
Online outreach efforts are increasingly important to the relevance of digital library and archives collections; such efforts have great potential to create new audiences for these collections and encourage users to engage with digital content. However, these online outreach activities are frequently under-appreciated and currently under-studied. By considering the background of online outreach, past and present attitudes towards outreach, definitions of outreach itself, methods for measuring the success of outreach programs, and finally examining and evaluating the online outreach activities of the recent Triangle Research Library Network “Content, Context, and Capacity” project, this paper hopes to further the understanding of and enthusiasm for online outreach as a valuable resource for the archives community.

Headings:

Library outreach programs

Archives -- Public relations

Archives -- Computer network resources
ARCHIVES OUTREACH IN A DIGITAL WORLD: PROMOTING DIGITAL CONTENT THROUGH ONLINE OUTREACH EFFORTS

by
Emily A. Bowden

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
July 2013

Approved by

_______________________________________
Stephanie W. Haas
# Table of Contents

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................. 2

I. New Tools for an Evolving Field ........................................................................................................ 4
   * Reaching Archives Users in a Digital Era ......................................................................................... 4
   * Understanding the Modern Archives User .................................................................................... 7
   * Improving Access to Digital Collections ..................................................................................... 11
   * Defining Outreach ......................................................................................................................... 13
   * Potential of Web 2.0 Applications ................................................................................................ 15
   * Benefits of Expanded Communication with Users ......................................................................... 19

II. Planning and Assessing Online Outreach Activities ...................................................................... 23
   * Defining Expectations ..................................................................................................................... 23
   * Challenges of Evaluating Outreach Efforts ................................................................................... 25
   * Interpreting Web Analytics ............................................................................................................ 29

III. A Case Study in Online Outreach Activities ................................................................................ 34
   * The Content, Context, and Capacity (CCC) Project ................................................................... 34
   * Venturing onto Facebook .............................................................................................................. 36
   * Supplemental CCC Outreach Activities ....................................................................................... 37
   * Understanding and Seeking Users of Digital Content .................................................................. 39
   * Evaluating Facebook Activity ........................................................................................................ 40
   * Facebook Analytics ........................................................................................................................ 42
   * Facebook Outreach Results and Discussion ................................................................................... 46
   * Online Outreach Strategies and Observations ............................................................................... 50

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................ 54

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................................... 56
**Introduction**

The guiding objective of many libraries and archives is to connect people with information, and, in the digital era when this information comes in the form of digital collections and products and is often accessed not through a physical library space or special collections reading room but through a library website or digital portal, "outreach is a key component to the success and relevance of a collection" (Dietz, 2005, p. 44). In recent years, online outreach efforts have become more and more important as "the general public is increasingly coming in contact with archival materials, especially through archival websites" (Dietz, 2005, p. 4). New web-based technologies and applications, such as social media, can not only attract new users but also “bring them back… repeatedly, building loyalty” and ultimately creating engaged audiences eager to pursue opportunities offered by digital libraries and archives (Henjyoji, 2012, p. 2). Are today’s libraries and archives doing all that they can to capitalize on the potential of online outreach? Before the popularity of online outreach activities can spread in the archives field, archivists need to establish a better understanding of the potential of new forms of outreach to contribute to the larger goals and objectives of archival institutions.

This paper looks at some of the background surrounding archives outreach and promotion and the purpose of online outreach efforts supporting digital collections. It considers what audiences these efforts target and how archivists should measure the extent to which outreach and promotional activities can be deemed successful. By examining the online outreach efforts of the Triangle Research Library Network
“Content, Context, and Capacity” (CCC) grant (www.trln.org/ccc) in detail, with a specific focus on the project’s experimental Facebook page, this paper evaluates the applicability of current evaluation techniques, offers a critique of the CCC project’s outreach activities, and suggests basic guidelines for future projects and archival institutions hoping to incorporate similar outreach efforts into their workflows.
I. New Tools for an Evolving Field

*Reaching Archives Users in a Digital Era*

Increasing awareness of archives collections may help to increase overall use of archival materials, something that is essential if archives wish to remain relevant both to academic scholarship and to society at large. One broad purpose of outreach is to be a catalyst for this increase in awareness, hopefully enhancing user perspectives on the relevance and usefulness of archives. But how should we define and measure this “awareness”? And how do archivists define this “relevance” that they seek for their collections and their profession in general? In the process of boosting user knowledge of archives practices and materials, and hopefully expanding the total audience for digital archival content, university archives, historical institutions, and grant-based projects can prove their usefulness and justify their merit for regular financial support or special funding, an issue that has become increasingly important for libraries, archives, and cultural organizations in a challenging economic climate. If archivists plan to engage in more rigorous outreach efforts, they need to have a better understanding of not only the mechanisms through which they can conduct such outreach, but also the concrete objectives they seek to accomplish through this work. This will involve identifying particular types of users to be targeted through outreach efforts, constructing metrics by which to evaluate outreach and promotional activities, and devising strategies for determining whether or not outreach is ultimately successful at increasing use and
promoting the relevance of archives to scholars and society. To accomplish these steps, archivists must decide what they intend when they speak of archives “remaining relevant,” how this “relevance” is related to use and user satisfaction, and what this definition of relevance means for the field as a whole and for their individual institution. Furthermore, archivists need to search for answers to the fundamental questions: What is outreach? When should it be deemed “successful?” And how can it be evaluated?

In his 2007 paper on reinventing archives for a modern world, former director of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), Max J. Evans, stresses the importance of "work[ing] in concert with a curious and interested public" (p. 387). This inherently suggests two things about an archivist’s efforts to engage users; the archivist's first task is to advance user interest in and awareness of archives; the second task is to create an ongoing relationship with an audience that is invested in the long term work of archives. In the digital era there are many applications and technologies with the potential to further these goals. Using digital tools and platforms, online promotional efforts have the ability to introduce users to digital archives and demonstrate archives' scholarship value, ease of use, and accessibility to diverse populations. Understanding these tools and applications is increasingly important for an archives community that is becoming more focused on digital collections and projects. Gilliland-Swateland (1998) suggests that the prevalence of digitization projects today can be partially attributed to the realization several decades ago that digitization engaged in for preservation reasons could also "serve the additional purpose of expanding access to the rich cultural holdings of historical repositories through the development of digital archives and digital library projects" (p. 141). Hand (2008) suggests that after the initial digitization of items, the
next step towards making them more accessible in digital form is "the production of web-based exhibitions of archival things" (p. 132). While many libraries and archival institutions launch webpages to serve as gateways to their online collections, other pre-existing applications, such as social media and social networking sites, also offer platforms for easy-to-create and widely visible "exhibitions of archival things."

Theimer (2011) sees an increasing role for new technologies, communication methods, and expanded online presences, strategies she refers to as “Archives 2.0,” in many facets of modern archives work. Outreach efforts seem particularly well-suited to the digitally based tools and mentality that she discusses: "Archives 2.0 is an approach to archival practice that promotes openness and flexibility. It argues that archivists must be user centered and embrace opportunities to use technology to share collections, interact with users, and improve internal efficiency" (p. 60). The "hallmarks of Archives 2.0," according to Theimer (2011), are a "spirit of flexibility and the willingness to experiment and collaborate," all of which are essential for successful forays into the world of blogging, social media, and crowd-sourcing (p. 68). Previously Ham et al. (1993) also stressed the importance for archivists to exercise flexibility in their ability to wear both "the 'archivist's hat'" and "the 'historian's hat'" (p. 724). Today there are many more hats archivists may be required to wear, including digitization technician, programmer, web developer, and even Facebook moderator. If archives are to remain relevant to scholarship and society, and the future imagined by Pearce-Moses (2007) in which "no one ever asks, 'what is an archivist?'" is to come to pass, archivists must become adept at donning many different hats (p. 16).
Understanding the Modern Archives User

Similar to the changes experienced in the library science profession, archives have seen a refocusing on user-centered practices and philosophies in recent decades. In the digital age, Given and McTavish (2010) recognize that a major focus of library and archives professions needs to be "the interplay of technology, culture, education, and people" (p. 27). In a culture of digital collections where physical human interaction is minimized, or even eliminated all together, the human element of library and archives work must not be forgotten. Theimer (2011) describes a need for modern archivists to be active, engaged, and effective advocates for their work through their communication with various archives users. This need is driven by the idea that archivists can no longer simply rely on even the most "traditional" of archives users, such as professional historians and scholars and genealogists, to discover digital collections without some type of guidance from archivists. This is where online outreach and promotional activities can come into play to engage users with archival content, and also involve them in communication with archivists about archives practices and future work.

