Digital Edition Publishing Cooperatives

NHPRC-Mellon Call for Proposals

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation invite proposals for **Digital Edition Publishing Cooperatives**. Working together, the Cooperatives will develop technical and human infrastructures to support the digital publication of documentary and scholarly editions and to provide for their long-term preservation, discovery, and use. This initiative responds to the urgent need of scholars and documentary editors for reliable, sustainable, authoritative, and field-driven outlets for publication and discovery of digital editions. At the same time, we hope to investigate the possibility of creating a federated system or systems for publishing and sustaining digital editions.

Developing the Digital Edition Publishing Cooperatives will be a two-stage process for *Planning* and *Implementation*.

Up to eight planning grants will provide funds to support the first stage of this multi-year endeavor, beginning no later than February 1, 2018. Each project team will consist of a principal investigator to spearhead the initiative, a lead representative from each of at least three participating editions and the host institution(s). During the Planning stage, each team will develop a proposal for implementing a Digital Edition Publishing Cooperative. Planning grants are for one year and up to $100,000.

All planning teams would be eligible to apply for Implementation funding. Three implementation grants of between $350,000 and $500,000, each for up to three years, are expected to be awarded, for a total of up to $1.25 million. Implementation grants will be awarded in September 2019, with a start date of no later than October 1, 2019. A full description of the program and its outcomes, and a glossary of special terminology, are included below.

- Deadline for Proposals: **July 6, 2017**
- Award Notification: **December 15, 2017**
- Project Start Date: **January 1, 2018**

Background and Context

This initiative grows out of the fruitful interdisciplinary work of the Mellon-funded Scholarly Communications Institute, held in the Research Triangle during October 9-13, 2016. Over four and a half days, the Working Group on Building a Sustainable Digital Edition Ecosystem* focused on the core challenges facing the documentary editing community, especially the need for reliable, authoritative, and field-driven outlets for publication and discovery of digital editions.

The Digital Edition Publishing Cooperatives initiative seeks to address this unique set of challenges affecting both the documentary editing community and the larger public it serves. After two decades of experimentation, individual scholarly editions continue to find it difficult to build and maintain their own digital infrastructure for creating and disseminating their work, and most producers of digital scholarly editions lack access to predictable, affordable, and sustainable publication channels.

While publication and access each present their own challenges for digital editions (large or small), the general lack of viable publication venues or support systems also has substantial consequences. For example, in many cases, this situation imposes artificial constraints on projects' intellectual horizons and editorial goals. Editors may make limiting choices simply because the opportunity to make use of/participate in a more ambitious approach lies out of reach in practical terms.

Furthermore, modern digital scholarly editing practice does not take place in isolation. Digital editions could benefit substantially from ways to share information standards, editorial practices, and dissemination mechanisms, and from opportunities to take advantage of shared information resources--such as the Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) Research Tool, which is addressing a long-standing research challenge: discovering, locating, and using distributed historical records). A strong network of projects working cooperatively can help overcome the limits of single projects.

This call for proposals for Digital Edition Publishing Cooperatives does not seek to create or impose a specific framework or platform. Rather, it proposes a process for project teams to build—from the ground up rather than from the top down—a cooperative infrastructure for publication based on their own needs and capacities. This infrastructure should exploit the synergies among editions and enable them to interact. Infrastructure here means not just technological systems (such as digital repositories or discovery tools) but also shared standards, semantics, practices, and policies. These necessarily entail discussion and compromise, and we envision each of the project teams would identify common frameworks and shared foundations and then expand on these to arrive at negotiated agreements for their collaborative work. Cooperation in this environment needs to be built, not imposed.

Working iteratively and in concert, project teams will also explore ways to operate as a federated system: to build broader connections at the level of technical infrastructure, shared semantics, and cooperative policies. During the proposed planning year, project teams will engage in a set of focused discussions about what would constitute those connective strands—for example: policies concerning rights and access, common use of linked open data standards, a possible system of shared governance, and a means of sustaining the work.

This work is timely. Previous collaborative efforts have raised concerns about the difficulties of designing comprehensive platforms that anticipate all needs (and require compliance from all participants). However, the emerging technologies of linked open data make possible more flexible systems for sharing and harmonizing information resources that accommodate local variation and the realities of specific projects and available resources. While this initiative begins with existing projects, the Publishing Cooperatives would also anticipate the needs and integration of future editions and open pathways for what current editions can become over time.

