Cyberorganizing Everyday Heritage in and around Public Libraries: An Exploratory Study in Illinois

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Abstract:

Trends from both within and without public librarianship create new opportunities for libraries to serve the public's interest in heritage information. Based on a workshop series in Illinois, this article presents exploratory findings on existing public library heritage services and how cyberorganizing can enhance these services. Public libraries offer heterogeneous heritage services in local contexts composed of multiple actors and institutions. Improving this service area involves organizing within libraries, across local institutions, and among individuals with diverse interests. Part of this organizational work involves digital technologies, but people are the core element in organizing everyday heritage services.

Article:

American public libraries occupy an increasingly important role in the local and national systems of information provision that meet the public's everyday heritage information needs (e.g., popular interest in local, family, and personal history/archiving). Some highly visible signs of this trend include:

1. RUSA RSS Library Service to an Aging Population Committee's list of "25 Ideas to Serve Active Older Adults and the Baby Boomers," which includes "Start an Oral History Project on Community Life," "Develop Inter-generational Genealogy Projects," and "Encourage the Local Historical Society to Partner with the Library on Programming" (Kleiman 2007)
2. The "Community Digital Archiving" page on Facebook, which focuses on "local libraries collecting, preserving and making available digital information about the people and places they serve" (Community Digital Archiving 2013)
3. The formation in 2010 of the Public Library Archives/Special Collections Forum within the Society of American Archivists (PLASC 2013)
4. The emergence of the Digital Public Library of America, which frames public libraries as key local partners (Fenlon and Varvel 2013) 5. The Library of Congress's Personal

Archiving initiative, which seeks to partner with American public libraries to expand literacy in this area (Library of Congress 2013)

Through these initiatives, libraries, librarians, and communities create new ways of serving the public's diverse and constantly evolving information needs. However, little research has explicitly analyzed how public librarians both help shape and adapt to this changing landscape. This study begins to fill this gap by addressing two research questions:

● RQ1: How are public libraries addressing popular interest in everyday heritage?
● RQ2: How can cyberorganizing enhance everyday heritage services?

The first research question highlights actualities: What is actually happening in public libraries? The second question highlights potentialities: Based on what is actually happening, what could happen if cyberorganizing was included as part of service development? Together these two questions offer a rudimentary start for focusing thought around everyday heritage services in public libraries.

This study finds that public librarians innovate and experiment with old and new information technologies to help individuals, families, and communities feel connected to the past; that is, to have a richer heritage. These services include everything from subscribing to Ancestry.com Library Edition to using library resources to create and distribute a documentary about local history. Public libraries do not work alone in this area—they rely on local networks composed of many actors and institutions. Cyberorganizing can enhance existing services by using newer communication technologies to help organize both people and infrastructure to meet diverse community members' interests in the past. This work focuses on community first and technology second.

Literature review

In this section the key topics of this study—heritage, everyday, and cyberorganizing—are discussed in relation to public librarianship. The term heritage has morphed beyond its dictionary definition of stuff passed down across generations (i.e., patrimony) to come to refer to popular, nonacademic social practices that are in some way oriented around the past (Giaccardi 2012). The topic of heritage has recently received a great deal of attention in the library and information science (LIS) literature. In a review of these findings, Marija Dalbello and Iulian Vamanu (2010) find that heritage refers both to "a type of knowledge" and to a type of "information (objects)." Heritage information refers to information used by people to produce connections to and knowledge of the past. Heritage refers not to historical scholarship but, rather, to intimate stories about self, family, groups, and places to which one is strongly attached (Rosenzweig and Thelen 2000). Put bluntly, heritage is not history, at least not academic history (Lowenthal 1998).

Since the beginning of the public library profession, librarians have innovated with information technology to meet individual, family, and community heritage needs (Wolf 1975; Lenstra 2010). For example, the very first issue of Library Journal featured a librarian from Lowell, Massachusetts, "noting a marked interest ... at the present time [at the nation's centennial] in genealogical works, town histories, etc." (Cutter 1876, 293). Five years later Melvil Dewey (1880) proposed a scientific way to manage local history information clipped from periodicals. As digital technologies entered American public libraries, this tradition of

excellence and innovation in heritage services continued. A report by the Council on Library Resources (1996) found public libraries around the country using new technologies to document, share, and celebrate local histories. For example, the Jefferson-Madison Regional Branch in Charlottesville, Virginia, launched an oral history project in which economically disadvantaged local youth interviewed seniors in their neighborhood. The youth then posted the interviews, with accompanying photographs, to a local digital community network maintained by the library. In a national study, Joan Durrance and Karen Pettigrew (2002) found that "local and family history departments" were the fourth most common provider of community information services in American public libraries. Furthermore, scholarship on library as place (Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw 2009) illustrates how public library buildings come to constitute part of the heritage that makes particular geographical spaces meaningful places.

