

To: Lucy Barber, NHPRC
From: Greg Colati, Digital Initiatives Coordinator
Penrose Library, University of Denver
CC: Lynn Backstrom-Funk, Project Administrator
Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of Denver
Re: Grant #NAR10-DS-50014-10
Open Source Software for Records Management Administration
Subject: Interim Report #1, July 31, 2010
Date: 7/30/2010

The University of Denver team has begun work on the NHPRC Strategies and Tools grant “Open Source Software for Records Management Administration.” The purpose of this grant is to build an open-source software system for inventorying records in an organization and disseminating records retention schedules online.

Staffing

Grant work began in mid-February 2010 with the hiring of the grant programmer, Evan Blount (resume attached). Since Evan was an internal hire from Penrose Library, he was already familiar with Library procedures and our programming environment. He also had some exposure to the prototype application. Programming work on the software began March 1, 2010.

Rachel Desormes, one of the records management assistants and a software tester for the grant, left the University in June 2010. Her duties were taken over by Robin Dean, the other records management assistant.

The University is actively recruiting for a new University Records Manager. We hope that this position will be filled by Fall 2010. To insure continuity of the project, the new Records Manager will be a project participant but not the PI on the project.

Branding

The software team decided to rebrand the software. The name has been changed from “Liaison” to “Records Authority.” An MLIS student from the University of Denver designed a logo for the software, which can be seen here: <http://library.du.edu/raspfile/?p=22>

Project Management

The grant team is using two complementary open-source software systems for project management. The first, dotProject, is an overall project management tool. The other, Mantis, is a

software error reporting and tracking software. Both of these are web-based tools that can be opened to our partners later in the grant project and are standard types of management tools used in software development.

Software Development

Software development continues on a revised schedule. Since we did not hire the programmer until March, all timelines were shifted two months. We do not expect this to materially affect the outcome of the project.

As per the plan of work, we did a comprehensive review of the application and its features, and based on that review and our experience using the application at DU, made a number of significant changes to both the back-end data management architecture and front-end management and user interfaces. We decided that it, in order to understand potential use and user behavior, it would be best to engage the project partners at a much earlier point in the development process than originally planned. To that end we have deployed a working demonstration website that will be available for project partners to test and comment on. We will begin working with the project partners in September 2010 and involve them in the development process through the point where we install the application at their institutions.

Software Progress

The focus of the first six months of the grant project was to improve the basic functionality of the software. In addition to the goals listed in the original grant proposal, two of the data collection forms (for records inventory and retention schedules) required substantial revisions before other work could begin. The form revisions are now complete.

The plan of work remains sound. If all deadlines in the plan are shifted two months later to accommodate for the late start, the project will be back on track with deadlines.

Goal 1: Improvements for Public Users

Task 1.1: Export and print retention schedules

Due to the revisions and improvements made to the retention schedule form, this feature has not yet been added to the search.

Task 1.2: Implement Solr for full-text search of all fields and faceted retention schedule results

Full-text search is now working for all text fields in the public retention schedule search. Later improvements to the search will include ways to narrow search results to permanent or vital records. These improvements should be functional by September 2010.

Goal 2: Improvements to the Admin Dashboard

Task 2.1: Method of auditing changes in retention schedule database

Work has begun on auditing features. A date stamp function was added in order to capture and display the date a record was first created and last updated. This will be tied to user accounts when those are added, which will give the software the ability to record who has made changes and when. Our initial plan did not account for how closely the audit functions would be tied to user management. Because user management and authentication are part of the Stage Two work, audit functions will not be complete until December 2010.

Decisions made about deleting records will also contribute to the auditability of the system. We decided not to purge the data in deleted records. Instead, the deleted records will remain in the database but will be suppressed in most displays. A search for deleted records and an “undelete” function are currently being built.

Task 2.2: Expanded search using Solr for inventory and retention schedule information

Progress is underway on a more robust full-text search for data in the admin side. After a careful review of Solr’s requirements and capabilities, we decided that it was most efficient to implement Solr only for the public search. A more lightweight MySQL search is planned for the admin side that will provide all the necessary full-text search capability for administrative records. The use of MySQL search on the admin side will also decrease the complexity of the application.

Task 2.3: Improvements to form behavior (deletion and validation)

See Task 2.1 for a discussion of how we decided to handle record deletion.

“Validation” relates to the behavior of fields in the form. All fields now handle data correctly.

As we examined the improvements to form behavior, we realized that some of our forms needed simplification and data redesign to better fit the realities of interviewing in the

field, and to capture the data that was truly important to the work of the records management program. A few minor changes were made to the retention schedule form. The inventory form was given a major overhaul to make it much easier to use and eventually customize. Although this work was not in the original grant plan, it will make later efforts to generalize the software much easier.

Partners & Sharing

Goal 3: Launch Website

A website and a blog for the project were launched in the early part of 2010.

Website: <http://library.du.edu/site/about/urmp/recordsAuthority.php>

Blog: <http://library.du.edu/rasppfile/>

In addition, a listserv was set up to help communicate with partners.

Demo Server

We have decided to set up a demo server for our partners earlier than stated in the original grant plan. This will help us make sure that any improvements to the software are made with an eye towards adapting the software for use at other institutions. We intend to open the demo server to partners by September 2010.