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October 25, 2013

Empowering the University of New Hampshire User Community with the Power of PLACE

The University of New Hampshire Library and its partner, the Earth Systems Research Center, have been awarded a grant in the amount of \$474,156 from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, National Leadership Grants for Libraries Program (Grant Award Number: LG-05-13-0350-13) to build PLACE, the Position-based Location Archive Coordinate Explorer. PLACE will be a geospatial search interface that will use embedded geospatial coordinates to enable easier discovery of information that can be difficult to locate through text based searching. Through PLACE, via a click or delineation of a search polygon on a web map, users will zoom to a region and will locate all UNH Library collections whose geographic extents intersect. Initially, PLACE will provide access to geographic collections focused on the region, but it will be flexible and expandable as collections grow. The project will provide users with access to these collections through a flexible visual interface and provide a toolkit for other institutions to implement in their geospatial collections. Ready access to embedded geospatial information in a flexible visual interface will contribute to the development of 21st-century skills by library users, such as visual, global, and environmental literacy.

The project will contribute to two open source communities: Open GeoPortal (OGP) and FEDORA. Tasks to accomplish our goals include creating standards compliant metadata for prototype collections and ingesting digital objects into FEDORA, purchasing and configuring a dedicated server for our instance of OGP, and integrating OGP with the FEDORA Solr index to provide a basic level of OGP functionality. We will build new tools not currently available in GeoPortal using Jscript and JQuery. The universal gazetteer tool will involve a common library of polygons, such as county boundaries, which will be available via pull down lists. Time series data is important for assessing changes over time: a cross reference table and a time slider on the interface will make it easier for users to select datasets by time periods. We plan usability studies throughout the project to optimize interface design, and enhancements for providing geospatial access to the unique geological fieldtrip guidebook literature, a feature supported in our needs analysis.

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