Recent research also focuses on the information needs and behaviors of individuals searching for heritage information. Numerous studies have analyzed the information practices of individual genealogists (Darby and Clough 2013; Duff and Johnson 2003; Yakel 2004), of genealogical communities (Fulton 2009; Yakel and Torres 2007), and of individuals and families creating and managing personal digital archives (Copeland 2011; Lindley 2012). An additional stream of literature focuses on best practices in public librarianship for supporting these types of activities (Theimer 2010; Reid 2003; Williams 2010).

Heritage practices undertaken by individuals and groups in the course of everyday life can be understood within the framework of everyday life information seeking (ELIS), built by LIS scholar Reijo Savolainen (1995, 2009) to refer to "the ways in which people access and use various information sources to meet information needs in areas such as health, consumption, and leisure" (Savolainen 2009, 2519). ELIS encompasses both "orienting information" and "problem-specific information." Orienting information is not explicitly sought but is, rather, perceived to be readily and constantly available to an individual during the course of his or her everyday life routines. In recognition of this fact, Savolainen (2008) has recently discussed "everyday information practices," as opposed to his earlier work on "everyday life information seeking." Savolainen and others (Talja and Hansen 2006; Fisher and Julien 2009; McKenzie 2003) find that everyday information practices are undertaken by groups of people, not by isolated individuals searching for information. This literature focuses on how groups of people interact with information rather than on how individuals seek information.

The term cyberorganizing was coined in the field of community informatics, an interdisciplinary area with strong roots in librarianship (Williams and Durrance 2009). Cyberorganizing, as defined in community informatics scholarship, focuses on projects that seek to embed digital technologies into community organizing so that local individuals, groups, and organizations can use digital tools for their own goals (Williams and Alkalimat 2008). Cyberorganizing, like community organizing more generally, is not about creating organizations. Rather, it is about organizing communities so that they can meet their own needs. Cyberorganizing and popular interest in everyday heritage can come together in powerful ways. Abdul Alkalimat (2004) used a cyberoganizing framework to guide the digitization of histories of African American hair, church, and families in Toledo, Ohio. He found that digital heritage work produces cyberpower in the local community that can be used for other purposes. In other words, the outcomes of his project included expanded access both to heritage information and to digital literacy more generally. In Manchester, England, Kate Williams (2005) found that local heritage groups use digital technologies to organize themselves to prevent the destruction of historic buildings. Archivists Victor-Jan Vos and Eric Ketelaar (2007) found that

cyberorganizing heritage helps build a more inclusive community in the present. These archivists conducted extensive face-to-face organizing with community groups of recent migrants to Amsterdam so that these groups could use a digital scanning trunk to represent and share their stories in the city's archives. This participatory archives project broke down boundaries between the official record of the city and the unofficial memory of these underserved communities. Cyberorganizing also takes place in public libraries. Williams (2012) found that the cybernaviagator program at the Chicago Public Library helps both at the micro level of an individual patron's technology need and at the macro level of community capacity building. Cyberorganizing builds on, and also helps sustain, community social capital (Putnam 2000). Social capital refers to social resources, such as volunteerism, embedded in social networks such as local communities.

In summary, this article seeks to understand how public libraries serve everyday heritage information needs and how cyberorganizing both within and around public libraries can enhance heritage services. Finally, this article contributes to recent discussions about how iSchools can continue to serve the needs of public libraries and public librarians. Loriene Roy and colleagues (2010) call for more applied research in iSchools that connects LIS students with public libraries to enhance the education of the former and the technology services of the latter.

Methods

In order to answer the questions framing this study, this article presents findings from a spring 2012 workshop series on Digital Local and Family History organized with Illinois public libraries in four different regions of the state (Chicago, Kanakee, Danville, and Carbondale). These free workshops brought together public librarians with interested members of the public to discuss everyday heritage practices and services (see the Appendix for an outline of the workshops). Each workshop lasted six hours (plus lunch), except in Chicago where an abbreviated workshop of one-and-a-half hours took place. This workshop series built on existing work with public libraries, local communities, and everyday digital heritage in the Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, area (Lenstra and Alkalimat 2012).