Both the participating edition clusters and their institutional host(s) stand to benefit. For producers of scholarly editions, this initiative offers an opportunity to create a predictable, viable, and sustainable venue for digital publication, discovery, and long-term preservation. Additionally, participating editors will have an opportunity to explore and build practical connections with other editions, and to develop processes for information-sharing and harmonization of practices across projects in ways that can enhance the value of each edition while creating fruitful synergistic effects no one edition could achieve in isolation.

For institutional hosts—whether a research library, scholarly publisher, or digital humanities center—the initiative offers an opportunity to explore the economics and feasibility of creating support systems for the publication, discovery, and free use of digital editions. While the work of the Cooperatives is likely to extend beyond host institutions, these same systems would potentially support local needs and would expand the core of unique resources available for discovery and use by a host's constituencies. Host institutions would not only play an essential role as long-term stewards; they would also make significant contributions to the larger conversation around open-access solutions and high-level discussions of how these may play out at the national level. More broadly, participating editions and institutional hosts would be providing an essential public service to a vast array of communities, including subject experts, researchers, teachers, and non-academics, while advancing the field toward a more sustainable digital edition ecosystem.

Creating Project Teams

This initiative is intended as an opportunity to discover and address opportunities and obstacles to collaboration and interoperation. Digital editions can and ought to interact usefully with each other--but that useful interaction across editions must be developed through negotiations and agreements among their creators. We are particularly interested in teams whose source materials and editorial vision are complementary, offering opportunities to create strong research ecologies if brought together. We also welcome teams whose approaches are not seamless but raise significant and challenging methodological questions.

Each project team should include the necessary editorial, technical, and scholarly expertise to address the challenges of developing a Cooperative at every level. Each should be led by a principal investigator, with training and expertise suited to the vision and goals of this initiative, including the ability to develop and sustain mutually beneficial, interdisciplinary collaborations within and across institutions and subfields, and to manage a complex project over time. Experienced directors of documentary editions, research libraries, digital history centers, and/or university presses who have managed complex digital editions, digital humanities projects, or digital publication pipelines, may be particularly well suited for this role.

Each team should cohere around a common set of concerns, which may be defined in a variety of ways: by historical subject area, research methodology, or common editorial structures. For example, a team with a focus on U.S. Civil Rights history could involve several ongoing documentary editions whose resources promise to advance new research and study in that U.S. history subfield. A project focused on advancing research in the comparative and transnational history of slave emancipation might bring together documentary editing projects related to the U.S., Cuba, and Brazil. An interdisciplinary team with a methodological focus on social network analysis might bring together editions drawn from history, literary studies, sociology, and/or anthropology, whose work stands to gain from close interaction. Likewise, projects that cohere around the need for common editorial structures could include editions based on financial and business records or documentary editions that allow for geo-spatial analysis. Cooperatives, once established, may expand over time.

This initiative is not intended to fund the basic editorial work or normal operating costs of participating edition projects. The editorial work of each project team should be well-advanced so that they can focus on cross-project collaboration and negotiation. Project teams will work collaboratively to determine common editorial practices, encoding schemes, protocols for data sharing and reuse, and underlying systems of data management and curation. To this end, project teams should include experts with appropriate training and experience to guide technical planning and implementation. Project teams may wish to consult experts in project design and publishing. Each team should also include representatives from one or more institutional hosts able to provide guidance on long-term digital preservation and publication support for the edition cluster.

The Planning and Implementation Process

The Planning stage will correspond roughly to calendar year 2018. Most project teams will likely devote the bulk of their time in the first half of the year to developing plans for implementing their respective Publishing Cooperative. At mid-year, NHPRC and the Mellon Foundation will invite and fund representatives from each of the project teams to attend an interim meeting at the National Archives building in Washington, DC. The

meeting will provide an opportunity for sharing and learning across project teams and to begin exploring, as a group, how to create a network of Cooperatives. Project teams will finalize their plans for implementation, in the form of well-developed proposals for implementation funding.

NHPRC and the Mellon Foundation will select up to three project teams to participate in the Implementation stage. Criteria for selection would include the coherence of the collaborative framework, its feasibility, prospects for wider adoption, and competence of the team to implement its proposed work plan. We anticipate the project teams selected to participate in the implementation stage will commence their work in spring 2019.