Many archivists and scholars point to the "ever widening access to the Internet [which] has made archival collections more accessible to the ordinary person," but despite its vast possibilities, simply the existence of digital content is not enough (Mason & Zanish-Belcher, 2007, p. 354). Dietz (2005) speaks specifically about the need to explicitly target student users through promotional activities and educational programs, but also identifies the general public as a largely untapped archives user population. Theimer (2011) refers to the proactive attitude, which is necessary to reach out to this broader user base, as "go where your users are;" a doctrine that may bring archivists out of their own comfort zone as it leads them to digital spaces that many users, on the other
hand, are already familiar with, such as Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube (p. 62). Archives are sometimes perceived as the conservative branch of the information science field, firmly tied to traditional practices and ideals. Theimer (2011) asserts that "as our users change, it is natural that the ways archives work must evolve as well" (p. 67). Archivists must not only be aware of the changes to user populations and needs but must proactively seek to analyze and understand these changes. This mentality fits with the charge of Conway (1986) that archives seek feedback from not only active archives users, but also "past" and "potential" users within academic circles "and even the broad extra-institutional community" (p. 398). Outreach can be a productive method of identifying current “non-users” who have the potential to benefit from the information contained within archives. Unfortunately it can be easy for archivists to settle into comfortable surroundings and neglect the world outside the archives itself.

However, just as today's archivists are adapting their personal and professional standards and workflows to change the fundamental structure and presentation of archives in order to "seek to provide descriptive information in ways that meet their users' needs, using systems and tools that users understand," archivists are also shifting their notions about the methods and priorities with which they should be interacting with those who use archives (Theimer, 2011, p. 61). Much has been written about re-engineering archival practice, with slogans like "More Product, Less Process" gaining popularity across the field (Greene & Meissner, 2005). Evans (2007) writes about the importance of new archival models, but also affirms that "archivists must… build alliances to be effective in today's information economy" (p. 389). Building alliances with users will not only help archivists better understand the users themselves but also will help
professionals in the archives field learn how to improve digital content and digital spaces to advance future dialog between archivists and users. Creating these conversations in the digital world means "grappling with recent innovations in technology, including Web 2.0 technologies that allow users to engage with institutions via social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and other mechanisms" (Given & McTavish, 2010, p. 22). In this digital age, as we see more and more technology integrated into every aspect of society, Pearce-Moses (2007) believes that "particularly important to archivists, we'll see changes in public expectations for access to information" (p. 15). One way in which archivists can rise to meet those changing expectations is to embrace social media and other Web 2.0 technologies that have already soared to prominence in mainstream web uses.

Conway's seminal 1986 article on building "a comprehensive, profession-wide program of user studies" in the archives field offers helpful foundations for an investigation of current outreach efforts that hope to target archives users in new and meaningful ways (p. 393). Though some of Conway's examples may seem insufficient for digital environments, his work on user-based approaches to archives and his definitions of concepts and terms remain important contributions to this topic. On the definition of users, Conway suggests that "users of archives are… all beneficiaries of historical information," concluding that "by this definition, it is unlikely there are many non-users of archives" (p. 396). Accurate though this may be, it is helpful to consider additional layers to the term "user of archives." Conway defines "use of archival materials" both as direct use of and interaction with physical archival materials (in a reference room or similar facility), and use as an impact that stretches "beyond the repository" (p. 396). With the growth of digital archives since Conway's discussion in
1986, new forms of digital content suggest a type of “use” that falls somewhere between these two definitions; digital collections can offer both "direct use" of materials (albeit digital copies of the original materials), and a strong potential for even greater dissemination of information. Because user experience with digital content may not fall into traditional categories of archives use, it is even more important that individual archives institutions and archival projects identify objectives for what type of users they intend to create, how they wish to interact with those users, and what effect increased usage of digital content will have on the organization, if any. Defining expectations is a key component, not only of assessing the effects and ultimate success of archival outreach efforts, but also of understanding the benefits for an individual institution of increased user awareness of and engagement with digital collections.

In 1998 Gilliland-Swetland lamented that despite increasing opportunities for digital access to archives, "individual digital access initiatives… are rarely fully articulated, systematized across repositories, nor designed based on an analysis of users and their needs" (p. 142). Keeping Conway’s user-centered directives in mind, archivists can make great strides in advancing access to archives through collaborative partnerships and through taking advantage of pre-existing tools and technologies that users are already familiar with. In the process, archivists may gain valuable information about the users and usage of their collections which can help them better align organizational objectives and current outreach agendas.
**Improving Access to Digital Collections**

Before the rise of the user-centered mindset, pioneered in the archives field by Conway (1986), Freman (1984), and others, it was more common for archivists to assume that once people were aware of the existence of archives, they would instinctively see the value that archival collections hold, and they would consequently be instantly transformed into enthusiastic archives users. However, promoting awareness alone is only one step better than this timeworn “if we build it, they will come,” attitude. Outreach efforts need to not only educate people about archival holdings, but also show individuals the value of archival documents by engaging them with the digital content itself and with the mission of archival institutions.

Today there is such a wealth of digitization efforts from libraries, museums, and archives that people may not know quite what to expect from these institutions; therefore, it becomes the responsibility of librarians and archivists to pursue avenues of communication with current users and those with the potential to become regular users, whether or not they have much past experience with archives. Though online promotional efforts such as websites and social media pages can reach diverse audiences, some outreach platforms and methods may be better suited to specific user groups, and it is important to consider what type of user is being targeted by outreach and promotion programs. User groups can be defined by profession, age, web habits and knowledge, or by the type of use a visitor may seek from digital collections. While his 2002 article specifically encourages archivists to shift more attention to K-12 user groups, Lyons' promotion of "educational websites [that] can help repositories strengthen their role as community institutions and challenge traditional, narrow conceptions of who uses, and should use, archival records," speaks to a more general need for online outreach measures.
It can be very beneficial to design outreach spaces to intentionally engage a specific type of user, whether that be K-12 teachers preparing lesson plans for a class, undergraduate students, or professional genealogists. In the vast ocean of potential that is the World Wide Web, it becomes increasingly important for archives to "consider the needs of the diverse new audiences that might now access their materials" (Gilliland-Swetland, 1998, p. 142). By crafting access points to digital content with specific user populations in mind, archivists can improve the public’s perception of archives’ accessibility and usefulness.

Hand (2008) writes that among many practitioners today, it is taken for granted that, along with libraries and museums, "the archive should be more accessible" (p. 133). However, stating this goal and achieving it are two very different things, and in some ways the wealth of new technology may cause as many problems as it resolves, requiring new skills, approaches, and wide-sweeping changes to the field. Archives, museums, and libraries are not the only professions to have seen dramatic change as a result of advances in technology, but in recent years these fields have undergone major technology-driven developments, one of which has been "new tools available to archivists on the Web [that] have inspired archives to share their collections in new ways" (Theimer, 2011, p. 66). These recent changes bring to light another important component of defining the intended audience of outreach measures: keeping in mind that "the uses of records will inevitably change" over time, and the users of records along with them (Ham et al., 1993, p. 722). The archivist must be able to address the needs of immediate users while at the same time ensuring that an "open-ended process of use [is] possible, and… easy," which suggests that archivists must think of “access” as a concept with a flexible definition (p. 722).
definition applicable to current outreach strategies but also able to be adapted to ever-changing user trends and needs.

**Defining Outreach**

Outreach and promotional efforts take on vastly different shapes in different projects and organizations. “Outreach” may imply tailored programs designed to augment specific types of user engagement with archival materials, including promotional events, presentations, or the distribution of publicity materials, or the term may be applied to more general duties an archivist performs for the purpose of seeking a more user-friendly image. Dietz (2005) supplies one definition of archival outreach, considering it to be "the sum of efforts of archives and archivists to increase the relevance of archival holdings by increasing the number of primary materials researchers, and by enhancing all users' experiences with those materials" (p. 5). This definition is helpful in suggesting several things about archival outreach; like others, Dietz ties the objective of outreach to an archives’ ability to prove its relevance to society. This comment also suggests that relevance itself can be measured, at least in part, by an increase in the number of archives users and the satisfaction those users feel regarding their experience with digital content. These two goals, increasing users and user satisfaction, also provide direction for the specific outreach activities an archivist may engage in; however, the nature of those outreach activities may vary greatly from institution to institution.