The eighteen public librarians that came to these workshops constituted one-quarter of the seventy workshop participants. Librarians represented systems as large as the Chicago Public Library and as small as a rural library open a few hours each week. Library directors, adult service librarians, reference librarians, audio/visual librarians, library technicians, digital services librarians, children's librarians, interns, and library students all attended the workshops. Other attendees included representatives from local historical societies, genealogy societies, academic libraries, archives, museums, art councils, churches, and schools, as well as students, community organizers, designers, media professionals, and amateur historians of diverse backgrounds. Attendees learned about new skills and technologies, shared what was (and was not) working in their communities, and interacted in an open forum to discuss both communal and personal interests related to the use of technology in heritage studies.

Data used in this study come from field notes, workshop transcripts, and questionnaires. I recorded the workshops and transcribed these recordings. Pre- and postworkshop questionnaires were distributed to all seventy attendees; they were fully filled out by forty-two. I also recorded field notes during the organization and advertising of the workshops, which relied extensively on digital technologies since I conducted no visits to the workshop sites prior to the workshops themselves. To preserve the confidentiality of participants, no personal names are used in this

study and place names are used only when reporting public knowledge gleaned from outside the workshops. The individuals (both librarians and nonlibrarians) who came to the workshops represented diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Table 1). The diversity was limited, however. Attendees were older, whiter, and more educated than the general population. In addition, participants tended to represent small cities and small towns more than major metropolitan areas. This being said, the diversity among attendees suggests that the topic of everyday heritage is not restricted to a narrowly defined user group. This article does not claim to produce a scientific sampling of public libraries, communities, or patrons. Rather, my goal is to offer an exploratory analysis of this domain, which I hope will have utility for public librarians and administrators as well create a basis for future inquiry.

To analyze this data I applied open coding (Charmaz 2006) to transcript and field-note data. I then generated descriptive statistics from pre- and postworkshop questionnaires. Based on these codes and statistics I developed analytical themes that crossed the different data sets. I then elaborated these themes into research drafts presented for peer review within the Community Informatics Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Reviewers of these drafts included students who helped organize the workshops. I also presented preliminary findings from this study at the Personal Digital Archiving 2013 and the eChicago 2013 conferences. Based on these reviews, I developed new drafts that tightened the study's analytical focus around public librarianship and everyday heritage. In summary, this study's analytical methods relied on the iterative sense-making process described by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2008):

> The researcher first creates a field text consisting of field notes and documents ... [that] moves from this text to a research text: notes and interpretations ... that contains the writer's initial attempt to make sense ... . Finally, the writer produces the public text that comes to the reader. (34)

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Workshop Participants, in the Context of State and National Profiles

Demographic Category	Workshop	Illinois	United States
Age (median)	60	37	37
Women	70%	51%	51%
Bachelor's degree or higher	83%	61%[1]	58%[1]
Any post-bachelor's degrees	37%	12%[1]	11%[1]
Households with children	12%	30%	30%
Hometown located within Illinois	93%	n/a	n/a
Household income (median)	$50,000	$53,234[2]	$50,054[2]
Currently retired	25%	n/a	12%[3]
White, non-Hispanic ancestry	94%	64%	64%

Source. U.S. Census Bureau (2010), unless otherwise noted. All figures rounded to nearest whole number.
[1]Population twenty-five years and older, U.S. Census Bureau (2012).
[2]U.S. Census Bureau (2011).
[3]U.S. Social Security Administration (2013).

Findings

RQ1: How Are Public Libraries Addressing Popular Interest in Everyday Heritage? Public libraries and librarians serve their communities' popular interest in everyday heritage in two

ways: by providing services within the library and by connecting libraries to other heritage services within the local community. Everyday heritage services in public libraries have little uniformity. Table 2 illustrates this heterogeneity. Based on idiosyncratic institutional histories divergent local needs, and local capacity, some libraries offer robust staffing and services in this area while others offer barely any at all. An accurate accounting of this state of affairs requires recognition of the fact that everyday heritage information services do not reside within one institution. Rather, these services are distributed across multiple organizational entities. For example, the director of the library in Table 2 that offers the least services stated that she directs interested individuals to the county historical society, which in her community offers the types of services provided by public libraries in other local contexts. Public libraries develop everyday heritage services in the context of local systems of information provision spanning multiple institutions and actors.

