Organizational Profile

In 2002, the Portal to Texas History began with a mission to provide three services: to provide a digital gateway to the rich collections held in Texas libraries, museums, archives, historical societies, and private collections; to build tools to enable collaborative institutions to share their collections online; and to create learning materials and resources for students and educators. The online materials are freely available to the public, and encompass books, photographs, artifacts, posters, artwork, maps, newspapers, letters, manuscripts, and other historic materials from over forty-five collaborative partners. In 2007, current content includes over 20,000 digital objects representing over 145,000 pages of materials. Every month, over 60,000 unique visitors conduct research at the Portal to Texas History. Visitors come from all fifty states and over a hundred different countries with this distribution of usage: International users, 21%; Texas residents 29%; users from other U.S. States, 50%. In the next two years, the Portal team plans to digitize over a thousand pre-1924 book titles focusing on Texas history, the Civil War, and Native Americans which will add significantly to the collections. Other ongoing grant initiatives continue to increase access to important new materials.

The Portal Services for Educators section of the Portal provides a variety of materials for teachers to use, including Primary Source Adventures, Texas History Trading Cards, links to other Texas history sources, and a guide to Portal Resources for teachers of American history. A recent addition to these resources is the My Texas History Notebook initiative. In July of 2006, the Portal received funding from Humanities Texas to launch a test-pilot program for the My Texas History Notebook. Twenty lesson plans will be developed and placed online by Summer 2007, and a few of the lesson plans are available online now.

The Portal to Texas History program receives grant funding from a variety of sources, but the UNT Libraries provide the majority of support for the program. The UNT Libraries see the development of digital collections as a core function of its services and outreach. In 2003, the Libraries created the Digital Projects Unit (DPU) to support this program, as well as other digital initiatives in the Libraries. The DPU staff includes eight full-time staff members, along with 5 to 10 part-time graduate and undergraduate student employees. Grant funding for a variety of projects provides additional project-specific staff and student positions.

Distinguished for its exemplary leadership in creating the CyberCemetery, and other government-related digital collections, UNT exists as one of only nine Affiliated Archives of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The UNT Libraries also participate in the Texas Digital Library, a digital infrastructure and institutional repository to support the scholarly activities of Texas universities. The UNT Libraries serve as a key partner in the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative providing integral services, hosting of materials, and software development. In 2003, the Libraries created the DPU to support these programs, as well as other digital initiatives within the Libraries, including the Portal to Texas History.
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