While some forms of outreach, such as presenting at institutional meetings or professional conferences, writing press releases, or planning exhibits, may be more familiar turf for archivists, online outreach efforts are one of the many areas that present
"changes in the skills needed by archivists to cope with modern information technology" (Ham et al., 1993, p. 720). One of the challenges of online outreach activities may be simply the learning curve involved for practitioners to become proficient in digital tools and technologies. As they admit the changing nature of the archives field, Ham et al. (1993) simultaneously insist that the modern archivist must maintain traditional archival skills, including knowledge of record creators, the historical context of records, and the traditional philosophies of records management and preservation. Thus while outreach efforts can be extremely meaningful and illuminating for projects and institutions, Ham et al. would argue that archives should not let themselves be guided solely by new means of communicating with users or by new information gathered through novel forms of user engagement. Furthermore, according to Ham et al. (1993), "even when others within society move to 'newer technologies,' archivists still must deal with the permanent information contained in the older technologies" (p. 728). This sentiment suggests that older forms of archivist-user interaction and communication, such as Conway's (1986) "reference log," should not be entirely abandoned even as modern archivists explore the potential of newer techniques for reaching and understanding users, such as websites, social media, and other online tools and applications. As online outreach efforts are defined to reflect the activities and strategies used to reach larger and more diverse user populations, and bring these users into closer relationships with archivists themselves, outreach may be seen both as a great opportunity: a task to which archivists should relegate increased time and attention; and as a challenge: one more duty to fit into an already lengthy job description.
**Potential of Web 2.0 Applications**

The term Web 2.0 was used by Tim O’Reilly in 2005 to refer to an emerging attitude which looked at the web as a platform enabling flexible, collaborative content creation and facilitating rich user experiences. Goulet (2010) describes Web 2.0 as a mindset rooted in interaction and collaboration that focuses on allowing users to consume and share online content. There are many Web 2.0 tools and examples archivists can learn from as they develop their own outreach instruments and programs. Pearce-Moses (2007) suggests basing new archival strategies on existing models like Amazon.com, which implies certain things about not just what information might be offered on an archival website or social media page, but also how users might interact with that information. Users are keen to offer input through comment sections and feedback forms and benefit from the automatic customization integrated into many commercial websites.

A descriptive list of numerous Web 2.0 applications relevant to archives outreach can be found in Goulet’s 2010 paper; Goulet includes applications such as blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, photo sharing, and, of course, social networking tools like Facebook. Samouelian's 2009 exploratory study suggests that some archivists and institutions are engaging in discussion about using Web 2.0 applications to better connect with users as they "recognize the importance of embracing new technology to remain vital to users in the digital era" (p. 44). However, Samouelian found less evidence of this idea being put into practice in the field. Compared to initial enthusiasm, and the work being done with Web 2.0 applications in academic libraries, perhaps "archives have become… slow[er] to adopt some of the features of the more recent social networking applications" (Samouelian, 2009, p. 48). More specifically on the topic of outreach and promotion, Yakel (2006) found that "despite early interest in using the web to publicize their
existence, services, and holdings, archives have been less experimental in recent years and slow to adopt some of the more interactive features that support social navigation" (p. 159).

It is important for archivists to move forward in investigations of Web 2.0 potential, in part because developing these tools for archives will be anything but a brief process. Of one early experimental project with an interactive online finding aid, Samouelian (2009) noted the evaluators were "disappointed" that users made only limited use of the website's social features, suggesting that archivists were not successfully employing Web 2.0 technologies in ways that resonated with users (p. 49). Despite such slow progress, practitioners remain optimistic; of the archivists interviewed by Samouelian in 2009, "participants were overwhelmingly positive about using a Web 2.0 application on their repository websites" (p. 62). It should be noted that interviewees responded to requests to participate in the research study and agreed to be interviewed, which perhaps shows a natural interest in and inclination towards using new technologies and applications. But this is not the only study that points to these findings; in 2011, Prom found that many archives institutions were beginning to “implement so-called Web 2.0 technologies, which promote use through new venues (such as blogs, Twitter, and other social media)" (Prom, 2011, p. 159).

Following the rise of Web 2.0, Theimer (2010) began to use the term Archives 2.0 to describe changes in the field of archives which reflect the Web 2.0 movement and apply Web 2.0 tools to archival practices and ideologies. In one of the most thorough analyses relating to Archives 2.0 applications, although still an exploratory study, Samouelian (2009) looked at the activities of "archival websites," defined as "the website
of a repository responsible for the long-term preservation of materials" (p. 49-50). The researcher was most interested in examining the extent to which Web 2.0 applications have been implemented by American archival repositories. Such archival websites are extremely important as archivists rely on them to "function as virtual spaces where users can discover and, increasingly, interact with our collections" (Prom, 2011, p. 160). Samouelian's study found that 45% of websites hosting digital collections included at least one Web 2.0 application on the site (p. 58). The most common features employed were bookmarking applications, which, though interesting, are less relevant to this paper as bookmarking is not typically considered a type of direct outreach effort; however, a number of sites did include blogging, "community sites," and podcasting activities. Interestingly, Samouelian found that these promotion-based applications were more likely to be used by institutions that employed "homegrown" content management systems, rather than commercial products, such as CONTENTdm (p. 60). On the subject of outreach efforts, perhaps the most notable of Samouelian's findings was that "promoting and sharing content with current and future users are the most common reasons" for archives institutions to engage in Web 2.0 applications, suggesting many archivists agree that Web 2.0 technology seems a natural fit for outreach activities (p. 62). The archivists interviewed revealed a specific desire to manipulate Web 2.0 applications in order "to put their materials 'out there' on the World Wide Web and let current and new users know their availability" (p. 62). These sentiments reflect the desire to enhance the relevance of archives by creating a user experience that will increase the number of archives users and improve the accessibility of digital content.
Samouelian (2009) noted that the main drawback of institutions maintaining Web 2.0 applications such as blogs and social media outlets is the issue of "taking away time from traditional archival duties," which mirrors some of the concerns relating to new forms of outreach discussed previously (p. 65). The most frequently cited positive result of implementing these applications was "increased promotion" for the repository and its holdings (p. 64). While anecdotal evidence supplied by Samouelian's interviewees suggests that archives users were responding positively to the new technology and applications on the archival websites, unfortunately "none of the respondents track use using a formal feedback mechanism" (p. 66). This absence of established assessment measures points to a significant need for further work to determine the effect of Web 2.0-based outreach efforts. Another related problem identified by Samouelian was that in many cases "the application had not been available long enough to warrant responses," and data available was insufficient to properly measure user interaction and opinions (p. 66-67). The lack of online outreach evaluation standards and the limited quantity of data are shortcomings which significantly impede archivists’ ability to carry out proper assessment and evaluation, an issue accentuated by the rising focus on evidence-based practice in the library and information science fields. Both of these concerns were also encountered in the course of the outreach efforts of the Triangle Research Library Network’s “Content, Context, and Capacity” digitization project, and play an important role in the findings surrounding the case study which is discussed later in this paper.
**Benefits of Expanded Communication with Users**

Engaging with users on a personal level helps archivists keep the mass digitization system from becoming a simple document delivery production service; instead it fosters a community of scholars, both advanced and amateur, and archivists united around collections of historical records. The potential of "digitally enabled interactivity" can "arguably transform the roles of institutions" and it also inherently "produces different relations between… producer and consumer" (Hand, 2008, p. 2). As archivists begin to navigate the types of engagement that are possible and even encouraged by digital mediums, they will find a new set of promotional tools at their disposal; and sometimes they will discover that these outreach channels may have substantial secondary benefits.

Perhaps one of the more studied results of increased user-archivist interaction is the potential for collections to benefit from user knowledge. Crowdsourcing is a method Erway and Schaffner (2007) saw much possibility in when they suggested "opening our finding aids and other descriptions for user contributed amendments and commentary," an idea that may still terrify many archivists and librarians but could prove enormously effective if such user contributions could be captured and maintained in a controlled environment (p. 6). Like a growing number of archivists who are choosing to embrace such Archives 2.0 tools, Theimer feels optimistic about the future of "collaborative archives," while she predicts that "faded or fading are gatekeeper archivists, who keep archives closed to control all aspects of access to collections" (2011, p. 62).