Table 2 Side-by-Side Comparison of Four Comparable Illinois Public Libraries' Everyday Heritage Services

	City 1	City 2	City 3	City 4
Approximate population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010)	40,000	28,000	33,000	25,000
Budget	10 percent of library budget for archives department	Part of reference department budget	Archives department funded through reference department	Subscription costs for databases
Staffing	Two archivists, five support staff	Reference librarians	One half-time archivist	None
Digital delivery	Scanners and digital database	Local history wiki	None	Commercial databases
Collaborations	Genealogy society and county government	Genealogy society	None	None
Exhibit space	Yes	No	Yes	No

Source. Data (except for population) derived from interviews with staff members conducted before, during, and after workshops.

Providing services within the library

All public libraries that participated in this study offer some form of everyday heritage information services. Innovation in this area often comes from motivated staff members attuned to local needs and interests. These motivated staff members were also those with the motivation to attend this workshop, frequently without pay from their local library. The library director in one small city started a local history wiki while he was a reference librarian. His idea of a heritage wiki came from his use of the same local history encyclopedia to answer many patrons' inquiries about local and family histories. By digitizing the encyclopedia and placing its content into a dynamic, wikibased environment, this librarian used technology skills acquired while he was an MLS student to bring new life to a popular local history resource. Out of this project the librarian pioneered new digital content delivery techniques that have since been used in other areas of his public library.

A library director from a small town in southern Illinois also experimented with new technologies to share local heritage. In the early 2000s she collected twenty digital oral history interviews with older members of her community. She then compiled their stories into a popular print book. She now works with these digital oral history discs to create a documentary. She frames this work as both about the past and the present: "There are so many small railroad towns that are crumbling around here I really think the history is going to die. You know half of the people that I interviewed in 2004 are already deceased." In her changing community, she sees the public library as having a responsibility to document and preserve local heritage for sustainable community development in both the present and future.

While these two librarians recognize the importance of using new technology to document and share stories from the past, other librarians attempt to document the present. A library director in a large suburb of Chicago discussed how his library has a great interest in:

> [d]oing outreach to ... the immigrant community, which is huge but it's just really very recent. And unlike a city the size of Chicago, where there is a definite sense of community, these people [are] dispersed across [the suburb]. So one of the benefits [I see] of something like this [digital local and family history] is creating more of a sense of cohesion and community.

In this case, everyday heritage services focus on documenting the present as opposed to documenting and preserving the past. Both types of work are valid and necessary. Public library heritage services do not fit within a single mold—they are heterogeneous across libraries owing to the need to tailor services to local needs and interests.

Nonetheless, commonalities can be discerned. One emergent theme focused on the need to use heritage services as part of outreach to underserved communities. Public librarians in all four workshops discussed the critical importance of striving to foster engagement with local African American communities. One library director bluntly stated that "[our library] is woefully poor on the history of African American people in our city. I've tried in various outlets to get [this] information in [our heritage systems]." In another city, a library responded to this need by paying an African American children's library technician to attend the workshop. This staff member had personal interest in local African American history, and the library wanted to support her efforts to bring this local heritage, previously invisible in the library, into its information services. Whether focusing initiatives around heritage from the past or the present, most librarians that participated in these workshops framed it as axiomatic that heritage work will help their communities in the present and future.

A second overarching theme centers on struggles with digital technologies. To address the need to access and share heritage information online, public libraries use a variety of digital systems. Two types emerged prominently in discussions: content management systems and commercial cloud-based systems. Among libraries using content management systems, collaborations with the Illinois State Library proved instrumental. Three libraries discussed hosting digital heritage information on the state library– funded Illinois Plinkit Project system. Four other libraries mentioned using the Illinois Digital Archives, which is based on ContentDM, to share heritage content. Although very pleased to have this technology available, some librarians shared concerns about being locked into one particular mode of sharing content. One stated that "it's hard to get out of ContentDM, we're kind of married to that forever, so we need a plan for that." General concerns about moving from one content management system to

another became an empirical reality for another public library, which shifted in 2011 from a legacy content management system based on msDOS to the Polaris Library System. This shift took more than a year of planning. Coping with an everchanging landscape of digital delivery systems is a persistent challenge for public librarians struggling to embed digital heritage into workflows.

