

**Orbis Cascade Alliance Receives National Endowment for the Humanities Grant,
“Northwest Digital Archives: Expanding Access to Northwest Archival Collections”**

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For Immediate Release

The Orbis Cascade Alliance’s Northwest Digital Archives program, which offers enhanced access to archival collections in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, and Montana, has received a \$137,756 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to mark up 482 finding aids in Encoded Archival Description and add them to NWDA’s database at <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/index.shtml>.

Six institutions hold the regionally and nationally significant collections represented by the finding aids. The participating institutions are Montana State University, Western Oregon University, The Evergreen State College, Oregon Institute of Technology, Eastern Washington University, and Boise State University.

The collections included in this project are not only important in their own right, but significantly complement the more than 5,900 collections already represented in the NWDA database. These finding aids offer access to collections that document public liberal arts colleges in Oregon and Washington; Idaho history, including public affairs, environmental issues, literary heritage; Montana history, including agriculture and ranching, architecture, Native Americans, trout and salmonids, Yellowstone National Park, and the Yellowstone ecosystem; women’s history in the region; Oregon’s Land of the Lakes, including the timber industry, Native Americans, water use in the Klamath River watershed, and internment of Japanese Americans at the Tule Lake Relocation and Segregation Center during World War II; and the cultural diversity of Washington, including its significant Chicano/Hispanic population. In many ways, the separate collections at the participating institutions represent one massive interrelated collection that documents the political, cultural, and natural history of the Northwest region.

The project, which will begin in July 2011 and conclude in June 2012, will add three new members to the NWDA program and provide additional support for three current NWDA members who have been unable to participate fully in the program. It will provide training in descriptive standards and EAD encoding and administration for new and long-term implementation of those standards at participating institutions; additional descriptive support staff for institutions that require it; administrative and technical support for the project; and travel support for project participants to participate in the annual in-person meeting of all NWDA members. At the end of the grant, participants will be prepared to make information about all new collections they process available through the NWDA database without further grant support. They will become fully involved in a program with a proven track record of providing excellent access to materials, sustainable support for and by its membership, and a growing and evolving mission. The end results will be expanded access to the participants’ collections, skill building, and revisions to descriptive practices and processing workflows that will continue this level of access to their collections in the future.

This project builds on the prior success that NWDA has demonstrated under previous NEH funding (Phase I: 2002-2004 and Phase II: 2005-2007) and on the robust program that it has sustained and grown with membership funding since the program became part of the Orbis Cascade Alliance in 2007. This project addresses a key goal of the NWDA leadership: To eventually bring as many Northwest archives into the program as possible to avoid widening a gap in access to information about archival collections that creates, in effect, more “hidden collections” rather than fewer. This project, in particular, will reveal a number of hidden collections at a variety of institution sizes and types that will constitute a valuable contribution to humanities studies of the Northwest and beyond.

As of July 2011, Northwest Digital Archives will have 37 members (including three new members from this grant and six new members from a National Historical Publications and Records Commission grant): Alaska State Library, Boise State University, Central Oregon Community College, Central Washington University, Concordia University, Eastern Oregon University, Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Eastern Washington University, The Evergreen State College, George Fox University, Idaho State Historical Society, Montana State University, Lane Community College, Lewis & Clark College, Montana Historical Society, Oregon Health & Science University, Oregon Historical Society, Oregon Institute of Technology, Oregon State University, Pacific Lutheran University, Pacific University, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle Museum of History & Industry, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle University, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Idaho, University of Montana, University of Oregon, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington, Washington State University, Western Oregon University, Western Washington University, Whitman College, Whitworth University, and Willamette University.

The Orbis Cascade Alliance is a consortium of 36 academic libraries in Oregon and Washington. Alliance member libraries work together to provide outstanding services to students and faculty, share information resources and expertise, develop library staff, and help members allocate financial and human resources to serve the unique needs of each member. To this end, the Alliance considers the combined collections of member institutions as one collection. The Alliance supports a number of services that support this vision, including [Summit](#), a system that allows students, faculty and staff to easily search and request library materials owned by member libraries; courier service offering delivery of library materials in Oregon, Washington and Idaho; the [Northwest Digital Archives](#), cooperative purchasing for databases, ebooks and ejournals, and other digital library services.

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