Large digital archives collections can be difficult to use due to the limited amount of description or metadata that is usually provided. Studies by Head and Eisenberg (2009) and Nimer and Daines (2008) have shown that especially users identifying themselves as
students and casual researchers prefer to see item-level metadata when navigating online collections. Item-level description is typically a sign of a heavily curated collection, and while "manually created metadata is considered of high quality, it is costly in terms of time and effort to produce, which makes it difficult to scale and keep up with the vast amounts of new content being produced" (Stoica, Hearst & Richardson, 2007, p. 244). Expert produced, manually created metadata has been the archival standard for many years, but by stepping away from this model and "avoiding the cost of human-created, item-level metadata, far more materials may be digitized far more quickly" (DeRidder, et al., 2012, p. 144). Inevitably some archivists will be reluctant to consider crowdsourcing a viable alternative; they may view it as unnatural, or even dangerous, as through it information "products" are allowed to move and change. "If the emphasis [of a digital culture] is now upon speed, circulation and movement, then what is happening to our sense of space and place in contemporary culture?" (Hand, 2008, p. 27). If this is the future of archives, then foundational archival tenets such as provenance, ownership, and authority must be reexamined.

While collections, and the researchers who use them, would benefit tremendously from item-level description, it is the responsibility of archivists to investigate realistic options for creating such metadata. Crowdsourcing is one possibility that could grow out of promotional online outreach efforts and would make use of volunteers or the greater public to help develop a model based on what Evans (2007) calls "commons-based peer production," borrowing a term from Yochai Benkler's description of open source software (p. 394). By directly involving the public audience in the description process, and creating environments where "groups of individuals successfully collaborate on
large-scale projects," the evolution and development of collections is connected to a grounded "conception of users' interests" (p. 395). Thus crowdsourcing, a potential product of digital outreach activities, could become a source of user feedback itself.

According to Evans (2007), the digitization process inherently "places these images before thousands of potential volunteers who will use new tools for online metadata collection" (p. 395). Through crowdsourcing, an archival record has the potential to become a "non-rival commodity that becomes more valuable the more people use it" (Evans, 2007, p. 396). Citing outlets such as Flickr and del.icio.us, Evans feels confident that the manpower exists to make crowdsourced archives a reality: "the growing phenomena of folksonomy and social tagging demonstrate that interested individuals will devote their time and energy to make sense of the World Wide Web. The archivist’s job is to make sure that this tagging supports archival access systems" (p. 398). Thereby "the archives of the people… thus become the archives by the people (who contribute and add value) and for the people (who now can actually use them)" (Evans, 2007, p. 400).

Looking ahead we can imagine great benefits of online outreach, highly engaged audiences, and improved communication between archivists and users, some of which are already being reaped today. As archivists continue to embrace user-focused perspectives and the goal of making digital holdings more accessible to traditional and non-traditional users, they will need to employ new technologies to help them seek a better understanding of user needs and interests. Web 2.0 applications seem to be a good platform for online outreach efforts and offer a way to reexamine conventional notions of what archives outreach should consist of and what purposes it should strive to achieve.
Archivists may even benefit from outreach efforts in new ways; through crowdsourcing they may find a sustainable alternative to time-consuming and expensive expert-produced metadata. Even archives with more modest goals for their outreach and promotional activities, perhaps hoping to attract new archives users or improve the satisfaction level of their current users, can discover great potential in the Archives 2.0 mentality; however, new technologies and applications also introduce a need for new assessment strategies, and their adoption brings a host of new challenges and questions.
II. Planning and Assessing Online Outreach Activities

Defining Expectations

As the field of archives begins to experiment with new technologies and practices, both for outreach and other areas of archives work, Theimer (2011) reminds archivists of the necessity of self-evaluation; "the question is not whether to measure, but how and what to measure to produce meaningful results" (2011, p. 63). New forms of outreach require new evaluation methods and new metrics by which to measure the success of user engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately the relevance of archival holdings to users and society. As archives dive into new activities, a good place for them to seek advice is from the library branch of information science. Conway (1986) points to library user surveys as a place to gain insight about developing archives evaluation measures. Decades later, Duff et al. (2010) agree that the library science literature offers a wealth of information on gathering data about users and their use of library collections and services. Furthermore, libraries seem to have been more proactive about "evaluat[ing] the potential of Web 2.0 technology for their respective libraries as a means to bring their services to users" and following such studies with experimental programs and services (Samouelian, 2009, p. 47).

As archivists begin the task of adapting existing metrics and developing their own measures of evaluation, there are several things they should consider which will help them understand how to better define successful outcomes and judge whether success is actually achieved. One of the first keys to evaluating the success of outreach efforts is to
clearly define expectations for outreach and promotional activities in the planning stages of a project. If the goal of a social media campaign is only vaguely stated as "raising awareness" of the project or the institution, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to determine when or if that goal is realized. Defining expectations might seem like an unnecessary step, but quite to the contrary it can be essential to both the ultimate success or failure of an outreach program and a firm understanding of that outcome.

Well-defined expectations will naturally help shape the short-term goals of outreach efforts. In her discussion of developing digital archives collections, Gilliland-Swetland (1998) addresses several topics that can be used as practical objectives for outreach efforts, including "reach[ing] out to potential new users who are not currently coming into the repository to use its holdings," and "help[ing] make users become more 'records literate' so they can better understand what they are accessing" (Gilliland-Swetland, 1998, p.142). If the expectation for an outreach endeavor is that the number of users accessing digital content will go up or that overall user satisfaction with an archives’ online holdings will increase, then the archivists involved in the project should shape their outreach activities around these expectations. Furthermore, they should use these same expectations when devising measures by which to evaluate outreach efforts; for example, this would likely influence the type of assessment data to be collected. But where should these expectations come from?

Gilliland-Swetland (1998) recommends that outreach and promotion activities should be consistent with the mission and parameters of the project or institution, suggesting this is the first place archivists should consult when forming expectations for outreach efforts. Considering an organization’s strategic goals when forming these
expectations during the planning stages of outreach preparation ensures that, as the project moves forward, outreach activities and evaluation measures are fundamentally aligned with the guiding mission of the archives. Archives need to draw on mission statements and outreach goals to craft expectations for what they will consider “successful” outreach efforts, and then consider how these expectations should guide their strategies for how to measure the specific effects of outreach. In addition to being linked to furthering the overall vision of an institution, expectations for the outcome of outreach efforts will influence the type of outreach techniques or vehicles that will be employed, as well as more concrete outreach goals used to measure progress and success throughout the outreach program. These expectations will thereby help archivists draw conclusions on the overall success of online outreach efforts and also better inform future outreach activities.

**Challenges of Evaluating Outreach Efforts**

As the archivist's own role shifts to fit within new archives models, evaluation and assessment are topics that may need to become a more prominent focus of daily archives work. With archivists becoming more involved with user interaction and making time to develop new practices for promoting large scale archival collections, some may fear that archivists will have to sacrifice other skills, such as their intimate level of knowledge about every collection they handle. However, perhaps a slightly different form of knowledge will become common, and possibly even more valuable. As Theimer describes it, "the archivists of today and tomorrow know how to find materials in their collections, and I hope that more users come to value them for those skills rather than for
their supposed “omniscience” about the collections. (p. 64). Among other valuable skills will surely be the development and understanding of evaluation metrics and protocols.

Duff et al. (2010) rethink the way user needs and satisfaction levels are measured in archives by promoting the development and implementation of questionnaires created under Creative Commons licenses that can be freely used by institutions across North America. The instruments developed by Duff et al. for the Archival Metrics Toolkit project (www.archivalmetrics.org) were designed to assess the satisfaction of different types of users with their experiences using archival collections. These instruments focus on collecting information about how the user rates his or her experience interacting with archives staff, facilities, and holdings, and only touch on topics such as outreach-related archival websites or promotional activities through which users may have learned about a repositories’ collections. Archives outreach efforts could benefit enormously from a similar standardized evaluation toolkit which could offer guides and metrics to aid archives in assessing the performance and success of various outreach programs.

Following the lead of Duff et al. and the Archival Metrics Toolkit project, outreach evaluation could be conducted through user questionnaires in which users are asked to rate aspects of the outreach program or website, such as quality of content, overall usefulness, and whether the promotional material taught the viewer something new about archives or a particular topic of interest. While an archives evaluation toolkit would certainly be a valuable resource for archivists, it would require a significant investment of time and finances, deterrents which may be substantial enough to make such development unlikely or unrealistic in a time when academic funding is already stretched quite thin.
One guideline suggested by Conway (1986) for outreach program assessment is to conduct "direct and continuous user evaluations" through surveys and questionnaires, a charge he admits can be difficult for institutions with limited funding (p. 405). When extended, ongoing assessment is not possible, perhaps Conway's ideal can be partially achieved through repeated small scale user studies, such as focus groups conducted with university classes or periodically administered exit surveys for reading room or website visitors. Another good point Conway's article makes is regarding the need for user study methodologies and findings to be shared between repositories; such a strategy would help "to discover patterns in isolated studies, encourage further research, and develop strategies for integrating research findings into standards of practice" (p. 406). This collaboration could assist and perhaps augment the development of national or international assessment standards in a time where most individual institutions cannot hope to tackle such an immense task alone.

