**NEFLIN INNOVATION AWARD**

1. Innovator: The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries

2. Name of Innovation: The Panama Canal Museum/UF Collaboration

3. Description of Innovation: The Panama Canal Museum is closing their doors and transferring their collections to the George A. Smathers Libraries. The collections will undergo conservation, select digitization, and will have the opportunity for national/international exhibit collaborators.

4. Name of person submitting the nomination: Rachel A. Schipper

5. Phone number of person submitting the nomination: 352-273-2505

6. E-mail Address of person submitting the nomination: rschipper@ufl.edu

7. Originality: Is the innovation a completely new concept, or does it address a pre-existing program, process or service in a new way? Is your innovation a unique product? Have other libraries tried something similar?

   Other libraries have loaned and exchanged museum materials, but this is the first known example of a museum closing and transferring their entire collection to a university, in an effort to preserve their collections and to make those collections more accessible. Collaborations between libraries and museums work well, in part, because they serve some of the same audiences and often have similar educational missions.

8. Impact: What need or problem did this innovation address? Will the innovation make a fundamental change? Will it positively impact the library both internally (library staff) and externally (public)?

   The upcoming 100th anniversary of the Panama Canal, in 2014, grants the University of Florida a unique opportunity to not only showcase this new collection and partnership but also to expand its own community of students, researchers and Friends. During the 2012 fiscal year, the collection transfer has been completed, an inventory has been developed, and volunteers have been mobilized. The entire process of transferring the collection will be documented and shared in a series of national presentations to help other libraries to acquire, preserve, and promote unique collections. The University of Florida has one of the 3 top Latin American collections in the nation, and has within their mission a goal to serve Florida and the Caribbean. Coupled with the Digital Library of the Caribbean, hosted by UF, this collection complements the mission, and memorializes a segment of history for the U.S. that would not otherwise be preserved.
9. Involvement/Teamwork/Partnership: Was this innovation created and/or developed by a single person? Were a team of people involved in its planning and implementation? Were any new partnerships developed as part of this project?

A team of people was utilized to successfully transfer the collection. Because much of the valuable metadata stems from a community of 800 Friends who have supported the Museum, it was important to retain this collective knowledge. Cross-membership was employed between the Museum Board and the Library Leadership Board to insure quick and appropriate communication. Along the way, many national and international partnerships have begun, from several museums in Panama, a museum in the Netherlands, Florida and California museums, port authorities and others. The Museum Board and over 27 library staff at the university have been involved in this large and unique project.

10. Benefits: How do you know the innovation was a success? How did it benefit your constituents? What data or measures do you have on the project?

Quarterly reports to the Museum Board over the past year indicate progress and highlight a successful joint endowment effort. An Institute of Library and Museum Services grant was proposed; presentations at the Florida Library Association, Florida Association of Museums, the Association of College and Research Libraries, and the Florida Association of College and Research Libraries have been conducted or submitted for consideration. The Panama Canal Museum closed in March 2012 and the initial meeting of the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum at UF commenced in June 2012. With the continued growth and cataloging of this collection, over 15,000 items were inventoried this year, with the promise of continued support.

11. Utility: Can the innovation be replicated or used by other member libraries as a way or improving their overall service?

The innovation can be replicated by any library or university who partners with a museum or other collaborator. It will take a vast amount of volunteer and staff labor, but saving these unique collections is worth every effort. Supporting the communities and constituents that have been cultivated helps to sustain the value of the collection through the preservation of collective memory, and builds interest, engagement and focus.