Missouri Folk Arts Program

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The creation and maintenance of digital archives and indexes provide both the public and academic audiences with broader, more open access to valuable materials collected by folklorists and other humanities scholars. Numerous programs in the field of folklore serve as examples of the importance of the digital humanities. Open Folklore, for instance, is a website-based archive hosted by Indiana University; the site is "a multi-faceted resource, combining digitization and digital preservation of data, publications, educational materials, and scholarship in folklore" from across the United States and around the world. Similarly, the American Folklore Society (AFS) launched the National Folklore Archives Initiative, a new collaborative venture funded via the National Endowment for the Humanities' Division of Preservation and Access. The initiative, currently in its first phase, seeks to consolidate information about, access to, and the format of folklore archives from a broad range of organizations, including scholarly, non-profit, and public sector organizations. The Missouri Folk Arts Program is a proposed partner in Phase II of the project, and staff anxiously await the results of the grant proposal's review. On campus, Mizzou Advantage is developing "Gateway to the West," a project that intends to digitize the "unique manuscript and print materials related to Missouri's role in Western expansion." MU's Student Folklore Society acknowledged the importance of the trend by inviting Dr. Trevor Blank, a leading scholar in folklore and the internet, to give a lecture on campus this coming April. The MFAP's own goals to document, conserve, and present are clearly in line with the outcomes of digital humanities, and MFAP has established a strong foothold.

The use of digital technologies at MFAP has become common place. Since June, however, I have worked with the wealth of materials that have been collected over the last twelve years of the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (TAAP). The project results in a great deal of documentation, especially photographs and recordings. The majority was created using older, analog equipment and produced such "antiquated" things as negative photographic film, audio tapes, positive slides, and hard copy photographic prints. Documentation from TAAP's first fifteen years is deposited at the State Historical Society (SHS), where staff, including former MFAP intern and graduate research assistant Darcy Holtgrave, indexes those materials and creates a digital database to improve access to the collection. Back at the MFAP office, I scan and store digital copies of

A profile of the late Richard Martin of St. Louis, a featured artist in the exhibit *Master Artists, Master Teachers* at our new website:
mofolkarts.missouri.edu

photographic materials so that the hard copy materials can join the collection at SHS. Combing through and scanning hundreds, if not thousands, of images documenting apprenticeships has given me a wonderful opportunity to see some of the fruits of the MFAP's work. Whether it was German four-square gardening, Ozark gig-making, instrument making, storytelling, or low-rider car airbrushing, I feel privileged to make my way through these images.

MFAP has also engaged digital humanities in the upcoming launch of our new website. Photos from MFAP's long history are included, as well as archived versions of previous *Museum Magazine* essays. Additionally, Darcy Holtgrave and Claire Schmidt, the most recent graduate research assistant, created a new online exhibit "Master Artists, Master Teachers" that chronicles our most celebrated master artists, those who have taught in TAAP five or more times. Holtgrave and Schmidt curated the exhibit, culling audio and visual data from both the MFAP's working archives and the collection at SHS.
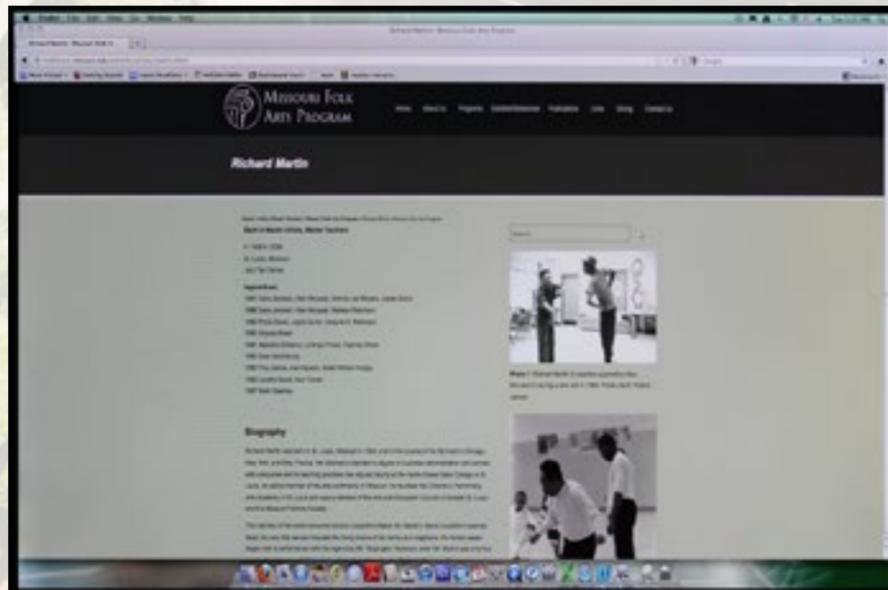
Creating a working archive that maintains our easy access to twelve years of the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program was a rewarding task as well as a time-consuming one. These materials will be professionally archived by the staff at the State Historical Society; however, access to these primary materials is, and will be, limited. A digital archive, on the other hand, puts these materials at the folklorist's fingertips and, eventually, at the public's. The cultural assets that MFAP develops are meant for the public at large; digital technology makes that goal much more easily achievable. Access, it seems to me, is one of the most powerful effects that digital technologies, and hence the digital humanities, has.

Dr. Trevor Blank, visiting professor at SUNY-Potsdam, will lecture at MU on April 11, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in Tate Hall.

Organized, digitized and copied documentation materials prepared for transfer to MFAP's collection at the State Historical Society

Color prints, now digitized and copied, document a German four-square gardening tradition near Hermann