Considering reasons for the lack of more frequent evaluation studies in the archives field, Duff, et al. (2010) identified the lack of funds, time, and expertise as three primary obstacles. Finding ways to overcome these obstacles has become more imperative as, "in an era of greater accountability and benchmarking, evaluation has become increasingly important to many archives" (Duff, et al., 2010, p. 570). User studies in archives have become more common over the past decades; many of these studies have focused on the information needs and information-seeking behavior of established archives users, such as historians, genealogists, and students. However, Duff et al. found that, though they acknowledge the importance of understanding users' approaches to archives, "few North American archives systematically study their users"
Evans (2007) insists that data about collections use is essential, "not just to produce aggregate statistics for the annual report" but to help archivists "make informed decisions about setting processing priorities" and guide them in their creation and curation of digital collections (p. 390). Furthermore, Evans suggests that there is value not only in quantitative data, but also in collecting qualitative assessments, such as "researchers' comments and requests" (p. 390). Collecting data from non-traditional users of archives, as well as current non-users, is even more difficult, but Web 2.0 applications may offer some solutions to this difficulty.

Applications such as Facebook offer easy ways to collect user data and see detailed statistics, such as the number of individuals that have viewed a particular post or the number of times a post was "liked" or "shared." However, to assign significance to these data, one must have appropriate knowledge of the tool itself and the current user base, as well as have pre-defined objectives and expectations for the outreach efforts themselves. Web 2.0 tools like Facebook and Flickr have contributed to what Hand (2008) calls "a blurring of the differences between cultural production and consumption;" the way people interact with these technologies "disperse[s] the production of knowledge and cultural commentary among the community" (p. 27). These new forms of communication can be challenging, but their value should not be dismissed. If we follow Theimer's advice to "go where your users are" (instead of taking the more passive stance that "if we describe it, they will come") then Facebook is one of the first places we must go (Theimer, 2011, p. 62). One respondent interviewed by Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis (2007) expressed a similar sentiment with regard to using Facebook to promote library services; the librarian in question stated: "Facebook (and other social networking sites)
can be a way for libraries to market themselves… if it becomes a part of students' lives, we need to welcome it" (p. 30). Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis (2007) studied Facebook as a way for librarians "to interact with and reach out to our users in new and creative ways" (p. 25). They found that awareness of Facebook was generally quite high and while only a small group of their respondents seemed "excited about the possibilities of online social networking" for libraries, a larger group of professionals (40% of respondents) agreed that libraries need to "keep up with Internet trends, such as Facebook, even when such trends are not academic in nature" (p. 29). As Facebook and other Web 2.0 technologies become more robust, and include built-in tools for easy assessment and evaluation, archivists need to become more proactive about implementing Archives 2.0 strategies as a part of their outreach efforts.

**Interpreting Web Analytics**

According to Prom (2011), there have been few studies that "discuss the specific ways that users interact with online archival resources and services," including informational archival websites and promotional social media applications (p. 161). In Prom's experimental study, he used web analytics to evaluate websites by looking at questions regarding heaviness of site use, routes to the website, popular searches, user navigation, and sections of the site which prompted users to contact the institution (p. 166). These web analytics were based on quantitative data similar to that automatically collected on Facebook and made available to Facebook page moderators. Prom stresses that for web analytics to be helpful measurements, "repositories must clearly understand website goals, select and configure appropriate analytics tools, and expend a moderate
amount of time and effort to interpret the reported results" (p. 184). This advice highlights several things that must be considered before web analytics can be analyzed or the success of online outreach be evaluated. First, Prom puts an emphasis on understanding the purpose intended for the archival website. This, in turn, will help determine the tools and assessment strategies to be used.

Along similar lines, Whang (2007) specifies that librarians and website managers must "determine the goal of the website" before deciding "the metrics by which web librarians will measure success" (p. 95). To address the first part of this directive, Whang recommends examining the overarching "library-wide issues" and goals identified within the library's strategic plan. Dietz (2005) also dwells on the importance of considering institutional mission statements when defining target users and grounding outreach efforts. For digital projects and grant-based programs, the equivalent could be returning to the original grant proposal or other project documentation for guidelines on target audiences, institutional promotion directives, and other foundational principles or objectives that might guide the planning of online outreach efforts. Though they surely supply valuable information, "for all the power of analytics, unique visits and bounce-rates will not improve the website or resources of an organization that does not have well-defined goals" (Bailey, 2012). While this paper primarily takes the position that outreach efforts are highly desirable, Bailey’s advice touches on the counter-perspective that archives cannot rely on outreach alone to define themselves and cultivate increased use. Pearce-Moses (2007) offers a warning that libraries and archives should be wary of expending too much time and effort on “external factors,” such as shifting user interests and needs, "and [should] concentrate more on internal statements of vision, mission, and
goals" (p. 19). Finding a balance between tradition and innovation is an ongoing challenge for the world of archives, but one that must be resolved as the currency of information becomes increasingly digital and archivists must interpret new types of data, such as web analytics, in the context of larger institutional objectives.

With the Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections project (http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/polaread/), the Finding Aids Next Generation (FANG) Research Group conducted a planned evaluation program of the site to determine "where some level of interactivity [on the website] increased the accessibility of archival materials" (Krause & Yakel, 2007, p. 287). The study took a mixed methods approach and looked at web analytics, online survey results, in-depth interviews, and a content analysis of the project website to evaluate overall user satisfaction and the success of web-based social navigation features. It is important to note that FANG wisely incorporated the evaluation process into their overall plan and had defined evaluation intentions and metrics for assessment before the website itself went live. Many digital projects do not take such measures during their initial stages, which may make achieving successful outreach efforts more challenging later in the project timeline.

If the purpose of a library or archival website is to generate more engaged users, Whang (2007) proposes one quantitative metric to use is to examine a "web conversion rate," a metric based on comparing the overall number of website visitors and the number of desired "actions" performed on the site. Whang suggests "a web conversion [can be thought of] as any measurable, successful outcome of a web visit," such actions might include things such as "submitting an email reference question, renewing library materials online, or even finding a phone number or email address" (p.98). It is fairly
simple to see how this type of metric could be translated to outreach platforms like Facebook where it is easy to compare the total number of users who saw a page or individual post, versus those who actually clicked on the post or engaged with it in some way. Grant (2012) encourages librarians to "avail ourselves of the already existing resources" for collecting aggregated data and considering the possibilities of analytics. Grant is a strong advocate of librarians incorporating products like Google Analytics into the evaluation of digital library services and communication. Google Analytics allows librarians and archivists to gather some similar information to that available on Facebook from user activity on library websites and library-run blogs. However, it may be difficult to measure and contrast the difference between total web traffic and user visits which constitute satisfactory or successful encounters with digital content.

Nonetheless, web analytics represent a valuable tool; Gonnsen (2012) affirms "web analytics is an easy way to understand what resources your users are accessing and how often they are visiting your site." Gonnsen (2012) lists three metrics identified by the Digital Analytics Association as useful concepts for starting evaluation and assessment programs. These three are: total unique visitors, number of website "sessions" (not necessarily from unique users), and individual page views. Another specific measure used by some librarians and archivists that can be provided by Google Analytics is to calculate the time a user spends on a page, assuming that a longer visit indicates a more in-depth engagement with digital content.

For some smaller projects, measures such as unique page views or web conversion rates may not prove helpful; in these cases, success of outreach efforts may best be determined through direct feedback from a small group of users who feel their
needs have been met. In a similar vein, Bailey (2012) affirms that "little visited online collections or webpages may support [an institution's] goals in ways not best ascertained through metrics analysis." Though web analytics seem to offer significant data for outreach evaluation, these results are only useful if they are considered within the context of guiding outreach objectives and the larger institutional mission. As such, archivists should be mindful that web analytics will need to be interpreted differently for different outreach projects and different archival collections.
III. A Case Study in Online Outreach Activities

The Content, Context, and Capacity (CCC) Project

To illustrate the potential of online outreach efforts to connect archivists with users, increase user awareness of a digital archives project, and demonstrate the relevance of archives to a diverse modern audience, this paper assesses the outreach and promotion activities of a recent grant-based project. The successes and shortcomings of the project’s efforts confirm the rich opportunities offered by Web 2.0 tools, the importance of establishing goals and expectations for online outreach activities during initial planning, and the challenges of evaluating a short term, loosely structured outreach program. The project examined offers significant limitations as a case study, including the small scale, limited duration, and spontaneous nature of its outreach efforts; issues similar to those discussed by Samouelian (2009). However, the analysis is still valuable if it allows others to benefit from the learning experiences encountered by the project’s outreach staff.

