WRITING A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR YOUR DIGITAL RESOURCE

Nancy Maron, Program Director, Sustainability and Scholarly Communications

April 25, 2014
**Settings**
» All attendees are muted
» To ask a question, please use the chat box at any time. We will pause during a few points in the presentation to answer these. As an alternative, tweet.
» To ask a question only to the presenters, select “send to staff”
» If you have technical difficulties, ask for help using chat. Our tech team can walk you through basic GoTo tips
» When you exit the webinar, you will be prompted to take a brief survey—we welcome your feedback!

**Twitter**
@IthakaSR
#SRPlan
OUR PLAN FOR TODAY

1. What is sustainability?
2. Writing your plan
3. Top 3 pitfalls to avoid
4. Closing thoughts
WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?
Digital projects rarely “fail” outright...

But is that good enough?
WHY PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

*Risks*

» Content becomes dated
» Interface appears dated
» Technical incompatibility
» Low usage and no upgrading leads to low ranking in search results
» No measurable impact = no future investment
WHY PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

*Risks*
» Content becomes dated
» Interface appears dated
» Technical incompatibility
» Low usage and no upgrading leads to low ranking in search results
» No measurable impact = no future investment

*Best case*
✓ Usage increases
✓ Evidence of impact
✓ Low cost-base to support upgrades
✓ Leads to measurable impact and enthusiasm about project
✓ Resulting in continued resources to support ongoing value
Sustainability is . . .

the ability to generate or gain access to the resources—financial or otherwise—needed to protect and increase the value of the content or service for those who use it.

A sustainability plan is an evidence-based strategy for identifying and securing these ongoing sources of support for your project, over time.
NOT (ONLY) ABOUT THE MONEY

**Sources of support can include**
- Direct funding (from grants, from donations)
- Revenue generation (from selling or licensing content or tools)

**But they can also include**
- In-kind contributions
- Volunteer time/labor
SUSTAINABILITY PLANS ARE CUSTOM-MADE, SPECIFIC TO THE INTENDED GOALS OF EACH PROJECT
EXAMPLE:

STANFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY

» Open access resource with an endowment funded by academic libraries

» Requires contributions of original scholarly articles, the time of peer reviewers and editors, financial management of its endowment

» Support comes from endowment (raised from library contributions), institutional support and an individual membership program for access to PDF downloads
EXAMPLE:
EBIRD

» Citizen science project collecting birding observations to support academic studies of bird populations

» Requires contributions of birding observations; careful editing network

» Support comes from institutional host (Cornell Lab of Ornithology) but also from corporate sponsorship, licensing and franchising of eBird to other organizations and nature centers
EXAMPLE: 
GRATEFUL DEAD ARCHIVE ONLINE

» 15,000 fan-decorated envelopes
» 10,000 photos
» 962 tickets
» 900 posters
» 316 audio recordings
» 190 t-shirts
» 160 fanzine issues
» 78 laminates
» 50 fan art

Sustainability needed for the collection, but also of the community of contributors
FIRST, THERE IS THE GREAT IDEA

A Great Idea
THEN, THERE ARE FORCES THAT HELP REFINE THAT IDEA…

External Factors

Audience
(users, stakeholders)

A Great Idea

Environment
(competition)
WITH PROJECT AIMS CLARIFIED, HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM?

External Factors
- Audience
  (users, stakeholders)
- Environment
  (competition)

Internal Factors
- Goals
- Activities
- Resource needed/Costs
- Funding Sources

A Clear Value Proposition
A RECURRING CYCLE OF INVESTMENT AND VALUE

External Factors

Audience
(users, stakeholders)

A sustainable digital resource

Environment
(competition)

Internal Factors

Goals
Activities
Resource needed/Costs
Funding Sources
QUESTIONS?
WRITING YOUR PLAN
WHAT DO FUNDERS EXPECT?

NEH DIGITAL IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

“This plan should discuss the long-term financial needs of the project and show how the project will continue to be able to meet its goals after the grant has ended. The plan must address potential institutional support or future funding streams necessary to allow the project to thrive beyond the grant period.”

WHAT DO FUNDERS EXPECT?

