

Transcription Tool for Teaching and Research Progress Report, September 1, 2013

Project Summary

The goal of this project is to identify a transcription tool for use at Harvard from the many candidates already available. After a first phase spent assessing user needs, existing tools were reviewed and evaluated with the object of meeting user needs and ensuring that the tool can successfully integrate with Harvard's Library and academic computing systems. Four tools were selected for implementation, Scripto, Transcribr, MIT-Edgerton notebooks tool, Islandora TEI editor.

Project Activities

As described in the June 1, 2013 report, the project experienced a hiatus between October 2012 and May 2013 due to a shortage of programmer resources. In May 2013, the project regained some momentum with the implementation of two transcription tools, Scripto and Transcribr. The team met with Sebastian Diaz in first week in June to address questions about the two tools, particularly user accounts and bulk content loading tools, and to discuss future development and the scope of the project. Implementation of a third transcription tool, the MIT-Edgerton tool, another of the four originally identified for testing during this project, was promised.

Since that meeting in June, the Transcription Tool Team has met weekly with the goal of readying at least one of the tools for a user trial in September. Due to short time remaining before the end of the project, the Team decided to focus on NARA's Transcribr tool. It met most of the original desiderata out of the box, and seemed to require the least customization. Over the summer, the Team's work focused on identifying, and configuring where possible, the elements necessary to begin a trial in September. While the Team was able to complete some configuration changes on its own, other elements requiring the assistance of a system administrator were identified and requested through the Redmine project management tool and e-mail, but no response or action occurred. Necessary changes include a security update of the software itself, instances of hard-coded text that refer to the National Archives, the activation of anonymous user accounts, and assorted other changes or edits to the user interface.

Next Steps

If necessary changes are made to the Transcribr tool by September 16th, it might still be possible for the Team to conduct a brief user trial within the timeframe of the project. We'd like to allow a month for users to test the tool and provide feedback. At the beginning of the project, the Team conducted a user survey through which we identified faculty and staff interested in such a tool and willing to participate in a trial. The Team would need some time after the trial to gather and analyze results in time to include them in the final report due at the end of the project on October 31, 2013. If no changes to Transcribr are made, team members

will themselves conduct such testing of the tool as they are able to do in the current environment.

Financial Update

\$4,200 of the project funding was allocated to the Berkman Center for the work done on this project to date. At this point, it is unclear whether additional work will be undertaken by Berkman Center staff. If any additional work does occur, it would have to be completed by 9/16, well before the 10/31 deadline for budget expenditures. We do not anticipate applying for an extension for this project.

Project Team Members

Amy Benson, Schlesinger Library
Robin McElheny, Harvard University Archives
Susan Pzyznski, Houghton Library