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Pace 9/11 Oral History Project

Maria T. Iacullo-Bird

Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, Pace University

Ellen Sowchek

Office of The University Librarian, Pace University

Jennifer Thomas

Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems, Pace University

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Pace 9/11 Oral History Project --Thinkfinity Final Project Report

Thinkfinity Cornerstone 2 Community Outreach and Empowerment

Principal Investigator/ Project Director:

Maria T. Iacullo-Bird, Ph.D., Dyson College of Arts and Sciences

Co-Principal Investigators/Co-Project Directors

Ellen Sowchek, Office of the University Librarian

Jennifer Thomas, Ph.D., Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems

December 15th, 2011

A) Original Goals:

This project proposal made to “Cornerstone 2 Community Outreach and Empowerment through Service Learning and Volunteerism seeks to support Pace University’s developing leadership role in shaping technology and learning at the college level” by **a)** converting approximately 98 audio cassette interviews to digital format; **b)** converting transcriptions that exist only in text form to digital files; **c)** converting student reflective journals that exist only in text form to digital files; **d)** proofreading the audio tapes with the student transcripts and making any necessary corrections to ensure the most accurate transcription is available in digital form; **e)** developing in consultation with Pace in-house technical staff a well-designed site for this project for deposit in the *Pace Digital Commons*; **f)** developing in the University Archives a virtual exhibit of related Pace 9/11 materials that will complement the *Pace 9/11 Oral History Project* repository in the *Pace Digital Commons*; **g)** making available 9/11 testimony and related materials for dissemination to the university, the Lower Manhattan community and beyond for the upcoming 10th anniversary commemoration of the catastrophe.

B) Progress made toward original goals on project to date:

The project made steady progress regarding original goals “**a**” through “**e**” that culminated in goals “**f**” creating a virtual exhibit of Pace 9/11 archival materials that became part of the Pace 9/11 Oral History project repository and “**g**” making a portion of the 9/11 materials and testimony available for dissemination to the university, the Lower Manhattan community and the larger public beginning with the tenth anniversary of 9/11 on September 11, 2011 and continuing indefinitely into the future. Viewing the tenth anniversary of 9/11 as a critical deadline, the students worked steadily and intensely to have the website, a portion of the oral history interviews and Pace archival historical materials ready for public presentation by September 11, 2011. The two Thinkfinity-funded student interns were joined by an AmeriCorps educational student intern who was a member of the CIS 102 web design class

and a fourth student funded for the summer by Dyson College Undergraduate Research funds.

The two Thinkfinity student interns, with the help of the AmeriCorps student intern and Dyson student intern, made steady progress further developing the project website, continuing to convert all audio cassette interviews to digital form, converting all text transcriptions to digital form, and proofreading a portion of the tapes. The Pace 9/11 Oral History Project Web Launch took place in the Student Union on Monday, September 12, 2011.

C) What activities have been completed to contribute to meeting/progressing toward these goals?

The student interns have inventoried and converted to digital format the 48 student projects from the 2004, 2005 and 2006 courses. Digitalized in their entirety were the audio recordings, interview transcripts, final papers and journal entries. A total of 95 audio cassette recorded interviews and text transcriptions were converted to digital format as were a smaller number of student journals and papers. The student interns continued to proofread and make any necessary corrections to the student-generated text transcripts by listening and comparing them to the original audio recordings. Under the oversight of Professor Jennifer Thomas, her web design class CIS 102 designed a website for the Pace 9/11 Oral History project. Under the oversight of Archivist Ellen Sowchek, the student interns also digitalized historic photographs, Pace Press newspaper articles and Pace-related 9/11 ephemera drawn from the Pace Archives. The most intense time was the summer months when the students were working toward the deadline of 9/11. Given the labor intensive nature of this process that was more time consuming than originally projected, a portion of the 9/11 interviews were ready for public access by September 11, 2011; the remaining audio cassette tapes, text transcripts, journals and papers were put into digital form by mid-December 2011. By mid-December the student interns had proofed 23 transcripts; 14 currently are posted on the website and the other 7 are waiting for a final proofreading by the Project Director before uploading to the website.

D) What activities have not been completed? Please indicate why they have not been completed.

