

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The project, *DLF Aquifer Development for Interoperability Across Scholarly Repositories: American Social History Online*, will implement schemas, data models and technologies to enable scholars to use distributed digital collections as one in a variety of local environments. The project will address the difficulty humanities and social science scholars face in finding and using digital materials located in a variety of environments with a bewildering array of interfaces, access protocols and usage requirements. DLF Aquifer seeks to provide scholars with consistent access to digital library collections pertaining to nineteenth and twentieth century United States social history across institutional boundaries. By integrating American Social History Online into a variety of local environments, the project will bring the library to the scholar and make distributed collections available through locally supported tools. Development and implementation of the project will take two years, from April 2007-March 2009.

### **RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL**

Problems finding and using objects from diverse collection create significant obstacles to digital scholarship. An interoperability infrastructure is needed to remove these impediments. As noted in *Our Cultural Commonwealth: The Report of the American Council of Learned Society's Report on Cyberinfrastructure for Humanities and Social Sciences*, "Creating such an infrastructure is a grand challenge for the humanities and social sciences, and indeed for the academy, the nation, and the world, because a digitized cultural heritage is not limited by or contained within disciplinary boundaries, individual institutions, or national borders."<sup>1</sup> DLF Aquifer proposes to remove some of these obstacles for historians and other scholars.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*Deliverables.* DLF proposes to develop a working infrastructure for digital library interoperation, including data models, complex object format representations and services to support harvesting, obtaining and re-using digital objects. This work will enable implementation of an architectural framework for DLF Aquifer based on protocol-based methods for interfacing effectively with a variety of digital library content stores. The infrastructure will be optimized for use with American Social History Online, a collection of digital material from DLF libraries.

*Project Elements.* Four elements will comprise the project and will be executed over a two-year period from April 2007 through March 2009:

- Architectural modeling
- Data model and schema development
- Distributed implementation
- Engagement with scholars and assessment

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.acls.org/cyberinfrastructure/acls.ci.report.pdf> (accessed September 19, 2006)

American Social History Online will be made available through:

- a commercial search service
- a course management system (e.g. Sakai™)
- tools designed for citation management (e.g. Zotero, RefWorks, EndNote®)
- a federated search tool in a library environment (e.g. MetaLib®)

### ***EXPECTED OUTCOMES***

The project is expected to result in the following outcomes:

- *Improving Access for Scholars.* DLF and DLF Aquifer expect to make meaningful progress towards making digital objects from distributed sources easier for scholars to use in their local work environments.
- *Stimulating New Research Questions.* DLF Aquifer predicts that the “one collection” juxtaposition of diverse digital content that has been impossible to achieve will inspire scholars to pose fresh questions and to view old subjects through new lenses.
- *Supporting Interdisciplinary Study.* DLF Aquifer supports the teaching faculty perspective that American Social History Online will add context to studies in American literature and culture by bringing material in different formats together.
- *Supporting Cross-Regional Research.* Bringing collections together in American Social History Online will enable research that crosses regional boundaries in a newly efficient way.
- *Increasing Digital Collection Use.* DLF Aquifer expects to expose more of the unique digital material for which libraries are stewards by making the digital objects easily accessible in the scholars’ work-space.
- *Model Development.* More broadly, DLF Aquifer anticipates creating a documented, functioning interoperability model that can be implemented by other libraries and cultural materials organizations for use in other subject matter areas and disciplines.

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