



Final Report for Transcription for Improved Research, Teaching, and Learning at Harvard

Project goal

Identify an existing online transcription tool for use with digitized primary source materials in Harvard Library collections that could successfully integrate with Harvard's Library and academic computing systems.

Project participants

Harvard University Archives, Houghton Library, Schlesinger Library

Project accomplishments

- Conducted a preliminary survey that identified faculty and student interest in a transcription tool for use in research and teaching
- Researched and evaluated existing transcription tools based on criteria drawn from surveys
- Identified four tools for implementation and testing
- Two transcription tools were installed in ways sufficient only for limited internal testing
 - Transcribr
 - Lacked security updates and necessary user interface customization
 - Sripto
 - No ability to load more than one image at a time

Financial report

A total of \$8,200 was allocated to this project. \$4,200 of the project funding was allocated to the Berkman Center for tool implementation and programming work. \$4,000 was allocated for student work on transcription and tool testing. Because the implementation of the tools never advanced enough to allow user testing, no students were hired and this money was not spent.

Final project status

Incomplete due to lack of technical support.

Project potential

Research, teaching, and learning:

Based on conversations with faculty and students, we continue to believe that transcription has an important role to play in the use of Harvard Library collections.

- Fostering close reading, interpretation, and analysis of primary sources
- Fostering participatory learning experiences and contributing to future scholarship

Adding value to Harvard Library collections

The availability of a tool for crowd-sourcing the transcription of primary source documents to create machine-readable versions would significantly enhance the discovery and use of otherwise hidden resources in the Harvard Library.

Future

The project team has scheduled a session in early December with faculty and other survey participants who expressed interest in transcription at Harvard to update them on the results of the project and demonstrate some of the functionality of the Transcribr Tool.

Project Team members will seek opportunities to integrate a transcription tool, or transcription functionality into other Library initiatives.