Open-Source Based Solutions for Processing, Preserving, and Presenting Oral Histories

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Open-Source Based Solutions for Processing, Preserving, and Presenting Oral Histories
Nature of USF Oral History Collections

A. Collecting Scope
• Urban development and sustainability
• Culture and identity (ethnicity and race)
• Holocaust, genocide, and crimes against humanity
• USF history

B. Quantity
• 22 oral history projects
• 813 accessible interviews

C. Accessibility
• WorldCat
• Local OPAC (Aleph)
• Library digital asset management system (CORAL)
• Google

Visit http://ohp.lib.usf.edu
Resourcing the USF Libraries Oral History Program

A. Staffing

- 4.0 equiv. permanent FTE: approx. $150,000/annum
- 1.5 part-time student FTE: approx. $36,000/annum

B. Infrastructure

Central IT
- 3 virtual servers
- Server maintenance
- Nightly back up to tape and remote HD

Library IT (averages $15,000/year)
- 1 Physical server
- 4 Audio/video production workstations
- 5 transcription workstations
A Brief History of Oral History at USF

A. In the Beginning (1997-2002)
- Founded in the Tampa Library (part of Florida Studies Center)
- First oral history projects targeted Tampa Bay area political leaders
- Video interviews recorded on Super VHS
- Edited in Adobe Premier for PC
- Streamed audio/video from USF Tampa Library server in Real Media™
- Interviews cataloged in online public access catalog

- Purchased mini-DV video cameras
- Transitioned to Apple shop using Final Cut Pro
- Expanded collecting scope to include non-elites
- Began systematic transcription of new interviews (used Baylor University style guide)
- Presented audio only and transcript via the Internet
- Transitioned from Real Media™ to MPEG4
- Experimented with several digital asset management systems (DAMS) and presentation tools (Site Search, Luna Insight, CONTENTdm, DigiTool)
A Brief History of Oral History at USF

C. Improving Workflow Management

- Created secure, open-source application Bull-OH-Base (Rich Internet Application)
- Utilizes LAMP Stack Software (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP) and Ajax (asynchronous JavaScript and XML)
- Offers complete production lifecycle
  - Administrative and descriptive metadata
  - Forms and releases
  - Digital audio & video master files
  - Transcription, edits, time codes
  - Abstracting and cataloging
  - Bull-OH-Base interfaces with DAMS
  - DAMS interfaces with long-term archive at Florida Center for Library Automation
A Brief History of Oral History at USF

D. Improved Presentation (2009)

- Simple Player
  - PDF searchable transcript
  - MPEG4 streaming audio

- Advanced Player (Beta)
  - Transcript in Adobe Flash
  - Time coded
  - Synchronized with audio
  - MP3 audio in Adobe Flash

Coral - Advanced OHP Player

LL: At first they put me in the infantry, and I did a basic training in the infantry. And then, later, they were making up this new unit; it had been one of the mule pack artillery units, Camp Hale, Colorado. And we were told that after one of the two existing mule pack the mules packed the artillery in segments, pieces, for mountain fighting, small artillery pieces; 75mm. They lost an entire battalion; I think is what they called it, in somewhere in the Orient-Burma or somewhere-and they decided that mule pack units weren't called for anymore and they were dismantling the unit. They dispersed the population of that unit among various other units elsewhere.
What makes an oral history player effective?

A. Management Perspective

- Uses open source solutions
- Minimizes operating cost and maintenance requirements
- Selects solutions with dynamic user communities with whom to share and learn
- Takes an IT leadership position in the oral history community
- Manages oral histories within existing Library FTE and expertise
- Leverages centralization of USF IT
- Reuses existing hardware and software where feasible
- Is Unicode compliant
- Utilizes robust test server for ongoing project development
- Includes archival and preservation capabilities

B. User Perspective

- Creates a uniform user experience regardless of web browser
- Minimizes browser plug-ins and/or add-ons
- Maximizes interface portability
- Provides descriptive and technical metadata
- Offers transcript and audio/video (synchronous and asynchronous)
- Presents intuitive user controls and accessibility
- Offers full-text searchability
- Displays foreign language scripts
- Promotes user self-sufficiency
USF’s Answer: OHPi

Technology Used

i. Management: IT Experience
   • OHPi integrated with all USF Libraries Digital Collections (CORAL)
   • Data repository – Fedora Commons (open source)
   • User interface development tool – Adobe Flex Builder 3 plug-in
   • MP3 Encoder (audio)
   • Adobe Media Encoder™ (video)
   • OpenOffice™ JAVA API (XML transcript)
   • Metadata cataloging – OCLC Connexion
   • Express Scribe™ for transcribing
   • Keyboard Maestro™ for time coding
   • Custom management modules to integrate open-source solutions
   • Deposits to Florida Digital Archive (dark archive)

ii. User Experience
   • Embeddable Web interface – Adobe Flash™ (.swf files)
   • Works on all browsers supported by Flash
   • No additional audio/video plug-ins required
   • Intuitive user controls
   • Transcript synchronized with audio/video
   • Full-text searchability
   • Transcripts available for immediate download as PDF
   • Resizable transcript text for visually impaired
   • Interview discoverable in WorldCat and Google
OHPi for Audio

Leonard Lubin interviewed by Michael Hirsh. (Interview conducted May 21, 2008 and May 27, 2008.)

