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**Franco American Portal Project:
Building an Open Access Discovery Tool for Franco American Collections**

White Paper

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I. Introduction

This white paper¹ will discuss work completed during the performance period of a Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Foundations Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH HCRR). This grant, *Franco American Portal Project: Building an Open Access Discovery Tool for Franco American Collections* (Grant PW-269238-20), was awarded to the University of Maine for a multi-university collaboration to plan and build an online portal to Franco-American archival collections around North America. The portal will improve discoverability of primary source materials from the French-Canadian and Acadian diaspora in the US Northeast, generate access to these materials, and grow the visibility of Franco-American history across the digital libraries and archives landscape.

The grant's period of performance began in June 2020 and ended in October 2021. The resulting reference resource, ***Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain (FADA/PFA)***; <https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org>, was launched to the public at the end of the grant period. Grant collaborators also established the Franco American Collections Consortium (FACC; <https://faconsortium.org>), a formal organization to oversee the future development of FADA/PFA and to envision, support, and inaugurate new projects surrounding Franco-American history and culture.

This grant's primary collaborators—the University of Maine (UM), University of Southern Maine (USM), University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK), Assumption University (AU) in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Saint Anselm College (SAC) in Manchester, New Hampshire—coordinate research into Franco-American history and culture, and steward significant diaspora collections from their regions. Beginning in 2018 with seed funding from the University of Maine and leading up to the NEH grant period of performance, project collaborators worked together to identify shared goals and conceptualize a digital reference resource for Franco-American collections. The white paper that follows will describe this concept and detail the process of bringing it to life, including: stages leading up to our grant award; collaboration between the Program Manager, Advisory Board, and software development team; project work of planning, building, developing, testing, and launching an online open-access portal; gathering collections metadata from contributing institutions; transforming metadata for the portal; and future planning. This white paper will also acknowledge adjustments and departures from our grant proposal's original work plan, budget, and project timeline that brought us to our project's result.

When the NEH Division of Preservation and Access announced the recipients of its HCRR grants on April 7, 2020, the collaborating team behind this project's grant proposal were dispersed across three New England states, each person working from their own home, and each almost a month into COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. When we began working together in 2018, our team never could have imagined the seclusion of our communities in their early responses to COVID-19. Nor could we have imagined the resultant longing

¹ Special thanks to Kate Bradley and Anna Faherty for their contributions to this white paper.

among people driven apart to find connections to one another and to their shared cultural heritage from a physical distance. The timing of our grant award brought new meaning and value to open access digital tools of the kind we hoped to build, and came to invigorate in our project team a sense of purpose that we could not have anticipated at the outset of our work together in 2018.

II. History

A. Subject Background

Franco Americans are an overlooked population group made up of the French-Canadian and Acadian diaspora in the US Northeast. Their communities extend historically from the northern borders of Maine with New Brunswick and Québec, to the borders of New York State with Québec and Ontario, through surrounding rural spaces and post-industrial centers in every New England state. Between 1850 and 1930, over one million francophone people from Canada moved to the United States. Over time they developed an interstate, transnational network of linguistic, religious, cultural, and economic institutions to support themselves. Their descendants today identify with certain shared population centers in the Northeastern borderlands, a French heritage language, and other cultural and genealogical touchstones that transcend state and national boundaries.

Similar to other nineteenth- and twentieth-century immigrant groups to the United States, Franco Americans' historic records are collectively embedded with themes that resonate across geographic and institutional borders. Compilation of these records uniquely reflects changes to this bilingual and dispersed transnational group over time, and provides a foundation for rich case studies in labor and economics, religion, domestic life, language, the arts, and more, that deepen our understanding of the people and history of the United States.

Franco-American archival materials are stewarded by dozens of collecting institutions all across North America, sometimes unknowingly, in various states of preservation and digitization, and often without adequate or accurate descriptive context. Historic marginalization of francophone Catholics, laws and attitudes suppressing the public use of French in the Northeast, and discrimination against Franco-American people in the public sphere and marketplace have also negatively impacted our abilities to access or discover Franco-American materials in a concerted way. Popular depictions of rustic, idyllic New England contrast sharply with the norms and experiences of this transnational, non-anglophone community for whom the sights and sounds of industrial or rural labor were arguably more life-ordering.

Innovations in the digital libraries and archives landscape over the past decade have provided opportunities and new tools to help us discover, amplify, aggregate, and serve materials from underserved communities. Digital discovery and organizational tools provide a mechanism for communities that have been overlooked to build an audience for their historical records, and offer structures of support for the people and cultures these materials represent. Franco-American communities and the institutions that support the preservation and dissemination of their history have long lamented exclusion from historical narratives of American immigration, community building, and public life in the 19th and 20th centuries. New digital tools provide new avenues for their inclusion.

B. Project Background

The *Franco American Portal Project* grew out of a joint initiative of the University of Maine's (UM) Franco American Programs and the University of Southern Maine's (USM) Franco-American Collection. In 2016 the organizations explored how they could work together within the University of Maine System (UMS) and support each other across distances and institutional missions.

UM and USM liked the idea of a joint portal project to draw attention to their rich archival holdings from Franco-America. They envisioned a tool comparable with *Umbra Search African American History* (<https://umbrasearch.org>), which brings together hundreds of thousands of digitized African American historical and cultural materials from over 1000 libraries and archives in the US. A similar, subject-based project in Franco-American history seemed ideal, for it would allow the two campuses to work together symbiotically and as advocates for each campus's archival collections, and at the same time, create a structure within which to work with similar collecting institutions. In 2017 UM led a proposal submission for UMS-wide seed monies to develop a Franco-American collections web portal. Though this specific submission was not funded, the proposal was otherwise accepted as the blueprint of *Franco American Portal Project* when, with the help of legislative advocacy at the Maine state government level, UM's Provost Office committed three years of funding to Franco-American initiatives for this type of collaborative cultural heritage reference resource. The \$275,000 commitment was made renewable upon the completion of annual project benchmarks delineated in the initial proposal (see Appendix A).

UM organized an Advisory Board of scholars, librarians, archivists, and administrators from the archival core of Franco-America (what would become the five primary institutions of this collaborative project) and hired a Program Manager (see Appendix B). The group immediately found value working together. From 2018 onward our Program Manager and Advisory Board met regularly to brainstorm and articulate the unique needs of Franco-American archival materials. Over time we confronted more universal issues related to the bilingual nature of our collections, idiosyncrasies in their cultural content and organization, and their glaring absence from the wider digital libraries landscape. Our project evolved as we began to locate Franco-American archival materials beyond our five institutions, and to identify a need for online access to Franco-American cultural history wherever its representative collections are held. We imagined bringing these disparate collections in conversation with one another in an organized, searchable, and culturally conscientious way, creating a gateway to them and making them accessible together.