Terminology and Concepts

As an initiative intended to generate new collaborative possibilities, this call for proposals necessarily asks applicants to engage a variety of individuals and entities whose professional vocabularies may differ. The following glossary is offered to help applicants communicate as clearly as possible when writing their narrative proposal.

- **Project Team**: The individuals identified to work together on the planning grant itself, minimally consisting of a principal investigator to spearhead the initiative, and a lead representative from each of the participating editions and the host institution(s). The project team may also include outside consultants, as appropriate.

- **Edition**: An edition is an editorial project created to make public (publish) the content of historical documents and sources (such as original manuscripts or audio source materials) that serve a defined area of historical research, using verified transcriptions and following a consistent, well-articulated editorial method. Editions provide well-researched and sourced explanations of historical references and/or context, such as annotations, identifications of people, places, and organizations, and provide reliable metadata about each document or source, such as but not limited to author and date of composition. (Please note that, for this planning process, the editorial work of each project team should be well-advanced so that they can focus on cross-project collaboration and negotiation.)

- **Edition Cluster**: The group of editorial projects that will be working together on a particular project team. Edition clusters should cohere around a common set of concerns, which may be defined in a variety of ways--for example, by historical subject area, research methodology, or common editorial structures.

- **Host**: The participant or set of participants working in concert with the editions to create the digital infrastructure necessary for delivering / distributing the content to end users. The host may or may not also be responsible for providing a content management system and interface for editorial work; technology services to transform content from one format to another (e.g., XML to HTML) for all or some of the editions; and long-term digital preservation. It is up to each project team to determine what the responsibilities of its host(s) will be. Entities likely to serve as hosts may include (but are not limited to) university libraries or digital centers, independent research libraries, university presses and other scholarly publishers. Editions need not have a preexisting relationship with the proposed host(s).

- **Cooperative / Publishing Cooperative**: The formation of publishing cooperatives is a key expected outcome of the planning and implementation process envisioned for this initiative. Each Cooperative will consist of an edition cluster and host, and should cohere around a common set of concerns. During the planning stage, project teams will investigate what is needed for the creation of their proposed publishing cooperative.

- **Federated System**: As part of this planning process, project teams will investigate the possibility of creating a federated system or systems of cooperatives for publishing and sustaining digital editions. Federated system is understood as the system of technical and human relationships to be defined by participating project teams for the purpose of building broader connections across Cooperatives at the level of technical infrastructure, shared semantics and policies.

Award Information

Stage 1: Planning

Planning grants are for one year and up to $100,000. As many as 8 planning grants are expected to be awarded. Awardees will be notified by December 15, 2017, with work commencing no later than February 1, 2018, and ending no later than January 31, 2019. The requested grant amount should be appropriate to the needs of the project's institutional collaborators and the scope of planning. Reports on the planning grant will include two parts: a report on the planning grant and a full proposal for implementation. These reports will be due March 31, 2019.

Stage 2: Implementation

NHPRC and the Mellon Foundation will evaluate the proposals and select up to three for implementation grants. Implementation grants of up to $500,000, for up to three years, are expected to be awarded, for a total of up to $1.25 million. Implementation grants will be awarded in September 2019, with a start date of no later than October 1,

2019. The requested grant amount should be appropriate to the needs of the project's institutional collaborators and the scope of planning.

Grant funds are not intended to support the basic editorial work or normal operating costs of participating edition projects or their host(s). Additionally, grant funds may not be used to pay indirect costs.

Cost Sharing and Eligibility

Cost sharing is not a requirement of either the Stage 1 or Stage 2 competitions.

Eligible applicants include nonprofit institutions of higher learning, including colleges, universities, and other academic institutions, as well as other nonprofit organizations or institutions.

All project teams must designate a principal investigator (described above) and an authorized representative responsible for financial reporting. Project teams involving more than one institution or other nonprofit organization must designate one of these institutions as the grantee for administrative purposes. The designated authorized representative must be a representative from the applicant/grantee institution. For a project team involving a collaboration of two or more institutions, the principal investigator must be based at either the applicant institution or a partner institution.

While project teams may include non-U.S. participants, the majority of participants, including the principal investigator, authorized representative, applicant organization, and the primary institutional host (if different) must be located in the U.S.

Application and Submission Information

Drafts and Full Application Submissions

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Darrell Meadows, NHPRC Director for Publishing and coordinator for the initiative, who can offer advice about preparing the proposal, including review of draft proposals. He can be reached at 202-357-5321, or by email at darrell.meadows@nara.gov. Although draft proposals are not required, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this preliminary review. Comments on draft proposals are not part of the formal review process and have no bearing on the final outcome of the application.