Transcript

Michael Hirsh: Okay. First of all, let me just get your name and your spelling, and your address and phone number.

Leonard Lubin: My name is Leonard, L-e-o-n-a-r-d, Lubin, L-u-b-i-n.

MH: And your date of birth, sir?

LL: July 7, 1925. So, on this occasion I was what, nineteen or twenty.

MH: Where were you growing up? Where did you go into the Army from?


MH: And when you went into the Army, you were drafted, or volunteered?

LL: No, I enlisted.

MH: And they put you in what?

LL: At first they put me in the infantry, and I did a basic training in the infantry. And then, later, they were making up this new unit; it had been one of the mule pack artillery units, Camp Hale, Colorado. And we were told that after one of the two existing mule pack—the mules packed the artillery in segments, pieces, for mountain fighting, small artillery pieces; 75mm. They lost an entire battalion; I think is what they called it, in somewhere in the Orient—Burma or somewhere—and they decided that mule pack units weren’t called for anymore and they were dismantling the unit. They dispersed the population of that unit—all of this is by hearsay, what’s told to me. They dispersed the population of that unit among various other units elsewhere.

We were told—I don’t know if this is true—the reason for it was that these were all very big men, because of the fact that they had no motors, no engines, that they were transporting this stuff by mule and on their own backs, lifting [it] up very tall mountains, which is what it was for: mountain fighting. These had to be big men. They had to load the barrel of a 75mm Hauser onto the back of a mule, counterbalance and weight on the other side, then separately the ammunition, water,
OHPi for Video

This is a difficult topic to speak about. I always have to do a preface, not always, but sometimes, that I’m not a genocide scholar. I’ve never studied genocide perse. My first years of my academic career were related to another topic. I was sort of pushed into this field by denial. I grew up with genocide survivors. We didn’t think that was anything special; everyone around us was a survivor so, you know, it was just a way of life. I grew up sort of in denial. Most of my generation, born in the United States, we knew that our parents were survivors. We heard their stories sort of in the background, as background music when they spoke to each other—the women, in particular, when they would get together and have their decaffeinated coffee; they would tell their stories and sometimes they would laugh and sometimes they would cry. And so we knew that these—what had occurred; but for us, born in the United States, we were Americans and we didn’t want to get involved in this.

It was only really with the passage of that generation or the passing of that generation that we thought would never disappear—but, in fact, did disappear—and the increased denial, state denial—not only state but primarily state denial of the Armenian genocide pushed me into this field of beginning to explore it. I’ve now edited and contributed to five volumes on the subject, and I still don’t find it an easy and pleasant subject to deal with, but one that is probably necessary to deal with.

As recently as two years ago, a Turkish Armenian journalist by the name of Hrant Dink, who edited a Turkish Armenian newspaper, was assassinated on the streets of Istanbul. And that sort of brought the Armenian genocide back to the fore. But this time it was not only Armenians who were taking about it, it was...
OHPi Strengths

• Developed using cost-effective open source, commercial, and custom software
• No third-party software licensing or support fees
• Resides on USF IT virtual servers, thereby reducing Library cost and staff responsibilities for operating system administration
• Content free and available 24/7 via the Internet
• Flash nearly ubiquitous (installed on 98% of all desktop browsers)
• 4 of 5 major browsers (Firefox, Opera, Safari, Chrome) assist users in obtaining and updating the Flash plug-in by way of notification, guidance, or automation
• Unicode compliant
• MD5 checksum validation of master files quarterly
• MD5 checksum validation of online data streams weekly
• Redundant back up (optical disks, local servers, taped back ups, remote archives)
• Post interview (audio) processing costs under $1,000/interview hour
Planned Enhancements

- Complete retrospective time coding of all transcripts
- Complete testing and implement video OHPi
- Further investigate Transana™ or equivalent for keyword coding and searching
- Integrate GIS functionality into interview transcripts via Google Maps or ArcGIS™
- Create mobile app
- Explore HTML5 as substitute for Flash
Questions?

For more information, please visit http://ohp.lib.usf.edu

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