For some libraries solutions to this problem took the form of commercial cloud-based services. Most libraries in this study reported subscriptions to Ancestry.com Library Edition, which was widely used in their local communities. Databases such as Ancestry.com, HeritageQuest, and Fold3 allowed some libraries to provide digital heritage services without maintaining their own content management systems. However, these services do not allow librarians to host and share digital heritage information produced within their communities. To fulfill this need, some librarians have turned to social network services (SNSs), especially Facebook. One particularly vivid account of a public library using Facebook came from an adult services librarian in a small city:

> These is a lady in [my town] who created a site, a group on Facebook, called "You Know You're from [my town]." [audience laughs] It was great because I was able to post pictures from our [public library] collection, and immediately people start[ed] responding. And I was able to identify people in the pictures and locations. And it's amazing what people are willing to research for you free of charge from their recliner in the living room. And it also has created ... a small group of people who are willing to help create a big display on [a local history event at the library] ... I was [against Facebook] but now I'm one of their biggest cheerleaders, just because I have seen the power of Facebook ... . I saw a thing on eBay: It was a ... $20 bill made in 1906 with signatures of the [town's] bank president, and I wanted it for our collection, but I don't have the say [in my library to purchase such an item], so I passed. So I thought how can I pay for this? ... So I started a pledge drive [on Facebook], and people on that page donated $5, and then within 11 hours I had the money [to get] the $20. People now come in [and ask] "Can I see our 20?" [laughs] And it's really generated a lot of interest, so that I would recommend [using Facebook] 100%.

This public librarian ceased being suspicious of Facebook once she realized that not only do many patrons actively use the SNS, but these patrons are also willing to help build the library's heritage services through their use of Facebook.

Connecting libraries to heritage services within the local community

In addition to providing services within the library, public librarians also actively support other local institutions to enhance their everyday heritage services. In some cases, this support emerges through overlaps between the library and other local institutions. For example, the president of a library board in a small town said she attended the workshop on behalf of both her public library and her local historical society. As she sees stories of other towns online, she feels she must do more for her community: "I always think it's needed when I go online and I see other peoples' ... historical work." For her, and for many other public librarians and public library representatives who attended the workshops, the responsibility to take a leading role in local heritage services emerged out of personal investment with multiple local institutions,

including churches, schools, and genealogical/historical societies. From this perspective, efforts to build everyday heritage information services naturally emerged across local institutions rather than only from within the public library.

Many librarians discussed embedding heritage services within local ecosystems of information provision. A suburban librarian discussed how since local museums and historical societies already support local and family history practices, he has decided to focus his library's energies around preserving works of cultural heritage such as "physical works of art, musical compositions, and those [things that] aren't being saved anywhere" that are produced in the local community. His library has started a digitization project to ensure that these ephemeral pieces of community documentation will be accessible for years to come.

In other cases, rather than develop services within the library, public librarians support existing projects. This type of support frees libraries from investing scarce staff and technology resources into new services. A public librarian from a small town stated that she and her staff actively support the weekly newspaper's heritage work. The newspaper has created an online, searchable database of its archives. She said that the newspaper has been "digitized all the way back to 1893." By supporting efforts such as these, public librarians support community use of heritage information without having to become the key access point for this type of information.

RQ2: How Can Cyberorganizing Enhance Everyday Heritage Services?

This section foregrounds how workshop participants talked about cyberorganizing everyday heritage services. Unlike the previous section, which focused only on public libraries, this section includes findings from all participants in the workshops. By including these voices, I suggest how public library heritage services could be enhanced by community organizing with digital technology. Participants discussed how cyberorganizing could be used to address community divides, build social capital, and connect diverse individuals and groups with the technical means necessary both to find heritage information and to share it with others. Cyber and digital technologies constitute one part, but only one part, of this organizational labor.

Cyberorganizing with language and social capital

One important dimension of cyberorganizing is language; or, developing the linguistic tools to illustrate commonalities among diverse stakeholders. My use of the term everyday heritage represents one attempt to see beyond the heterogeneity of individual interests in the past. This term encompasses diverse popular interests, including local history, family history, and personal archiving. The decision to use this term emerged from the study. Based on the explosive interest in genealogy (Darby and Clough 2013), I had thought while planning the workshops that family history would be the hook that brought participants together. However, in a preworkshop questionnaire, 65 percent of participants stated that they were equally interested in local and family history. Only 17.5 percent said they had interest only in family history. During workshop discussions it became clear to me that in many cases local historians are family historians.

