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2003 National Leadership Grants for Libraries - Preservation or Digitization

Report 3: October 1, 2004-March 31, 2005

Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books

PI: Dr. Louis A. Pitschmann, Co-PI: Karen Croneis, The University of Alabama

Project Manager: Jessica Lacher-Feldman, The University of Alabama

University of Wisconsin-Madison Co-Coordinator: Amy Rudersdorf and Barbara Walden

Project Overview

On September 23, 2003, the *Institute of Museum and Library Services* (IMLS) announced the 2003 recipients of the IMLS National Leadership Grants.

Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books (PBO) is a comprehensive collaborative project which will provide end users with a valuable and highly searchable database of up to 5,000 books and up to 10,000 images with rich metadata and a rich cache of value-added materials. This resource will encourage both individuals and repositories to use this as a tool to gain a better understanding of the books within their own collections, and to develop a knowledge base relating to design movements and publishing trends in American book publishing and book design in the 19th and early 20th centuries. PBO provides end users with a collection of materials that not only provide an understanding of what was being read but will also illustrate the importance of the book as artifact or object. PBO also provides insight into America's first century, both in the realms of history and culture and in the areas of graphic and industrial design. The bindings themselves provide a forum for the study of the development of a distinctive American style and the movement from America looking abroad for inspiration, to Europe looking towards America for ideas and imagery.

Overview of October 1, 2004-March 31, 2005

Building on a successful first year, the project team continued work on several aspects of the project, including database development and population, web development, subject-specialized research, and promotion and publicity of the project.

Among the many accomplishments of the *Publishers' Bindings Online* project and its participants during the period of October 1, 2004 through March 31, 2005, is that the SiteSearch database was made available to the public through our website, bindings.lib.ua.edu. The SiteSearch database was linked to the main site and unveiled on March 1, 2005. It was announced on several listservs and in several other venues, including a feature, with an image of the homepage on the University of Alabama's homepage, www.ua.edu.

This primary outcome for the project has been met in its initial stage by providing to the public **377 complete database records** (images and rich metadata) in a fully searchable database. The database is accessible online at bindings.lib.ua.edu/sitesearch. Several other accomplishments are documented in this report, divided into headings that reflect the grant narrative and deliverables of the project.

Website:

While the URL bindings.lib.ua.edu for the Publishers' Bindings Online (PBO) project was established in the very beginning of the project, the site was primarily informational. The site has been completely redesigned with an overall look, including a logo, word mark, and recognizable color scheme and design elements for branding and marketing purposes. A low resolution version of the site is featured on the home page which allows for end users using dialup and slower machines to shorten their loading time.

Several components to the website have been added, including a **research tools** area, which includes a preliminary bibliography, a comprehensive list of subject headings for controlled vocabulary for the 377 records currently included in the live search page (<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/sitesearch.html>), as well as examples and biographies of all identified binding designers. Through the subject headings page, the end user is able to access search results for any subject term available in the live database. This aspect of the project represents some of the new scholarship that facilitated through PBO.

Other parts research tools area include a growing source for related online information, namely a page with *other online resources* that will be of interest to our end users.
[<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/other.html>]

Other pages on the newly designed site include a comprehensive and current *PBO Project Credits* page, which aids in the documentation of the history of the project.
[<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/credits.html>]

A comprehensive *Publicity and Outreach* page which documents all PBO publicity and outreach related activities, and provides links and images relating to academic presentations, poster sessions, press materials, exhibitions, and other notable mentions of the PBO project.
[<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/publicity.html>]

The password protected site for project management has a new URL, bindings.lib.ua.edu/wrkgrp (Userid: working, password: group). This site continues to grow with materials specifically to aid in communication between UW-Madison and the University of Alabama

Participants:

Both current and past Publishers' Bindings Online staff and students are documented on the PBO website at <http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/credits.htm>. Each additional student and staff member who works on the project will be included on the credits page of the website.

New Staff: In February 2005, Kristy Dixon, former graduate student employee on the PBO project joined the project as a temporary staff member aiding in several aspects of the project including digitization, quality control, usability testing, and other related areas.

Communication:

Email Distribution Lists: The working group continues to make excellent use of the email distribution lists to facilitate discussion and to share documents between the two institutions and with the advisory committee.

Working Group Site: This password protected site, bindings.lib.ua.edu/wkrgpr/ (user id: working; password: group) continues to serve as a gateway to components of the project and facilitate communication. Additions to the project manual are made regularly as needed. The manual serves as a major asset to the project and future digital projects.

Bindings Email Address: An email account bindings@ua.edu has been established. In addition to the email, a feedback form has been added to the PBO website in order to increase feedback capabilities, including anonymous feedback.

User Studies/Usability Testing:

To ensure value to end users, we have begun some usability testing in order to seek out feedback.

