

Final report on grant NAR08RB-5000-08, Connecticut Historical Society  
September 2010

The goals of the Connecticut Historical Society's NHPRC-funded grant were:

1. to create K-level MARC records over the course of 24 months for 900 collections that had no catalog record
2. to upload these records into OCLC and our institutional OPAC
3. to identify collections within the above group as priorities for additional processing and EAD-encoded finding aids
4. to identify documents of general and educational interest for submission
5. to the cooperative digital library, Connecticut History Online (CHO).

The performance objectives described in the awards letter were:

1. Submit reports by the deadlines in the Notification of Grant Award.
2. Reduce the Historical Society's backlog by 600 cubic feet. No discrete collections larger than 0.5 cubic feet will remain uncataloged by the end of the project.
3. Create 900 collection-level MARC records and upload them to OCLC and the Historical Society's OPAC.
4. Identify at least 50 larger collections that merit more detailed processing in the future.
5. Identify at least 50 collections of general, educational interest from which individual documents can subsequently be selected for submission to the Connecticut History Online (CHO) digital library.

As of September 30, 2010, the Archivist and Project Archivist, aided by volunteers and the Assistant Archivist (who left half-way through the project), had created 1,964 K-level MARC records, of which 1,937 were uploaded to OCLC/WorldCat and the institutional OPAC. The records that were not uploaded were incomplete; the call number protocol for manuscript maps has not yet been established. This number is well beyond the initial goal of 900 records. As a result, the backlog was reduced by more than 800 linear feet.

The success of the project hinged on the successful implementation of "More Product/Less Process". The only "processing" the staff did was unfolding items, replacing fragile and acidic folders as needed, and creating box lists of large collections, helpful to researchers who need some access to the collections. There are at present 127 collections that staff identified as needing additional processing, ranging from complete folder level processing to separating personal and business papers. More detailed processing is expected to be the subject of a future grant proposal. In the meantime, volunteers and interns continue to fully process small collections (usually no more than 2 linear feet). The additional

information gathered from this detailed processing will be added to existing records as the data becomes available.

Project staff identified 29 collections with documents for possible submission to CHO, the online digital library. This is well below our target, due in part to the fact that staff was intent on reaching the numerical goal for cataloging. However, the collections that were identified are rich in material and will undoubtedly yield a large number of documents for consideration.

Project staff made links between cataloged museum artifacts and manuscript collections in 54 records, providing more comprehensive access to all of the collections. This accomplishment meets a goal of our institutional reorganization in 2008 that created a collections department encompassing museum, graphics, library and manuscripts to provide “one stop shopping” for researchers.

In 2010 alone, there were at least 47 newly cataloged collections used by patrons. It is assumed the researchers did not know about these collections until they had online catalog records.

In addition to the work done to meet the grant’s goals:

36 blog entries, the bulk written by the Project Archivist, focused on specific documents, topics, and summaries of each month’s cataloging discoveries (<http://manuscripts.wordpress.com>). The blog was mentioned on NHPRC’s Facebook page as an example of promoting a successful grant project.

Articles about the project appeared in online and paper journals: notices in *New England Archivist* (October 2008, July 2009); an article in the online journal *Common-Place* (<http://www.common-place.org/vol-10/no-04/>) in July 2010, volume 10, number 4; notices and updates to online forums of SAA (primarily to the *Manuscript Repository Newsletter*, back issues of which are not yet available online).

The Archivist was part of a panel presentation at the Society of American Archivists conference in Washington, DC, entitled “the Art of Archival Judgment: Applying More Product Less Process” on Saturday, August 14.

As a result of reviewing each catalog record and having daily discussions with the Project Archivist, the Archivist had the opportunity to develop a more detailed collecting policy for the manuscript collections, based on the SAA workshop “Advanced Appraisal for Archivists” presented by Mark Green on November 6, 2009 in Boston, Mass.

The Archivist developed a project-specific processing manual outlining three levels of processing and indicating minimum processing as the level

required for the grant project. This manual will serve as the basis for a more comprehensive manual for wider institutional use.