

## Steps in Building the Portal

### Digital Access Committee

#### 12.10.10

A new CRRRA member recently asked what the aims and goals are for the portal, i.e., what stages of development are foreseen, what kinds of services are seen in these stages and how members might view the development of the portal as a viable, useful and in-demand tool. While it will always be a work in progress, we believe it is helpful to identify and articulate such stages and what each stage will offer. Toward that end, we identified four essential targets for near term development:

1. a critical mass of rare and unique content
2. access to the full EAD file is possible
3. access to the item itself is possible or facilitated
4. ability to search among texts to discover and create new knowledge

One purpose is to strengthen understanding among CRRRA participants of the direction and planned goals for developing the portal. A second purpose is to use this articulation of steps to inform and guide the strategic planning process and the development of goals for 2011/12. For example, one goal stated in this year's [CRRRA Strategic Plan](#)\* is "Develop and draft a vision for the portal that includes and fosters digital scholarship." This document represents a first step toward this goal by showing how phases in portal development will support digital scholarship.

The current aim is to develop a portal rich in rare, unique and uncommon Catholic scholarly resources with a robust search and display functionality for MARC and EAD records. By 2012, the goal is to have a critical mass of full text content and to have digital humanities tools in place that will enable scholars to discover new knowledge across collections and resources. Following is a model/timeline of past, current, and projected phases in portal development to realize this vision. The model references collections and members, but its focus is on portal infrastructure. Content and new members will surely be added, administrative and budgetary concerns addressed, but this is not articulated in the following model so as not to distract from the infrastructure itself, the tools behind the portal that enhance the usability and discoverability of its rare, unique, and uncommon resources. The following model focuses primarily on the goals in the [CRRRA strategic plans](#) relating to data input and ingestion as well as search functionality and display, items that fall primarily under the purview of the Digital Access Committee.

#### Phase 1 - Portal 1.0

In fiscal year 2009/2010, the main intent was to build infrastructure: in terms of the portal, portal content, and membership. Specifically, we implemented the following goals related to portal development from the [2009/10 CRRRA strategic plan](#):

- adopted and implemented the VuFind interface
- established, documented, and communicated best practices for members to make content available

- ingested more than 20,000 records into VuFind as part of a pilot project
- met with the Scholars Advisory Committee for guidance regarding portal content
- conducted focus groups at six member institutions to gather input on the collecting focus
- identified 12 themes and articulated a collection development Policy narrowing the focus to rare, unique, and uncommon materials
- explored harvesting techniques

### **Phase 2 - Portal 2.0**

The current aim is to develop a portal rich in rare, unique and uncommon Catholic scholarly resources with a robust search and display functionality for MARC and EAD records by March 2011. Specifically we are working on the goals in this year's [CRRA Strategic plan](#) to:

- build capacity in membership and records
- create an EAD indexing and display tool
- develop and implement a procedure for harvesting member records
- implement "Web 2.0" features of VuFind (email, favorites comments, etc.)
- identify appropriate use statistics and pilot reports for 2011/2012 implementation
- conduct usability studies at member institutions
- refine portal content by refocusing on rare, unique, and uncommon resources
- revise website documents to to serve needs of scholars, members, and prospective members including but not limited to: how to join, benefits of membership, how to search, CRRA activities and projects, about CRRA members
- provide public access to policy documents such as the collection policy, metadata guidelines, bylaws, etc.
- create a demonstration digitization project with a subset of members
- explore text mining techniques to facilitate discovery and creation of new knowledge among portal resources

### **Phase 3 - Portal 3.0**

By May 2012, the proposed goal is to have a critical mass of full text content and to have digital humanities tools in place enabling scholars to discover new knowledge across collections and resources. Although the CRRA strategic planning and goals for 2011/12 are not yet identified, the data from the CRRA focus groups with scholars indicates this as a desirable next step.

Scholars have been clear in their desires for the portal - provide access to rare, unique, and uncommon materials of interest to Catholic scholarship and - when feasible, provide access to the object itself. The portal will serve scholars' needs by developing Web-based tools to support robust keyword searching within and across texts and the ability to analyze texts and detect patterns across documents using tools such as charts, graphs, timelines, etc. Examples of the uses of these tools include: ability to compare and contrast themes across texts, trace the evolution of ideas through or across sets of texts, extract all

images from a number of manuscripts to create a virtual flip-book for easy scanning, and/or create a timeline of key events across a set of documents. To implement this vision we would potentially:

- increase the number of images and full text documents
- create opportunities for members to collaboratively digitize their resources through activities such as collaborative grant projects, harvesting, digitization on demand, etc.
- implement text mining and visualization techniques to facilitate discovery and creation of new knowledge among portal resources

### **Beyond Portal 3.0**

The technical future directions for the “Catholic portal” are only limited by our imagination and the resources applied against it. There are any number of additional paths we can take to accomplish the goals of the CRRA. Some of them may include:

- metadata contributions via a portal template
- collaborative transcription projects
- development of the portal as a medium for sharing other resources, research, peer review, etc.
- options for acquiring items through ILL or digitization models
- expanding resource types to include more audio-visual media, international resources, journals, newspapers, etc.
- translation tools
- hosting e-journals

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