During the period of October 1, 2004-March 31, 2005, four user studies were done. The groups were as follows:

- a group of K-12 Social Studies teachers from the Tuscaloosa City Schools,
- a group of 12 graduate students from a 600-level History of the Book course,
- a group of senior creative writing students working on a project to incorporate historical themes in their poetry,
- And a group of graduate students training to teach K-12 Social Studies.

These studies were successful and provided sound and useful feedback which is currently being analyzed. Suggestions from these studies are being incorporated into the project in several areas including interface redesign, value-added components area, adjustments in language and tone, and the development of canned searches and other tools to provide end users a more satisfying experience.

Travel

In January 2005, Jessica Lacher-Feldman and Kristy Dixon presented gave a presentation, *19th c. Publishers' Bindings: A Reflection of American History and Culture via the WWW* at the American Historical Association in Seattle, Washington.

A site visit to the University of Wisconsin-Madison is planned for April 2005 by Jessica Lacher-Feldman, Project Manager and Douglas Anderson, Head of Systems, to meet and discuss the progress of the PBO project and deliverables.

From UW-Madison, Jessica Lacher-Feldman (UA), and Amy Rudersdorf (UW-Madison) will travel to Roosevelt University to present, *Publishers' Bindings Online: Reflecting American History and Culture via the WWW* on the PBO project at the American Association for History and Computing to be held at Roosevelt University, Schaumburg, Illinois.

Benchmarks:

Selection

UA: As of mid-February, 2005, the 2500 (**100% complete**) books [based on a goal of 2500 titles] to be included in the PBO project from The University of Alabama (UA) were selected and initially described for metadata creation.

UW-Madison: As of March 31, 2005, 1016 titles of the 1660 (**61% complete**) total [based on a goal of estimated 5000 images] to be included from UW-Madison have been selected and initially described for metadata creation.

Aggregate: 3516 titles of the 4160 (**84% complete**) to be included in the project have been selected and initially described for metadata creation.

Metadata

Using the web-based File Maker Pro metadata entry form facilitates smooth transition from initial selection and description by the subject specialists to the metadata development by the metadata coordinators.

UA: As of March 31, 2005, 2392 of the 2500 titles (**96% complete**) to be included from UA have Dublin Core metadata records created for them.

UW-Madison: As of March 31, 2005, 995 of the 1660 titles (**59% complete**) to be included from UW-Madison have Dublin Core metadata records created for them.

Aggregate: 3387 out of 4160 (**81% complete**) metadata records completed.

Digitization/Reformatting

UA: As of March 31, 2005, 1929 of the 2500 titles (**77% complete**) to be included from UA have been digitized.

UW-Madison: As of March 31, 2005, 1039 of the 1660 (**63% complete**) titles [based on estimated 5000 images] have been digitized.

Aggregate: 2968 of 4160 (**71% complete**) titles scanned.

Uploading/FTP

The University of Alabama Libraries FTPs the master images to UW-Madison for inclusion in the database. This is done in batches of 2 GB on a regular basis.

As of March 31, 2005, images from 1396 books out of 2500 (**56% complete**) have been FTPed to Wisconsin.

Project Database

The first iteration of the public database was made available on March 1, 2005 and is accessible through the bindings.lib.ua.edu URL at bindings.lib.ua.edu/sitesearch. The SiteSearch database search pages have been customized with a logo and wordmark from the PBO project.

A second URL is active online and contains 3264 records which are currently under review for quality control. That URL serves as the quality control/test interface. Though not publicly available or linked to the main site, it is accessible at bindings.lib.ua.edu/search. Its accessibility is such to allow for project members, advisory committee members, and others to test the functionality and content of the database.

The SiteSearch database application, hosting the PBO database resource, was enhanced to support the display and navigation of multiple images associated with a single record. These include series of images with several viewing sizes available for each image, as well as multiple series of images. These enhancements were made to the source code of the application and so are available to other projects as well.

Value-Added Components

Research and writing in several areas pertaining to the value-added materials for the website are currently in development. Recent additions to the website are as follows:

Currently available online:

Under *Research Tools*: [<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/research.html>]

- **Bibliography:** [<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/bib.html>]: A bibliography of works of interest to those studying publishers' bindings. These books are also used on a regular basis in the development of the project.
- **Bindings Designers: Biographies and Examples**
[<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/designers.html>] Biographical essays with examples of the bindings designers featured thus far in the PBO database. A more comprehensive biographies section, along with a mechanism for researchers to contribute further information about these designers and other information in this area will be added in the near future. Also included in this area is "Reflections on a Design", an illustrated essay on a particular book binding by noted designers Sarah Wyman Whitman, which

complements the Bindings Designers pages and serves as an informative teaching and research tool.

