Grateful Dead Archive Online

University of California at Santa Cruz
www.gdao.org

ABSTRACT

Few archives come with a built-in fanbase. The Grateful Dead Archive Online (GDAO) is distinguished from many other academic special collections by the variety of media it holds, from concert tickets to audio files and art created by fans of the band, and by its potential audience, the many thousands of fans of the Grateful Dead. Support for the Archive has come from grant funding, private donors, and from this fan base, which poses one of the project's fascinating opportunities and challenges. How can the GDAO benefit from the enormous potential audience of devoted fans, and from the material they could contribute, while still remaining true to its academic home at the University Library of the University of California at Santa Cruz?

INTRODUCTION

Some archives may have devoted researchers who use them, but few have true fans. The Grateful Dead Archive (GDA), housed at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), is a real exception in several ways. The focus of the archive—the live music and touring of the Grateful Dead, the jam band fronted by Jerry Garcia—is part of fairly recent cultural memory. The band, known especially for its live performances, developed a devoted following over the three decades it performed, from 1965 to 1995. The Grateful Dead's most devoted fans, some of whom would follow the band from venue to venue over long stretches of time, became to some extent a real community, with rituals of participation all their own.

Grateful Dead at their 20th anniversary press conference: Jerry Garcia, Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir. Courtesy of the Grateful Dead Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library.

The Grateful Dead collection consists of approximately 600 linear feet of boxed material including "paper documents, books, photographs, graphics, film, video, recordings and textiles"—materials ranging from concert tickets, to recordings, to original artworks by fans; and it is considered the definitive archive of the band. The GDA, which represents one of the most significant popular culture collections of the twentieth century, documents the band's activity and influence in contemporary music. The collection contains works

by some of the most famous rock photographers and artists of the era including Herb Green, Stanley Mouse, Wes Wilson, and Susana Millman.

The University of California at Santa Cruz is a division of the University of California system with a student body of 17,454, representing 7.37 percent of the full system, according to fall 2012 figures.[1] According to the UCSC Office of Planning and Budget, in 2012 the University Library had an operating budget of over $8 million, placing it among the smaller research institutions.[2] Its special collections group had done some work in creating digital collections before embarking on the Grateful Dead Archive Online, but never at this scale.[3] According to Robin Chandler, "We had previously been part of other projects, like the Google book scanning project, but then, digitization was done offsite, and we were not dealing with the digital files ourselves, as Google and CDL [California Digital Library] coordinated this. We had done slide scanning, as part of a project with ARTstor, but… these were all smaller projects, with about one thousand images, not forty-five thousand objects!" Housed at a self-described "smaller institution with many fabulous archival collection, but few large, well-known digital collections," this project offered the opportunity "to develop and maintain a traditional 'digital library collection' in a supportable system, reuse, mix, and blend digital collection with user-contributed digital materials…and to create a new model of sustainable, virtual collection building."[4]

In 2008, the remaining members of the Grateful Dead decided to donate the collection to the University of California at Santa Cruz. It was not the first donation from band members to the library, but it was by far the most substantial. With the gift came the stipulation that the contents of the archive be digitized to broaden access

BACKGROUND

According to former University Librarian Virginia Steel, who is now University Librarian at UCLA, "We first learned about the existence of the archive from a faculty member, Fredric (Fred) Lieberman. He teaches a course every year or two (on the Grateful Dead) and is a longtime collaborator with Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart. Fred learned the band was looking for a permanent home for its archive. They had spoken with several archives, but were not satisfied with the response they were getting. Fred encouraged us to approach the business manager of GD Productions, to start a conversation about the possibility of the archive coming to Santa Cruz."

Jerry Garcia with a banjo. Courtesy of the Grateful Dead Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library

In 2008, the remaining members of the Grateful Dead decided to donate the collection to the University of California at Santa Cruz. It was not the first donation from band members to the library, but it was by far the most substantial.[5] With the gift came the stipulation that the contents of the archive be digitized to broaden access. This was something the library wanted, given what they anticipated would be demand for access to these materials from the campus alone, but it was also, according to Robin Chandler, now Associate University Librarian for Collections and Library Information Services (former project manager for the Grateful Dead Archive Online), a stipulation that "comes from the culture of [the Grateful Dead's] tape sharing. They wanted to share back with their fans." The plan was for the library to seek grant funding for the digitization, while the university would seek to endow a permanent Grateful Dead archivist position. Band members offered to help with fundraising activities to this end.