Our Advisory Board agreed to work by consensus, with meetings organized and led by the Project Manager. One reason for consensus governance was, throughout their history in the US Northeast, Franco-American institutions have notoriously suffered contentious relationships; they did not often get along. Different population centers from the top of Northern Maine to the bottom of Southern Connecticut developed locally in different ways. Minority francophone communities in proximity to one another often competed for

resources. Though generally united in their emphasis on Franco-American people, institutions might also be divided in their understanding of the needs of their community, or in their attitudes toward politics, language, religion, or institutional leadership. Franco organizations within UMS were not an exception here, and could boast little collaboration since their beginnings in the 1970s. The Advisory Board was aware of this dissonance, and they aimed to capitalize on their strong working relationships with one another to bring their organizations together in service of Franco-American collections. Consensus governance, though often time consuming, fed and continues to feed into the positive, collaborative will that this project generates.

Much of the project labor completed in 2018 and 2019 in advance of our NEH grant was dedicated to learning the physical whereabouts of Franco-American collections, identifying what the needs of diverse researchers of these collections might be, and exploring other systems that modeled what we envisioned in joining multiple institutions' collection records together in a single interface. We discovered at least 75 institutions with in-scope Franco-American materials: discrete collections throughout the US and Canada, from Alberta to Austin, from California to Québec. We began creating detailed inventories of these institutions' holdings and enumerating the content our portal aspired to draw attention to. We articulated what we imagined would provide the best access to Franco-American primary sources and their specific cultural content. In addition to *Umbra Search*, we studied a range of small- and large-scale projects:

Explore Chicago Collections

(<https://explore.chicagocollections.org/>)

Digital Transgender Archive

(<https://digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>)

College Women: Documenting the History of Women in Higher Education

(<https://www.collegewomen.org/>)

South Asian American Digital Archive

(<https://www.saada.org/>)

Archives West

(<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/>)

American Folklore Society Folklore Collections Database

(<http://www.folklorecollections.org/>)

California Revealed

(<https://californiarevealed.org/>)

We explored their frameworks and learned about their research communities; we interviewed leaders of their development teams and read their white papers, reviews, and

critical literature. We gathered what we learned from these tools and their teams and applied that knowledge to our own collections and to our understanding of Franco-American materials held around North America. With this knowledge we designed and published a beta version of a Franco-American portal for trial and exhibition in early 2019 (<https://beta.francoamericanportal.org>), and began to seek out funding to build out a more robust research tool that could support aggregated Franco-American collection access and discovery for many collections and contributing institutions long into the future.

C. Pre-grant Preparation

We inaugurated a plan and timeline of grantseeking that began with an application to the NEH. In our systems research we were especially excited by the origins, shape, and trajectory of Bryn Mawr College's research portal, *College Women*. We saw meaningful similarities between their project and our own: a multi-institutional collaboration to create a subject-based materials aggregator that amplifies an understudied group in American history. We studied narratives from their successful grant proposals, and were encouraged to discover in the NEH a contest that spoke to the needs our own collaboration sought to meet. We chose to apply to the NEH for our own Foundations grant.

With the foundation of the *Franco American Portal Project* already laid in terms of multi-institutional collaboration, collections research, and financial support, our 2019 proposal was able to articulate a strong basis for continued collaboration, and to make a cohesive plan for envisioning a sustainable future for our mutual growth and development. We solicited proposals from multiple vendors in digital asset management development and prepared to contract a successful grant with Born-Digital (<https://born-digital.com/>), a Massachusetts Islandora development team. Born-Digital intended to meet our portal's functional requirements within our budget (see Appendix C). Their work on similar projects,

California Revealed (<https://californiarevealed.org/>), and

Five College Compass (<https://compass.fivecolleges.edu/>)

impressed our team with their compatibility to our own project². We also committed to use an open source framework whose developments would be made openly available to the community. Born-Digital/Islandora seemed a strong fit (<https://github.com/Born-Digital-US>).

We gathered letters of support from scholars in Franco American Studies, US History, and the digital libraries universe. We also garnered the institutional support of the Maine State Library (MSL), host of Maine's hub to the Digital Public Library of America (DigitalMaine Repository; <https://digitalmaine.com/>); and the Maine State Librarian, Jamie Ritter, a long standing supporter of using innovative tools to preserve and promote the history of

² During the performance period we also studied more recent projects built by other developers in Islandora–*Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository* (<https://ladi.lib.utexas.edu/>) and *Louisiana Digital Library* (<https://louisianadigitallibrary.org/>)—both of which contributed to development discussions.

the people of Maine (see Appendix A). MSL and Ritter joined our project team in an advisory capacity and leant the strength and resources of MSL in statewide digital projects to the success of our portal.

As our collaboration had already been active with a Program Manager, Advisory Board, and working benchmarks, the period between the June 2019 submission of this grant proposal and the April 2020 announcement of our award was dedicated to the advancement and growth of our project. We explored alternative grants for project development and digitization, connected with additional project contributors, and continued to research collections to grow the geographic scope of the project. This interim work was recorded in the *Franco American Portal Project Year One Annual Report* (see Appendix D). When we finally learned of our NEH award, our team was poised to begin its work at the commencement of the grant period.

III. Project Work

A. Coordination

It is hard to overstate the impact of COVID-19 on this grant's period of performance. COVID restrictions, cancellations, and delays required our project team to be flexible.

Our project's original work plan and timeline proposed distinct project benchmarks beginning in June 2020 and ending May 2021. Though awards were announced in April 2020, and our official project start date was planned for June 1, the project start itself was delayed until budget reviews were completed by the Office of Grant Management (OGM). Given the timing of our award, CARES Act funding assumed OGM operations and delayed budget approvals for NEH-awarded projects like ours indefinitely. In our case, we did not receive notice of final budget approval until July 29, 2020. This two-month delay presented some challenges for our team that eventually contributed to our request for a six-month no-cost extension of the project through October 31, 2021.

Our proposed project plan included travel - both domestic and international - to visit institutions in New England and Québec with in-scope Franco-American collections and to solicit potential contributors of content to the portal. Due to COVID-related travel restrictions, our project replaced all Program Manager travel commitments with virtual meetings, email, and telephone contact. Though unfortunate, these changes impacted our anticipated project timeline positively, and allowed us to communicate with additional institutions at further geographical distances. These changes also freed up dedicated travel funds in our grant budget to be reallocated to professional services for portal development without changing the scope of work of our project. These extra funds gave us the opportunity for additional portal customizations, and enabled us to support the maintenance of the portal in its early stages.

Our work plan included monthly Program Manager and Advisory Board meetings for the duration of the performance period. As our *Franco American Portal Project* worked by consensus, these meetings were needed to chart and govern the scope, pace, and priorities of our work together. Our grant proposal anticipated eleven virtual meetings and one in-person retreat between May 2020 and June 1, 2021. However, over the course of the period of performance, project details grew more numerous and complex than anticipated, which made decisions by consensus more time consuming than our original meeting schedule allowed. In addition, the project team's personal and professional schedules were often disrupted on account of COVID-19, or prevented access to our offices that held project-related materials. Our board actually met 49 times over the course of the grant period, with all but one of these meetings held virtually (see work timeline, Appendix E). Meetings consisted of budget reports; work plan progress reports; determining crucial design elements for the portal related to collection structure, multilingual display, and more; molding our functional requirements to the capacities of Islandora 8; approving

Islandora 8 customizations; reviewing portal developments; and preparing the background and content to submit our follow-up NEH HCRR Implementation proposal. These meetings included a two-day virtual "retreat" in January 2021 to work through portal design issues, as well as an in-person, facilitated meeting in July 2021 dedicated to future planning for our Advisory Board's continued work together and support for the portal after its completion.

