

Minnesota Digital Library Coalition

Steering Committee Meeting

October 3, 2005

James W. Miller Learning Resources Center, St. Cloud State University

MINUTES

Attending: Kathleen Flynn, Daardi Sizemore, Bill DeJohn, Jason Roy, Steve Harsin, John Butler, Todd Digby, Gay Galles, Michael Fox, Marian Rengel, Keith Ewing Jim Dildine, Mike Kathman

Michael Fox chaired the meeting. He welcomed new member, Steve Harsin, from the Iron Range Research Center.

CONTENTdm update

John Butler reported that working with CONTENTdm to bring “Minnesota Reflections” online has gone pretty well. There are still some elements that need work. He and his staff have reported some major bugs to DiMeMa, which has taken back support and control of the software from OCLC.

The bugs are causing some problems. They are thwarting our efforts to allow volunteers to work with the metadata. The volunteers are ready but software technicians haven’t been able to set the authorizations at appropriate levels. DiMeMa finally acknowledged that there is a problem but wasn’t sure of a fix. Michael asked if we could grant permissions somehow with what ever rubric we do have available.

There are still some questions over the controlled vocabularies and how they are allowing access to information. There appear to be limitations on custom queries caused either by the number of items in a query or the actual length of a query. John recommends convening the metadata group to address some of these problems.

Many of the people involved in bringing “Minnesota Reflections” online are meeting October 28 to discuss workflow and to make revisions in the process as we move ahead with our next projects. Currently, we have more than 5,000 object presented through the system, after decoupling some of the compound objects (postcards) and only including the images and not the backs. There is as yet no easy way to do compound objects in CONTENTdm.

Discussion followed on some of the features of the interface and CONTENTdm. Bill DeJohn asked if the people who contributed photos would be able to get into CONTENTdm and tweak the metadata. John said it is possible according to the software features, but that there would need to be some central control over the changes. The workforce group will also be looking at a distributive model for loading images into the database; CONTENTdm 4.0 allows for SFTP (secure file transfer) and this opens up the possibilities of people loading images so they don’t have to send them to the U on portable storage media.

All of the controlled vocabularies have been loaded. Jason sent the U the files with Minnesota place names. John’s team has put some controls on the technical fields that could cause hiccups.

Jason reported that the maps project is nearing completion, now that MHS has sorted through some of the issues they had with CONTENTdm. The address of the maps – digital.mnhs.org – has been logged, but the state of Minnesota has to officially release it. We can go live with the site once that is done. Now the question is how do we want to relate that to the “Minnesota Reflections” site so that the user can get to it. The workflow or metadata groups could talk about connecting the two.

John also reported that, though we want use statistics, that require loading another database and could be complicated.

Project Manager’s Report

Jim Dildine shared details of the report he had sent to the steering committee e-mail list on 9/28/05. The MDL holds 6543 scanned images from 55 separate institutions. Currently, there are 51 projects online. Some are awaiting metadata, including Big Stone County which will add 430 images to the collection.

The photo selection committee for the next implementation phase will meet in a teleconference on Oct. 5.

Jim recommended that the Web development group meet to look at the two Web pages – www.mndigital.org and reflections.mndigital.org He also recommends that the Spotlight features on the interface page need an explanatory interface and suggests that the spotlight should change every time a viewer goes to the interface page.

Jim recommended that the stakeholders have more of a say in what goes on in the planning and thinks the committee needs to discuss that issue.

Report on home for MDLC

Michael Fox and Bill DeJohn reported on the meeting that they and Kristi Tornquist and Wendy Pradt Lougee had had on Sept. 29 to discuss a home for the MDLC. Michael made the bulk of the report and drew a chart on the white board.

Minnesota Historical Society is seeking a major grant from the Bush Foundation for a Minnesota cultural heritage network. They are looking for funding to start July 1 and last three years. Bush approached MHS on this project. Initial project plans are to have three phases and to let MHS internally bring together all of its resources. MHS has the responsibility to work with other cultural heritage organizations. There are barriers to smaller institutions participating in many projects. MHS can provide centralized statewide services, a network or grid of services, including training. MHS has also talked at the state level with Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota, which also do not have these capacities. That’s the background of the discussions. MHS hopes to get the money in March.

Michael sketched some ideas on the board:

Content (acquisitions)		Access	Governance	Funding
Cultural Heritage stuff	Other stuff	Minnesota Reflections	MDLC Steering Committee	
Documents	Topics	MNLINK	MINITEX Advisory Council	
Photos	e-government	ELM (full-text)	State Library Advisory Council	

Books	e-legislature	WordCat		
maps	Full-text	(Is this what MDL is? An access provider?)		
	Museums			
	TCP/MPR			

Other questions arose, such as: Where do we want to go in terms of a body that encompasses what goes in here? Is there a programming layer in this model? How do we start getting a synergy between existing projects and organizations?

Bill recommended that we take this up as a major portion of the agenda at the November 7 steering committee meeting. Is the MDL a cultural heritage project or do we go into more than that and if so, what? John suggested that there are topical issues for the MDL to explore and that he sees the MDL as a vehicle to give access to stuff here in Minnesota. Bill asked if we should rethink what we are talking about. Other issues might concern working with local governments to digitize information. What is holding us back, Michael said, is that we don't have a larger image of the MDL and we don't have a context for it. Keith Ewing raised the recurrent consideration that developing infrastructure to support the MDL and to serve different sized organizations has been part of the MDL vision. Marian Rengel asked where the projects we have completed and are working on are pointing. Michael said that what we've done has been very informative in many areas. Bill pointed out that the metadata training alone has benefited everyone in the state who could attend it.