According to Head of Digital Initiatives Sue Perry, "we saw this as a way to possibly 'leapfrog' over the smaller steps and get the digital library program really going quickly, a way to leverage the collection to give a boost to the full collection." Added Chandler, "the project team was feeling a little overwhelmed at the beginning, but everyone jumped on it," embracing the chance to learn the new tactics that were needed to implement the plan.

The real test of the sustainability of the project will be in the scholarly and public impact the archive is able to achieve

Startup costs for the project were funded by a $615,174 IMLS National Leadership Grant to "digitize materials from the Grateful Dead Archive and make them accessible in a unique and cutting-edge website, the "Virtual Terrapin Station" named after an album by the band.[6] Funding was contributed by the UCSC University Library, which included $1.6 M in cost sharing (the original grant proposal spoke of just $340,921) to cover the purchase of scanning equipment, hiring the services of a full-time archivist entirely devoted to managing this archive, and staff engaged in digitization, metadata creation, and rights management. Staffing for the grant-funded phase of the project included a project manager (Robin Chandler); a programmer to develop the site using the open-source Omeka platform; an archivist to help advise on descriptive metadata, organize the collection, and guide the prioritization of items for digitization; and archivists and metadata specialists drawn from Special Collections and Digital Initiatives to accession and create metadata for materials in the digitization queue. The team also needed copyright expertise. The grant included funds to bring in consultants, but as Chandler pointed out, "serendipity comes into play." They formed an intellectual property (IP) strategy group that included Katie Fortney, Collection Development Librarian,[7] who helped develop evaluation methods for the copyright status of items in the collection. The IP strategy group crafted a set of recommendations that were reviewed by a consultant, Peggy Hoon, Scholarly Communications Officer at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Hoon's review included an overview of copyright strategies employed by academic libraries digitizing special collections. Towards the end of the project, the group's approach was validated by the Association of Research Libraries Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Academic and Research Libraries. As a result of this work, Chandler reports that "we have an IP framework that will allow us to proceed with adding additional content to the site as we digitize."

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The sustainability strategy for the Grateful Dead Archive Online includes many elements. In addition to a major fundraising effort aimed at creating an endowed archivist position, building an open-source software platform for the project was seen as an investment in a low-cost way to support not just this project, but others to come. In a sense, the real test of the sustainability of the project will be in the scholarly and public impact the archive is able to achieve, and whether the UC Santa Cruz team will succeed in attracting the legions of Grateful Dead fans to use the site and also to continue contributing their own artifacts and commentary to the collection over time.

Economic Model

The GDAO was always conceived of as a project that would continue to grow, so it was a given that there would be significant ongoing costs to cover, including project management, a full-time archivist, and ongoing web development. As new material is being added to the site, there are also costs to support the machinery to do the scanning itself.

In addition, the question of rights management did not end at launch. According to Sue Perry, "once we got up and running, we determined we needed a rights management coordinator, brought on at half time for over a year; we also did hire a consultant on copyright and IP issues—putting it simply, to make sure we had experts

who could assess our strategy." They felt the need for expert advice concerning what they wanted to scan, and what could be made available to the public online, including how to handle content contributed by Grateful Dead followers.

For the time being, post-grant, all of these activities are being covered by the operational budget for the library, but going forward, the GDAO team is undertaking several strategies to cover the ongoing costs of supporting and growing the online archive. According to Chandler, "To move forward into larger kinds of enhancements, we will need to do fundraising. We will need to work with the community [of fans], our library development officer, and [Grateful Dead Archivist] Nick [Meriwether] to make a case for that vision."

A key part of that fundraising will be the campaign to create an endowment to support the archivist's position, as originally posited in the initial terms of the gift. Ethan Henderson, Senior Director of Development for University Libraries, reports that over the next three to four years the goal is to build "an endowment for the archivist position and to support the archive, to spend on other things, symposia, exhibits...." To fully fund the archivist position, the target for the endowment is $1 million; with regard to continuing to support additional programming, "it depends how big we want it [the endowment] to be." Raising an endowment is seen as a critical step, as the funding environment in the UC system, according to Henderson, is "getting more grim as we speak. We want to be able to make this archive more accessible, not just electronically, but in person. There is a lot of research being done with the material, and we thought it would be important to make materials available to researchers, offering fellowships to researchers and scholars. There is no way we are able to do that unless we build an endowment."