In May 2020 we also connected with our selected developer, Born-Digital, to discuss our upcoming contract with them, to explore a working timeline, and to begin establishing a master services agreement and statement of work. Our team shared past *Franco American Portal Project* documentation that might be helpful in the course of their work, including white papers drafted in 2019 (see Appendix D) , our project's metadata profile and research (see section III.C below), and information about members of our project team (see Appendix B). We were also introduced to our Born-Digital project manager, Dara Virks, who would represent Born-Digital to us through the period of performance. She liaised between our team and her developers, leading weekly meetings with our Program Manager where she reported on project progress and received any Advisory Board input and feedback. She and other Born-Digital staff continue to provide support to *FADA/PFA* through the life of our service and maintenance contract with Born-Digital.

From our official development kickoff meeting in September 2020, Born-Digital moved toward achieving our project deliverables, including: the Advisory Board's functional requirements; technical specifications; a viable collections structure for portal content; metadata profiles and ingest; facet displays; other theming/display variables for our site; manuals for site upkeep at the end of the development period; and more. This work, described in detail below, would take place over the following year in Islandora 8, an open-source digital content management software whose version 8 had just been introduced within the Islandora community. Naturally, developer timelines for the completion of the portal were gradually pushed back on account of software fixes and work delays surrounding the version 8 release. These delays amounted to approximately two months of time and contributed in part to our request for a no-cost extension.

Additionally, metadata ingest for digital materials to populate the portal encountered significant delay. Due to COVID-19, the Program Manager and Advisory Board member librarians and archivists had limited access to their offices, archives, and the materials that were to form the content of our web portal. COVID mandates requiring us to work from home delayed our metadata content generation significantly and, in turn, delayed our metadata ingest workflow with Born-Digital.

B. Hosting

In early August 2020, our team began to explore options for the long-term hosting of the portal. Our beta portal had been hosted with Reclaim Hosting (<https://reclaimhosting.com/>), although we were interested in contracting with a group or

service that could offer expertise with an Islandora install or the capacity to work seamlessly with our developer at low cost. We connected with the Advanced Computing Group (ACG; <https://acg.maine.edu/>), a team that provides computing infrastructure and support for various projects throughout Maine. They presented a local, highly cost-effective alternative to other popular cloud host environments for large-scale digital projects in content management, and were able to meet the Islandora 8 hosting specifications Born-Digital required of an institutional data center. ACG agreed to provide hosting services and support for our portal with two virtual machines and adequate data mounts, and to work directly with Born-Digital developers in order to advance the project. Channels of communication between Born-Digital, ACG, and the Program Manager remained open throughout the grant period, which mitigated development delay and helped maintain a supportive, collegial environment among our discrete entities³. Access to staging and production environments were limited to UMaine IP addresses and VPNs, and opened at various points for Advisory Board members to see site progress or conduct user testing.

C. Design & Functionality

Work related to portal design accounted for the bulk of time and collaborative labor associated with this project. The Advisory Board's consensus model for decision-making across all elements of design meant that many team meetings were dedicated to determining, evaluating, and re-determining design elements to fit within the scopes of our project budget, development capacities in Islandora, and according to the greatest needs for our collaborating institutions and our imagined audiences.

Design occurred in four overlapping phases: discovery; development and implementation; customization; and review.

Our September 2020 kickoff meeting with Born-Digital inaugurated the discovery phase of development. In this phase, our Program Manager and Advisory Board completed several templates related to the aesthetics and functionality of the portal as they related to the collections we aimed to ingest. Born-Digital's Technical Discovery Questionnaire (size of collections and amount of materials to be included), Collection Structure Spreadsheet (how objects, collections, repositories relate to one another within the portal), Theme and Site Variables Template (aesthetics and accessibility), and Metadata and Facet Display Template (metadata fields, taxonomical needs, and corresponding facets) all positioned our team to reflect on our project needs and preferences across several interconnected design layers. Our Advisory Board held nine separate meetings from September 2021 through December 2021, including a two-day working retreat, in order to complete these templates. This work included a great deal of open communication over email with Born-Digital about what was

³ Our hosting contract remains in place with ACG as of the writing of this white paper, and will continue for the foreseeable future. Recent adjustments to their fee structure were especially advantageous to our project's sustainability, and their location on campus at UMaine eases communication barriers that might have been present in working with an offsite host.

possible within Islandora 8, which was just coming into use within the Islandora community (<https://islandora.ca/index.php/content/islandora-8-now-available>). All Advisory Board meetings produced detailed notes, and all communication with Born-Digital remains recorded in email, on progress report documentation, in the discovery templates, or in related documentation.

The discovery process required the project team to make decisions as basic as color scheme and font; as complex and far-reaching as metadata fields, site shape, and interactions between institutions, items, and collections through the available i8 interface; and as unique as multi-language functionality and English/French translatability within our i8 instance. We returned frequently to model sites for inspiration (especially to *Explore Chicago Collections*, *Digital Transgender Archive*, and *Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository*) and to imagine how our purposes might be informed by these projects within our own content management system. Discovery also included gathering estimates for custom work that Born-Digital would need to complete in order to meet our team's design requests.

Portal development and implementation work started at the beginning of 2021. Born-Digital's base release in Islandora 8 incorporated the basic features that formed the foundation of *FADA/PFA*, and over the course of the year integrated customizations chosen by the project team that fit within the total project budget. The newness of Islandora 8 naturally delayed our working timeline with Born-Digital, as mentioned above, but enabled our project to remain on the cutting edge of software development as Islandora 8 features and fixes came on-line over the course of our development time with Born-Digital. Iterative work on customizations for our project involved hours of discussion, exploration, and decision-making on the part of the Program Manager and Advisory Board, whose budget limited production to roughly 300 hours of Born-Digital labor. This work involved studying mock-ups of team ideas; proposing alternatives; making final decisions before custom development; completing user testing; proposing additional changes; and evaluating possibilities for growth.

Over this time our project came to include the site characteristics and features that satisfied our team's functional requirements. We foregrounded the cultural specificity of Franco-American materials themselves and the ways that Franco-American communities historically organize knowledge and experience the world, and included features that appealed to our evolving aesthetic interests and the preferences of our working group:

-Site name and logo: The project team changed the name, *Franco American Portal Project*, to *Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain (FADA/PFA)* after a great deal of conversation among ourselves and community members. Discussion of a name change was prompted by the need to purchase and secure domain names for our web host to

begin supporting project staging and production environments⁴. The final name of the project in two languages captured the French/English bilingual/bicultural nature of the diaspora archives to which the portal would provide a gateway, as well as the plurality of these materials and their existence across multiple institutions and digital spaces. The project logo (see Appendix F), designed by Advisory Board member Libby Lipin of Assumption University, captured graphically and symbolically the cultural and historical past to which Franco-American materials attend. A working sugar maple tree with a root system in the shape of a maple leaf emblematic of Canada, illustrates a living, working culture in the present with deep roots in a Canadian past.