[http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/designerbios/whitman_reflections/reflections.html]

- **Controlled Vocabulary for Subject Headings:** [<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/vocabulary.htm>] . This feature allows for end users to browse the list of subject headings, and to click directly from the list to the search results for a particular subject heading. For example, by clicking on the subject heading “people—women”, the end user immediately accesses all 37 examples in the live database that contain images of women. This controlled vocabulary is expanding with the inclusion of additional records in the live database.
- **UW-Madison's Scandinavian-American Publisher Holdings, 1840-1920.** [http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/scan_bib_uwm.doc] A comprehensive bibliography of Scandinavian-American bindings held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Though compiled as part of a different project, the end product ties directly in to this project. This is the first time this resource has been made available to the public.
- **Other Online Resources:** [<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/other.html>] A growing compendium of online resources, hyperlinked to the online resources themselves.

Currently under development:

Teaching Tools:

- Lesson plans
- Detailed tutorials on searching and using the database.

Examples of galleries with essays under development:

- *The works of Lafcadio Hearn (Exoticism)*
- *Westward Expansion Represented in Publishers' Bindings.* This will include an essay by Dr. Joshua D. Rothman, (History Dept. The University of Alabama) to complement this gallery
- *Book cloth grain patterns (detailed examples of grain patterns with narrative descriptions)*
- *Artistic/decorative movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.*
- *The Significance Of Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- *The Works of Sarah Orne Jewett*

Publicity, Promotion and Outreach

Presentations and Proposals:

Presented:

- Jessica Lacher-Feldman and Kristy Dixon gave a presentation on the **PBO** project entitled *19th c. Publishers' Bindings: A Reflection of American History and Culture via the WWW* at the American Historical Association annual meeting, January 6-10, 2005, Seattle, Washington.
- Jessica Lacher-Feldman gave a presentation was made to the Board of Directors for Alabama Center for the Book, The University of Alabama,

Accepted:

- Jessica Lacher-Feldman (UA) and Amy Rudersdorf (UW-Madison) proposed and had accepted a panel presentation entitled *Publishers' Bindings Online: Reflecting American History and Culture via the WWW* was submitted and accepted for the annual at the American Association for History and Computing, Roosevelt University, Schaumburg, Illinois, April 15-17, 2005.
- Steven Dast and Vicki Tobias (UW-Madison) proposed a poster session on collaboration which touched upon the **PBO** project. It was accepted for presentation at *SHOWCASE 2005, Ideas to Results: Improving Work, Learning, and Climate*, April 4, 2005 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Mary Alexander proposed and had accepted a poster session, *Descriptive Metadata for 19th Century Decorative Book Bindings: A Collaborative Digital Project* on the metadata portion of this project for the Alabama Academic Library Association, April 2005 in Birmingham, Alabama. The poster session was developed by Alexander, along with Amy Rudersdorf (UW-Madison, and Katherine McGhee-Snow Wilkins (graduate student, UA)
- A half day workshop on PBO and its uses in the K-12 classroom is planned for July 2005, The University of Alabama.

Submitted:

- A proposal was submitted to the Rare Book and Manuscript Pre-Conference for June 2006 in Austin, Texas. Participants in this session are Jessica Lacher-Feldman (UA), Kristy Dixon (UA), Amy Rudersdorf (UW-Madison) and Barbra Walden (UW-Madison).
- A proposal was submitted to present the PBO project at the The University of Iowa's Center for the Book conference tent show, *The Changing Book: Transitions in Design, Production, and Preservation*, July 2005.

Publicity, Marketing and Outreach:

The *Publicity & Outreach* page [<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/publicity.html>] fully documents and illustrates all manner of initiatives, press, presentations, exhibitions, and other notable appearances of the Publishers' Bindings Online Project.

The importance of creating an overall look and design for a project will allow for its continued recognition, publicity, and the marketing of the project. The site design, the color scheme, and the use of small details from the books used in the project, assembled together in a patchwork, and echoed throughout the site, and in the bookmark, PowerPoint presentations, and other future publicity materials will aid in furthering deliverables for the project itself. [See **Appendix A**]

A full color bookmark advertising the project with URL and email address is in development. Several thousand bookmarks will be used as promotional items widely both at UA and UW-Madison. [See **Appendix B**]

Print and Online Press:

A short article on the project was featured in Vol. 27, Issue 1 of *The Alabama Archivist*, the newsletter of the Society of Alabama Archivists.

An illustrated feature article was submitted for publication for the spring 2005 issue of *Library Horizons*. *Library Horizons* serves as the primary publication of the University of Alabama Libraries and has a circulation of 5000.

Appendices

Appendix A: Screen shot of newly designed homepage featuring wordmark and overall look/branding for the project and its components. Screen shot taken April 26, 2005. (report3_appendixA.doc)

Appendix B: Publishers' Bindings Online promotional bookmark image (front) and back (informational text). (report3_appendixB.doc)