Grants are still an important funding source, and GDAO has secured a second IMLS grant that will allow the University Library to build out their instantiation of the Omeka platform. In the fall of 2012, UCSC received $400,000 from IMLS to create "a toolset to help curation of digital content online," according to Perry. Among the sort of tools the team plans to develop are processes for ingesting batches of images, and transcription tools. "Right now, we depend on Grateful Dead fans to give us things on their own. We thought it would be useful if we were to find content in Picassa, on Flickr, etc., where perhaps a fan published large groups of images. If our curator found it, we would want to bring in a batch of images at once, instead of one at a time as is currently supported by Omeka."

In addition, the team has begun to generate some funding through donations, in several ways:
- **Online donation via the GDAO website.** Visitors to the website can choose to support the project by making donations via the site. So far, $6,265 in online gifts for the Grateful Dead Archive have been received.
- **Large donations from the community.** One donor contributed $500,000 to create Dead Central, permanent exhibit space at the University Library, to display materials from the Grateful Dead Archive. There was another one-time donation of several thousand dollars to purchase a scanner.
- **University-wide fundraising initiatives.** Henderson reports that in mid-2013, University Relations will be using GDAO as a test case for a major social-media–enabled fundraising campaign, which will include providing their Facebook and Twitter contacts with a link to encourage giving to GDAO. Library development staff met in late April with the head of social media for the university to develop the campaign, so that when people donate, they will receive some kind of Grateful Dead ephemera. Their plan also includes launching a crowdfunding campaign through Scalefunder (www.scalefunder.com) "to raise money for a specific GDA project." Their goal for that campaign, to commence in July, is $5,000.

Given that the site also actively seeks people's contribution of materials for the archive, the GDAO team has recognized that they need to give thought to what language they use on the website for online fundraising. In late 2012, a prominent "Donate" button was actually intended for those who are considering uploading their own content, not contributing money. The GDAO team has since revised this, calling attention to "Contribute" for those who wish to offer content to the archive; for those wishing to make a donation of funds, the website's footer contains a "Support the GDA" link. It is too early to measure the impact of this change. So far, the fundraising goals are ambitious: to raise at least $1 million to endow the archivist position, and more, to support ongoing community-based activities. According to Henderson, by summer 2013, the two-year anniversary of the launch of GDAO, they hope to have reached this target.

Public Benefit

To some extent, GDAO's ongoing sustainability is contingent upon its ability to attract a strong community of devoted users and user-contributors. The impact of the resource since its public launch in June 2012 can be measured by the level of interaction with this audience:

- As of June 2013, the Grateful Dead Archive's Facebook page had over 86,000 friends.
- Since launch, there have been 115,120 unique visitors to the GDAO site and 885,857 page views.
- GDAO has received 1,150 user comments, ranging from a few sentences to six paragraphs. Some are corrections and some are questions.
- Ninety items have been contributed by users. The majority of these are photos of concerts, band members, artwork created by fans, and ticket stubs. There are also about ten reminiscences ("stories") that have been contributed.
- 56 user tags created, and over 300 items tagged.

While those figures are impressive, they mask a somewhat more complicated picture. The initial launch drew high numbers—over 5,000 visitors per day on several days of the first month—but those figures did not meet the even higher expectations the project leaders had set. Since those early weeks, average monthly usage has fallen to just over 1,000 unique visits per month.

Project leaders uniformly feel that there are many more potential users of GDAO out there. In the near term, Sue Perry's strategy is to try "engaging people where they are…working through the news groups, the Internet Archive. The [GD] Archive itself has [86,000] fans on Facebook…. We can engage people more." Otherwise, the GDAO web operations team, now led by Perry, acknowledges that there is still work to be done in terms of outreach and promotion of the site. To date, they have not really reached out to other social media and to other Grateful Dead sites to pursue inbound links, though they feel this would be a good strategy, and recent efforts at driving traffic by posting on Facebook has been effective.[8] In fact, according to Henderson, the GDAO Facebook page "gets dozens of fans with their own pages every week, who want us to link to them," but so far, GDAO has declined to do this. The development office is "trying to find the medium…if we are not going to link to them, how to get them to link to us? We have unique materials…that they cannot [otherwise] see without coming to campus."