-Accessibility: Our Master Services Agreement with Born-Digital included University of Maine System riders on IT Accessibility and Standards for Safeguarding Data. The former ensures that the created portal will observe Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 Level AA. Born-Digital performed WCAG accessibility testing and continues to ensure that any front-end development remains in compliance with University guidelines for web accessibility.

-Support for multilingual user interface and multi-language content: Archival materials within the scope of *FADA/PFA* occur in English, in French, or in both languages. Our team required a system that could accommodate these languages, as well as user communities performing research in either language. To this end, Islandora 8 and our development team at Born-Digital ensured that *FADA/PFA* could operate multilingually in a few different ways. First, the site included a language toggle that enables users to experience site interface, site static content, field headings, search, and more, in either French or English. Second, the site back-end also integrated a Google Translate module whereby metadata records are able to be automatically and batch translated after ingest into either French or English, to accommodate user interface preference.

The team chose to maintain all item and collection names in their original language, without translation, and to make major narrative fields (summaries, scope and contents, biographical and historical notes) translatable. For subject headings, the team chose to use both Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and their Canadian French-language equivalents from the Répertoire de vedettes-matière (RVM; <https://rvmlweb.bibl.ulaval.ca/>) side-by-side, for every item, that users in either language might see subject headings in both languages.

Over the course of the project, our team was cognizant of the need to make materials easily discoverable, accessible, and available to communities in their original languages, even to those who do not necessarily read that language. For example, according to a 2013

⁴ The project's main domain is <https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org>. However, we maintained and purchased several other redirecting domains for ease of access in multiple languages: <https://francoportal.org>; <https://francoamericanportal.org>; and <https://portailfrancoamericain.org>.

poll, fewer than 10% of 600 Maine-based Franco Americans claimed fluency in French, yet virtually all self-identified Franco Americans claimed to have a relationship with the French language. Our work in the community confirms our interpretation of this statistic: there remains an important power in the ability of Franco Americans who no longer "have" fluent access to French to be able to experience French. Within the portal, our team ensured users would be able to maintain this linguistic connection: to read French terms on their own or alongside English terms, for example, or to hear French through contributing institution recordings made accessible by an English metadata record. Alternatively, French-language users would have access to Franco-American English-language materials through a French interface, and have a gateway to encounter the complex linguistic reality of the diaspora in the US.

In presenting French and English content next to one another, or providing access to one through the other, we borrowed more readily from Canadian models of resource description for multiple language communities, and from select US projects that publish materials in languages other than English (eg., *Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository*, <https://ladi.lib.utexas.edu/>).

-Metadata profile with support for unique fields: The *Franco American Portal Project* Program Manager and Advisory Board developed a metadata profile for its beta site that incorporated elements of Dublin Core and DACS in order that the portal might comfortably display both object- and collection-level metadata (see Appendix G). Born-Digital and Islandora 8 were able to accommodate all of this project's unique taxonomical needs, generated named fields, and created searchable and browsable fields particularly unique to our project (Contributing Institution, Repository, Family, and others) that could accommodate various types of data: taxonomy terms, long text, hyperlinks, and more.

The Google Translate functionality, as well as Islandora's multi-language ability to accommodate custom translation of records, enabled our team to display these fields in multiple languages where needed, to hide unused fields, and to customize their order and public display. In addition to adhering to these standard ways of organizing information within a digital archival system, our Advisory Board was, and remains, deeply conscientious of the culturally-specific aspects of Franco-American archival materials and the communities from which they proliferate. We brainstormed ways to transmit this specificity across a digital portal, and to provide gateways to materials that tap into specific ways of knowing and accessing information that are common in Franco-American spaces. To this end, in addition to the bilingual subject headings mentioned above, we added unique metadata fields.

- We chose to curate materials by an additional bilingual thematic layer: around 75 culturally-specific "Topics" were chosen by the team to improve the browsing experience for researchers (<https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/topic-group>). We solicited feedback on Topics from scholars in Franco American studies as well as

community members active in historical research who ultimately determined, assessed, and improved a list of terms for browsing and faceting search results. The Topics were organized into seven major thematic groups described bilingually in either interface: The American Experiences/Américanité; Arts and Creativity/Arts et créativité; Daily Life/Vie quotidienne; Events/Événements; Language/Langue; Religion; and Work/Travail.

- We also made sure to tap into the genealogical richness of Franco materials by tagging every item and collection with the Franco-American surnames that occur within that item or collection. This "Family Name" access point was significant for us, as we are highly aware of the function of surnames in Franco culture for connecting individuals and entering them into history and community. The resulting list of names in *FADA/PFA*, still growing, includes common spellings of surnames both with and without accent marks, uncommon spellings, anglicizations, and related variations of names that have changed or been supplanted over time (<https://francoamericandigitalarchives.org/taxonomy/vocab/family>). Islandora 8 also allows our project team to place various name terms in relation to one another. This means that a user who browses "Family Names" or performs a search by a certain surname term can find historically related terms they did not know to search for and, by extension, the materials that have been tagged with that related name.
- As with family names, the significance of geographic locations like cities, neighborhoods, and Roman Catholic parishes for bringing connections between archival materials was also important for the Advisory Board to capture and leverage within the portal. All items are therefore tagged separately with geographic locations, in addition to whatever physical locations may appear in LCSH, RVM, or other text fields. Geographic headings are nested from the country level (USA; Canada), through state and province, city, neighborhood, and parish, and remain browseable through both French and English interfaces.

-Faceted searching and hierarchical facets: Islandora 8 incorporates faceted searching through Solr to make materials more discoverable. Facets appear as part of Born-Digital's base release frontend interface. Our project team chose and ordered facets for sorting search results, and remains able to adjust or create facets according to the growing needs of the project, and to index fields and objects as new metadata is added to the portal.

-Display of multiple item types, including collection finding aids: Islandora 8 also natively supports metadata display for a range of resource types - collection, sound, moving image, still image, text, etc. - and system display models to accommodate these types among individual objects, compound objects, paged content and more. The *FADA/PFA* Advisory Board was limited in its need to display multiple item types as such, however, as our primary mission was simply to provide metadata, thumbnails, and external links, so that users would be directed back to the location of the hosted materials. This post-custodial

model, inspired by *Umbra Search* and taken up by *Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository*⁵, proves useful to our project in the way that it places disparate collections in conversation with one another in a single interface, yet continues to funnel users back to the hosting institutions that steward materials. This model ensures that the communities and institutions that provide materials to the portal remain their primary stewards, it benefits from the local knowledge shared by repository staff, and it encourages the growth and development of each contributing institution both individually and as part of a collective.

