

## Managing the Digital University Desktop



Understanding and Empowering the Individual; Preserving the Public Record and Institutional History

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January 30, 2003

Mark Conrad, Director for Technology Initiatives  
NHPRC  
National Archives & Records Administration  
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Dear Mr. Conrad:

This report presents our first six months' progress (July 1 – December 31, 2002) on the "Managing the Digital University Desktop" desktop project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University.

1. Immediately upon word from you that the project was definitely funded for the first year (notification letter of 3/7/02) we set to work to establish the Assistant Project Manager position. This requires approval by UNC Human Resources and is generally a lengthy process but poor economic conditions seemed to expedite matters. We were able to advertise the position in May and June and received 43 applications from individuals located in North Carolina and several who were planning to relocate here.
2. We interviewed five excellent candidates.
3. Our top candidate, Kimberly Peters, accepted our offer and re-located from Baltimore in mid-July and began work on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Kim has an MLS, has worked with electronic resources in public libraries, has strong experience with high technology companies and information architecture, and has done a good deal of consumer research interviewing. We got a real bargain in Kim as her qualifications far exceed what we asked for in our position statement. Her presence on this project has greatly facilitated our work so that she and Ruth Monnig can both handle high-level tasks.
4. We had a personnel change since the proposal submission in May 2001. Meredith Evans left the project. In June we requested in a letter to acting Director Burns that Ruth Monnig be appointed as Project Manager. He granted this change and Ruth started work on August 1<sup>st</sup>. She is a Ph.D. student who is focusing on medical and scientific electronic records preservation issues for her dissertation research. I believe this is an excellent selection both for the project and for Ruth as her personal research interests are very much in line. Ruth's experience in university development, both at UNC and Duke, along with her research interest in electronic records, should be strong assets for this project and give her credibility when talking with faculty and administrators both here and at Duke. Ruth and Kim (the APM) have very complementary skills and are working well together.
5. The working group overseeing the day-to-day grant activity met each month, May 2002 through January 2003. It consists of the following individuals: Helen Tibbo, chair; Paul Conway, Tim Pyatt; Ruth Monnig; Kim Peters, Frank Holt; Russell Koonts, and Susan Ballinger, the acting University Archivist. Roslyn Holdzkom, acting curator of the Southern Historical Collection was also involved in these initial meetings and the new UNC-CH University Archivist will join the team on February 1,

2003. We will continue to meet once a month, although many of us will be working together on a daily basis.
6. We have established a separate advisory committee that will oversee the larger picture of the grant and its impact within the state. We held the first meeting of the board on November 15th. This group consists of the above listed individuals along with:
    1. Debbie Barreau, SILS faculty (has conducted research on how people organize office files)
    2. Michel Bezy, IBM, WebSphere Strategy, Program Director
    3. Elizabeth Bunting, UNC System, Office of the President, Associate Vice Provost for Legal Affairs
    4. Mark Crowell, UNC-CH, Office of Technology Development, Associate Vice Chancellor, tentative
    5. Charles Dollar, Dollar Consulting
    6. Joel Dunn, UNC-CH, Administrative Information Services, Director for Systems and Communications
    7. Kelly Eubanks, NC Department of Cultural Resources, Government Records Branch, Electronic Records Archivist
    8. Lynn Holdzkom, UNC-CH, Interim Curator of Manuscripts and Director of the Southern Historical Collection
    9. Russell Koonts, Duke University, Head, Duke Medical Archives
    10. Eric Myln, UNC-CH, Director of Robinson Scholars Program, a program that supports and facilitates inter-institutional projects and education between UNC-CH and Duke University.
    11. Madeline Perez, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University Archivist
    12. Benjamin Speller, North Carolina Central University, School of Library and Information Science, Dean (HBCU)
    13. Johanna Carey Smith, UNC Associate University Counsel
    14. Jeanne Smythe, UNC-CH, Academic Technology and Computing, Director of Computing Policy

We selected the above individuals for several reasons:

- a. Perez, and Speller are from other UNC Systems schools where we will probably collect data
  - b. Bunting and Smith are from the UNC-CH and UNC System legal offices
  - c. Dunn and Smythe represent information technology departments on campus
  - d. Barreau has conducted extensive research into how people organize their office files (in corporate settings)
  - e. Myln heads the program that promotes research across UNC-CH and Duke.
  - f. Eubanks, DCR staff; DRC oversees NC Public Records Act
  - g. Bezy and Crowell, technology development and connection to industry
  - h. Dollar, international expert on electronic records
  - i. Holdzkom, director of unit in which UNC-CH Archives and Records resides
7. We have mounted a project website at: <http://www.ils.unc.edu/digitaldesktop>
  8. We have updated the bibliography (and will continue to do so) that we submitted as part of our original proposal. This is maintained on the website.
  9. During August we finalized the questions for a brief survey of all faculty and staff on the UNC-CH and Duke campuses regarding email, attachments, and file management. We had the survey approved by both UNC and Duke IRBs and received permission to send it to the campuses via campus-wide email. Respondents could reply by either email or a web form. We designed this to be a brief survey that would help us strategically select individuals for the interview phase of this project. We also used the survey data to create interview protocols for faculty and staff at UNC-CH and Duke. See Appendix I.
  10. We administered the survey on the UNC campus during the second week of September and at Duke during the last week of September.

11. We had 3,835 responses, 2,634 from Duke and 1,201 from UNC, with 69% of responses coming from the web form. We entered all data into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis and are presently writing up the results of this phase of the research for publication.
12. We spent a good deal of time in December and January seeking a conceptual framework within which to select those individuals we would interview. This took longer than we anticipated but we felt it was important for a good selection and future interpretation of our data. At Paul Conway's suggestion we started with the classification of university units found in Helen Samuel's *Varsity Letters*. While analyzing the survey data and taking note of individuals who said they would be willing to be interviewed (a question on the initial survey), we struggled with this framework but found it did not provide an adequately structure with which to understand units' or individuals' functions at either UN-CH or Duke. We hoped we could take Samuel's seven categories and make a matrix out of it. This attempted structure is captured in Appendix II. We will be using Samuel's analysis to help us develop opening scenarios for the interviewees to get them talking about the records they manage and the challenges they face in a grounded context.
13. Alas, after much thought and discussion we concluded that we simply did not know enough about individuals' functions or even those of entire units to make distinctions that increasingly appeared to be arbitrary. In January we abandoned the Samuel's framework for a different approach. On both campuses we will interview a random sample of individuals plus target the offices the archives have already established as being the most important sources of records on campus. This dual approach will allow us to reach generalizable findings regarding how university employees manage their electronic records and how specific offices and officials do so as well.
14. We have revised the interview protocol from the pilot study and have tested it with subjects. Appendix III.
15. We are presently making appointments to interview UNC and Duke employees.

Here is a summary of what we said we would have accomplished by this time and where we are:

Original Objectives	Progress to Date
<i>Phase 0 (time after announcement of funding but prior to funding period)</i>	
1. Developing the project team. During this time we will advertise the position of Assistant Project Manager (APM) and select this person	Done. We actually hired someone with qualifications that far exceed our position posting.

<p>2. Development of the sampling frame and solicitation of participants from the UNC-System and Duke.</p> <p>In the time before actual funding, we will also compile updated lists of UNC-CH offices, records management liaisons, and records schedules for each records unit. (Monnig &amp; Holt); analyze the lists to see what types of units/records do not exist at UNC-CH that may exist on other UNC-System campuses (Monnig &amp; Holt); and issue invitations to other UNC-System institutions, including General Administration, and specific units therein to become involved with this project.</p>	<p>We compiled and updated the lists of the units that the UNC records management and archives programs consider to be the most significant records producers on campus. These include units such as the Chancellor's and Provost's offices, the Graduate School, etc.</p> <p>Lacking records retention schedules at Duke, Tim Pyatt is continuing to identify important record producing offices and solicit interest and participation for the interviews phase of the research. We are waiting to assess the results of the initial interviews before contacting other UNC System schools for survey/interview participation but have strong support from the archives/records management programs on several campuses and have 3 members of the Advisory Board who are from other UNC-CH campuses and one from General Administration.</p>
<p><b><i>Phase I (months 1-11; July 2002-May 2003).</i></b></p>	
<p>1. Update literature review on e-mail and desktop records management (Peters &amp; Monnig)</p>	<p>Done and ongoing as new materials arise.</p>
<p>2. Arrange with units for participation. (Peters, Monnig, Holt, &amp; Pyatt)</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>3. Develop the final survey to send to study participants to ask specific questions regarding their management of e-mail and desktop electronic documents &amp; records. (Monnig, Conway, &amp; Tibbo; reviewed by entire Grant Advisory Committee).</p>	<p>Done; survey sent at UNC-CH 9/12/02; at Duke 9/26/02.</p>
<p>4. Develop web-based survey form that will dump responses into a database. (Peters, Monnig &amp; Tibbo)</p>	<p>Done. Duke University Library IT staff produced this for us and dropped data into spreadsheet.</p>
<p>5. Collection of data from the survey. (Peters, Monnig, &amp; Tibbo)</p>	<p>Finished.</p>
<p>6. Analysis of the survey results. (Monnig, Holt, Pyatt, Tibbo, &amp; UNC UA)</p>	<p>Largely finished with write up of results about to begin.</p>
<p>7. Finalization of interview protocols for in-depth data collection from a subsample of the survey domain. (Conway, Monnig, Peters, &amp; Tibbo; reviewed by entire Grant Advisory Committee)</p>	<p>Conceptual framework for interview questions established (see Appendix III) and interview questions and procedure undergoing final testing.</p>
<p>8. Training of Project Manager to do field interview (Tibbo) and training of Assistant Project Manager to do field interviews. (Monnig &amp; Tibbo)</p>	<p>Tibbo, Monnig, and Peters are working together on perfecting the interview procedure. We will conduct the actual interviews in pairs with one person asking most of the questions and the other taking notes. Peters will be involved with most of the interviews so as to maintain consistence across questions and note taking procedures.</p>

