Advisory Board Meeting NEH Grant
January 31st 2014

Advisory Board members present:
Susan Parker, Executive Director, St. Augustine Historical Society
Herschel Shepard, Retired Architect, FAIA

UF Project Team members present:
Thomas Caswell, PI, Unearthing St. Augustine
James Cusick, Co-PI, Unearthing St. Augustine
Mark Sullivan, Systems Programmer, Smathers Libraries IT
Matt Armstrong, Project Manager, Unearthing St. Augustine
Matt Peters, Project Programmer, Unearthing St. Augustine
Joe Aufmuth, GIS Librarian, Documents Department
Laurie Taylor, Digital Humanities Librarian

Guest(s) present:
Jenny Wolfe, St. Augustine City Planning
Bob Nawrocki, Chief Librarian, St. Augustine Historical Society

- The agenda and minutes from the last board meeting were accepted and approved.
- Tom Caswell reiterated that June 30th is the end of the project.
    - There are approximately 5 months left on the grant.
    - He is trying to get a mini grant for Matt A. so he can continue working on the project.
    - Construction on the elevator at the Government House continues. Once it has been completed Matt should be able to inventory what's there and perhaps continue scanning if they can get funding for him.
- Matt Armstrong presented his update on his digitization efforts thus far – he's ahead of their projected numbers.
    - Julian Naranjo an intern continues to work on the blog.
    - Lindsay Mahalak will assist with scanning "Where is it Wednesday?"
    - He's finished (among other things) the following:
        - The large block and lot photograph collection.
        - More archeological reports (Castillo, Fort Mose, and Martin Hernández sites)
        - HSAPB scrap books – 6 volumes have been scanned from 1959-1969.
        - HASPB block and lot cards.
    - He demonstrates some examples of the scrap books that have been scanned:
        - HASPB block and lot cards – photographs of the houses and progress of their alterations, before and after.
        - In the details of some of the artifacts there are interpretations but most are not very descriptive.
        - Titles have to be given with more detailed information.
        - He shows examples of things that happened during the restoration – the cards are numbered and say "see item."
    - Tom C. asked if there will be links to the photographs from the cards/records.

- Matt A. asked where.
- Mark Sullivan said they can look into having a separate field on the cards for this.
- Matt A. highlighted his concerns about keying in specific dates for these items and showed an example of a site that had several changes to the property over time. He wants to be sure that all the dates and changes for each site are listed - ensuring that no information would be lost.
- He discussed what was next on the docket to be scanned.
    - Finish the lot and blocks.
    - Scan the Parish Record Abstracts.
- Tom C. said that originally their target number was 10,000 documents to be scanned but that they have already exceeded that number.
- Tom C. asked how many sites had been completed thus far – they wanted 100.
- Matt A. said four sites have been completed to date but they were large ones with lots of material to be scanned per site.
- Herschel Shepard asked if the project can index the information and list the sites to let people know what is currently available.
- Mark S. said to send him the list of the 100 that they wanted to focus on.
- Matt A. is going to focus on the reports and will send word documents to Mark S. for him to upload.
- Joe Aufmuth asked if they were hitting the mark – and asked if the experts say that other things are more important based on feedback from them.
- Bob Nawrocki said they will always have people asking about things not previously available and reiterated that the "big" sites are the most important to have completed before the end of the project.
- Tom C. said that one key proponent is Susan Parker and Herschel S.'s collection and asked if have been ingested already.
- Matt A. said yes – any information not scanned and linked was sensitive and therefore left out.
- Susan P. asked if it was public record, couldn't it be found via other avenues.
- Jenny Wolfe said that if something isn't online, it wouldn't be given (redacted).
- Bob N. asked how do you know what isn't OK to scan and post.
- Matt A. said that Carl has sensitive information separate and has excluded such items from the batches to be scanned.
- Herschel S. asked if the Historical Society makes money off of things, do we want to post them.
    - Matt A. agreed that they don't want to take potential revenues from the Historical Society by offering information for free.
    - Bob N. said that was not really an issue since most of the information is public record and available anyway.
    - Susan P. and Bob N. discussed this concept and agreed that it shouldn't be a problem.
- Matt A. asked if the group had any questions or concerns.
- Tom C. assured him that because they were already past the projected number of items to be scanned that he was doing a stellar job. The group agreed.
- Matt A. will keep the group up to speed on his progress over the next weeks on the blog.

