Looking For A Model : Digital translations for the "Our Americas Archive Partnership" project

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From the very beginning of the Americas Project the question of how to handle the items translated in-house presented a variety of challenging questions. Early on, our general and open-ended discussions indicated that a search of similar websites might turn up a useful model for us to follow.

The initial list of promising websites was compiled based on suggestions from co-workers who were aware of specific collections housed at different academic institutions, including universities where they themselves had attended school and in some cases even worked. This initial list consisted of the Library of Congress, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 3 separate sites at the University of Texas at Austin, Tulane University, and the University of Wisconsin, as well as the Imperial War Museum (UK), the Biblioteca Nacional (Argentina), the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican City), UNAM (Mexico), the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, and the Uniwersytet Mikolaja Kopernika w Toruniu (Poland).

The search of the Library of Congress was conducted via the *Global Gateway to Collaborative Digital Libraries (http://rs6.loc.gov/intldl/find/digital_collaborations.html)*, and the two sites elected for examination were *France in America / La France en Amerique (http://rs6.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/fiahome.html)* and *Parallel Histories / Historias Paralelas (http://rs6.loc.gov/intldl/eshtml/eshome.html)*. In the *France in America* site, the "Papers of Francis Parkman" were examined in some detail. The papers are organized by a collection description of about a paragraph in length in both English and French, in separate columns, with the option of clicking on "browse" in the English column or "feuilleter" in the French. However, a click on "feuilleter" takes one to the same English language site as "browse". In *Parallel Histories* site the collection "Conquista del Reino de Nuevo Galicia en la America Septrentionel" is selected, with the same English-only result when one clicks on the Spanish "cotejo".

The search of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum began hopefully enough, since the museum is a repository of material in virtually every modern European language, along with additional material in Turkish, Arabic, and Chinese. A note regarding the translation services available upon request for non-English archival finding aids was also promising. Bypassing published monographs and government documents, approximately 150 examples of diaries and letters were examined. Many of these are noted as multilingual (German and English, Polish and Hebrew, French and Russian, etc.). However, the majority contained no information regarding whether the originals were themselves multilingual or whether translations were included, and if so, by whom these had been done. There were a number of exceptions to the otherwise consistent lack of information, such as "an unidentified Harvard University scholar prepared the translation from Polish into English, "Alfred Elbau completed the translation of the Frey diary in 1988", presumably from German into English, although this was nowhere stated, and

finally, "included are English translations that Weiner made as an adult." At any rate, the search turned up no example of an explicitly identified in-house translation.

The three University of Texas at Austin sites were the collections of the Harry Ransom Center, the Benson Latin American library, and LANIC (Latin American Network Information Center). There was nothing comparable to what we were hoping to do with the OAAP translations. The additional sites included in the first list proved just as unhelpful.

The sites selected as the second group were the University of California at Berkeley, University of Washington, University of Chicago, University of Indiana, University of Virginia, National Diet Library of Japan, National Library of the Czech Republic, Yad Vashem (Israel), University of Natal, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Biblioteca de la Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Simon Fraser University, and the Universidade de Lisboa Centro de Estudos Anglisticios, all of which have particularly interesting collections, presented with a good degree of media-savvy user-friendliness.

None of these sources provided a good model, so the third group of sites was examined based on public relations information indicating that the institutions under examination were in the midst of uploading new collections and supplementing both the textual and visual components with metadata focusing on their provenance and creation. These were Cornell University, the UT-Portugal Online Program, Columbia University, Duke University, the 2010 Digital Libraries Initiative (European Community), British Library, National Library of Iceland, and the University of Calcutta. While many of these sites were added to the "favorites" column, for a future and leisurely return visit, there was nothing directly related to our intentions with the OAAP.

Having made three attempts toward our strictly focused goal, the fourth and final group of sites were selected using a globe-trotting scatter-gun approach and consisted of academic libraries in Israel, Singapore, China, Korea, Italy, Poland, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Slovenia, Norway, Scotland, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand, Chile, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, and Cuba.

Ultimately, we realized our search for a model was fruitless; we would have to develop a new system of noting, accounting, and differentiating digital-born translations. The good news was that we were free to be as conservative or as innovative as we wished.

Archive information:

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