During its operation, the project developed a protocol for proofreading the transcripts to ensure accuracy. The student interns did a first proofread and the Dr. Iacullo-Bird did a second, final proofread. In addition to the other tasks, proofreading was a very time-consuming activity and for this reason the students proofread only 23 of the total oral history interviews. Proofreading for Dr. Iacullo-Bird also has been very labor intensive and was not included in the original projections for this project phase. Dr. Iacullo-Bird plans to continue this proofreading beyond the funded Thinkfinity project until all 95 are completed. Three of the original 98 were eliminated due to technical difficulties and inappropriate content.

E) Please outline the outcomes you have received as a result.

All the 9/11 Oral History tapes and transcripts were put into digital form. The website was designed consisting of six major sections: About the Project, Course Materials, Interviews Journals & Papers, Archival Materials and Research Resources. A portion of interviews were proofed and made available on the newly created website:

<http://webpage.pace.edu/911oralhistoryproject>

F) Did you create a Class? If so, is the class running?

Three classes of HIS113P in 2004, 2005 and 2006 conducted the original Pace 9/11 Oral history Project. Professor Jennifer Thomas instructed her Area of Knowledge #1 web design class CIS 102 to design a web site for the Pace 9/11 Oral History Project.

G) Has your project impacted students? If so, how many?

At a minimum this project impacted at least 100 students. These students included the 48 student members of the HIS 113P Classes, the 24 students in the CIS 102 web design class, the 2 Thinkfinity-funded students, the AmeriCorps student member, the Dyson Undergraduate Research- funded student and the students in attendance at the Web launch on September 12, 2011. All these students have acquired knowledge about the challenges of web design and producing the best possible design outcomes to feature the archival materials entrusted to this purpose. The Web Launch included in attendance the 24 students enrolled in Dr. Iacullo-Bird's Fall 2011 HIS113K New York City history course. All these students, who were children when the 9/11 attacks occurred, acquired more in-depth knowledge about the 9/11 attacks in Lower Manhattan and the experience of Pace University during and after the attacks. The two Thinkfinity student interns, the AmeriCorps student intern and the Dyson sponsored summer intern also have learned about oral history methodology and digitalization.

Additionally, access to the website will provide countless future students with the opportunity to learn more about the experience of Pace University and Lower Manhattan during and after the 9/11 catastrophe. The project also serves as an example of undergraduate research and the uses of both oral history methodology in a thematic class context and electronic resources in the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

H) Has your project impacted other faculty members? If so, how many?

This project has interested several dozen faculty and staff who have become aware of the project. We expect to reach a larger faculty audience within Pace most likely at Dyson Day and/or the Faculty Institute as we showcase the use of electronic resources and undergraduate research--high impact teaching practices--that support retention and academic achievement.

I) Were there any unintended outcomes achieved?

An unintended outcome was the necessity of creating a project website within Pace University separate from the Digital Commons in order to preserve the student website design that was an integral part of this undergraduate research project. We learned during the project that downloading to the Digital Commons would follow the form of the digital commons and not permit any customized design.

J) Did you present at a conference? If so, which conference?

Not yet, but we anticipate presenting at a conference in the near future.

K) Do your outcomes reflect the change or benefit you were hoping to receive?

Yes, the outcomes reflect the benefit we were hoping to achieve by providing more permanent preservation and wider access through digital storage and uploading onto the project website.

L) How has your project furthered the Thinkfinity Cornerstone you selected?

Cornerstone 2 that addresses “Community Outreach and Empowerment through Service Learning and Volunteerism seeks to support Pace University’s developing leadership role in shaping technology and learning at the college level.” The Pace 9/11 Oral History Project demonstrates how undergraduate students can utilize technology both for the creation of knowledge regarding a catastrophic historical event and the dissemination of this information to the university community, Lower Manhattan and the larger public.

M) Describe your future plans for sustaining the program or project.

Now that the website is available, Dr. Iacullo-Bird will continue to place fully proofed interviews onto the website. Dr. Iacullo-Bird plans to sustain the website through Dyson College and will utilize it on a regular basis in her teaching of New York City history and American History. Dr. Iacullo-Bird also seeks to publish an account of Pace University and 9/11 and will utilize the primary source material available in the project website for the writing of this history.