KEY FACTORS OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. **Managing the transition from project to service requires planning.** From the start, the GDAO team— at first, the project led by Chandler, and now the GDAO web operations team led by Perry—saw that this was not just a digitization project, but an initiative that would have to transition "from project to product."

   Chandler stressed the importance of thinking about what the transition would require. "When you start to transition from a project to a product—especially a project with a user component—you need to realize

that users will interact with the site, and will ask questions, supplying metadata and content, and particularly around something like [community contribution], you need infrastructure that will allow you to receive messages, track them, and be able to answer them; gather data. We needed mechanisms to gather this data and sort it out and get it to the teams…. With any project you work hard to get it out the door, but something like this, with the interaction of all the users—you need to be able to respond to their requests quickly."

One way to do this was to think about how to respond to user feedback. The team decided to put in place a single point of contact for fielding all queries. Today, "all queries go in to one queue, it's like a ticketing system" according to Perry. The volume is about two messages a day, with sometimes more following a podcast or other publicity. There are about five staffers who are tasked with checking the queue and responding. Most queries are users reporting things not working, broken, and some are suggestions for new enhancements. Some are rights claims or requests to take down material (some from people who may not want their early years as Deadheads colliding with their adult professional lives).

Concerns about heavy traffic led to a clever approach: Rather than work with Amazon or another cloud-based service, the project's IT staff "worked with colleagues on campus within some different schools who were able to loan them space in the clusters, to run copies of the system, so that they could essentially direct traffic to multiple copies on campus." As a precaution, in case traffic were to become too great to be handled even in this manner, they developed a "time out" piece: programmers wrote script that will retrieve files from Internet Archive to play Grateful Dead music if servers are busy and a user has to wait for access to the site. So far, however, this has not been an issue.

Despite the forward planning, there have been some difficulties, particularly in the area of ongoing website development. The GDAO programmer, whose position was funded by the original IMLS grant, sought a permanent position and found employment at another university. About two months after his departure in October 2012, UCSC received news that the second IMLS grant for which they had applied, funding development of the Omeka Curation Dashboard, was approved. This project included funding for two years for a programmer. Recruitment for the position is currently underway. While the focus of the position will be on the new grant, Omeka software development and enhancement will benefit GDAO. It is the team's hope for the long term that funds can be raised to support programmers to build new functionality into the GDAO website.

2. **Balancing academic and popular needs helps reach broad audiences.** There was some early concern that an archive devoted to the Grateful Dead was "just not the most solid academic value," so there was concern about some possible pushback, according to Chandler, "but we were able to make the case [that] we were leveraging the grant money and donor money to benefit all parts of our special collections and Digital Initiatives departments." And according to Perry, "faculty on campus are glad to see work on digitization" Beyond that, some faculty, for example in the history department, "were glad do have us develop more expertise about the Omeka software, as this would be a source of advice for other digital humanities projects others were undertaking."

How to balance the archival items in the donated collection with the user-contributed items has been an evolving question. From the outset, the GDAO project team "knew that the quality of submitted materials would not necessarily be 'archival,'" according to Chandler. "It was always an opportunity to build a community collection online, and these submissions could lead to a conversation with the creator about a possible donation," whether of higher resolution images, or physical artifacts, if warranted. To make the

distinction between the archival materials and the user-contributed content, new entries are flagged as "Newly Available. Please Review" to encourage users to review the content and flag content they feel is inappropriate. If an item is flagged as inappropriate, an email is sent to the administrators who review it themselves and determine if it merits removal. So far, according to Perry, "the CAPTCHA requirement on the contribution form has been very successful at keeping out inappropriate content (such as spam) and it hasn't been a problem."

3. **There are significant benefits of host support.** For those digital collections fortunate enough to be part of larger, supportive institutions, there are many benefits. GDAO benefits from such services as intellectual property consultation and development work, but as an initiative of the UCSC University Library, it also benefits from services provided by the California Digital Library (CDL). While CDL does not have a direct role in the GDAO website or the Grateful Dead Archive, both benefit from several CDL services, including the Online Archive of California, which hosts the finding aid for the Grateful Dead Archive (described in terms of ten separate series, such as History, Business, Show Files, and so forth);[9] the Merritt Repository, which will be the eventual long-term preservation solution for the materials digitized as part of the original IMLS grant;[10] and the Web Archiving Service (WAS), which supports the crawling and preservation of websites documenting Grateful Dead history and culture. According to Chandler, these websites are "cataloged and integrated into the GDAO website, i.e., they will surface during searching, though access is provided through the WAS website."[11]

ONGOING SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

•   **Building the endowment.** Because the mission of the online archive is to continue to gather artifacts and to participate in the Deadhead culture around it, its ongoing costs will continue into the indefinite future. Right now, there are grant funds to support this. The university may need to agree to support staff time beyond the archivist, however, to continue to field requests from the fans who write in.

