

Internet Technician Report VII

On The Stevens County Crossroads on the Columbia Digital Archive

For September 2011

By Joseph Barreca

This is the 7th report in this series and the 11th month of archiving activity. A great deal has gone on since May and we are making progress in several areas.

One of those is the **inventory and prioritization of material** from the various museums and organizations. The following chart shows the status of the primary organizations in the original grant.

Agency or Organization	Inventoried	Prioritized	Agreement	Digitizing
City of Chewelah and Chewelah Historical Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City of Colville	No	No	No	No
City of Kettle Falls (Library)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City of Marcus	Yes	No	No	No
Clayton Historical Society	No	No	No	No
Geronimo's Restaurant	No	No	No	No
Hunters Museum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kettle Falls Historical Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Little Pend Oreille Wildlife Refuge	Yes	Yes	No	No
Loon Lake Historical Society	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Northport Historical Society	Yes	No	No	No
Spokane Tribe	No	No	No	No
Stevens County Historical Society	Yes	Yes	No	No
Stevens County Library	Yes	Yes	No	No
Stevens County Planning	No	No	No	No
Tiger Historical Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
US Forest Service	Yes	Yes	No	No
US Park Service	No	No	No	No
Private Collections	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial
Northeast Wash. Genealogical Society	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial
Valley Store	Yes	Yes	No	No

(From last month) *“The crux of the problem here is that the Stevens County Historical Society has vast holdings which could easily take up all the remaining funds. In order to be fair to the smaller participants, we need to complete inventories of the remaining collections and allocate portions of the projected archive to each.”* Now almost all of the museums have been inventoried and prioritized. We want to move on digitizing at the smaller museums before winter inhibits travel.

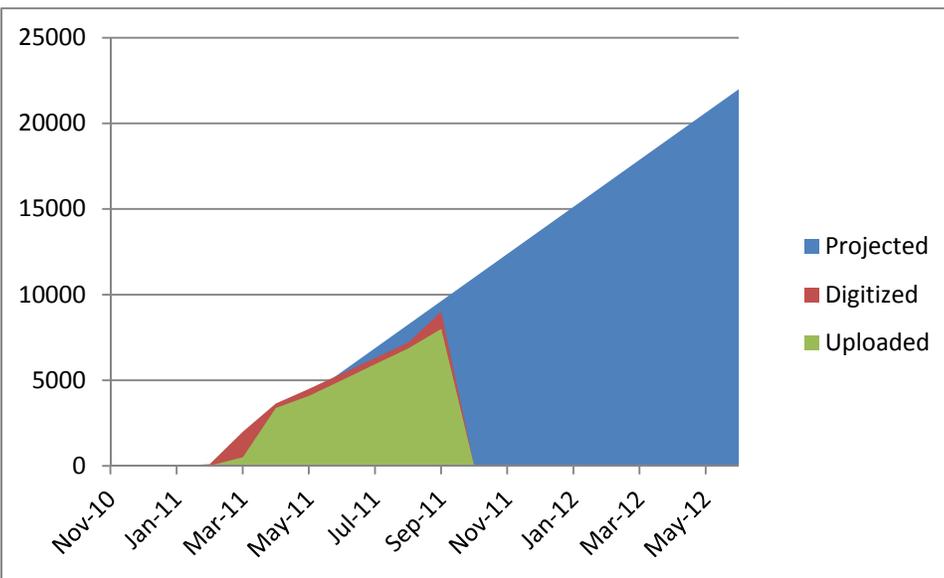
The biggest event in the last few months has been the initiation of a **Process Improvement** review of communications and responsibilities within in the project staff. A professional project manager, Gael Treesiwin, who works for the Stevens County Washington State University Extension Office contributed volunteer time to lead the effort. The result is a much clearer understanding of each other's roles and documents defining the tasks in front of us with lead, support and consulting positions for each task. With these documents as a road map to further action, the project can be reviewed by representatives of the County without further in-depth involvement in the process itself. We think that this combination of communication, role definition and oversight will get the project back on a course toward achieving the goals of volunteer participation, more extensive interpretation and wider support for the local museums and historical organizations.

