

Social Networks and Archival Context Cooperative

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snaccooperative.org

The University of Virginia Library is pleased to announce that the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded the University of Virginia \$750,000 to complete the work of establishing the Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) Cooperative. For this final phase of establishing the Cooperative, the University of Virginia Library is collaborating with the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration and 27 other Cooperative members.

About SNAC

The SNAC Cooperative aspires to improve the economy and quality of archival processing and description, and, at the same time, to address the longstanding research challenge of discovering, locating, and using distributed historical records by building a global social-document network using both computational methods and human curation.

SNAC began as a Research and Demonstration (R&D) project with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (2010-2012), followed by funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (2012-2015). The project demonstrated the feasibility of separating the description of persons, families, and organizations—including their social-intellectual networks—from the description of the historical resources that are the primary evidence of their lives and work. SNAC also demonstrated that the biographical-historical data extracted and assembled can be used to provide researchers with convenient, integrated access to historical collections held by archives and libraries around the world.

The initial results of the research made it clear that the potential power of the assembled data to transform research and improve the economy and effectiveness of archival descriptive practices required more than computational methods: it also needed human curation. With funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the SNAC developers performed detailed planning from 2012-2015 on how best to transform the R&D into a sustainable international cooperative that would enable archivists, librarians, and scholars to maintain the descriptive data and to extend the scope of the people and records included.

With funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the SNAC team has completed Phase I (2015-2017) of establishing the Cooperative based on the detailed planning, focusing on community building and transforming the R&D technical infrastructure into a platform that will support editorial curation of the data as well as batch ingestion of data.

From 2010 to 2017, the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) at the University of Virginia served as the lead institution for SNAC. During this period, IATH led three different endeavors: R&D (2010-2015), Cooperative planning (2011-2015), and Phase I of establishing the Cooperative

(2015–2017). The California Digital Library, the School for Information Science at the University of California, Berkeley, and the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration were important collaborators in these activities.

SNAC is now moving to the University of Virginia Library, which will serve as its administrative and technological home. The move to the University Library will ensure close collaborations and partnerships with the cultural heritage and research communities. Daniel Pitti, who has led the development of SNAC since its inception, will continue to serve as its director. Ivey Glendon will join the project to provide expertise in metadata and program management, and John Hott will lead the technological development.

Cooperative Members

As the University of Virginia Library begins completing the work of establishing the Cooperative, the membership has expanded from 17 to 29 members, and now includes two international archives, a U.S. state archive, two documentary editing projects, an independent scholar, and several new academic research libraries. Over the course of the current project period, additional members will be added as the Cooperative builds the capacity to ingest new sets of data and train editors.

- American Institute of Physics
- American Museum of Natural History
- Archives, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bangalore, India
- Archives nationales de France
- Brigham Young University
- California Digital Library
- Cecilia Preston (independent scholar)
- George Washington University
- Getty Research Institute
- Harvard University
- Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis

- Jane Addams Papers
- Library of Congress
- Mojave Desert Archives
- National Archives and Records Administration
- New York Public Library
- Princeton University
- Smith College
- Smithsonian Institution
- Tufts University

- University of California, Irvine
- University of Miami
- University of Nebraska
 - o Library
 - o Walt Whitman Archive
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- University of Oregon
- University of Virginia
- Utah State Archives
- Yale University

Objectives

The second and final phase of establishing the Cooperative has both social and technological objectives. The social objectives include developing a business model that will ensure long term sustainability, further developing editorial policies and standards, and being able to offer three forms of training for editors: on-site and remote as well as online self-guided. There will be many technological objectives, but chief among them will be the following: developing “cooperative ingest tools” that will enable data-contributing institutions to collaborate in refining and ingesting data into SNAC, and in return to receive persistent identifiers to enhance their descriptive data; refining and enhancing the History Research Tool for researchers; completing development of the key components of the technical infrastructure; and performing computational refinement and enrichment of existing SNAC data.

A major focus will be on expanding capacity in training editors and ingesting new batches of data. Progress in these two areas will enable the Cooperative to vastly expand membership and the global social-document network represented in SNAC.

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