•   **Engaging with the huge Deadhead fanbase to build the collection.** Outreach has not yet attained the level the team would like to see and thinks the archive merits. Additional outreach could include forging closer ties both with other major Dead-related collections and with fan sites big and small, to fully engage this very enthusiastic fan base in building and using the collection. This work, too, will need to be funded in some way, if the archive is going to meet its goal, and it is not clear that at this time there is staff at the university with this area of expertise.

LESSONS FOR OTHERS

1. **Planning for a transition is vital.** The needs of a project post-startup are going to shift. In this case, the team developed a low-touch method for managing the hundreds of user comments that have come in, and was able to foresee and plan for this in advance.

2. **Outreach takes work** (time, money), but is a critical factor in both building the audience for the resource, and in identifying sources of content and revenue.

APPENDIX

Interviewees

Robin L. Chandler, Associate University Librarian, Collections and Library Information Systems, UCSC University Library

Ethan Henderson, Senior Director of Development for University Libraries, UCSC

Nicholas Meriwether, Grateful Dead Archivist, UCSC University Library

Susan Chesley Perry, Head of Digital Initiatives, UCSC University Library

Virginia Steel, former University Librarian, UCSC University Library (2005-2013); current University Librarian, University of California at Los Angeles

Resources Consulted

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IMLS Final Performance Report Narrative for "Creating a Virtual Terrapin Station," 2012.

IMLS Interim Performance Report Narrative for "Creating a Virtual Terrapin Station," October 31, 2011.

Nick Paumgarten, "Deadhead: The Afterlife," The New Yorker, November 26, 2012.

Virginia Steel (University Librarian, UCSC University Library), Principle Investigator, "Creating a Virtual Terrapin Station: Blending Traditional and Socially Constructed Archives for Research, Teaching, and Cultural Enrichment," proposal narrative for IMLS National Leadership Grant, 2009.

David A. Wallace, "Co-creation of the Grateful Dead Sound Archive: Control, Access, and Curation Communities," in Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory, ed. Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet Publishing, 2009).

NOTES

1   University of California, Statistical Summary of Students and Staff, Fall 2012, http://legacy-its.ucop.edu/uwnews/stat/statsum/fall2012/statsumm2012.pdf.

2   UC Santa Cruz Office of Planning and Budget, "The Birds Eye View," 2012–13, p. 75, http://planning.ucsc.edu/budget/Reports/profile2012.pdf.

3   Grateful Dead Archive Online website, available at www.gdao.org.

4   "Creating a Virtual Terrapin Station: Blending Traditional and Socially Constructed Archives for Research, Teaching, and Cultural Enrichment," proposal for IMLS National Leadership Grant. file copy, office of the University Librarian, UCSC.

5   Earlier gifts had been made in 2004 by two foundations run by band members, the Rex Foundation, founded by the Grateful Dead and friends, and the Unbroken Chain Foundation, established by Phil and Jill Lesh. See Scott Rapaport, "Grateful Dead Donates Archives to UC Santa Cruz," Newscenter (UC Santa Cruz), April 24, 2008, http://news.ucsc.edu/2008/04/2142.html.

6   University of California at Santa Cruz University Library website, "Virtual Terrapin Station Receives Major IMLS Grant" http://library.ucsc.edu/speccoll/grateful-dead-archive-news/virtual-terrapin-station-receives-major-imls-grant.

7   Katie Fortney now serves as the Copyright Management Officer at the California Digital Library.

8   According to Perry, a news item posted to the Facebook page in July 2013 led to a 5-fold increase in usage on the GDAO site for 3 days following.

9   Online Archive of California, "Collection Guide to Grateful Dead Records: History," http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8vm49n7/admin/#relatedmaterial-1.3.12.

10   California Digital Library, "Merritt: Share, Manage and Preserve Your Content," http://www.cdlib.org/services/uc3/merritt/.

11   Web Archives, "Grateful Dead Web Archive," http://webarchives.cdlib.org/a/gratefuldead.