Bearing down **volunteer recruitment** we set up several goals in the areas of publicity, organization and recognition for volunteer activities. We intend to have a presentation to a new group every week. The

coordinator will set up meetings and all of the staff members will provide presentations, usually tailored to the interests of the group whose meeting we attend. We have a goal of one article in a local paper or magazine every month. These can piggy-back on research done for the meeting presentations. We will have our postcards, displays and other materials available for those meetings and utilize computer projectors for presentations.

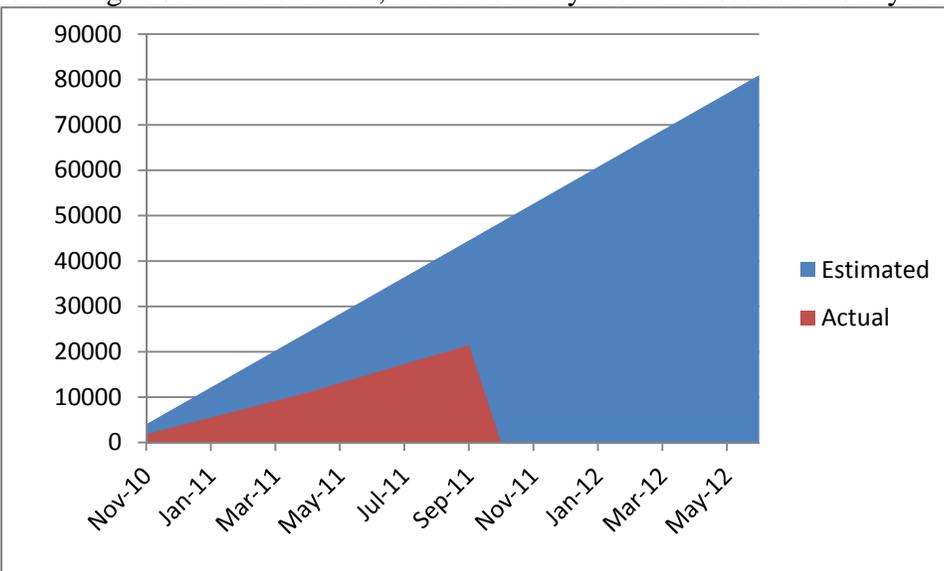
For organization, we are creating a **database of current and past volunteers**, with fields for contact, status, museum affiliation, amounts contributed etc. This will allow us to tailor specific volunteer tasks to the skills, timelines and associations of our volunteers. We will begin that database with the donation sheets we already have and augment it with more individual contact and new forms for recruiting volunteers.

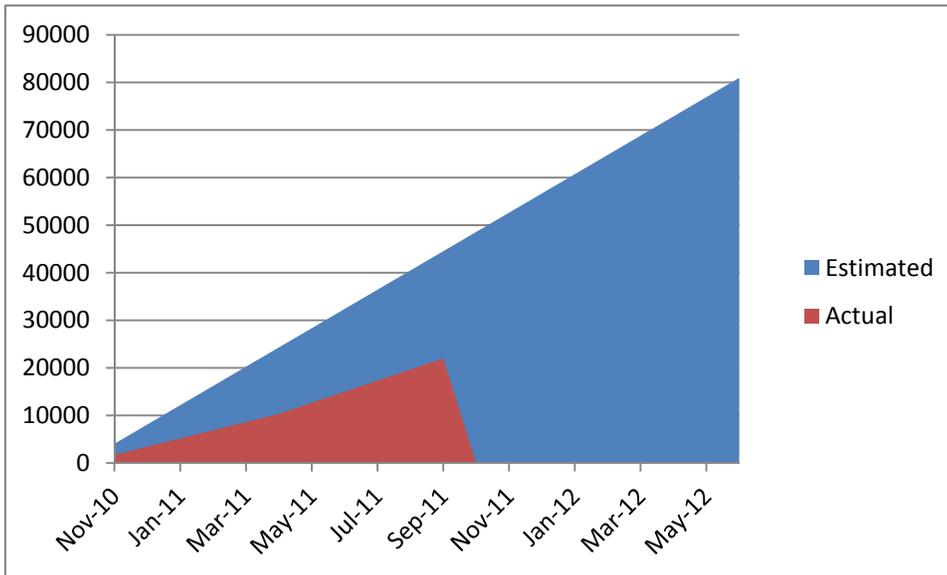
The database will also help us better **recognize the service of our volunteers**. We can include that information in publicity about the project. We also want to form a more coherent team of History Detectives by holding at least one and probably more volunteer recognition events to include presentations about the project, rewards for the volunteers and a locally grown and cooked meal. We expect to hold the first of these events after the first of the year when the holiday season has past.