IMLS REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECTS THAT DEVELOP DIGITAL CONTENT

“If your project involves the creation of new digital content such as online collections or databases, new metadata about collections, software tools or electronic systems, or digital datasets, you must provide in the application narrative a detailed explanation of the need, intended uses, and audiences for this content, and a detailed work plan.”

http://www.imls.gov/applicants/projects_that_develop_digital_content.aspx
WHAT DO FUNDERS EXPECT?

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

“All narratives should provide... an account, where appropriate, of how the organization will ensure the longer-term sustainability of project results and/or institutional changes supported by Foundation funding”

http://www.mellon.org/grant_programs/grantmaking-guidelines-procedures/grant-proposal-guidelines
When is a Data Management Plan probably enough?

Articles, digital objects, datasets

If it doesn’t require content updates, ongoing development, or active outreach, deposit into a repository may be all you need. But the repository should have its own sustainability plan!
QUESTIONS?
1. What will you need to sustain?

2. What effort, what resources will that require?

3. How will you obtain the resources you need?
1) WHAT WILL YOU NEED TO SUSTAIN?

*The digital assets?*

*The entire website/interface?*

*An active community, engaged in the resource?*

*The entire organization or project team that created it?*
WHAT WILL YOU NEED TO SUSTAIN?

FRAMEWORK FOR POST-GRANT SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Instructions: Use this template to answer the questions and clearly identify the goals and activities you want your project to engage in for the future. Each project will have different needs, so please feel free to modify the column headers so that they best suit your case.

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| **Determine Costs**  
What resources will be required to support these activities? | | | | | | |
| **Build Funding Model Plan**  
Where will project obtain resources needed to cover costs? | | | | | | |

### WHAT WILL YOU NEED TO SUSTAIN?

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<td>• We want to see usage increase by x% in FY 2014</td>
<td>• Senior editor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine Costs</td>
<td>What resources will be required to support these activities?</td>
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<td>Where will project obtain resources needed to cover costs?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assistant editors (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Many, many volunteers for editorial board, contributors and advisors</td>
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The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy organizes scholars from around the world in philosophy and related disciplines to create and maintain an up-to-date reference work.

2) WHAT RESOURCES WILL THAT REQUIRE?

*Full time project management?*

*Technical staff?*

*Other project staff?*

*Ongoing promotion and outreach?*

*Digital preservation?*

*Direct costs? Travel? Hardware? Storage? Design?*
WHAT RESOURCES WILL THAT REQUIRE?

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This document was adapted from the Framework for Post-Grant Sustainability Planning, published by Ithaka S+R (2011) and available at http://sca.jiscinvolve.org/wp/portfolio-items/revenue-recession-reliance-revisiting-the-sca-ithaka-case-studies-in-sustainability-decision-making-tool/
# What Resources Will That Require?

## Framework for Post-Grant Sustainability Planning

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<td>• Editorial staff</td>
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<td></td>
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3) HOW WILL YOU OBTAIN THE RESOURCES YOU NEED?

Funding from donors or revenue generation?
Volunteer contributions of time and effort?
In-kind support from your host institution?
## HOW WILL YOU OBTAIN THE RESOURCES YOU NEED?

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IN-KIND SUPPORT

Can include

» Office space
» Staff time (from the library, IT, legal, finance and other key departments)
» Other partner organizations

To do this, you must... consider what in-kind contributions are available in your setting. Determine how your project furthers the mission of your institution. Find ways to express the value your project offers in terms that are meaningful to your potential supporters.
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

**Can include**

» Content contribution
» Transcription
» Editing
» Other forms of engagement specific to your project

» Birders enter birding observations into online checklist program
» Network of 400 volunteer regional editors vet the entries for anomalies and coach the birders

**To do this, you must**... consider what will incentivize volunteers to support your project. Scholars offering articles may expect peer review, strong reputation of the resource, and ways to professionally acknowledge their contribution; crowd-sourcing participants will want your project to help them reach their goals, not necessarily yours!
FUNDING SOURCES

Can include

» Charging for content
» Freemium models
» Licensing content or tools
» Consulting work
» Sponsorships
» And more...

» In addition to freely available audio/visual content, runs a licensing service for broadcast-quality video, customized CDs, and hosts advertising
» Publishing division, creating new content from the archival content it holds

To do this, you must... think creatively about how the assets you have created could be used -- and paid for -- by others. Before jumping in, some back-of-the-envelope estimating will help you see if you can easily test some of your assumptions. What starts as a low-risk experiment might end up being a useful funding stream.
### How Will You Obtain the Resources You Need?