To ensure timely review, applicants may submit a preliminary draft proposal no later than May 15, 2017. This preliminary draft should include the full narrative section of the application and the proposed budget. Please send drafts by e-mail attachment (PDF preferred) to darrell.meadows@nara.gov.

Full applications must be submitted as PDFs by email attachment to Darrell Meadows, NHPRC Director for Publishing, at darrell.meadows@nara.gov, no later than midnight Eastern Standard Time on July 6, 2017. Applicants will receive confirmation by email upon receipt.

Application Materials

Your application should consist of PDFs of the Proposal Information Sheet, Cover Letter, Endorsement Letter, Project Narrative, Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative, and an Appendix. Please adhere to the following instructions when preparing your application.

1. Proposal Information Sheet

Applicants must download and complete the Proposal Information Sheet.

2. Cover Letter

A cover letter on organizational letterhead, signed by the principal investigator, should accompany the final proposal and match the date of the Proposal Information Sheet. It should be addressed to the NHPRC-Mellon Digital Edition Publishing Cooperatives Planning Grants Program and include the title and a brief summary of the project, the amount of funding sought, and the names and contact information of any collaborating institutions and individuals. The cover letter should also include reference to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's "Grantmaking Policies" and state that the organization understands and will comply with these policies.

3. Endorsement Letter

A signed endorsement letter from the chief executive officer of the applicant organization is needed when the chief executive officer is not the principal investigator on the proposed project. The endorsement letter, on organizational letterhead and dated the same as, or later than, the cover letter, should be submitted with the final proposal. It should refer to the proposed planning grant and project title, budget and timeframe, and the date and substance of the principal investigator's cover letter.

4. Project Narrative

The project narrative should not exceed 25 pages, and should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and 12 pt. type. The narrative should include the following sections:

- *Abstract and Overview* (no more than 3 pages): Provide a clear and concise rationale for the project. Briefly describe your project team, identifying its participants and its proposed activities and expected results. Describe the expected outcomes and benefits of the project. Explain how participation in this initiative will meet the needs of both the participating editions and future digital editions, as well as how your project team will

advance the work of the broader initiative. Outline the core opportunities and challenges you foresee in undertaking this work. Also provide a very brief budget summary.

- **Project Team**: Describe your project team in fuller detail. Project teams should elect a principal investigator to lead the initiative, and should also include at a minimum, the lead representative from each of the participating edition projects, as well as the lead representative(s) from the institution(s) or organization(s) committed to serving as an institutional host. List the names of all individuals who have already committed to participating in the planning process, as well as those who have been invited but have not yet committed to participating, and those who might be invited, including any individuals who will serve as advisors. Explain the contributions that both the committed participants and the potential participants would make to the planning process. If applicable, provide a description of legal and operational relationships with other organizations, subcontractors, consultants, administering agents, or collaborators on the project (see the Mellon Foundation's "Guidelines for Grants Involving Consultants and/or Subcontractors ")

- **The Edition Cluster and Its Target User Community**: Describe the rationale that guided your selection of participating edition projects. Describe your project team's anticipated user community and how the envisioned Digital Edition Publishing Cooperative will advance the particular subfield(s) or research area(s) it is intended to support. For each participating edition, provide a summary statement on the subject matter and scope, the amount of materials amassed, and the amount and type of work completed to date and remaining. Explain how the synergies between these editions will benefit the research community and how the potential interconnections between them will make for a set of editions that is more useful than a simple aggregation. (Synergies between editions might emerge in a variety of ways: for example, thematic connections, shared social networks, geographic or temporal overlap. But they might also come from common editorial structures or principles, a need to represent similar source formats, or other concerns.) Provide letters of support from relevant individuals, institutions, and organizations in the Appendix.

- **Planning Issues**: Outline the most pressing issues or challenges (four or five at minimum) that your project team will need to address in forming a successful and sustainable Cooperative, and explain their relevance to the particular needs of your edition cluster, your host institution(s) and your identified user community. These likely include (but are not limited to):

  o Defining or harmonizing encoding methods, editorial approaches, and information resources that will be shared across the participating editions;
  o Identifying and developing appropriate protocols for the incorporation of linked open data resources, full-text materials, metadata, annotations, and other core informational components;
  o Aggregating or linking to distributed collections of materials;
  o Planning for user community input and engagement;
  o Identifying, developing, and testing financial / cost models that provide free online access to some or all of components;
  o Current sources of technical expertise and/or sharing technical expertise across editions.