John Butler sees two distinct issues: 1) What we have been doing in terms of digital conversion of objects and establishing standards and controls for digitizing 2) The very messy other level of putting those digitized objects out on the Internet. He argued that we are not going to be able to control metadata.

Steve Harsin observed that, as a newcomer to the board and a contributor to Minnesota Reflections, the board is too big to govern and raise money. Keith reminded the group that it has been very challenging for the MDLC to set up a governance system without knowing what we would be governing.

Sustainability also is a major issue, as is helping smaller institutions participate, a point which occupied a lot of the discussion time at the Monticello conference in 2001. Keith suggested that we are looking at several issues in Michael's chart: 1) Networking, bringing projects together 2) Educating and training to explore and share common ways of doing things. Daardi Sizemore pointed out that our audience is also very important; what services are we providing them? John asked if there were other agencies in the state seeking to be the aggregator or federator. Michael said MHS is trying to build a case for being just that. At the government level, Northstar is supposed to do that. Keith suggested that a model more similar to the MDL is Google. Michael sees the model as the people who use libraries. Jason Roy suggested that we want two levels to the MDL project: A point of entry and the ability to go deeper.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Bill and Kristi will be meeting Oct. 12 with Emily Kissane from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (formerly the Higher Education Service Organization). Marian reported that Kristi wants to find out how Emily might be able to help the MDLC with funding possibilities. Bill said that Emily needs to submit information by Oct. 6 to get a proposal or just to raise the idea with her organization for possible funding during the upcoming bonding session of the

Minnesota Legislature. He is thinking of putting a document together for her with ideas for MINITEX that would include place holders, including one for the MDL, and that Emily is willing to do that. Bill would like to see greater collaboration between the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Bill suggested talking with Suzanne Miller about a grant that could be a bridge between where we are and where we want to go, once we know that. He reported that Suzanne does have funding for statewide initiatives. He pointed out that the MDLC can take two or three funding approaches: Legislative emergency funding, LSTA budgeting for MDLC, and asking the legislature to put forward a bill. Mike Kathman said it would be helpful if we knew the cost to maintain what we have for a year. Bill believes the digital library project is an initiative people would respond to if we could figure out how to draw their attention to it.

In conclusion, Bill said that he is inclined to get basic funding through the MINITEX budget line and contract out for the work, but we wouldn't know if we were going to get that funding until July 2006. Michael supports Bill's initiative and the other committee members expressed agreement.

Sandbox Studio's K-12 Survey

Keith and Marian have reviewed a preliminary and partial draft of the final report from Sandbox Studios. Kris Wetterlund and Scott Sayre received 66 responses to the survey and conducted four focus groups. Sandbox will have the finished version to Keith by mid-October.

LSTA '03 Follow-up

Keith must have the final report on the 18-month grant to State Library Services and School Technologies by Nov. 4. He has asked people involved in projects to get their reports to him soon and has specified the information he needs from each person. All bills must be paid by Oct. 15 and Marian is working with people to make sure this happens.

SCSU's IMLS application

IMLS declined to fund SCSU's application to develop book digitizing resources at St. Cloud State University. Reviewer's comments varied and included concerns with the level of participation of the MDL members and a clear understanding of value of the distributive model the SCSU and the MDLC put forth in the application. Bill requested a copy of the application and comments.

New LSTA grant FY06

The image selection committee will continue as in Phase 1. Members are Bonnie Wilson, Lisa Marohn, Jason Roy, Marian Rengel, Keith Ewing, and Jim Dildine. Bonnie has suggested doing a photo album as part of this project, but albums raise issues with how to do compound objects. The committee will investigate this possibility.

The document committee is still shaping up.

Committee members raised questions about the timeline of the project. Keith said they would like to see requests for applications for photos going out by Nov. 1. Documents will take longer since the group will need to establish criteria for the project. Mike asked if we could

identify the documents we need. John suggested the Tim Hoogland and Pat Coleman from MHS might know what people need and what we have so that we can be proactive in asking for specific documents or specific types of documents.

Daardi asked if we had worked with contributors to Minnesota Reflections to learn what they liked and didn't like about the process. The committee supported doing so and Daardi volunteered to work on getting this information. She will draft an initial survey and share it with Jim and Keith.

Publicity

Marian reported on the success of the State Fair booth, on a poster she is developing that others would use in their buildings, and on the press release she is working on to send to the contributors.

Federal funding

Marian reported on an e-mail exchange she has had with Mary Jacquart, MnSCU's director of federal legislative relations. Mary informed the group that with Hurricane Katrina recovery costs and the costs of the war in Iraq, there is little else being discussed in Washington and the chances for federal funding are not looking good.

Usability study of Minnesota Reflections interface

John would like to test the interface. Plans to do so during the summer were replaced by dealing with CONTENTdm issues. The question now is do we have funds to do so. There is no money in the new grant for this. The committee suggested putting this on the agenda for the Nov. 7 meeting.

John also reported that he has been looking into a new idea of creating a mechanism in the interface to receive user input on the content (photos) in the digital library. The user input would be kept separate from the official metadata and there would need to be some editorial control over the comments. John asked if people thought contributors would favor this, if there were rights issues to be concerned with, and what other issues they foresee. Is there enough interest for the U to conduct a small pilot? Consensus of the group was that yes, if the U has the time, conduct the study.

Next MDLC Steering Committee meetings

10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday, Nov. 7, MINITEX conference room, Andersen Library, University of Minnesota

Notes by Marian Rengel (10/3/05)