Prioritizing item and collection metadata over digitized objects also enables *FADA/PFA* to include metadata records in the portal for materials that are not yet digitized - including rich text from finding aids, or records from individual items that are intellectually controlled but not yet available to experience in a digital space. This capability remains significant for our team: the need for the project to provide access to and information about Franco-American collections stems in part from inattention paid to these collections. Waiting for materials to be digitized before including them in the portal is at odds with the purposes of our work to ameliorate access to those materials and encourage their use, knowing full well that many of these collections are not prioritized for digitization. To this end, after user testing, our Program Manager and Advisory Board decided to include a new custom field for all materials that would indicate their "Digitization Status." This field allows users to sort search results by materials that are immediately available digitally, partially digitized, and those for which they would have to contact the host institution to access. Links within every object or finding aid record ("View at Contributing Institution") return users to an object or collection's host institution, regardless of the materials' digitization status.

-Capacity to harvest, aggregate, and update metadata from discrete systems:

Contributing institutions use a range of discrete content management systems. This diversity required us to have a management system for *FADA/PFA* that could accommodate import or ingest of metadata from many different types of digital environments. Even our primary collaborating institutions represented by our Advisory Board use various CMS to

⁵ The *LADI* statement on post-custodialism speaks to our mission for Franco-American collections and institutions that keep them : "Post-custodialism is a collaborative, non-extractive, mutualistic approach to providing access to archival collections within their original contexts of creation. Through these collaborations, [we] support the development of partners' archival capacity, particularly in the areas of digitization, preservation, arrangement, description, and access. The collections...have been digitized and described by partner repository staff, who provide the rich contextual knowledge captured in each collection's descriptive metadata....This work is guided by a commitment to nurturing reciprocal relationships between a network of local and international collaborators. We aim to build a horizontal community of post-custodial practice by connecting...partners with one another while decentering our own role in the network" ("About our work: post-custodialism," *LADI*, <https://ladi.lib.utexas.edu/en/about>).

host and display in-scope Franco-American content on the web: bePress Digital Commons; ArchivesSpace; Omeka; LibGuides; PastPerfect; Kaltura; WordPress. Additional contributors use still other systems with discrete metadata profiles and various forms of display: ContentDM; Islandora; homegrown websites of various kinds; and more. In this respect, Islandora 8 does not at present provide an automated harvest/aggregation tool in the manner of OAI-PMH or other metadata harvesters. Instead, it enables the ingest of various metadata from various sources through mapping local metadata to a common ingest template. This manual ingest process has required us to establish guidelines for the creation of common, mapped, ordered CSV files prior to ingest of metadata into the portal. It also provides a space within our project workflow for team members to perform the supplemental descriptive work of adding Franco-American surnames, local geographic tags, and topical/thematic headings. Though a successfully completed ingest leaves us with consistent metadata and a bank of manipulable spreadsheets for back-up, the entire process is intensely laborious and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Born-Digital designed our ingest template and supported our use of the integrated command line tool, Workbench (https://github.com/mjordan/islandora_workbench), in order to create object- and collection-level metadata records within the portal. With each contributing institution, our project team has completed a non-legally-binding contributor MOU (see Appendix H) and established relationships to harvest and map their metadata to an institution-level ingest template; some of this work is completed by the institution, some by our team itself, depending on the relationship. An institution's records are mapped to the template and the template is ingested into the portal for indexing, translation, and public display. As the project grows its institutional reach and includes more contributors who use different, discrete systems to manage and display their collections, this layer of labor in transforming metadata could present major delays to growing portal content as we wait for a more amenable metadata harvesting development within the Islandora community.

-Assessment Tool: Finally, our grant work plan had proposed the creation of an "assessment tool," or a functional set of guidelines by which our team could assist catalogers in evaluating Franco-American resources in their descriptive cataloging. Though the format of this tool was not elaborated in our plan - whether it be an automated tool built by a developer; a basic set of criteria; or something else entirely - it was important to our Advisory Board that we amplify conversations about what qualifies materials as "Franco American," particularly in a subject-based portal such as this one. Outside of our primary advisory partner institutions whose collections are richly defined by their geographic and historical contexts, the question of definition remains, in part, open-ended. Indeed, the choice to use the term "Franco-American" in the context of the

French-Canadian and Acadian diaspora in the US Northeast is a deliberate one with historical precedent, albeit not one that is universally used or understood.⁶

Instead of an assessment tool, the project team created a Cataloging Workgroup among Advisory Board members to handle and manage descriptive issues related to their collections. This Workgroup keeps open the conversation about what are the most appropriate materials to appear in this subject-based portal, and engages this conversation with contributing institutions as needed. The Workgroup, in dynamic dialogue, is more nimble than an assessment tool that holds rigorous standards for description, and can address descriptive cataloging of "Franco-American" materials for *FADA/PFA* without artificially narrowing the portal's scope, or widening that scope so much as to obscure the portal team's original mission, which may risk re-hiding materials that we have spent so much time drawing attention to.

D. Content

Our team began generating content for the portal with items and collections from our own institutions: UMaine, University of Maine at Fort Kent, University of Southern Maine, Saint Anselm College, Assumption University, and the Maine State Library. As each of us described, digitized, and made accessible materials through our institutional publishing platforms and asset management systems, the portal accepted online records and respective links in order to place them in conversation with one another, and to begin to provide a single gateway to them.

As mentioned above, COVID travel restrictions prevented our Program Manager's travel to seven other potential contributing institutions as listed in our proposal. Our team instead connected virtually with thirteen institutions—McArthur Public Library (Biddeford ME); Northeast Historic Film (Bucksport ME); New York Public Library; Siena College (NY); University of Texas at Austin; University of Massachusetts Amherst; University of Connecticut; Vermont Historical Society; University of Vermont; Harvard University; Rivier University (Nashua, NH); Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec; and University of New England (Biddeford, ME)—and crafted agreements with eight of them to begin harvesting in-scope collections metadata to the portal. We signed Contributor MOUs with all but one contributor, who agreed instead to provide written permission. Ingest templates with these institutions began immediately, and the project team worked in conjunction with each institutions' staff to prepare metadata appropriate for ingest. Staff supplemented all metadata with additional description and taxonomic terms particular to the portal:

⁶ In other contexts, for example, "Franco-American" (or "Franco American," without the hyphen) speaks to France/US diplomatic relations or to French/American biculturalism; others use its generalness in the US Northeast to include French language communities outside of the Québec/Acadia diaspora; still others extend it to the US Midwest French heritage communities, or to Louisiana Cajun and Creole communities.

applicable cultural tags for topics, family names, and geography; RVM headings; thumbnails of images where applicable; and French translations of major narrative fields.

The project team will continue to grow content to the portal from partner and contributing institutions whose in-scope collections are not yet fully represented within it, and to solicit contributions from and partnerships with new institutions not yet represented in the portal. Our project's inventories count at least 75 institutions with in-scope content that we aim to include. A slow ingest process and limited *FADA/PFA* project staff delays content growth, but our team is poised to keep additions to *FADA/PFA* ongoing. Part of this growth comes from working to add these new contributing partners; part of it comes from additional content accessioned or digitized by current contributing partners.

E. Additional Grants

Another purpose for this grant was to develop an action plan for the mass digitization of selected in-scope materials. During the period of performance, our Advisory Board prioritized materials to digitize, determined the best course of action for completing this work with participating institutions, and wrote three additional grant proposals for digitization.