<p>9. Collection of data from participants via individual interviews and possibly focus groups. Because this is qualitative research, we cannot project just how many people we will interview. The general approach in such data collection is to sample the widest diversity of your total population and to collect data until new findings stop appearing. (APM, Monnig, &amp; Pyatt, Tibbo)</p>	<p>We are scheduling our first real interviews for the week of February 10<sup>th</sup>. We anticipate doing somewhere between 100 and 200 interviews at the two campuses and then we will explore doing some at other UNC System campuses as necessary.</p>
<p>10. Transcription/write up of data from interviews. (Peters &amp; Monnig)</p>	<p>We will write up notes and discuss each interview immediately following the period with the respondent. This will be ongoing throughout the data collection period.</p>
<p>11. Interviewing academic technology staff from participating universities as to the types/models of e-mail systems and desktop applications used on campus, technical capabilities and limitations, their involvement in e-mail and other document management, and their views of ERMSs. (Holt, Pyatt, UNC UA)</p>	<p>Preceding this investigation we are gathering as much information as we can regarding the most used email packages on each campus. We need this understanding for our interviews as well as for the final analysis.</p>

In addition to the above activities, Tim Pyatt and I have had a session proposal to the 2003 SAA meeting accepted in which I will present the preliminary findings for the survey we conducted this fall. The project has also been covered in the media at the two universities. See:

<http://gazette.unc.edu/archives/02sep25/morestories.html#7;>

<http://dialogue.dukenews.duke.edu/Dialogue/archives.html>, select Vol. 17, no. 18. October 18, 2002.

We are all very busy here and the project has created a good deal of interest at both UNC and Duke. For example, in reviewing our IRB proposal, the UNC-CH AA-IRB director commented, "This is going to be so important!" Other comments included:

I just read the below email about managing the information on our computers research... It really interest me... I consider myself to be an extremely organized person but do get overwhelmed with the amount of digital information I receive and process. I am just recently out of school (May 2001) and have been thinking about getting involved in some type of school work or research to keep challenging my mind. (I get bored easily) I was going to see if I could hook up with a professor over at the business school when I found a project that caught my interest.... and I saw your email. I was thinking there might be a way I could participate/help.... As far as time... I have my lunch hour and wouldn't mind staying late/coming in early/working at home one or two days a week..... Thoughts....

I am very interested in your project! The public records law for NC requires that we keep records of correspondence...and, since the Botanical Garden just went on the fiber optic system of the University, we have just in the last year seen a huge movement from paper correspondence to electronic. We desperately need a way of automatically building an archive of important correspondence and satisfying the state public records law!

This is an elegant study. Website is beautiful, well organized, and high in info content. You're off to a great start!

While the project started a month later than anticipated (Tim, Frank, and I worked all last summer interviewing and planning but other staff did not begin until August 1<sup>st</sup>), we are in a good place according to our original timetable. One change we foresee is that we will conduct the interview data analysis in parallel with the data

collection. This will move up the analysis, make it on-going, and extend the period of the data collection, although not beyond the original timetable of 18 months for the combined processes. We will report on this project in the June 2003 report.

I am also sending this report and attachments via overnight mail.

Sincerely,

Helen R. Tibbo

Attachments:

Appendix I: Brief Survey, September 2002

Appendix II: Samuel's Framework Adapted for Interviewee Selection (abandoned)

Appendix III: Conceptual Framework for Interview Questions