Digital Collections Units as Learning Labs

Cindy Boeke, Digital Collections Librarian and Interim Director, Norwick Center for Digital Services, Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University

Since 2008, SMU’s Norwick Center for Digital Services (nCDS), a unit of Central University Libraries (CUL), has digitized, cataloged, and made available on the CUL Digital Collections web site more than 52,000 image, text, video, and audio files from the holdings of CUL’s special collections. In parallel, nCDS has evolved into a learning lab for a wide variety of students, faculty and visitors.

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We would love to hear about your educational activities!
To let us know what you are doing or for more information, contact Cindy Boeke, Digital Collections Librarian and Interim Director, nCDS, cboeke@smu.edu

digitalcollections.smu.edu/all/cul

Guided Tours, Lab Demonstrations, and Seminars

Over the past seven years, nCDS has provided guided tours of our digitization/metadata lab and digital photography studio. Tours are given to community organizations, scholars, donors, and visitors who are interested in the digitization of special collections. We incorporate lab demonstrations matched to specific course needs at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Our nCDS Digital Services Tour, divided into three stations, gives students an overview of digital photography, digitization/metadata creation, and digital collections.

Outcomes and Feedback

The practicum, demonstrations, seminars, and tours are a team effort, involving all members of the nCDS staff. The most important result we are achieving is a much closer relationship with the campus and local community. We see great potential to increase nCDS’s educational activities in the future.

The outcomes are real:
- Multiple MLS practicum students have found jobs as digital librarians.
- One SMU graduate student received a CLIR Fellowship as a Digital Scholarship Librarian.
- We are building an internship program with a local community college.
- Staff are highly motivated because of positive feedback they receive from students and visitors.
- We are much more aligned with SMU’s strategic goals.
- We are collaborators who contribute to the academic mission.
- New practicum students include a museum archivist, a community college English professor, two history professors from local universities, community college transfer students, high school students, and more.

 Above right: nCDS created a customized graduate seminar for the Joint Art History/English graduate seminar: Print, Identity, and the In/Im/Material Image in February 2016.

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• MLS and Digital Humanities Practicums

nCDS has a long-standing practicum program with two local library schools. Since 2009, we trained 32 MLS students on all aspects of digital collections development. Most practicum graduates use the skills they learned in their current jobs; quite a few are employed as digital librarians. More recently, we added a Digital Humanities practicum that has helped five SMU and local graduate students and professors with their career development.

At left: The nCDS Digital Humanities Practicum provides in-depth training on digital collections as a DH tool for SMU and local graduate students and faculty. One professor is taking the practicum in an effort to build a DH program at a local community college.

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