The POWRR Project
Summative Evaluation
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Review Process
The in-person review with the project manager occurred on October 23 and 24, 2014, and follow up responses from project partners were provided via email in the weeks subsequent to the in-person interview. The in-person discussions were supplemented with resources available on the website, through internal communications (email messages, draft documents, etc.), and via analytics software (for quantitative data). The reviewer has been involved as an advisor since the launch of the POWRR grant in 2012.

Initial meeting
The first meeting of advisors for the Digital POWRR grant took place on October 11-12, 2012. In attendance were representatives from 4 of the 5 partner institutions named in the initial grant, in addition to the five-member advisory committee. It was clear at that time that the experience of the group with digital preservation tools and practice was minimal; some partners expressed trepidation and others expressed outright skepticism that the goals set by the lead institution, Northern Illinois University, could be achieved. Some concern was expressed by the advisory committee, as well, that the goals were too ambitious and that the activities should be narrowed. To their credit, the NIU team felt confident that they could achieve the goals within the timeline of the grant.

Goals
The goals of the grant were related to the digital preservation needs and long-term care of digitized and born-digital content held at small and mid-sized academic institutions. These included investigating need, identifying possible tools and procedural processes, disseminating findings, and educating professionals in typically under-resourced institutions of similar size. The grant workplan was ambitious, but the main activities were (a) one-on-one interviews at each campus to better understand the current preservation-related activities being undertaken by faculty and professional staff, (b) identification of tools and services that might meet these needs, (c) consult with vendors about each of the tools and services available, (d) test and evaluate effectiveness of each of the tools and services, (e) convene a meeting of preservation professionals at the NIU campus and attend other national conferences to disseminate the findings.

Activities

The advisory board met in person on two occasions and three times by telephone over the course of the grant to help fine-tune some of the implementation plans. Some one-on-one meetings were also held with specific advisors, particularly during the development of the workshop curriculum. At the first in-person meeting, the project team leaned heavily on the experience and knowledge of the advisory committee, asking for input and advice at the very granular level and, as is more typical, support for the project's broader goals. For example, the advisory committee played a lead role in identifying the most appropriate curation and preservation tools and service to evaluate as part of the grant. In addition, at this meeting the advisory strongly suggested that the project team reconsider the idea of hosting a conference, for the simple reality that (a) Dekalb is not an easily accessible destination and (b) the event was not one that professionals would likely choose to attend over, for example, ALA or Best Practices Exchange. The advisory board suggested that a more effective approach would be for the team to travel to established conferences to disseminate grant outcomes. Ultimately, this change in the workplan was approved by IMLS.

Some concern about the readiness of the project team was expressed after that initial meeting, but already by the second in-person meeting, the advisory board's impression was changed completely. The work completed in 2013-2014 was impressive, and the findings were not only interesting but generally applicable to the work of preservation practitioners at academic institutions. Of particular note were three outputs completed in the first year. The first was a set of case studies undertaken by staff at each of the participating institutions to identify the state of and readiness for digital preservation activities at the various campuses, which include an urban state college, tier two state universities, and a small, private liberal arts college. The second was a gap analysis that included interviews of scholars, researchers, and professional staff at each of the institutions to gain a better understanding of the actual day-to-day digital preservation practice of and obstacles for these individuals. The third major outcome was a tool and services grid, the purpose of which is to provide trustworthy and neutral information about available digital preservation tools and services so that institutions can map the most appropriate to their existing needs, resources, and technical capabilities. In the second year, the project team continued testing and fine-tuning the tool grid, writing the white paper, and developing and hosting hands-on (and sold-out!) workshops across the US.

Feedback

The quality of work that the team has produced is exceptional, and the response from the digital preservation and stewardship community reflects that. The team--at first, at least from the view of this advisor, a coalition of semi-willing (if not earnest)-- has coalesced into a community of practice that shows great signs of continuing to grow the work they have started through this grant. The tool grid, available alongside an active and informative website that includes a blog, workshop materials, and other grant outputs, has been viewed over 25,000 times. The white paper was

downloaded more than 3,000 times in the first three months from Huskie Commons, the lead institution's Digital Repository.

The tool grid and website are repeatedly referred to in educational materials and on lists of the most useful preservation resources available. The project manager and other team members have been invited presenters at a number of national and international conferences, and have been asked to write blog posts the Library of Congress's blog, "The Signal." Perhaps most excitingly, their workshops continue to sell out literally overnight, and the demand for them is so great that the team has had to turn down requests (for lack of time and resources). The Society of American Archivists will audit an upcoming workshop to determine whether it could be part of their certification curriculum for digital archives specialists.

It is clear to the advisory board that their outputs were well-timed and greatly need by the digital preservation community. A single event shows the power (POWRR?) that the momentum of this grant was able to reach. In 2013, a single email from the project manager to a service provider led to a complete revamp of that vendor's communication and marketing policies and pricing model. Today, their offerings and costs are available to any potential buyer on their website.

Recommendations
The advisory committee is impressed by the breadth of work performed in such a short period of time by the project team, and feels that the participants should be proud of the good work and strong impact they have made on the digital preservation community. A few recommendations for the project team are listed below, but because of their exemplary work, these are minimal and actually fall outside of the existing scope of the grant. It is proposed that the project team pursue a second grant to undertake these activities.

- Continue its work to keep the website and related resources current, and update the tool grid as new applications and services become available or the appropriateness of existing tools diminish. If possible, the team should work closely with registries like COPTR if the POWRR tool grid no longer becomes sustainable.
- Develop workshop materials into a easily repurposable curriculum or "workshop in a box."
- Move from the investigation phase to the implementation of tools and services at the participating institutions. Implement stop-gap measures until resources can be identified and partnerships for long-term management can be established.

It is clear by reviewing the outputs and seeing the reception that the grant team's work has garnered, that they have exceed the workplan laid out at the start of this project. Their work has promoted strong collaborations and developed professional relationships that will continue to engage and support the digital preservation community's growth and knowledge. Their whitepaper, tool grid, and hands-on workshops, go far to support the exemplary stewardship of cultural heritage collections to ensure that the discovery of knowledge continues far into the future.