Digital Preservation of Shaker Heights Architectural Records and Creation of an Online Database

Interim Report
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The project has reached its approximate halfway mark, so this is an appropriate time for an interim report.

Project Timing and Pacing: After receiving the OHRAB grant monies in late March, we started work on the project at the beginning of April 2011. Database design and planning took place in May and early June. We began recruiting volunteers in June, and on June 24 we began the scanning project in earnest. As of August 25 we are at the end of the sixth full week of scanning the building cards, and alphabetically we are working on the streets beginning with "R." We expect that by the beginning of October all the building cards will be scanned, and we will have begun the second phase of the project, to enter data into the database.

Companion Grant: The City of Shaker Heights was also awarded a grant for a related project, to build and populate a database of Shaker Heights historical information for a smart phone app called *Cleveland Historical*, developed by Cleveland State University's Center for Public History and Digital Humanities. Because the two projects are related, the city's grant included funding for the Building Cards database--not to replicate OHRAB's funding, but to hire a professional database and website designer to ensure that the information is easily accessed by the public and that the database is fully functional.

We are fortunate to have the volunteer services of a Shaker resident with database and programming experience. Over the first several weeks of the grant period, through numerous meetings, emails, and phone conversations, we discussed the structure and needs of the building cards database. He then developed a MySQL database from our discussions that is being passed along to the website/database designer for completion.

The City of Shaker Heights' Planning Department is currently finalizing the contract with Cleveland State University's Center for Public History and Digital Humanities to complete this index cards database and construct an input screen to allow volunteers to read information on the scanned cards and type them into the database. We hope that this part of the project will begin in September.

Project Needs—Dedicated Scanner and RAM Upgrades: We determined that we needed to purchase a dedicated scanner for this project because the available flatbed scanners at the library and at City Hall would have added hundreds of extra hours of volunteer labor to manipulate, crop, and name the scans. The scanner wasn't part of our original financial calculations. Fortunately, the Friends of the Shaker Library held a program last spring called "What's It Worth?," modeled on *Antiques Roadshow*, during which patrons paid to have a professional appraiser look at their belongings. The proceeds from this program were earmarked for the Library's Local History collection, so after considerable research we used that money to purchase an excellent card scanner at a reasonable cost that creates the exact scans we need: color, high dpi, duplex, card stock, easily re-labeled TIFs.

We are borrowing two laptops from the Library's Homework Center (which has not been open during the summer, and will only be open after school hours during the school year). We determined that we needed to perform RAM upgrades on our laptop and desktop computers to handle the scanning volume and speed. This we did in-house using IT funds and time. We also determined that we needed to purchase both portable hard drive space and server space to store the card scans, which will total approximately 150-175 GB of data. We purchased the portable hard drives using the City's grant, and a year's subscription to 200 GB of server space on Google Docs using the Local History Department's regular budget.

Project Needs—Re-location of Building Index Cards: Scanning is taking place at the library rather than at City Hall. We negotiated an agreement with the Building and Planning Departments in which we bring over a limited number of cards at one time and transport these small batches back and forth between the Library and City Hall as we move through the cards.

Volunteers: We have eighteen regular and dedicated volunteers participating from one and a half to six hours per week, and we have collected several names of additional people interested in helping with the project, whom we have asked to be 'on hold' until the second phase begins. We are accommodating as many volunteers on a regular schedule as possible in the first phase. We now can schedule up to two volunteers at a time. This week fifteen two-hour sessions were scheduled.

Phase One Process—Scanning: At the library, one volunteer scans the cards on the scanner purchased with the Friends of the Shaker Library companion grant and one of the laptops borrowed from our Homework Center. The second volunteer works on a second laptop borrowed from the Homework Center. The second volunteer double-checks the formatting and accuracy of the titles of the scans and renames them as necessary. After the scans are double-checked, we save the scans on two portable hard drives purchased with the City's companion grant, and also upload the scans into our server location in Google Docs for temporary safekeeping.

Phase Two Process—Data Entry: Once the database designer contract is finalized and work begins on completing the database, we will select a permanent server location for the database and transfer the scans onto that server space. We expect that data entry will begin in October. We are planning to enable a multiple-point data entry process, so volunteers can either come to the library to work on our laptops or work from home; in either case they will use internet access to navigate to the website where they can enter data.

Data entry screens on the website will allow volunteers to view the scanned image of the building card and manually enter such information as the architects', builders' and original owners' names; building dates; microfilmed blueprints locator code; house materials; and so on into fields of the database. Some information, such as the permanent parcel number, street name, and street number, have already been built into the title of the scan and will be already linked to a record with that information pre-loaded into the database. Additionally, we will create shortcuts for data entry, such as drop-down menus for common building types and materials, and lists of architects and builders names that will allow a volunteer to either select an existing name on a list or add new information if necessary.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments about this project, and thank you again for giving us the funds to make this possible!