The Triangle Research Library Network (TRLN), a partnership of the university libraries of Duke University, North Carolina Central University (NCCU), North Carolina State University (NCSU), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), actively promotes inter-institution collaboration and supports the development of library resources through a variety of programs and initiatives. In 2011, the four TRLN libraries began a large-scale digitization project to scan approximately 400,000 items relating to the Long Civil Rights Movement from nearly forty archival collections. The digital content produced represents a wide range of 20th Century archival material,
including both manuscripts and sound recordings. This undertaking, titled “Content, Context, and Capacity: A collaborative large scale digitization project on the Long Civil Rights Movement in North Carolina,” is one of the most extensive collaborative projects carried out in the history of TRLN. The project embodies the organization’s dedication to ensuring the continued relevance of academic libraries and archives by pursuing a topic which currently receives a good deal of research interest and by seeking to expand the type of digital holdings desired by modern library and archives users. The project was made possible by funding from the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources. In the first two years of the project, digitization was conducted at the digitization facilities of Duke and UNC-CH, the latter of which was responsible for scanning documents from its own archives holdings as well as those of NCCU and NCSU. Representing topical material from four separate archival programs and coordinating objectives relating both to outreach efforts and other aspects of the project (for example, digitization workflows), has been an ongoing challenge.

The suggestion to initiate an online outreach program was met with enthusiasm by the members of the CCC project team, who saw it as an excellent opportunity to promote the project and expose members of the TRLN university communities, as well as the general public, to the fascinating, and currently fairly infrequently used, digital materials produced by the project. The original CCC grant did not include plans for an Outreach and Promotion Working Group, outreach-related staff positions, or any specific outreach activity. However, in light of the digital production team’s swift progress, in the grant’s
second year the Project Librarian proposed allotting a portion of student digitization hours to outreach. In August 2012, five student hours per week were assigned to outreach activities, in January 2013 this number was increased to ten hours as the outreach program expanded to include a larger blogging presence and the production of more promotional materials, including posters and a video. Student outreach efforts were guided by the newly formed Outreach and Promotion Working Group and the project’s steering committee, both made up of representatives from the four TRLN universities, and overseen by the Digital Production Manager and Project Librarian. While outreach efforts began with a high level of enthusiasm, activities were conducted on a somewhat exploratory basis, without a firm plan or agenda. This lack of in-depth outreach planning later complicated the evaluation of outreach efforts and made it difficult for the project team to determine the success of their attempts to generate awareness of the project.

Venturing onto Facebook

One of the CCC project’s objectives for engaging in outreach activities was “to increase the percentage of content reaching users” (Chapman, 2012a, p. 9). To further this goal, the project needed to find an outreach platform that would allow sharing images, enable hyperlinking to digital collections, and provide direct lines of communication with users. Several options were considered, including initiating a Facebook page, posting CCC-related news on Twitter, and sharing images from the collections through Wikimedia Commons or Flickr, following the example of the Library of Congress. Among these choices, Facebook seemed to be a promising platform: in addition to facilitating the sharing of images as well as micro-blog style posts, Facebook provided
access to a large, pre-existing audience, from which CCC hoped to be able to quickly recruit a group of interested followers. Furthermore, even before CCC staff began concentrated Facebook efforts, analytics showed that during an earlier period of the grant, "surprisingly, the largest source of referral traffic for both NCCU and UNC [online finding aids] was Facebook" (Chapman, 2012a, p. 6). The Project Librarian attributed this phenomenon to "unknown users independently sharing CCC finding aids on Facebook" (Chapman, 2012a, p. 6). This finding supported the project's decision to dedicate time and resources to creating an active Facebook presence in year two of the project, even though such action was not part of the original grant. Over the course of the months following the inception of the CCC Facebook page, perspectives on outreach efforts among the project team remained positive, and staff members continued to hope that present and future outreach activities would “help to increase visibility [of the project], and hopefully the use of the collections" (Menges, 2013a, p. 17). Facebook activity was an important part of the plan to expand the CCC project's online presence and attract a larger group of users of its digital content.

**Supplemental CCC Outreach Activities**

Before formal outreach efforts, overseen by the Outreach and Promotion Working Group, began in August 2012, the CCC team had seen evidence of the effects of even brief promotional activities. Some of these preliminary outreach efforts have been evaluated in the grant’s incremental usage reports. For example, between February and July 2012, it is possible to identify "4% of NCCU's total traffic [and 10% of their referring traffic, as coming] from the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* article
published in April [2012]" (Chapman, 2012a, p. 1). Traffic to CCC content during this time period also originated from outreach sources such as Duke's library blog. Additional outreach efforts included contributing entries to a second library blog project, this one focused around the topic of the Long Civil Rights Movement, as well as promoting the grant’s digital content to Research and Instruction librarians, faculty, and students at the four TRLN institutions through word of mouth, news releases (both online and in print), and events hosted as part of the annual Archives Week held by the Society of North Carolina Archivists (SNCA). In 2012, the theme of SNCA’s Archives Week, which fell between October 22 and 28, was “Journeys to Justice: Civil Rights in North Carolina,” which lent itself perfectly to a promotional venue for the CCC grant. Archives Week events included a CCC-related exhibit at NCSU’s Special Collections library and informal lecture and discussion forums held at two TRLN institutions (UNC-CH and NCCU), hosted by individuals affiliated with the CCC project to generate conversation about the project with fellow library and archives colleagues, students, and interested scholars and community members. These events were promoted across a variety of digital platforms, including email listervs, SNCA’s blog, Facebook, and shared library calendars.

In 2013, a video describing the scope of the project and highlighting content from the CCC collections was scripted by the project’s original Principal Investigator and produced by the CCC Digital Production Manager, Project Librarian, and a CCC graduate student. The video was posted online at YouTube.com on 12 June 2013, where after two weeks it had been viewed over 130 times, according to YouTube analytics. The video was also separately uploaded to Facebook, and as of this writing the corresponding
Facebook post had reached 2134 unique users, many of whom were exposed to the post through friends who liked or shared the video, or through friends who follow the CCC page regularly. While this number does not indicate that all 2134 users followed through to watch the video, it does show that Facebook provides a large and easily accessible audience. In the coming weeks, part of this audience may be prompted to view the CCC video through continued Facebook exposure.

**Understanding and Seeking Users of Digital Content**

In addition to promotional activities, the CCC grant has also focused on understanding new potential user groups for the project’s archival materials through surveys targeted at K-12 and undergraduate populations. In a beta survey in the fall of 2012, administered to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University undergraduates, students were found to be "extremely enthusiastic" about online digital collections (Menges, 2013b, p. 19). Occasional reservations identified by the students matched the findings from other digital archives studies; the absence of folder- and item-level description and problematic user interfaces were recognized as possible deterrents to digital collections usage. In fact, nearly every participant mentioned the problem of minimal metadata, and many "found it to be extremely challenging when attempting to locate a single document on a particular topic" (Menges, 2013b, p. 12). A second common complaint was the confusion felt when attempting to navigate complex digital interfaces.

However, students also mentioned many benefits of working with digital collections; for example, they appreciated the capability to "look at multiple collections
from different institutions simultaneously. Some participants found that "digital
collections are more approachable than traditional archives," and the study observed that
"students feel more confident using a digital archive," perhaps because of their pre-
existing familiarity with the digital environment. (Menges, 2013b, p. 10). In addition,
when engaging with digital content, students commented that “working with digital
collections offers ‘faster and easier’ navigation of the documents” and “already being on
a computer makes it easier to do supplemental research" (Menges, 2013b, p. 11, 10).

The CCC Evaluation Working Group was encouraged by undergraduates'
generally positive responses to their experience using digital collections. The usage report
commented that "far and away the most prevalent response to these digital collections
was an overwhelming appreciation of the convenience and ease of access and use they
present" (p. 10). The results of this beta survey suggest that though they may not be the
traditional scholarly audience associated with archives, "undergraduates present a
tremendous opportunity for reaching new users" (p. 12). This also suggested that
undergraduates were a user group that needed to be the target of outreach efforts.

Undergraduates were certainly not the only group the CCC project team hoped to reach
through Facebook, but social media applications are natural platforms for connecting
with students, many of who already use them for personal purposes.

