Project Summary

Luther College, in partnership with Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, requests a grant of $119,898 from NHPRC for a project entitled *Journeys to America: Illuminating Hidden Collections at Luther College and Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum*. The proposed project will include the completion of a shelf survey of the collections, assessment of basic conservation needs, and the migration of existing collection-level data to a searchable on-line database. With NHPRC support, the basic arrangement and description of the collections will be greatly enhanced to improve access to these important collections for our core constituencies and professional scholars in the U.S. and abroad.

Purposes and Goals of the Project

Both Luther College and Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum's collections contain invaluable, tangible evidence of how one immigrant group to the United States has maintained its traditions and created new ones. The building and maintenance of communities exhibited by Norwegian immigrants is common to other immigrant groups; however, the successful history of Norwegians in America spans well over 180 years. Although scholars have described the collections at Luther and Vesterheim as being rich in materials, these collections have not been used as widely as collections at other Norwegian-American institutions. Creating a searchable online aggregate catalog where researchers from around the world have access to these significant Norwegian-American collections will add to the breadth of scholarship in the field of Norwegian-American studies and improve scholarship in emigration studies as a whole. Greater access will not only benefit professional scholars, but it will also enable partnering institutions to better serve core constituencies, including students, staff, visitors, and genealogists.

Methods

Accessibility has been a goal for both institutions for a number of years, but staffing has been a major hurdle. This project will enable the museum and college to hire an archivist devoted solely to this project and its completion. Creating this web-based database will make the collections accessible to all, in the U.S. and abroad. The project also sets the stage for building an online consortium of institutions in the U.S and Norway to create one-stop digital access to materials related to the study of Norwegian emigration. The database will be developed using the Archon database product developed by the University of Illinois. A web-based tool, Archon was developed specifically for archival collections. Archon uploads the files, publishes the website, and generates EAD and MARC records.

Summary of Plan of Work for the Grant Period

The proposed project includes two phases: 1) a start-up and cataloging phase, during which a grant-funded position will be filled, Archon cataloging of the Luther College Archives will begin, creation of a name authority including subject file to utilize Luther's library will be completed, and a presentation of the project will be given at the NAHA-Norway meeting and 2) an expansionary phase, cataloging of the Vesterheim Museum's Archives, convening of focus groups to provide feedback and suggestions, and exploring funding for database expansion.

Products to be Completed during the Grant Period

The project will create web-accessible records utilizing archival description standards. Using Archon software, these records will make an expandable database that will form an aggregate catalog other related collections can join. The end product will include a Norwegian language interface and will be available for users around the world. Archon allows records to be exported into MARC, so any records in the new database can be linked to Luther's library online

catalog, Magnus, as well as Vesterheim's collections database, Past Perfect. The new Archon

records will utilize DACS as a description standard and will greatly expand the description and

subject access to materials. Archon is also discoverable by Google, creating additional access for

discovery of collections by off-campus researchers; a link from Vesterheim's website will be

added to direct museum members, staff, and researchers to the database.

Project Director and Key Personnel

Rachel Vagts	Luther Archivist (Project Director)	vagtsrac@luther.edu	563-387-1805
Jennifer Kovarik	Vesterheim Registrar (Project Co-Director)	jkovarik@vesterheim.org	563-382-9681
Ryan Gjerde	Luther College Digital Initiatives Librarian (Technical Lead)	gjerdery@luther.edu	563-387-1288
Faust Gertz	Vesterheim Museum Technology Specialist (Web Developer)	fgertz@vesterheim.org	563-382-9681
Chris Prom and Scott Schwartz	University of Illinois Archon Developers (Consultants)	prom@illinois.edu schwrtzs@uiuc.edu	217-333-0798

Performance Objectives
Objective 1**:** Installation and operation of collection management software system.
    Measure: Collection management system is usable by archives staff at Luther and Vesterheim.
Objective 2: Subject files created for all names in Luther College Archives card file.
    Measure: Subjects are used as authority file for project.
Objective 3: Collection-level (and some series level) descriptions for all collections at Luther
College and Vesterheim.
    Measure: Records completed, meeting DACS and other standards.
Objective 4: Design and implement local theme to Archon
    Measure: Design is complete and functional.
Objective 5: Increase access to and searchability of collections at Luther and Vesterheim.
    Measure: Survey data shows increased use through various tracking measures.
Objective 6: Market new collection access to related Norwegian-American institutions and
explore potential expansion of searchable database.
    *Measure: Meetings with potential future partners held, press releases sent to related
Norwegian-American institutions, and publication/presentation at NAHA-Norway in June 2011.*
Objective 7: Completion of all narrative and financial reports required by NHPRC, as well as
cataloging plan and final project report to document workflows and production rates.
    *Measure: Reports completed on time, plans and cataloging report shared to professional
publications and other relevant outlets.*