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- Raise funds from participating libraries to create endowment; seek reliable support from host institution, both in-kind and direct funding; develop “friends” model, offering downloadable PDFs to those who join (“freemium” model)

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Consider ALL the possible sources of value your project can create.

Which of these might suggest viable funding sources?

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<th>Leverage the value of</th>
<th>Revenue Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase/perpetual access</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pay per use</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Licensing content (to publishers)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charge for added value: more formats, higher res images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools and Services</td>
<td>Charge for added value: greater functionality,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Licensing/customizing software</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contributor pays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consulting services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Corporate sponsorships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Membership model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Philanthropy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Host institution support</td>
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See: [A Guide to the Best Revenue Models and Funding Sources for your Digital Resources](#)
SUMMING IT UP
THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN SHOULD DELIVER...

A clear, well-reasoned, evidence-based plan that shows you know what you will need in order to keep your project valuable over time...

Some plausible strategies to fund the ongoing work that you feel you will need

Evidence that your institution, volunteers, or other partnering institutions are willing to support your efforts in specific ways

And some measurable ways to start testing your assumptions
QUESTIONS?
PITFALLS TO AVOID
DON’T GO IT ALONE!

Identify strong partnerships so that your project will not need to do everything

It's crucial for applicants to consider how collaboration—both within and across institutions—might positively impact a sustainability plan. For instance, if there are long-term storage needs, is there a project partner with robust enough infrastructure to commit to this, or is there an existing cross-institutional repository? --program officer
Don’t claim “long-term support” without some evidence.

We often see applicants claim to have long-term support for the project from their institution, but fail to include a convincing letter of commitment from a dean or other administrator. Reviewers are often impressed by especially strong letters of commitment and support, so this shouldn’t be an afterthought. --program officer
AUDIENCE: ARE THEY OUT THERE?

Be sure you can demonstrate that the audience you want is out there, and that you plan to learn from them.

If a project team is developing a software platform that is meant to be widely used, have they assembled at least a pilot group of individuals or institutions committed to implementing it? --program officer
CLOSING THOUGHTS
REMEMBER…

*Things change.* I know that, you know that, and reviewers know that, too. Just getting a plan outlined and sharing your thinking is a very good start.

*Plan to revise your plan!* This is an ongoing process, for as long as you plan to keep building and growing your project. Assume you will need to regularly review and revise your assumptions. Budget time for market research, user testing, and project management.

*Research as much as you can now, and be willing to shift course,* as circumstances may dictate. More a mindset than anything else.
A Guide to the Best Revenue Models and Funding Sources for your Digital Resources
(Maron 2014) A hands-on, example-filled guide outlining the different types of funding available for digital resources, including the revenue generating models compatible with open access.

Searching for Sustainability: Strategies from Eight Digitized Special Collections
(Maron, Pickle 2014) Includes detailed case studies of Grateful Dead Archive Online, HEARTH, Maine Memory Network, Florida Folklife, Vanderbilt TV News Archive, Biodiversity Heritage Library, Quakers and Slavery, American Antiquarian Society

Revenue, Recession, How Funders’ Practices Influence the Future of Digital Resources
(Maron and Loy 2011) Includes detailed updates of the 2009 case studies (below)

Sustaining Digital Resources: An On-the-Ground View of Projects Today
(Maron, Smith, Loy 2009) Includes detailed case studies of eBird, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Middle School Portal 2 (NSDL), Bopcris Digitisation Centre (UK), Centre for Computing in the Humanities (UK), Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment, V&A Images, TLG, The National Archives (UK), Digizeitschriften (Germany), L’INA (France), and Hindawi (Egypt).

Sustainability and Revenue Models for Online Academic Resources
(Guthrie, Griffiths, Maron 2008) The original guide to revenue models, including an Introductory essay outlining the mindsets project leaders need to adopt in a rapidly changing online environment.
JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations.

ITHAKA S+R helps academic, cultural, and publishing communities in making the transition to the digital environment.

PORTICO to help the academic community use digital technologies to preserve the scholarly record and to advance research and teaching sustainable ways.
ITHAKA S+R

THANK YOU!

Nancy L. Maron
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