with members of the community interested in digitizing historical resources. In addition to attending the event and working with digitization tools, students enrolled in the elective course will also curate a digital exhibit to be displayed in the Anthropology Museum during a *Saturdays at the Museum* event.

One student intern will be awarded a stipend for working with university faculty to coordinate the event. This student will design flyers and other advertising materials, providing them to local businesses that will display them in their windows. The student intern will also create an advertising pitch to be announced on local radio stations and will coordinate with the venue to organize logistics regarding event set-up.

## **Rationale/Impact**

The American West Heritage Center is a working museum a short twenty-minute drive away from Utah State University, in Wellsville, Utah. This project is an opportunity for USU Special Collections and Archives to collaborate with the American West Heritage Center, to extend collections housed by both institutions. The creation of digital copies of the historical materials provided by the community preserves personal collections while expanding the coverage of university collections. This project communicates an interest in documenting local history, memory, and story. The university's recognition of community resources as valuable information strengthens a collaborative partnership.

The Collaborative Community Curation Project aligns with the mission statement of Utah State University, which strives to “foster the principle that academics come first, by cultivating diversity of thought and culture, and be serving the public through learning, discovery, and engagement.” (Utah State University, n.d.). The Collaborative Community Curation Project also embodies the mission of the American West Heritage Center “[to] create an educational and entertaining environment that inspires our patrons to learn, live, and celebrate the American West Heritage by exploring the diverse cultures that shaped the Cache Valley and surrounding region from 1820 to 1920.” (American West Heritage Center, n.d.)

The objective of this program is to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between Utah State University Special Collections and Archives department, the American West Heritage Center, and community partners. Additional impacts include building trust between the triad, increasing visibility of the services provided by both institutions, and allowing for students and community members to build experience with archival projects and practices through the process of compiling first-person narratives and recognizing the value of local knowledge and history.

## **Funding**

As a public institution of higher education, Utah State University (USU) is qualified to apply for and manage funding received through grant awards. Support for the Collaborative Community Curation Project is provided by the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, a local education fund created with the intention of “strengthening the quality of outreach programs ... strengthening the state through a more educated citizenry.” Organizers of this project are awarded \$1000 through this fund.

Additional funding is awarded through the Public Humanities Project, a fund created by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Division of Public Programs. The purpose of this program is “to support projects that bring the ideas and insights of the humanities to life for general audiences.” The university is awarded \$2000 to support the Collaborative Community Curation Project.

In addition to the support of grant funding, the Utah State University supports this outreach project through a sponsorship of \$800. This sponsorship aligns with the USU mission to encourage “cultivation of thought and culture by serving the public through learning, discovery, and engagement.”

All funding is managed through USU Department of Anthropology and the University’s Special Collections and Archives. These financial resources will be allocated to support the American West Heritage Center, a hub of local history invested in preservation projects focused on restoring historical structures and other resources. Funding also supports the work of educators and students by reimbursing the time educators invest in event coordination and student training. The logistics and structure of the program will also be possible through grant funding and university sponsorship.

## **Budget Breakdown (\$3800)**

\$1200 – Venue (Heritage Center livery stable)

\$600 - Stipends for student coordinators

\$1000 - Faculty advisor/instructor (leading and planning elective course, leading and supporting student coordinators)

\$500 - Advertising materials (flyers, Facebook add boosts, radio spot)

\$500 - Food (lunch provided for student coordinators and instructor day of event, refreshments for event participants)

## **Communications Plan**

The success of this outreach project depends on the willing and enthusiastic participation of Utah State University, the American West Heritage Center, and the local community. As the spearhead of this initiative, Clint Pumphrey of the University Archives staff will be responsible for coordinating the communications between all parties, the first of which being establishing communications with the USU Museum of Anthropology to discuss the potential for an exhibit showcasing the results of this project. A team of student coordinators interested in working on this advocacy project will be assembled. Working with Mr. Pumphrey and an additional faculty advisor, they will then reach out to the Heritage Center to ensure their willingness to participate, as well as to determine the extent of that participation. Once this preliminary contact has been established, the University team will then apply for funding from their school administration and the grants mentioned above. Once the necessary funding is acquired, the first step will be to secure the American West Heritage Center as the chosen venue and reserve the desired date. The University will begin formal communications with the Heritage Center representative to

determine which date works best for them and their ability to participate in the event itself. The event will ideally take place on a Saturday afternoon from 12:00-4:00 pm to ensure the highest possible attendance. The chosen date should be no sooner than six weeks from the date of reservation in order to give all parties ample time to advertise and prepare for the event.

The Special Collections and Archives will then make sure that all their digitization equipment is functioning properly and in good condition to be transported to the Heritage Center for the event. Any necessary repairs should be made, and any additional equipment should be purchased at this time. The University should communicate an inventory of this planned equipment to the Center and decide together where these devices should be set up ahead of time. Arrangements for light, lunch-inspired refreshments should also be organized at least several weeks ahead of time. The University team and the Heritage Center should also work together to create a marketing plan to reach a wide audience and create a vibrant group of participants consisting of students, faculty, university staff, and local community members.

This marketing plan will rely on strategies of traditional flyers, social media engagement, and advertising through the local radio station. Professional flyers will be printed up and posted around the University, Heritage Center, and frequented spots in the local community. The latter will be determined by engaging directly with community gatekeepers: some examples of possible locations could include the public library, popular coffee shops, grocery stores, community centers, places of worship, and other community gathering places. In addition to distributing flyers in these locations, project representatives from both the University team and Heritage Center will be discussing the event with these community stakeholders and encouraging them to spread the information to those they think would benefit from attending. The event will also be promoted on Facebook, with a coordinated effort from both the University's and Heritage Center's accounts. The remainder of the marketing budget will go towards ad space bought from

the local radio station. As additional incentives for students, the Anthropology Department will be offering extra credit to students who digitize their own items at the event and/or bring a non-student to the event.

After the event itself, the leadership team will evaluate how many materials were contributed and digitized for the collective exhibit. If there are enough materials as deemed necessary by the USU Museum of Anthropology to constitute a display of this collection for one of their free Saturday events, the Museum and the University Archives will work together to process this collection and make it available for public viewing in this manner. Based on the attendance of the event and the number of materials collected, the leadership team will also re-evaluate the potential for future similar events in the future. Detailed notes should be documented throughout the entire process to ensure that they can be referred to if needed to make the necessary improvements for future outreach events.



## References

American West Heritage Center. (n.d.). Mission Statement. Retrieved October 29, 2020, from <https://www.awhc.org/mission-statement/>

George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation. (n.d.). Our Mission. Retrieved November 1, 2020, from <https://www.gsecclesfoundation.org/about/our-mission-and-history>

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Utah State University, U. (n.d.). Welcome to USU. Retrieved October 29, 2020, from <http://www.usu.edu/about/>

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