With the Advisory Board's support, UMaine and the Program Manager applied twice—unsuccessfully—to the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Digitizing Hidden Collections grant program to fund the mass digitization of Franco-American newspapers. Largely overlooked in the digital libraries and newspaper landscape, and omitted in large part from other newspaper digitization efforts like the National Digital Newspaper Program, French-language Franco-American newspapers from New England and New York State captured the attention of our team. We coordinated our five major advisory partners' shared data on newspaper microfilm and hard copy collections, as well as collections from the Maine State Library, Boston Public Library, Rhode Island Historical Society, and Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec, to propose collaboratively digitizing 165 titles, and approximately 750,000 pages of published newspapers from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Though we were rejected twice—once in the final round, once outright—we established a team priority in the digitization of these rich, underused, overlooked published materials. We also developed relationships with holding institutions in our region, and with representatives of collections at the University of Vermont, Harvard University, and Université Laval (Québec), which will help us to provide a future for this part of the project.

The Advisory Board also completed an additional NEH HCRR proposal during the grant period. This follow-up proposal for a Implementation grant required the team to prioritize elements of their own collections for digitization outside of the scope of newspapers. Our proposal centered on personal papers, correspondence, business records, music, literary works, and other documentation that capture diverse French-language, Franco-American

experiences in a deeply American context. This selection and enumeration of collections for digitization allowed our team to better understand each other's specific institutional interests and priorities and, like with our CLIR applications, strengthened the collaborative foundation by which we could continue our work together on *FADA/PFA*.

F. Publicity

Publicity for the portal began before the grant period with the inauguration of the *Franco American Portal Project* in 2018, through our collaborators' professional networks, our communities, individual word of mouth, and through our project's informational website (<https://francoamericanportal.org>, which has since been redirected to *FADA/PFA*).

The University of Maine released an official press release announcing the NEH award on April 21, 2020. The release ran subsequently through our collaborating partners' marketing offices, local news channels and print media, the Associated Press, and various other AP news outlets around the country (see Appendix F).

The award announcement occurred during the spring term when we were teaching for the first time a newly developed UMaine course on Franco-American issues in archival studies. The period of performance in the summer coincided as well with UMaine's first internship program for the portal, during which time students discussed archival theory, learned about the Franco-American collections held at all of our partner institutions, generated metadata, and populated the portal with contributing institutions' collections. The internship program organized roughly a dozen participants for a 6-week course in June and July 2020, and for continued independent work through September. Though the entire internship program was offered virtually on account of COVID, the distance model allowed students from wide geographies to participate, and eased the contributions of guest speakers who participated from throughout New England. Our portal was therefore advertised through University of Maine System courses, through word of mouth by all contributors, and by participating students from throughout the University of Maine System.

The internship program and accompanying course laid the groundwork for various student projects at UM in the following academic year, and was repeated in June and July of 2021 with students participating virtually from around the state. The program will be offered again in the summer of 2022.

Our Program Manager presented background on the project as part of a panel of archivists at the Maine Archives and Museums (MAM) annual conference in October 2020. Members of our team also presented on the project as a part of Connecticut Digital Humanities Day in February 2021. In March 2021, our Program Manager and entire Advisory Board also participated in a live video overview presentation of the portal project, with introductions to each of our partner institutions' collections. Finally in October 2021, at the end of our

period of performance, the Program Manager and UMaine Advisor, Susan Pinette, presented historical case studies rooted in *FADA/PFA* at the 2021 MAM Annual Conference. These presentations grew the professional audience of this project through multi-state, multi-disciplinary channels, and generated recorded content for us to share with our respective communities through social media and on our project website.

FADA/PFA created social media accounts on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/fada.pfa>), Twitter (@[fada_pfa](#)), and Instagram (@[fada_pfa](#)) to begin building community in social digital spaces, and to provide multiple foundations to coordinate publicity and outreach efforts going forward.

IV. Project Sustainability

A. Future Planning

Our Advisory Board and Program Manager sought to formalize our collaboration within an organizational or institutional structure, and to provide a sustainable future for the portal within that structure. From the project's outset, our collaborative work had been ordered around the completion of project benchmarks set out in our 2018 proposal funded by UMaine, and reiterated in our NEH grant. With grant funds nearing depletion at the end of our period of performance and University of Maine support for portal work moving toward the end of its current three-year commitment, our team agreed to come together in facilitated conversation to explore what our future together might look like, and how that future could support the growth, maintenance, and development of each other's collections and the portal tool we had worked so hard to create. We were eager to sustain our positive working relationship and the energy that *FADA/PFA* had generated.

To that end, in July 2021, our Program Manager and Advisory Board participated in an all-day, in-person strategic planning meeting facilitated by longtime UMaine Community Development Educator, Jane Haskell. Having completed several hours of assigned pre-work, each member of our team met at a central space, the Biddeford City Hall (Biddeford ME) to discuss our project's history and its present status, to come to a common understanding of each institution's commitment to our collaborative work, and to plan strategically our future together. From this meeting was born the Franco American Collections Consortium (FACC), and the beginnings of a formalized structure to provide strategic support not only for the portal and its growth, but for the development of other collaborative projects around our shared strengths and interests. We established an organizational mission, vision, and purpose (see Appendix J), created a website to communicate our team to the public (<https://faconsortium.org>), and committed to drafting working statements and plans for our team. This documentation included: Competitive Advancement Statement; Community Engaged Learning Statement; Fundraising Plan; Hosting and Membership plan; and a list of next steps for the team to undertake. FACC continues to meet monthly; has established advisory committees dedicated to fundraising, cataloging, outreach, and curriculum development; and will receive committed financial support from each collaborating institution.

B. Project Maintenance

The center of FACC collaborative work remains *FADA/PFA* and its growth and sustainability. The period of performance inaugurated our first year of a service and maintenance contract for *FADA/PFA* with our developer, Born-Digital. Born-Digital's custom developments for our site in Drupal 8/9 and Islandora 8, their open communication with our team and with our hosting provider ACG, and their deep involvement in the Islandora Foundation makes them the best qualified team at present to service our site and to deploy security updates and patches as needed. Our current contract with them expires at the end of April

2021. We intend to renew it for the forthcoming year using financial commitments from our FACC member institutions and a multi-institutional fundraising plan rolled out by the consortium's Fundraising Committee.

As staff and user communities become increasingly active in the portal, our team will also incorporate user feedback to present back to Born-Digital for site improvements. Most recently we have begun a configuration of Matomo in order to generate site analytics, and have requested mock-ups for new aesthetic features.

As mentioned above, ACG remains our hosting provider for the foreseeable future, with hosting expenses currently covered by the UMaine Franco American Programs. Hosting fees are also listed as a target for our team's fundraising efforts.

Relationships with contributing institutions also require nurturing and maintenance. Each Contributor MOU includes statements of expectations for both *FADA/PFA* and the contributor, and intends that *FADA/PFA* maintain some regular communication about contributors material in the portal. Indeed as *FADA/PFA* grows, representation of harvested objects and collections may change. Maintaining ongoing relationships between Program Manager, Advisory Board, and contributors will ensure that representation of materials in the portal remains strong and supported by all collaborating parties.