5. Budget Form and Budget Narrative

Applicants must download and complete the [NHPRC-Mellon Digital Editions Publishing Cooperatives Program Budget Form](). After saving a copy of this form to your local computer or network, you will be able save and edit your entries. The form itself contains additional instructions. Provide specific budget figures, rounding to the nearest dollar. Cost share is not a requirement of this grant opportunity.

The budget narrative should describe and justify the cost assumptions for each category and line item in the budget form. The budget narrative should not introduce new features of the project beyond what is presented in the project narrative.

6. Appendix

Please provide the following in an Appendix:

- **Résumés**: Two-page résumés for the principal investigator and all other members of the project team who have already agreed to serve, including those serving in an advisory capacity.
- **Letters of Commitment**: In addition to the required Endorsement Letter (see above), provide letters of commitment from the applicable partner institution(s), project team members, institutional administrators, and other individuals or organizations involved in the planning process.
- **Proposed Cost Model**: If available, provide a description or visual representation of the financial / cost model your team is envisioning for the publishing cooperative (including plans that allow for free public access to some or all components). This may be derived from an existing cost model, a modification of an existing model, or an innovative new model for consideration. It is understood that this speculation may change substantially over the course of the planning year.
- **Timeline/Work Plan**: Provide a month-by-month schedule of planning activities, related tasks, and the individuals responsible for them. It may be helpful to present this section in a grid format. Clearly indicate when the project team will meet and explain the expected results of each meeting. Project teams must meet at least 6-8 times throughout the grant period, in addition to the participation of selected members in the mid-point planning meeting in DC.

Application and Other Deadlines

- Draft (optional): May 15, 2017
- Submission deadline: July 6, 2017
- Notification of selected proposals: August 11, 2017
- Deadline for revision of selected proposals: September 1, 2017

Application Review

All applications will undergo peer review by 5-7 external reviewers, using the following evaluation criteria:

1. ***Significance and feasibility of the ideas animating the Planning Process* (30 percent)**: The quality, breadth, and scope of the ideas underlying the planning, the feasibility of the proposed work plan, and the potential impact: for the creation, publication, discovery, and use of digital editions; for the participating projects and institutional collaborators; and for the advancement of disciplinary goals and scholarship.
2. ***Project Team* (30 percent)**: The creativity, qualifications, and level of commitment of team members; their appropriateness to participate in the planning process; the breadth of representation from all relevant constituencies.
3. ***Timeline* (20 percent)**: The likelihood that the applicant will achieve the project's goals in a timely and efficient manner.
4. ***Budget* (20 percent)**: The appropriateness and reasonability of the project's costs.

The peer review process will be administered by the staff of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Final selection of awardees will be determined in consultation with staff of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The review process is expected to be completed by August 1, 2017. Selected applicants will then have an opportunity to incorporate comments from reviewers and submit their revisions by September 1, 2017. Mellon Foundation staff will review the proposals and may request formatting or other minor changes to be submitted by no later than September 15, 2017. The trustees of the Foundation will consider the proposals at their meeting in December 2017, and grants will be announced by December 15, 2017.

Notification and Award Administration

Successful applicants will receive notification by December 15, 2017.

Awards will be administered by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, in consultation with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

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*Members of the Triangle SCI Working Group on Building a Sustainable Digital Edition Ecosystem provided substantive assistance in the crafting of this Call for Proposals, for which we are most grateful. Working group members included:

- R. Darrell Meadows (coordinator), Director for Publishing, NHPRC

- Tenisha Hart Armstrong, Associate Editor and Associate Director, Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Stanford University

- Hugh Cayless, Digital Humanities Senior Programmer, Duke University Libraries and Chair, TEI Technical Council

- Julia Flanders, Director, Digital Scholarship Group, Northeastern University Library

- Ondine Le Blanc, Director of Publications, Massachusetts Historical Society

- Daniel Powell, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, Digital Scholarly Editions Initial Training Network (DiXiT ITN)

- Joshua Sternfeld, Independent scholar and Director, Federal-State Partnership Program, National Endowment for the Humanities

- Rebecca Welzenbach, Director of Strategic Integration and Partnerships, University of Michigan Press/Michigan Publishing