

## Visual Materials Session Review 2007

Session #: 401

### Session title: Digital Imaging in the Smaller Shop: Case Studies from the Midwest

Number of VM Reporters contributing comments: 1

Reporter 1's VM experience level:

Archives Profession: 10+ years

VM Specialization: Generalist w/ significant VM

#### Speakers:

Sharon Carlson, Chair (Western Michigan University)

Erik Nordberg (Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections)

#### Description from program:

Join the speakers for a review of digital imaging projects at two smaller university archives. With funding from a statewide library consortium, WMU digitized Civil War diaries – and re-examined traditional concepts of provenance and original order as it created new digital collections. Funding from its state humanities council allowed MTU to build a user-interactive imaging system for historical photographs. User needs encouraged development of an innovative interface and flexible application of descriptive standards.

#### Summary of session:

Both speakers presented well thought out descriptions of their digital projects. Nordberg described the Interior Ellis Island Project, which explores ethnicity in Michigan's Copper Country. Funded by the Michigan Humanities Council, the project digitized ~3000 images with the goals of simplifying and increasing patron use, improving description, providing online content, and creating an in-house duplication system. The project uses an innovative interface that allows users to create online photo albums popular with students working in groups, post comments, and to cut and paste images for external use. He cautioned the session to be sensitive to long term internal costs especially when the initial project is funded externally.

Carlson discussed the digitization of eight civil war diaries to provide access, interpretation, and preservation, made possible by a \$95,000 grant from the Library of Michigan. She outlined the technical and software requirements including the use of iTranscribe and Contentdm to create searchable online text. Images were created using a SLR digital camera. Carlson discussed the project's impact on description, noting that one diary was found to have been catalogued incorrectly.

#### Session strengths:

- Provided a good overview of the complexities of digitization projects.
- Emphasized the need for cooperation with organizations and individuals outside the Archives. Small shops need a strong support network and outside funding.
- Both speakers gave informative presentations that used visuals to good effect.

#### How effectively did the session address the topic as proposed in the program?

The session was true to the program description, unlike other sessions that I have attended.

**Toward what experience-level was session geared?**

I found that both speakers discussed the technical aspects in a manner that required the audience to have a good foundation in digitization and metadata lingo. Even though I'm familiar with the subject, I was scratching my head over certain terms.

**What topics (broached or implied) merit further development in future sessions or articles?**

Both projects depended upon strong outside help, particularly infrastructure and finances. Volunteer help was essential for Nordberg's project and Carlson's project website is powered by the University of Michigan's Digital Library eXtension Service. Both projects required grant funding. Now that we've seen what can be done, a session or workshop could cover how it was done in detail. Themes could include developing partnerships, presentations by the larger support institutions (what are their expectations), choosing software/hardware infrastructure, and what are the expectations of the users?