C. Project Growth

FACC and the Program Manager continue to seek out ways to grow the portal. Current contributing institutions number fifteen in total, with 790 object and collection records made searchable as of the writing of this white paper. Of these fifteen contributors, only six have exhausted their in-scope collections for ingest; the remaining nine contributors have an estimated 40,000 additional object and collection records poised for transformation and ingest. Our inventories of other in-scope collections include basic inventories of 70 additional institutions in the United States and Canada: mostly universities and national libraries as well as a few public libraries and smaller historical societies. We have only scratched the surface of collections holding Franco-American history records on this continent, and incrementally will work to include metadata from these other institutions as staff time and team commitments allow. FACC's Cataloging Workgroup will also participate in discussion about descriptive practices for Franco-American materials that will provide a starting point for their more accurate and complete description wherever these materials are held.

Growth of the portal also means the growth and evolution of the ways in which the portal may be used. Throughout its development, our team has been committed to creating a resource that was as useful and functional to academic researchers as to members of the communities that these materials represent and speak to. We have also ensured that the site provided space for English-language, French-language, and bilingual groups, and

maintained gateways between them through the presentation of historical collections metadata. FACC's Curriculum Committee will work to support engaging ways to facilitate use of portal collections by students; to provide lessons and guides for teachers to use the portal in the classroom across humanities disciplines; and to bridge the gap between this historic content and school audiences. Digital aggregation and presentation also provides our team the foundation to build rich exhibits of digital content that can provide basic, meaningful, and contextualized access to Franco-American stories. FACC's Outreach Committee will work to maintain a consistent stream of content through social media channels and professional networks, and will ensure that *FADA/PFA* remains involved in conversations regarding digital humanities, digital libraries, and the range of intersecting fields that our evolving digital tool hopes both to inform and be enriched by.

The FACC Fundraising Committee, in addition to steering the consortium through the timeline of grant-writing that began with this NEH proposal, looks forward to the growth of the consortium and the collaborative projects where it directs its energies. Though the University of Maine has extended its three-year funds commitment for the portal project and portal staff to a fourth year, the problem of more entrenched support for staff time and project development has not disappeared with the success of the portal. As such, this committee is invested in the work of sustainability, and in continual, strategic collaboration to find ways to maintain our ability to work together fruitfully and provide access to rich, historical materials.

V. Conclusion

Almost universally, institutions and individuals engaged in the preservation and dissemination of Franco-American history begin with the knowledge that stories about this cultural community are overlooked, ignored, or silenced. There is a risk that these stories could be lost and the community they sustain impaired. Indeed, a primary motivation for our team in creating *FADA/PFA* was to acknowledge this narrative, and to honor the urgency, energy, and deep longing that lies within it by amplifying Franco-American history across the humanities in this country and beyond.

Our institutions are humble stewards of this diverse and disparate community's records. Our project team members are privileged to have the responsibility of preserving their stories and to experience the richness of them in our daily lives and work, where building and maintaining community trust must remain at the forefront.

The reports above represent a year and a half of lessons learned about collaboration, communication, technology, and sustainability surrounding efforts to make Franco-American history accessible. Though our work began long before and will last long after our project's period of performance, we would not have had access to these learning experiences, nor to the robust results that they produced, without support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. We are immensely proud of *FADA/PFA* and its evolution over the past year, and we are grateful for having had the support to bring it to life with the input of our team members, web developers, researchers, and community members. We are committed to leveraging the structure of FACC to grow *FADA/PFA* into the future, and to participate in other projects that strengthen the central mission of the portal to amplify and provide representation in the digital landscape for Franco-American people and their histories.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A - Investment in UMS Franco American Programs Initiatives (2018)

From *Investment in UMS Franco American Programs Initiatives* (2018), pp. 1-2, by Pinette, Rice-DeFosse, and Bonneau. [See here for the complete proposal.](#)

The University of Maine Franco American Programs in Orono, the Franco American Collection at the University of Southern Maine, and the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine at Fort Kent seek to build a search engine and an on-line portal of primary source materials essential to the study of Franco Americans of the Northeast. We believe that by providing online access to currently difficult-to-access primary resources and rare out-of-print titles, we will encourage and support the scholarship of migration, labor, industry, small business, religion, folklore, ethnicity, literary studies, and linguistics. We will also raise the profile of one of Maine's unique resources. Franco Americans make up the largest ethnic group in the state, and French is its most common language after English. Maine is also located at the geographic heart of more than eight million people of French descent in the Northeast – encompassed by New England, New York, Québec, and the Atlantic Provinces – providing essential cultural and commercial links between these French communities.

Our project addresses the challenge of inadequate access to Franco American cultural history by (1) working with repositories to identify and make accessible a national collection of archival material relevant to Franco American history; (2) creating a freely available online search tool that makes Franco American historical documentation more easily discoverable; and by (3) promoting awareness and use of this resource by scholars, students, educators, and the general public.

To this end, we propose to use the funds grant to: (1) create an advisory board of humanities scholars, archivists, and student researchers to oversee the creation of an on-line portal and search engine on the model of <https://www.umbrasearch.org/> and to ensure that the collection of materials in this portal is coherent and will support the work of academics, teachers, public programmers and community scholars; (2) hire a program manager to oversee and be primarily responsible for the portal creation and eventual student internships; (3) establish paid internships for students to help digitize and create the metadata needed for such a project.

We will look to leverage this funding investment by applying for grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Council on Library and Information Resources as well as by seeking private funds. If successful, we will use whatever additional funds we have to: (4) seed a fellowship consortium which would fund undergraduate, graduate and faculty research projects based in the archives; (5) create a curriculum transformation grants process for the University of Maine system in order to integrate the two aspects of our project across the broader UMS curriculum at all levels: (a) Franco American content into current history, language, sociology, literature, and other related classes and (b) the study of archives and digitization. Ideally, at the end of our grant process we will have enough courses across various disciplines in English and in French to create a

system-wide M.A., minor(s) and/or certificate(s) in Franco American content or archival study with a Franco American minor that would prepare students for careers in related fields. We realize that this might not be possible in the three years of this grant period but we will work towards this goal in mind for the future.

Our deliverables include:

- Comprehensive identification and analysis of digital archival repositories for Franco American content;
- Complete inventory of current UMS holdings of Franco American content;
- Creation of a centralized search index of aggregated metadata harvested from online collections held in previously identified repositories;
- Development and execution of a comprehensive search strategy for retrieving relevant metadata from across disparate sources on subjects related to Franco American culture and history;
- Establishment of metadata standards for repositories submitting digitized and born digital archival materials;
- Cultivation and sustenance of partnerships to be leveraged for growing holdings and promoting use of the portal for scholarly, artistic, and educational projects;
- Increased engagement with and use of the Franco-American archival holdings across the University of Maine System by students, faculty and the public, including increased coursework in French and in English and curricular integration with the hopes of eventually establishing either a system-wide minor in Franco American Studies and/or archival study with a Franco American Studies minor.

