UC San Diego, NYU, & University of Illinois Libraries to Collaborate on Next-Generation Archival Management Tool

Mellon Foundation Grant to fund merging of Archivists' Toolkit and Archon

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The University of California, San Diego; New York University; and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Libraries are teaming up to develop a next-generation archival management tool, thanks to a grant in the amount of $539,000 from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The grant will support the planning and design of a new software tool for the description and management of archives, based on the combined capabilities of Archivists' Toolkit™ (AT) and Archon™. The two predominant open-source archival tools are currently utilized by numerous academic libraries, special collections, archives, and museums worldwide, including universities like UCLA and Harvard, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the San Diego Zoo, and smaller archival repositories like the Niels Bohr Archives in Denmark and the Biblioteca Ateneu Barcelonès in Spain.

Planning activities will include the development of a next-generation architectural framework as well as a complete review of the new archival tool's required and desirable functional specifications. Members of the archival community will be consulted during the planning and product development stages.

"This project will capitalize on the functional strengths of both AT and Archon," said Brian E. C. Schottlaender, the Audrey Geisel University Librarian at UC San Diego and the principal investigator for the project. "This will result in a superior archival software tool and a long-term sustainability plan for the integrated product. We are grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its support and look forward to collaborating with our partners, NYU and the University of Illinois on this significant undertaking."

According to Schottlaender, archivists across the globe have already registered their support for the development of the new archival tool. While AT and Archon have their own well-developed communities of support, most agree that Archon's access features, combined with AT's strong archival management attributes, will result in the design of a unique and even more powerful archival data management system that will greatly benefit the archival community and scholars worldwide. At a time when libraries are increasingly interested in putting primary research materials online, this new system will allow them to do so much more efficiently, while exposing previously hidden archival collections to scholars.

Schottlaender and UC San Diego Libraries will serve as the lead institution in the development of the new archival tool, sharing project oversight with Carol A. Mandel, Dean of Libraries at New York University, and Paula Kaufman, Dean of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library. UC San Diego and NYU Libraries sponsored the development of AT, released to the public in 2006; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library supported the development of Archon, also released in 2006.

AT archivist Bradley Westbrook of UC San Diego Libraries and Archon archivists Christopher Prom and Scott Schwartz will form the archives team for the AT/Archon integration project. They are charged with the single task of determining the functional requirements and drafting specifications for the integrated application.

In 2008, the AT received the C.F.Coker award from the Society of American Archivists for its "tremendous impact on archival practice and promotion and adoption of descriptive standards." Last year, the AT received the Archival Award of Excellence from the California Historical Records Advisory Board. Archon has also been recognized for its impact, receiving (with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library) a Mellon Award for Technology Collaboration in 2008.

The UC San Diego Libraries *ranked among the top 25 public academic research libraries in the nation, play an integral role in advancing and supporting the university's research, teaching, patient care, and public service missions. The nine libraries that make up the UCSD Library system provide access to more than 7 million digital and print volumes, journals, and multimedia materials to meet the knowledge demands of scholars, students, and members of the public. Each day, more than 7,300 people stream through the university's nine libraries, and the Libraries' vast resources and services are accessed more than 87,500 times via the UCSD Libraries' Web site.*

The collections of the **NYU Division of Libraries** *support the curricular and research needs of faculty and students with over 5 million print volumes, 68,000 serial subscriptions, 50,000 electronic journals, 105,000 audio and video recordings, and 25,000 linear feet of archival material. The collections are uniquely strong in the performing arts, radical and labor history, and New York City history and avant-garde culture. The Division of Libraries includes the flagship Elmer Holmes Bobst Library on Washington Square and the libraries of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, the Institute of Fine Arts, the Real Estate Institute and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World.*

The **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign University Library** *is central to the intellectual life of the University. By providing and stewarding collections and content that comprise a current and retrospective record of human knowledge and by offering a wide array of services, it enhances the University's activities in creating knowledge, preparing students for lives of impact, and addressing critical societal needs. The Library advances the University's goals by ensuring unfettered access to information and by providing a network of expertise that ensures value, quality, and authenticity of information resources. The Library integrates and manages knowledge to enable learning and the creation of new knowledge.*

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