- Matt Peters updated the group on his progress:
    - Part 1 was to complete the administrative site and to go in and add geographical data

- Part 2 was to complete the public interface that will be used to drill down and find the geographical data that has been entered into the site.
- He explains that to edit a record, one must be registered and validated to be able to add information.
    - Herschel expresses concern on how people will be able to edit.
    - Bob N. said that no one will be able to edit without being validated.
    - Laurie T. said that only approved members of the expert community will have such privileges.
    - Joe A. asked how they will ascertain who is an expert.
    - Laurie T. said that project coordinators will manage users and that they are constantly looking for more grants to gain support for this.
    - There is more discussion on how users will be validated.
    - Mark S. said they need to keep an eye on who they give administrative abilities.
    - Mark S. also said that they need to add a blurb on the website that explains to users how they gain administrative access.
    - Bob N. expressed concern about amateur historians and the potential "threat" of them adding incorrect or extraneous information to the site if given permissions.
    - Mark S. agreed that the potential to fake information is there but users will have to be registered before they can add information. Hopefully the registration process will weed out any potential amateurs from being able to alter records.
    - Mark S. demonstrated the interface.
    - Joe A. asked what happens after someone added information. What's the quality control afterwards?
    - Mark S. said that there is a log of what is added.
    - Laurie T. said they can review records after items have been added but stressed the fact that they will need staff to be able to do that.
    - Bob N. asked if there was going to be a help screen.
    - Mark S. said there will be.
    - Joe A. asked if there will be some kind of exercise for new users – a tutorial they must complete before gaining access.
- The interface is further demonstrated.
    - Matt P. showed how users can click and drag information easily once the data is in the record. You can now see and search for information immediately.
    - Users can enter maps or points of interest and they can even select areas on a map to highlight them.
    - Matt A. asked how users would enter photos.
    - Matt P. said it would be a Point of Interest (POI) and the photo would be linked to the record.
    - Bob N. interjected that most people don't know the block and lot numbers for items but would know the places' names – he thinks that pictures will be helpful for use in locating information about particular sites.
    - Matt A. asked if addresses could be used to locate information about a particular site.
    - Mark S. said yes.
    - Matt A. asked if the block and lots will be linked to the site as well.
    - Mark S. said yes they will and that users can take coordinates to link to the block and lot numbers – all information will be displayed.

        - Susan P. mentioned that since the city lots are not a standard size – many addresses exist per lot and each building would have a different address. It would be hard to give an exact address to a particular lot. They may have to get in the realm of the address at the very least for some sites.
        - Mark S. agreed that the level of precision is always a concern. The block and lot polygons would be good to help pin point specific areas.
        - Laurie T. agreed that sometimes precision can be confusing without a back story
        - Matt P. said that everything in the system can be geo-rectified.
        - Matt A. asked that when a user adds information, does it create another item.
        - Matt P. said that no, it just adds to the existing record.
    - Matt P. discussed the search interface.
        - It's not ready yet to go live.
        - Once it's available, when using the search page, users would type in what they wanted to search/view and their results could be filtered by many things including by date, or by language.
        - Joe A. asked if items without specific dates would be given an entire date range so it would be included in any date range search.
        - Mark S. said they are still working on it but that results could be sorted in many ways.
        - Matt P. said that yes, those items would be included but it depends on the collection
        - Mark S. suggested that they use a custom time line more than a period when cataloguing these.
        - Tom C. asked how to create an authority file for these. If a photo was taken in 1964, how that would be integrated into a time line.
        - Susan P. said that there are timelines with the Bureau of Historical Resources that have already been established and that these would give a larger framework for them to use. The project would have to expand on this framework for St. Augustine but it would be a place to start.
        - Jenny W. asked what about architects?
        - Herschel S. said they would have to define the periods before loading the sites into the database – they would have to give date ranges.
        - Joe A. asked what about +/- 10 years.
        - Susan P. said that at some point the researcher has to have some knowledge about the site they want to research – the responsibility is on the researcher.
        - Extensive discussion occurred about the periods and dating information that needs to be included - amongst the group.
        - Matt P. demonstrated how if a user gets extraneous information during a search he/she can use a filter to add/remove information.
        - Mark S. did a brief search to show everything that appears and explains how the timeline they had been discussing would be helpful.
        - Matt A. asked if users can apply filters at the beginning of a search.
        - Mark S. said no, they have to add the filters after but that if you add the timeline then items without that date will vanish from the search.
        - Matt P. showed how if a user picks a spot to zoom in and then adds filters they can get more specifically what they want.
        - Tom C. and Mark S. both asked if using the blocks and lots would be wise.