Some public libraries also expressed a desire to help local genealogists frame their work as documentation of the community's heritage. One public library director planned to use the workshops to learn how to organize individual genealogists in her community. Many people come to her library to use library subscriptions to Ancestry.com, HeritageQuest, and African American Heritage Quest. She plans to organize these genealogists by creating a public exhibit

of the "beautiful family photographs" she sees patrons bring to her library when they conduct research. At another public library, an African American staff member organizes "African American History Days" each February. At these events individuals bring to the library family and church histories that the librarian copies and adds to the local history archives. This librarian plans to add a digital dimension to this work by creating a digital library where copied documents can be accessed online. In these types of projects, cyberorganizing focuses on building community among local genealogists. The library helps genealogists see their individual research projects as representative of the wider community's heritage. One genealogist objected to all these discussions, stating "I'm here just for me!" Another participant (not a librarian) quickly responded: "That's how you start, though, you think you're going to do it just for you [laughs among audience]." Helping people move from individual heritage projects to generative patterns of helping and supporting others' needs for connection to shared heritage requires organizing, and public libraries can help by creating attractive spaces in which genealogists can congregate and share their knowledge with the wider community.

Nearly all individuals who attended the workshops brought projects they hoped to either implement or improve. These projects spanned the range from individual genealogy projects to community-wide oral history websites. No matter how big or small, all rely on local forms of support. To make heritage projects work, participants rely especially on social capital (e.g., volunteerism) produced by widespread public interest in everyday heritage of diverse types. Support for projects grows out of strong volunteer organizations rooted in local communities. Preworkshop questionnaires showed that participants had already volunteered for heritage projects in libraries, churches, schools, museums, and in a variety of other organizations. Explaining the importance of volunteering for such projects, one woman stated that it is "tremendous to share" heritage information with others. In such information-sharing practices (Talja and Hansen 2006) both the individual doing the sharing and the individual with whom the information is shared receive benefit. Through these social interactions social capital is built that can be used for other purposes (Putnam 2000).

Social capital can also secure access to tangible goods beyond volunteerism. During the past two decades, an all-volunteer local history museum and archives located in the Saint Louis Metro-East area has worked with the county's information technology department to build a physical and digital heritage infrastructure. The museum receives funding, technical support, server space, and a rent-free building from the county. Said a volunteer from the group: "It is a partnership that truly works." Although many public libraries lack the technical and financial resources this county has at its disposal, public librarians can work to organize governmental resources with community social capital to create similar collaborative services and spaces.

Social capital requires energy to build, sustain, and deploy for particular projects. In some cases participants perceived local social capital to be fraying, leading to difficulty building and sustaining everyday heritage services. A young information and technology staff member at a small-town public library stated that "we're sort of crumbling around here." As a result, he found it difficult to mobilize his community around supporting the digital heritage services he hoped to build. Similarly, the president of a genealogical society in a medium-sized city experiences frustration because of her difficulty finding volunteers to digitize records.

This experienced lack of social capital relates both to struggles meeting public expectations about digital technology and to complex community fissures. A reference librarian finds it difficult to excite local people about volunteering to support the library's archives department since her library still does things "the old fashioned way." Staff in her library rely on

face-to-face contact, mail, e-mail, and telephone to meet people's heritage information needs. Although the library has a rich local and family history archives, none of this material is represented online. She said her library wants to do more, especially in the area of digital libraries, but the technical capacity and administrative will simply is not there. As a result, she finds it difficult to mobilize local people to support and build the library's services. Cyberorganizing, in this case, entails working both within the library and between the library and other individuals and institutions in the community.

Organizing beyond the library and into the wider community requires sustained efforts to transcend the complex fissures and tensions found in every community (Williams and Durrance 2009). At one workshop, a genealogist described a forty-year feud between the public library and the genealogical society. In the 1970s the genealogical society sought to exert more control over its collections, which at the time were located within the public library. As part of this conflict, the society removed its collections and started an independent library less than one mile away. Strained feelings continue to exist. Overcoming historical fissures found in every community requires active and sustained community organizing.