As part of the project tracking process, we will continue to look at 3 major metrics for our progress. The first of these is the **number of images** that have been scanned and are uploaded to the archive. In the accompanying chart, progress on digitizing is a bit behind with an abbreviated timeline starting in February 2011 and ending in May of 2012. We hope to extend this timeline and meet or exceed the 22,000 documents expected.

In the category of **Volunteer Hours**, we are still only halfway to the goal. There is a lot of room for improvement here. There is also a lot of room for new and creative uses of volunteer time. Since the scanning is so much on track, there are many creative uses for History Detective investigations. Attached to this report is a document on potential History Detective Projects that include scanning, data input, name extraction, interpretation, oral history, home visits and building exhibits from personal and archive material.





The **Funds Expended** picture is almost exactly like the Volunteer Donations picture. The difference is that only one museum has received its curator fee so far. But two more are nearly complete and ready for reimbursement. The Kettle Falls Library is a government agency and cannot receive funds. Nevertheless, the funds really are not available until the donations are in place. So even though we are not behind on payments, we are not ready for

the next two big ones, Chewelah and the Kettle Falls Historical Center to get their curator fees yet.

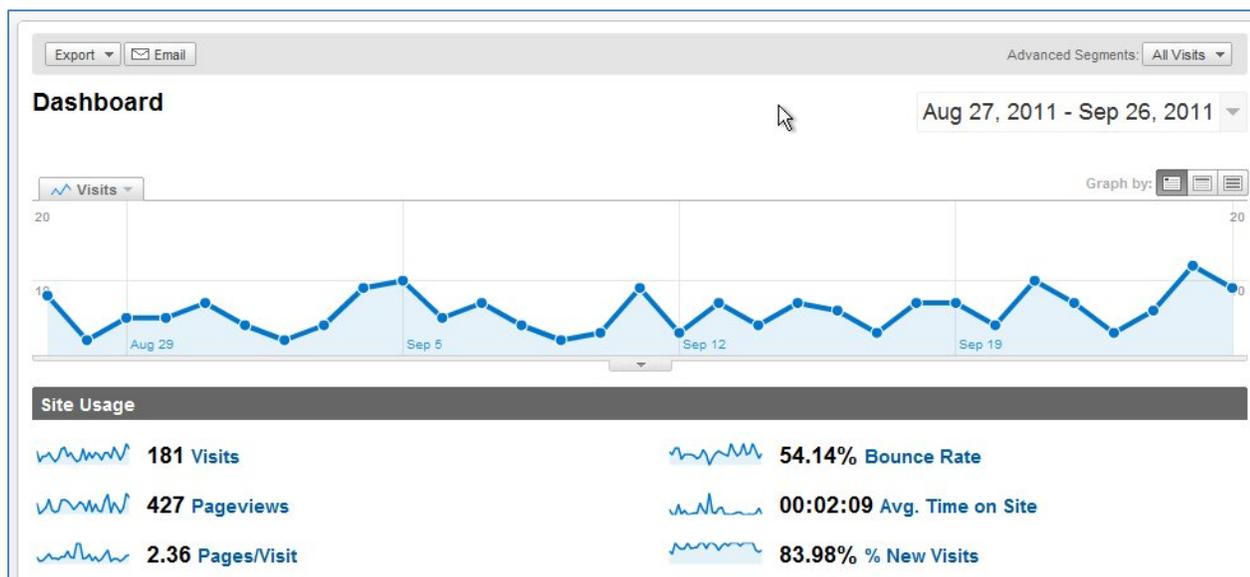
Along with these big-picture items, we have several other significant improvements to report. With a pair of 3 terabyte external hard drives for storage (3TB), we have instituted a system to keep the full archival copies of our work in **redundant backup storage**. The Internet Technicians exchange the 3TB drives monthly and copy material from our smaller 60 gigabyte drives onto each drive. This material has the metadata already embedded in each image. Our Photo Mechanic software can both embed the information and extract it again. If necessary we could rebuild the Omeka archive from these. Also because we have been using Washington State Digital Archive (WSDA) standards to scan and record metadata, we are ready to upload the material to the WSDA if and when that opportunity becomes available. One option we have discussed is that even if the WSDA does not want to incorporate our material into their online system, we could store one of the drives at their facility.