        - Herschel S. questioned that – what would be the cleanest way to access information.
        - Joe A. said that block and lot numbers combined with time periods might be the best.
        - Herschel S. gave the following example – if a user was looking for a 16th century building what would the results be? Would they include all reconstructions or rehabilitations, restorations, etc.? He then reiterated what Susan P. said earlier - at some point, the researcher has to take responsibility.
        - Susan P. mentioned that historical terms are not consistent.
        - Herschel said again that the block and lot numbers are the best way to access an exact site.
        - Jenny W. asked what if a researcher doesn't have that information.
        - Mark S. said that at least the block and lot numbers are a place to start when cataloguing these.
        - Matt P. said that they can add a "block and lot" filter to the information that is produced during a search – it would function much like the map filter they already have in place.
        - Herschel S. agreed that would be a great idea since the map has eras for each block and lot. The group agrees.
        - Jenny W. suggested that the National Park Service maps could be useful.
        - Susan P. mentioned that there are not many historical city maps but there are some that might be helpful. 4 or 5 in existence.
        - Mark S. suggested that rather than timeline maps, perhaps they use geo-rectified maps to create coordinates and link to those since the point of this interface is to help people discover information about a particular place.
        - Joe A. suggested that they don't geo-rectify the maps and should have a disclaimer that they are not to be used as exact – they are just giving information to be used as a starting point in user's research.
    - Tom gives the floor to Jim Cusick so he can go over his discussion topics.
        - Jim C. had a write up of what could be useful (see handout) for the Historical Society information.
        - Matt A. needs to be given some kind of direction as to what is the next thing he should be scanning.
        - Don't need to make a decision today but Jim C. needs to look over what is left and make recommendations for Matt A.
    - Discussion about the Parish Abstracts.
        - Jim C. got the OK from Father Morgan this past week.
        - Jane Landers OK'ed it too.
        - Susan P. offers corrections to the handout – Jim C. will update the draft with the corrections and give it to Tom.
        - Tom C. said that would be a great help – thanks.
        - Susan P. asked if they are currently available online.
        - Tom C. said no.
        - Susan P. said that the items they have to be scanned from the Historical Society should be able to be accomplished fast but that some of the extra stuff on the boarders don't have translations but hope that the document itself will give that information.

        - Tom C. asked Jim C. if once the list of scanning has been approved, could he get Matt A. to start on them to see how it goes but keep the records dark until we see if it works well with OCR
        - Matt A. mentioned that several of the items he is to scan have yellowed over time and asked Mark S. if it would be better to scan them at grey scale documents or in full color.
        - Mark S. said that color is better for the OCR.
        - Susan P. said that in a past project there was one scan made of the original and then one scan with color correction so that the background appeared white.
        - Susan P. also mentioned that all Historical Society Parish records' abstracts are white pages.
        - Matt A. asked if he could scan them.
        - Susan P. said sure – they are in notebooks.
    - Tom opens the discussion on the landing page for the project.
        - He asks Susan P. to consider what the Historical Society would want on the landing pages.
        - Bob N. and Susan P. are going to think about the verbiage and images and let Tom know.
        - Tom C. promised he will get with Carl to find out what he would like and asks Herschel S. to think about what he wants too.
    - Herschel S. wants to know what is going to happen in June when the grant money runs out.
        - He reminds the group that Matt A. is knowledgeable about the subject matter now having deal with it for the past two years.
        - He asks how do we keep up the work he's doing going.
        - He suggests the UF Historic St. Augustine DSO since it is a supporting organization for academics and proposes that we ask them to devote some of their funding to support this project.
        - He also suggests that they approach the University for support since St. Augustine is an incredible resource and there is not a database like this project is creating for architects to work from currently.
        - Tom C. is trying to get additional support through grants and institutional funds.
        - Bob N. doesn't want to lose the resources of the large scanning station once the grant is finished.
        - Laurie T. suggests that bridge money would be helpful to continue – the DSO, and even the University of Florida might be willing to contribute funds.
        - Tom C. would also like to keep the current resources in St. Augustine (i.e. the scanning workstation) to help other agencies besides the ones included in this project to digitize their documents too.
- The final official Advisory Board meeting will be in April.
- Perhaps even a wrap-up meeting/celebration in the summer?