TAPER
TUFTS ACCESSIONING PROGRAM FOR ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Third Interim Narrative Report

Project Activities January 1, 2009 – June 30, 2009

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Krista Ferrante

Project Archivist

Eliot Wilczek

Project Director

University Records Manager

INTRODUCTION

The Digital Collections and Archives (DCA) at Tufts University is undertaking a National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) Program Expansion Grant project to design, develop, and implement machine-readable submission agreements and records creator records. Work for this project started on January 1, 2008 and is scheduled to end on December 31, 2010.

STAFFING AND CONTRACTING

In May 2009, Tufts University hired Krista Ferrante as the Project Archivist to investigate strategies to describe Tufts University entities and manage that description, create records creator records, and assist with developing requirements for the submission agreement builder tool.

The DCA originally intended to hire a project developer to work with project staff to develop schemas for submission agreements and records creator records, and the submission agreement builder tool. The project developer job was an 18-month term position that was going to start on July 1, 2008. However, the search to fill this position did not yield satisfactory results. The project staff concluded that filling the position would not be the most efficient way to produce the project deliverables. The DCA altered the project to hire an XML consultant and project archivist rather than hire a project developer. The DCA documented this change in its August 12, 2008 revised plan of work.[1]

In December 2008 Tufts University endorsed a contract with Appleseed Software Consulting of Somerville, Massachusetts to complete most of the technical work for the TAPER project. The DCA has had a productive working relationship with Appleseed. The consultant and the DCA have worked closely and iteratively to develop project deliverables. This work is supported by frequent email exchanges, periodic in-person meetings, and a shared wiki space.

SUBMISSION AGREEMENT SCHEMA

Based on an element list the DCA developed, Appleseed created a draft submission agreement schema in March 2009. The DCA and Appleseed subsequently made relatively minor revisions to the schema. The DCA is currently holding the schema in a draft status, awaiting the opportunity to test the schema in the submission agreement builder tool (SABT), which will serve as the operational environment for the schema. The DCA anticipates that the testing will reveal the need for further, probably minor, revisions to the schema. After that final round of edits, the DCA plans to release a 1.0 version of the schema later this calendar year.

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[1] "Revised Plan of Work" August 12, 2008, http://dca.tufts.edu/downloads/plan-of-work_revised_tufts.edu. Document listed at http://dca.tufts.edu/?pid=136.

SUBMISSION AGREEMENT BUILDER TOOL

Development of the submission agreement builder tool (SABT) is underway. The SABT will serve as the online environment for records creators and DCA staff to complete submission agreements. Appleseed has used the functional requirements outlined by the DCA to create the SABT. The project staff anticipates that Appleseed will have a development version of the tool ready for internal evaluation during August 2009. The prime criteria for the SABT requirements have been ease of use and sustainability. The project staff's goal is to create a user friendly tool that can provide the DCA with enough information to fully document accessions and anticipate the challenges of any given acquisition of archival records.

Developing the requirements along with feedback and questions from Appleseed have prompted the DCA to have several internal discussions concerning how the department will implement the SABT and integrate the tool and agreements into its broader accessioning and arrangement and description processes. This included making several decisions regarding the DCA's descriptive metadata creation workflow and the architecture of its metadata management environments.

RECORDS CREATOR RECORDS

The DCA plans to have the submission agreement reference externally defined activities, resources, rules and standards. Within the scope of the TAPER Project, the DCA is developing records creator records as one of the resources referenced by a submission agreement. The DCA will use the records creator records to indentify users of the SABT and to populate the submission agreements with accurate information about the entities transferring archival records to the DCA. Accurately identifying the records creators will help the DCA predict and plan for records it is suppose to accession. More broadly, records creator records will enable the DCA to improve the flexibility and quality of its archival description. The DCA documented its incorporation of records creator records into the TAPER Project in its August 12, 2008 revised plan of work.[2]

In order to develop and implement records creator records that will store information about records creators—particularly those that transfer records to the DCA, the project staff has begun to investigate standards such as ISAAR (CFP) and EAC-CFP along with institutional strategies for their implementation. The DCA is closely following the development of EAC-CFP as it considers ways to store and transmit records creator records. The SAA EAC working group anticipates making a revised working draft of the schema available this summer. Based on discussions with members of the working

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group, the project staff is hopeful that the DCA will be able to use EAC-CFP as its XML schema for records creator records.

The DCA is particularly interested in testing two aspects of EAC-CFP:

1. Compatibility with MARC authority records. Project staff have met with librarians from other Tufts libraries about generating local authority files for individuals and departments at Tufts. Since the other libraries do not have local MARC authority records describing Tufts entities, they have expressed interest in the records creator records and their compatibility with MARC.

2. Ability to draw relationships between records creator records in order to demonstrate context.

The DCA has begun to review several internal and external sources to start the process of identifying the various Tufts entities that should have a records creator record. This work includes prioritizing which records to create during the course of the TAPER project. Unfortunately, the University does not have a single authority list of departments and offices. Instead the DCA will rely upon a variety of resources, including:

- The DCA's collection management system.
- The DCA's collection and donor documentation.
- Department listing from HR and Purchasing.
- Listing of "Tufts University" as an author in the library catalog.
- Library of Congress Authority Headings relating to Tufts.
- Published or unpublished department histories.

WEBSITE

The DCA posted the following items to the TAPER Project website, which is at

http://dca.tufts.edu/?pid=49:

- Project Documentation http://dca.tufts.edu/?pid=136
  This includes project application materials, interim reports to the NHPRC, and some working documents.

- Deliverables http://dca.tufts.edu/?pid=137
  Project staff will post deliverables on this page.

- Announcements, Presentations, Articles http://dca.tufts.edu/?pid=138
  Project staff will post project announcements, presentations, and articles on this page.

- Project Personnel http://dca.tufts.edu/?pid=135.