Another innovation is the use of the free **Museum Archive** (Musarch) software <http://www.musarch.com> to deliver both an in-house inventory of holdings to the Kettle Falls Historical Center and a catalog of images to the Crossroads Archive. The software can store images up to several megabytes and can export a list of holdings in formats that we can use for metadata.

Now that our websites have a significant amount of material, we have begun tracking the website usage using Google Analytics. It is a more conservative usage reporting system than some and is free.



This chart shows regular, traffic with quite a few pages visited per online session. There are a lot of new visits so the usage is growing.



The CrossroadsArchive.org site shows a similar number of visitors, with more new traffic but fewer pageviews and less time on the site. There is a lot of room for improvement in traffic on both sites. Having the analytic software in place gives us a baseline for tracking project success.

There are two standard static **HTML maps on the CrossRoadsArchive.org site**, the Old Towns Map, <http://crossroadsarchive.org/Maps/Oldtowns.htm>, and <http://crossroadsarchive.org/maps/schools>, the Schools Map. Both have connections to over 100 points in the county. The Old Towns Map has descriptions of almost all the 126 old towns from the 1911 Polk Directory of Northeast Washington, plus links to web pages about the towns and tour maps of Stevens County. Because of the density of information and the way they are generated automatically from a Geographic Information System, both maps suffer from data overlap and a lack of clarity. The better solution would be to build interactive maps in Google Map. This will require getting a site-specific key from Google. If Google maps generate more than 400 hits in a day, there is a charge. I doubt that will be a problem. The coding is much harder for the Google Maps but because you can pan and zoom and change the background about roads, aerial photography and contour maps, they make a much more useful map for people who want to visit local sites, one of the long-term goals of the project. There are also interfaces for Google Maps on the Omeka site. Both of these sites could benefit from this technology and it is worth pursuing.

We have also generated a number of **indexes** or links to indexes that are on the .org site. The Polk Directories, Census Data and Military records as well as school information is now available. The biggest indexing project is a complete name index to material on the archive site that will probably reside on the interpretive (.org) site. We have begun experimentation in implementing a complete name index in Wordpress. There does not seem to be a plugin specifically for what we need, but some come close. This would be a huge asset if we can get it working. We are already devoting a great deal of History Detective time and Internet Technician Time to building the database that the index will be based on.

This has been a long summer. In terms of volunteer time, the harvest and holiday seasons will also not afford much energy for this kind of project. Winter seems like the best bet. If we can ramp up publicity and interest, a lot could be accomplished in the first quarter of 2012. It would be a big help if the deadline for work on this project could be extended to compensate for the lapse of 8 months between the official start of the project in April of 2010 and the first hires in November of 2010.