**Evaluating Facebook Activity**

In the summer of 2012, the extent of the objectives outlined in the official CCC
Outreach and Promotion plan for the project’s newly created Facebook page was the
directive to generate consistent Facebook posts, ideally three to five posts per week; the
development of a promotional video was also mentioned. The plan did list users to be targeted through Facebook activities, but this list failed to provide much helpful direction due to its tremendously broad nature; the project’s intended audience included undergraduates, graduate students and research assistants, library staff, TRLN university faculty, individuals involved with the development of educational materials for secondary schools, North Carolina public libraries and historical societies, TRLN university alumni, and TRLN university publications departments. The plan also cited the hope of expanding outreach to reach a national audience in following years of the project. This planning document did reference the need to produce methodologies to track future outreach efforts, but the details of such methodologies were not elaborated on, and the outreach plan included no specific statements about how Facebook outreach activities would be evaluated. However, later CCC project reports sometimes referred to data collected through Facebook’s “Insights” tool.

Facebook offers built-in analytics to measure the number of active and passive interactions that Facebook users have with a Facebook page, as well as with individual posts. Active interactions include "likes," people who click the like button on a page or a post; a "talking about this" rating, which corresponds to the number of times users liked, commented on, or shared a post or a page; and "engaged users," people who clicked somewhere on an item posted to your page. Passive interaction measures include "reach," the number of users who were exposed to content relating to your page; "impressions," a count of how many times content from your page appears on Facebook (impressions can be increased when the same post is shared by multiple users); and "viral reach," users
exposed to your content through secondary sources (e.g. when a friend shares your page on their own timeline).

Facebook analytics data is quite detailed, offering statistics on aspects of usage including the number of users from particular cities, age group and gender demographics, and external websites referring traffic to your Facebook page. Facebook analytics even include data on "negative feedback" posts may have received, which primarily constitutes instances when users click to "hide" a particular post (or future posts from an organization or individual) on their personal timeline. These negative feedback statistics can be useful for alerting outreach personnel to content that may not appeal to Facebook users and should be avoided in the future. Of course this does not necessarily mean that such content is inherently bad, but perhaps it is simply better suited to a different outreach venue.

**Facebook Analytics**

As of this writing, Facebook analytics are available for the CCC page between 15 August 2012 and 28 June 2013. During this span of time, the CCC Facebook page featured just under 200 posts. The most common type of content was "highlights" from the CCC collections, selected by project staff (primarily student workers and the Digital Production Manager); these posts provided a brief summary of a highlighted document (or series of documents), an image of or relating to the item, and a link to a collection-, folder-, or item-level digital content page. Statistics for individual dates vary dramatically based on whether anything was posted on the CCC Facebook page on that day, whether any other organizational pages shared CCC related material, and the popularity of
different types of posts. Because of this variation, it is often helpful to look at usage statistics over time according to weekly and monthly averages.

An average of 5.6 users interacted with the page every week in ways that actively propagated its potential audience, increasing the page’s reach and boosting the grant’s “talking about this” score, such as liking a post, commenting on a picture, or sharing a post on their own timeline. While this average seems fairly low, the data show that this type of usage activity fluctuated dramatically. Spans of minimal interaction correspond to the winter holidays and a period of suspended outreach activity related to funding issues in mid- to late March 2013. In contrast, points of increased user promotion (and greater “talking about this” ratings) cluster around incidents such as two of the page's most widely viewed posts in the last week of August 2012, (when a high of 35 user interactions occurred in one week) and the release of the CCC promotional video in mid-June 2013 (which garnered 16 user interactions in one week). However, even though the overall numbers of users helping to promote the grant on Facebook seem low, one of Facebook's strengths is in the power of its "ripple effect." A few actions by a small group of people have the ability to reach a much larger audience. And the data shows that through these actions to intentionally share CCC material, a much wider audience was reached; for example, the number of people who saw CCC content appear on a friend's Facebook feed was an average of 212.5 users per week and 654.9 users per month. Other statistics also show corresponding trends in the numbers of active and passive users. The number of engaged users, those who directly interacted with CCC Facebook content by clicking somewhere on a CCC post, averaged 14.8 users per week and 42 users per month, while individual CCC posts received an average of 26.8 views per day, 114.3
views per week, and 200.6 views per month. The data on engaged users follows the same patterns as the “talking about this” ratings. In Figure 1, peaks correspond to initial excitement surrounding the page’s creation, popular posts, and the release of the CCC video. Low points between November 2012 and January 2013 can be attributed to decreased posting over the holiday season and academic winter recess, while the period of low engagement beginning in March 2013 corresponds directly to a funding crisis which temporarily suspended all Facebook activity. Many of these same trends are mirrored in the data relating to passive users (Figure 2). The number of engaged users noticeably affects the “reach” of the page (the number of total users exposed to CCC content).

![Engaged Facebook Users](image)

**Figure 1.** Weekly number of engaged users on the CCC project's Facebook page.
Between August 2012 and June 2013, some portion of CCC Facebook page content was seen by an average of 50.2 users per day, 254.8 users per week, and 708.6 users per month. These users encountered CCC content by viewing it directly on the CCC Facebook page or on their own or a friend's timeline. These users did not necessarily engage with content by reading posts fully and may have only been exposed to content through cursory scrolling across a Facebook news feed of recent events and postings. However, it is still useful to keep these numbers in mind as a "potential audience" which may be drawn in by particularly engaging posts that appeal to their interests. Facebook data prompts some interesting questions for those involved in outreach, such as:

- Can non-users also benefit from digital collections?
- How does archival information impact those just beyond the circle of current archives users?
- How should archivists interpret what these numbers reveal about the effectiveness of outreach efforts and the usability of digital content itself?
At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the wisdom of Ham et al. (1993) who advised that archives must be mindful of their timeless purpose and responsibilities and not be solely guided by the wants, needs, and interests of contemporary users.

Between August 2012 and June 2013, the page's total influence, measured by a count of unique Facebook users who are friends with people that follow the CCC page, increased by more than 223% from 15,676 to 35,006. According to the October 2012 report on CCC's Facebook activity, the CCC Facebook page saw a significant increase in likes immediately after the Facebook page of the Carolina Digital Library and Archives liked CCC's page, which demonstrates the importance of inter-organization collaboration on outreach endeavors. Libraries and archives can benefit from "sharing" the Facebook and blogging activity of partner projects, which has the potential to expand the audiences of all groups involved. The initial CCC Facebook report noted that while it may be challenging at first to build an engaged audience around a Facebook page, because of the built-in features of Facebook, "once a few [people] are reached, it will go a long way towards reaching more" (Chapman, 2012b).

**Facebook Outreach Results and Discussion**

To assess the meaning of these data, we need to return to the question: what is success? Because CCC did not set more specific goals for the outcome of its Facebook page, such as a desired number of likes, amount or type of feedback from users, or specific goals for increased traffic to digital content, it is difficult to make judgments about the success of these results. That said, hopefully valuable findings can still be extracted from the large quantity of Facebook analytics data available and this analysis
may be helpful in both furthering the project team’s understanding of the success of their outreach efforts and helping archivists and librarians plan future outreach activities involving Facebook and other online tools and applications.

After two months of Facebook outreach, the grant’s Facebook promotional activity had "credited ten times as much traffic to our digital content than Facebook did prior to these efforts" (Chapman, 2012b). Prior traffic would have been generated by general institutional Facebook pages or individual librarians' Facebook activity. Furthermore, after the creation of the CCC Facebook page, the average time visitors referred by Facebook spent viewing digital content hosted by Duke University increased from twenty-one seconds to two minutes and eleven seconds. This increase could suggest that the CCC Facebook posts provided users with useful contextual information or some other incentive that motivated them to spend more time with the digital content.

In the first months of the page, some of the most highly viewed posts included a link to a graph from the Samuel Huntington Hobbs Papers charting the increase of electrification of Southern rural homes in the 1920s and 1930s, a post providing information about CCC's live digitization progress charted through HighCharts, and a post about a letter opposing the Civil Rights Act of 1956 from the Basil Lee Whitener Papers (and a related blog post on the same document). The variety of these top posts suggests that Facebook can be a successful tool for disseminating a range of outreach material, and that Facebook users can be interested in different kinds of promotional content related to digital archives. However, it is hard to specify exactly why some posts appeared to be quite successful while others did not find a wide viewership.
During the six month period approximately following the start of the CCC Facebook page (August 2012 to January 2013), the Project Librarian reported that in addition to observing that users were spending longer amounts of time viewing digital content, overall "CCC collections experienced significant growth in the number of people visiting the online content" (Menges, 2013a, p. 1). It is important to note that of the users accessing CCC's digital collections during this time, there was "an increase in the number of new visitors" as well, which may be partially attributed to the creation and subsequent growth of the project’s Facebook page (Menges, 2013a, p. 1). Facebook also may have affected the diversity of the users during this time; visitors accessing the collections from countries other than the United States increased from 7% to 16% while visitors from outside the Triangle area increased substantially from 27% to 53%. Facebook was not the only factor involved in these changes; non-Facebook promotional activities, a greater quantity of online finding aids and general online content available, and other sources likely generated more user interest and traffic, but the project's Facebook efforts were believed to be a substantial contribution to these results.