Cyberorganizing with people and technology

Digital technologies and mediated communications are critical in this work. Of all technical tools discussed during the workshops—spanning the range from QR codes to microfilm—Facebook appeared most regularly in participants' discourse. In three of the workshops I asked the question: "How would you get the word out that you are looking for help identifying photographs?" In all three workshops the first response from participants was "Facebook." Facebook's popularity among participants emerged from the fact that many people in their local communities regularly use Facebook and not from any particular technical features of Facebook that participants specifically like.

Although some refused to use Facebook, most saw in the SNS opportunities to create new services in their communities. A middle-aged academic librarian discussed how his personal use of Facebook allowed him to learn more about himself, his family, and the place in which he grew up.

> Many, many people in many different towns have these "You Know You're From ... " groups. There is one from [my current town], and there is one from [my hometown] ... and it's thrilling to go on there and sort of lurk, and see my father commenting on pictures and telling stories about, "So that's, remember that teacher, and that time," and things that he's never discussed with me and that have never come up. He's talking with old, you know, friends and such, and I can kind of sit in the background and say, "Wow, I never knew that!" [laughs]

Connecting to this grassroots heritage activity on Facebook emerged during the workshops as a powerful way for public libraries to support everyday heritage information practices. An example of how this may intersect between Facebook and public librarianship appears in the small city of Herrin, Illinois. Librarians have created a very active Facebook page representing the library's local history room. This library's Facebook page shares connections and resources with the volunteer-maintained group "You Know You Are from Herrin Illinois if ... " Through

this mediated collaboration, the public library demonstrates its value to both current and former residents of the local community.

Some participants also use Ancestry.com to facilitate cyberorganizing. One public librarian attended a working lunch paid for by Ancestry.com during which the company presented an initiative to help local communities get heritage content, such as yearbooks, digitized and accessible online. This librarian planned to join the initiative, and she recommended other librarians do the same.1 An amateur genealogist also discussed using Ancestry.com to organize both people and information. She experiences excitement when she finds pictures of relatives on the site, and this excitement prompts her to share her own photographs online. By the time you read this article, Facebook and Ancestry.com may have lost popularity. It is highly likely that local communities have migrated to new digital platforms to share and find everyday heritage information. The point I wish to make in these examples is not that public librarians necessarily should focus energies around Facebook or Ancestry.com. Rather, public librarians should closely attend to how their communities use digital technologies as part of everyday efforts to feel connected to the past.

Finally, the workshops themselves opened new avenues for cyberorganizing everyday heritage services. In a postworkshop questionnaire, 68 percent of participants said they felt more likely to lead a digital history project in their communities after the workshops. I cannot claim that these positive outcomes emerged from my instruction. The workshops worked best when I functioned as a cyberorganizer, bringing people together and helping them share ideas, frustrations, and successes (Figure 1). I advertised the event almost exclusively through mediated communications. I sent invitations to public libraries within a thirty-mile radius of the workshop site (which I identified using Google Maps). I also invited local historical societies, genealogy societies, museums, schools, art councils, tourism bureaus, newspapers, and other local agencies that appeared likely to support everyday digital heritage. Public librarians also spread the word within their communities. Organizing the workshops relied on both distributed communication emerging from Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, and face-to-face communication emerging from local public libraries. This strategy appears to have worked. One woman stated that she would use what she learned in the workshop immediately: "I am 'computer savvy,' but do not use digitization to share information. I will be doing so: This weekend." Another stated she learned "how to build enthusiasm to digitize photos at home and church." A third said "the workshop gave me new initiative, both to start new projects and finish old ones." In all workshops, participants continued conversations out the door, into parking lots and beyond. Many seemed more excited to talk among themselves than to talk with me.

FIGURE 1 Images from Digital Local and Family History Workshops. Workshops Included Very Brief Lectures, Open Discussion, Informal Interaction, and Hands-on Technology Support (color figure available online).

