OVERVIEW: DEVELOPING A DIGITAL PROJECT

These guidelines are for Content Providers planning to use the
digital hosting services provided by the Milwaukee Public Library.

INTRODUCTION

There are five primary steps involved in planning and executing a digital project with Wisconsin Heritage Online: materials selection, resources review, application, implementation, and sustainability. WHO's Program Manager and Outreach Specialist are available to provide advice, assistance and training for each step in the process. Thanks to a grant from the Nicholas Family Foundation, consulting and basic training services are offered at no cost to new Content Providers. To contact WHO staff, call 608-265-2138 or email info@wisconsinheritage.org.

A wealth of information on the digitization process is available from the WHO Resources wiki, http://www.wiheritage.pbworks.com. This information is accessible to all Content Providers with a current paid WHO membership. Membership is an annual contribution of $50 for a small institution or $100 for a large institution or consortium. To become a member, contact info@wisconsinheritage.org.

STEP ONE: SELECT MATERIALS

- **Scope.** Choosing a particular subject or theme can provide a useful framework for developing a digital project. Your organization's first digital project must include a minimum of 20 items.

- **Significance.** Consider the contents of your collections. Which items best represent your community or your organization? Which items are rare, unusual or historically significant?

- **Preservation and access.** Digitization can reduce wear and tear on fragile or high-use original materials. Digitization also makes your collections more easily available to your users and accessible to new audiences.

- **Format.** Wisconsin Heritage Online can support a wide range of digital materials, including books, photographs, negatives, artwork, three-dimensional artifacts, and oral histories. Keep in mind that the level of training and the amount of work will vary depending on what types of material you choose to digitize.

- **Condition.** Your collections must be in suitable condition to be digitized. Guidelines are available for the careful handling of original materials.

- **Documentation.** Are detailed catalog records already available, or will you need to take the time to research and catalog each item?

- **Ownership and copyright.** Before beginning a digitization project, you must make certain that the materials you plan to digitize fit one of the following categories: a) in the public domain; b) you are making fair use of the materials under U.S. copyright law; c) the copyright holder has granted permission, in writing, to publish the materials online.

STEP TWO: REVIEW RESOURCES

- **Equipment.** Does your organization own or have access to the appropriate equipment you will need to digitize the selected materials? In addition to a scanner or digital camera, you will also need image processing software and enough storage for your high-resolution archival master files. You will need a high-speed Internet connection to use CONTENTdm, the digital collection management software program that will be provided to you by the Milwaukee Public Library.

- **Funding.** Do you have funds available for any necessary startup costs, such as appropriate hardware and software? Will funding be available for future needs, such as further consulting, intermediate or advanced training, and equipment upgrades, in order to maintain and develop your digital program?

- **People.** Whether it's paid staff or volunteers, you will need people available to organize and execute the project. WHO recommends that your organization choose a single Project Manager to coordinate your work. A Technical Specialist who can install software and create links between your organization's website and your WHO collection is helpful, but not required. If you are interested in working with an intern, WHO can connect you with undergraduate and graduate students from Library Science and Museum Studies programs in Wisconsin.

- **Knowledge.** Before beginning a digital project, it's helpful to familiarize yourself with the standards and requirements you'll need to meet. Review WHO's *Digital Imaging Guidelines*, *Metadata Guidelines*, and *Preservation Recommendations* (all available on the WHO Resources wiki, http://www.wiheritage.pbworks.com). Browse the Wisconsin Heritage Online portal (http://www.wisconsinheritage.org) to see examples of digital collections in Wisconsin. Explore CONTENTdm's "Collection of Collections" (http://collections.contentdmdemo.com) to see how other organizations have used CONTENTdm to organize and display their digital materials.

- **Time.** WHO staff can help you estimate the time it may take to complete your planned project. Digital projects often take longer than you might expect. Be sure to budget time for tasks such as planning, organization, training, research, and quality control in addition to the time it will take to scan and process your materials.

- **Space.** Is there a dedicated workspace available where scanning, photography, data entry, etc. can take place?

STEP THREE: APPLY

- **Complete the Collection Hosting Application.** The WHO Collection Development Working Group will use this application to determine if your project meets WHO's selection criteria and general mission. WHO staff can help you complete the application. WHO staff will contact your organization within one week of receipt of the completed application to discuss the next steps.

- **Memorandum of Understanding.** When your application has been approved and you are ready to begin your project, we will ask you to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. This document will describe in detail the training and other services WHO will provide for your organization and your organization's responsibilities as an official Wisconsin Heritage Online Content Provider.

STEP FOUR: IMPLEMENT

- **Develop a workflow and timeline.** Consult with the WHO Outreach Specialist to develop a detailed plan for executing your project and set a deadline for project completion. The Outreach Specialist will help you determine a realistic timetable depending on the size and complexity of your project.

- **Install the Acquisition Station.** Digital projects hosted by the Milwaukee Public Library will use CONTENTdm, a digital collection management software program, to upload and catalog digital images. MPL will provide you with a CONTENTdm Acquisition Station, which must be installed on a computer with a high-speed Internet connection.

- **Set up your project.** Work with the Outreach Specialist to decide what information you will document for each item in your project and how to maintain consistent quality standards for data entry. Worksheets and templates are available to make sure your metadata (cataloging information) meets the standards set by WHO. The Outreach Specialist can also help you determine how to import your metadata and images into CONTENTdm from another application, such as PastPerfect.

- **Set up a home page for the project.** The Milwaukee Public Library will develop a simple customized home page for your project that can include your organization's logo, selected images, a set of "canned" searches (preprogrammed searches that allow users to browse your materials by topic, location, or other criteria), and information about usage rights or ordering reproductions.

- **Train.** The Outreach Specialist will provide on-site training in the basic use of CONTENTdm. If you need it, training in scanning, image processing and cataloging is also available either in person or online.

- **Put it in practice.** After the training period is completed, WHO staff will remain on call as you put your digitization plan into practice. The Outreach Specialist and Program Manager will be available for two weeks of intensive support (up to

five hours per week) as you refine your digitization procedures. We will provide regular check-ins over a six-month period (up to 20 hours) to verify progress, resolve problems and provide encouragement.

STEP FIVE: SUSTAIN

- **Certification.** After successful completion of your digital project, the WHO Collection Development Working Group will review your project and certify your organization as a Wisconsin Digital Heritage Partner.

- **Preserve.** Your organization is responsible for the preservation of your high-resolution archival master files. You will need to have a system in place to safely store these large files (i.e. gold CDs or external hard drives) and migrate them regularly in order to ensure their longevity and future usability.

- **Promote.** When your project is completed (or while it is in process), use your organization's newsletter or your community's newspaper to bring attention to your work. Some Content Providers develop public programming, such as an exhibit or a slideshow, to showcase their digital projects. Consider creative ways to promote your project online, such as a web gallery on Flickr (http://www.flickr.com) where visitors can comment on individual images or a blog that chronicles the project's progress. Let WHO staff know how you are promoting your project so we can add links and information to our newsletter and wiki.

- **Respond to patron interest.** The global nature of the Internet means that when your collections are made available online, your organization may reach audiences you never imagined. How will you respond to questions about your collections? How will you handle requests for rights or reproductions?

- **Develop a digital program.** Developing a digitization project with WHO means that you will have the infrastructure and skills in place to establish an ongoing and sustainable digital program. If you choose, you can consult with the WHO Program Manager to outline a plan for future digital work.