In the time since CCC project-related Facebook activity has been underway, in addition to analyzing Facebook analytics, the project team has estimated changes in online usage by looking at unique page views, time spent by users on folder- and item-level pages of digital content, by considering the point of origin of archival website traffic, and by receiving direct feedback from users reached through the project’s various promotional activities. Data on unique page views, both on the folder- and item-level, also provide evidence of a growing online audience; in the six months after Facebook outreach efforts began, unique page views for individual digital items hosted by three of
the TRLN schools "more than doubled" (this data could not be extracted for one participating institution) (Menges, 2013a, p. 8).

On the CCC project, "referral traffic data confirms the importance of outreach and promotional efforts" (Chapman, 2012a, p. 1). Information on the sources of online traffic to digital content provided by Google Analytics showed that the official TRLN CCC website and the websites of the four university libraries overwhelmingly provided this traffic, an average of 67.5% of all referral traffic. Comparably, Facebook's referral traffic to digital content seems low with an average of just 3%. However, Facebook's considerable effects can be seen elsewhere. The main CCC website (hosted by trln.org) also "saw a significant increase in [incoming] traffic between August 2012 and January 2013" (Menges, 2013a, p. 13). Referral traffic (the result of users reaching the page via a link from another website, as opposed to a search like Google or directly typing a URL into an Internet browser) was the largest source of traffic to the website, and of the sources of this referral traffic, Facebook was second only to the main TRLN website. In a 2013 usage report, the CCC Project Librarian noted that "traffic coming from Facebook has skyrocketed," increasing 989% from the previous period (before the CCC project Facebook page began) (Menges, 2013a, p. 14-15). Project members speculate that Facebook efforts have indirectly supported the growth of CCC digital content usage by causing a surge of new users to visit the CCC website, from which users go on to visit the project's online finding aids and digital content pages. This theory could be validated by further outreach assessment and surveys querying users about their path to CCC digital content.
As seen in these results, Google Analytics can be helpful for learning about patterns and habits of user traffic to digital content. In another example from the CCC project's data, it was found that "users typically navigate from Facebook to [the] CCC [website], and not vice versa" (Menges, 2013a, p. 17). Analyzing patterns like this can help archivists and librarians plan future online outreach efforts to best fit the web navigation habits of their users. Google Analytics and Facebook Insights give us a multitude of numbers to study, but with so much information available, we must evaluate which statistics have value for our particular outreach goals and objectives. Are we most interested in how many people "like" our Facebook page? Or the total number of unique users exposed to our content? Or is the most important measurement the users who are amplifying overall promotional efforts by actively sharing project content with others?

**Online Outreach Strategies and Observations**

Through Facebook, image- and video-sharing, blogging, and other creative uses for Web 2.0 tools and applications, libraries and archives can discover the potential of online outreach efforts. Online outreach seems well suited for reaching modern users of archives and expanding the audiences making use of ever-growing library and archives collections of digital content. However, it is easy for librarians and archivists, even those who are highly enthusiastic about initiating online outreach programs, to underestimate the task of successfully employing these tools to promote their institution or project. Outreach planning should be an involved and thoughtful process, in the course of which institutional or grant mission statements are closely analyzed to ensure that any outreach activities are aligned with and ultimately for the purpose of furthering larger objectives.
For a grant based project, such as CCC, it would be highly useful for outreach intentions to be formally written into the original grant document. If this does not occur, a detailed supplemental outreach plan will greatly further the ultimate success of any outreach and promotional endeavors. Key components of this sort of outreach plan would include expectations for both individual outreach actions and more general outreach outcomes, methods for future evaluation and assessment, markers by which to judge the success of outreach efforts, and a firm understanding of the audience to be targeted by these activities. When these components are not realized, it becomes increasingly challenging to accurately determine the effects of outreach. For example, the intended audience of the CCC Facebook page was initially identified as a very broad group of users, and it can be difficult to construct approaches to actively seek such a diverse population. If this target were narrowed somewhat through an increased concentration on users "involved in the field of education and scholarship," focused strategies for these users could include making new connections with educators through librarian colleagues who had already shown interest in the CCC Facebook page and through connections via the Facebook pages of educational organizations such as Learn NC and the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, and ultimately prove more successful (Chapman, 2012b).

Planning and documentation will also support the continuation of outreach efforts over time. Though the number of users "checking in" to individual Facebook posts waxed and waned, none of the 100+ users to “like” the CCC Facebook page had "unliked" the page as of this writing, which suggests Facebook outreach efforts were successful at generating an audience committed to and continually interested in digital archives.
content. However, when outreach energies are inconsistent it is easy to lose the interest of users which can quickly impede the overall effectiveness of such efforts. There are multiple limitations to the evaluation of CCC Facebook outreach efforts, many of which stem from the unplanned nature of the page and the relatively short time in which it has been active. If the project had possessed firmer objectives for end results, Facebook content, and the type of users to be reached, it would be easier to determine the overall effectiveness of these efforts.

For the full potential of online outreach to be realized, it needs to be approached seriously and considered a regular duty of libraries and archivists, not just a supplemental task for staff to squeeze into already full schedules. In Dietz's 2005 study exploring archival outreach efforts related to education programs for undergraduate users of academic archives, he observed that of the twenty-three institutions surveyed, "in most cases, respondents report[ed] that there is no staff member in their department whose main or sole responsibility is public outreach" (p. 23). In these organizations "non-regularized educational outreach… [is] the reality for most" (Dietz, 2005, p. 44). The CCC project is certainly not unique in its lack of specific outreach direction and funding or time allotment. Unfortunately, CCC's overall funding was cut short in early 2013 and regular Facebook activity ended in mid-June 2013. Previous posts will remain online at least until the end of the grant and may attract continued notice, but as of the writing of this, no additional Facebook outreach is planned.

Only through online outreach efforts that have been developed by careful planning, thoughtful intentions consistent with larger institutional goals and mission, well-defined expectations for the results and success of the efforts, and dedicated staff
time and resources, will we be able to fully understand the value of outreach in a digital world. As online outreach activities are designed and executed in ways that facilitate and even encourage more formal and methodical evaluation of these efforts, we will be able to better answer questions such as, what makes outreach successful? And how does outreach translate into maintaining, or even increasing, the relevance of archives to modern scholarship and society?
Conclusion

The Content, Context, and Capacity project saw promise in Web 2.0 technologies to facilitate a new kind of archives outreach. Despite the absence of outreach activities from the original CCC grant’s intentions, the CCC team strove to find time and resources to dedicate to online outreach efforts. Through a Facebook page created in August 2012, the CCC team was able to reach out to a large and diverse audience as they attempted to increase awareness of the project and use of the materials being digitized. Facebook analytics show that posts featured on the CCC page received mixed levels of attention from Facebook users. Facebook Insights data together with an analysis of web analytics for digital content webpages, suggests that Facebook outreach did indeed affect the number of users and the depth of their engagement with the material they sought out. However, the CCC project’s largely unplanned outreach program is difficult to evaluate because project staff did not always explicitly set goals or objectives for outreach efforts. Similarly, CCC could have done a better job of defining expectations for outreach activities and spending time on the development of evaluation methodologies suitable for online environments.

In the digital era, archivists are redefining what it means for archives collections to remain relevant to society. Crafting online outreach activities that purposefully fulfill institutional objectives, reach users in new and creative ways, and enhance access to digital archives content, has the potential to expand the relevance of archives not only within the domain of academic scholarship, but across a broad spectrum of diverse users.
In the course of participating in online outreach efforts, archivists should strive to establish a “digital dialogue” with users rather than simply “broadcasting” information about their services and holdings (Henjyoji, 2012, p. 9). The challenges of new forms of outreach involving Archives 2.0 applications are not small, but can be overcome through thoughtful planning, the dedication of time to developing keen assessment techniques, and continued willingness to explore new ideas of what archives outreach can and should be.
Bibliography