Simply bringing together individuals who share interest in everyday heritage (in whatever form) and technology (with whatever literacy level) produces results. The director of one of the public libraries that hosted the workshop series initially expressed reservations about a day-long event. She said library staff struggle to get people to stay for programming longer than one hour. Nonetheless, when the workshop came to her town nearly twenty people volunteered to spend a beautiful Saturday in late May sitting in a small conference room discussing digital heritage. Public libraries can do more of this type of public programming to knit together different interests and enthusiasms for everyday heritage in their communities. Although these workshops relied on a state humanities grant, this type of public programming does not necessarily require a great financial commitment. The vast majority of grant funding was applied to food, transportation, handouts, and advertising. Bringing people together to talk about individual, family, and community interests in the past—and on how digital technologies can be used to support these interests—does not necessarily require any money at all. Obviously not all public libraries or librarians have access to grants or to iSchools. However, all can organize conversations that catalyze the public around what can (and should) be done to address everyday heritage information needs. The Appendix to this article includes suggestions for topics and questions that could be used in this type of public conversation.

Cyberorganizing does not depend on technical capacity. People, not technology, come first. Not all public librarians that participated in the workshops shared this mindset. During conversations with librarians, I learned that some came in search of technical advice about building heritage services. For example, a public library in a Chicago suburb hired a digital media specialist without strong ties to the community to create a website for the town's 120th anniversary. This young digital librarian attended a workshop to learn the technicalities of digital history. During the workshops this librarian changed his opinion about what is most important in this type of work. He told the workshop participants that he learned that the most important thing is "getting out and talking to people: definitely getting out into the community and not just staying in the library." He learned that doing everyday digital heritage in public libraries requires much more than technology. The allure of digital technology (Mosco 2005) leads some to believe that technology itself will address social needs. The concept of cyberorganizing puts technology in its place by reminding us that technology can help, but only when used as part of social organizing directed around community desires. Many other public librarians who attended the workshops already know that library heritage services are as much about building and sustaining community in the present as they are about making accessible information from the past.

Conclusions

Public libraries in diverse communities throughout the state of Illinois currently provide many different types of everyday heritage information services. Many libraries recognize that they could do more in this area, and many desire to do more. Trends from both within and around the public library profession propel public libraries into increasingly critical roles in local heritage information systems. Eighteen librarians representing a dozen different library systems throughout the state of Illinois attended workshops in the spring of 2012 to learn how cyberorganizing can enhance their library's services.

Since no two communities are the same, no one suite of technical tools and skills will meet the needs of public libraries and their communities. Tools such as Ancestry.com, Facebook, and ContentDM can and do play roles in these services. But by themselves these tools do not represent solutions. Cyberorganizing focuses on bringing together many resources (social, technical, financial, human) in one's community and then using these resources to support community use of new technologies for community purposes. Cyberorganizing everyday heritage services in public libraries does not necessarily require new technical skills or services. This work can and should build on existing resources. Simply bringing together diverse individuals with diverse interests in heritage and technology can produce tangible outcomes. As libraries support the public's need for heritage information they acquire respect and appreciation for the many roles of the public library in the local community. Furthermore, this work produces a strengthened sense of community, one in which everyone feels that their story is validated and appreciated.

As with any public library service, cyberorganizing everyday heritage has some financial and staffing costs associated with it. However, the findings in this study show that these costs can be minimal and that many public librarians see actual and potential returns on investment that warrant this venture. This article has presented exploratory findings on extant and potential everyday digital heritage services within a single state. More research is needed to extend and refine the trends documented in this article and to add more nuance to our understanding of the means by which public librarians embed digital heritage services into public libraries.

Contributor

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Note

1. For more information on this initiative, see the web page http://community.ancestry.com/awap and for background see http://mylist.net/htdig/conntech/2009-February/001605.html

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Appendix: Workshop outline

The following outline was used to structure the workshops and to give participants a sense of coherence throughout the day. However, each workshop was tailored to meet the particular needs and interests of attendees. Public librarians may wish to flexibly apply this outline for internal staff training, meetings in local communities, and/or regional discussions. More information on this outline is available at this project's website: http://eblackcu.net/ portal/manual/.

- Getting organized: Mobilizing people and technology in your community around digital heritage.
- Finding the information: Determining what types of information your project will focus on and identifying where that information exists.
- Digitizing the information: Digitizing and aggregating diverse information sources, including print, photographs, audiovisual, born digital, and artifacts.

- Sharing the information with others: Sharing digital information, both online and in face-to-face settings.
- Building a digital library: Developing digital delivery systems using free tools such as Omeka (http://omeka.org/), LocalWiki (http://localwiki. org/), and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/).
- Building collaboration and sustainability: Embedding digital heritage into local communities to ensure its long-term sustainability.