We intend this document to be a flexible blueprint. We will assess our progress at the end of each year and update this planning document as necessary. This initial text maps our use of the funds for the next three years as we imagine it now. It will be subject to revision based upon our progress and might change as needs arise.

...

Appendix B - Program Manager, Advisory Board, and Contributing Staff

Beginning in 2018, UMaine organized an Advisory Board of leadership from the predominant Franco American collections in the US and hired a Program Manager to lead the portal project effort. Each team member brought rich experience, professional expertise, and community wisdom to the foundation of the portal project, and readily engaged the possibilities that were available to them in collaboration. The team that submitted the proposal for this NEH grant was made up of the following members:

Jacob Albert, MSLIS (UMaine; Program Manager, 2018-present; Grant PI) is an archivist and librarian who specializes in Franco American Studies. He has archived and taught in university, secondary school, and museum environments; published research and creative writing; and collaborated locally with various efforts to preserve and disseminate Franco-American arts, literature, and historical materials. He developed the *Franco American Library*, an online subject bibliography in Franco American Studies. He has long been active in local nonprofits dedicated to youth and education.

Susan Pinette, PhD (UMaine; Advisory Board, 2018-present; Grant co-PI) is a scholar of Franco-Americans. Her work explores the specificities of contemporary Franco-American literature, arguing for its relevance to the broader arenas of ethnic and migration studies. She aims to show that Franco-American ethnic fiction operates within a continent-wide semiotic space not restricted to the United States but one that includes French Canada. She contextualizes her scholarship on Franco-Americans within transnational migration studies, especially as it concerns definitions of community, social class, and diaspora. She is Director of Franco American Programs and Associate Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures at The University of Maine. She has published numerous articles, developed a Franco-American Studies curriculum, received state and federal funding grants, and served as a liaison between scholars, business leaders, governments, and the public.

Doris Bonneau (University of Southern Maine Lewiston-Auburn College; Advisory Board, 2018-2019) had a career as a teacher of French and English, Coordinator of Curriculum, Director of Instruction, Assessment, and Programs for the Gifted and Talented as well as Assistant Superintendent of Schools. She co-created the Maine French Heritage Language Program which continues to serve children in Auburn, and served as Chair of the Board for the Franco-American Collection at the University of Southern Maine. In 2013, she was inducted into the Maine Franco-American Hall of Fame and decorated *Chevalier des Palmes Académiques* from the French government. In 2017 she received the *Chevalier de l'Order de Mérite* which recognizes Frenchmen and foreigners who have been prominent in community service. She has been a trustee of the Lewiston Library, Trustee of the State Community College where she served as chair of its Education Policy Committee. In addition, she served on numerous local boards and committees such as the Board of Directors of the Gendron Franco American Center. She sings with a local group called the "Troubadours" who perform monthly sing-alongs of traditional Franco songs at the Lewiston-Auburn Campus, serves as trustee to the Auburn Public Library where she has led

a series French workshop for Families and created French Book Bags on various topics that can be used by families wanting their children to learn French.

Keith Chevalier, MLIS (Saint Anselm College; Advisory Board, 2018-present) is the Archivist and Head of Special Collections in the Geisel Library at Saint Anselm College. He is responsible for the Saint Anselm College Archives and the on-campus Benedictine community's monastic archives as well as four collections of rare books and manuscripts on topics covering New England history, St. Anselm, and Franco-Americans. Prior to this appointment he worked at the University of Wisconsin. He attended graduate school at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (English) and received a Masters of Arts in Library Studies with a Specialization in Archives and Records Administration from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He received a certificate in book production and design from Rare Book School at the University of Virginia. He is active with the New England Archivists and a member of the Standards Committee for the Society of American Archivists.

Leslie Choquette, PhD (Assumption University; Advisory Board, 2018-present) is Professor of History, Côté Professor of French Studies, and Director of the French Institute at Assumption University. Her diverse publications concern both modern France and the francophone presence in North America from New France to the present day. She is the author of *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Harvard University Press, 1997), which won the Alfred Heggoy Book Prize of the French Colonial Historical Society in 1998 and was selected as one of nine best books on Canada by an American by the *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, at the request of Foreign Affairs Canada, in 2005. A French translation of the book was published by Septentrion and Les Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne in 2001. Professor Choquette was awarded the Prix du Québec from the Government of Québec in 2012 for her outstanding contribution to the field of Québec Studies.

Libby Lipin, MSLIS (Assumption University; Advisory Board, 2018-2021) was the French Institute Librarian and Archivist at Assumption University until 2021. She earned her MSLIS from Simmons College GSLIS in 2010 and brought to her work a background in art and museums as well as knowledge about the physical care for and conservation of collection materials.

David Nutty, MLS (University of Southern Maine; Advisory Board, 2018-present) is the University Librarian and Director of Libraries and Interim Director of Professional and Continuing Education at the University of Southern Maine. He has been at USM for over eleven years. David has a 34 year career as a librarian in academic libraries, with an emphasis on administration and information technologies. Prior to USM, David was Director of Information Resources at Richmond American International University in London where he oversaw IT, libraries, administrative and academic computing. David also spent six years at George Washington University as the Associate University Librarian for Users Services and Technology and ten years at Loyola University in Chicago in several

capacities, ending as the Assistant University Librarian for Public Services. David is active in state and national library organizations. He is a member of the Maine InfoNet Board of Directors and is a past Board Chair, a member of the URSUS Library Directors Council, and is co-chair of the American Library Association's Committee on Legislation - Telecommunications Subcommittee. As acting director of Professional and Continuing Education, he is actively involved in USM Online initiatives. His professional interests include the intersection of libraries, information with technology, and teaching and learning. He has championed the development of the Learning Commons at USM Libraries. David is also pleased to be a part of the Digital Maine initiative and its close association with the Libraries' Digital Commons.

Lise Pelletier, MA (University of Maine at Fort Kent; Advisory Board, 2018-2021) was Director of the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine at Fort Kent. She has been a member of the UMFK French Heritage Council; UMFK Strategic Planning Committee 2008-2009; Le Club Français; President of Maine Acadian Heritage Council; Board of Directors, Acadian World Congress 2008 - 2015; UMFK Presidential Lecture Series committee; Economic and Social Development Committee of Acadia of the Lands and Forests. Most recently, she helped organize the 2014 Acadian World Congress and participated in the writing and publication of "Acadian Roots - Images of the St. John Valley" and Circuit Map of Acadia of the Lands and Forests. She was also a participating member of "St. John Valley Cultural ByWay" in 2014. She co-wrote curriculum and taught NEH summer institute "Borderland Acadians of the St. John Valley"; was a speaker in Quebec, March 2016 on "Acadians of Maine"; and was involved in a planning exhibit of historic maps and international traveling exhibit about Maine Acadians and the Bloodless Aroostook War.

Mary Rice-DeFosse, PhD (Bates College; Advisory Board, 2018-present) is Professor of French and Francophone Studies at Bates College. Her work on the intersection of literature, social change, and identity in nineteenth-century France dovetails with her community-engaged research on the Franco-American experience in Maine, especially as Maine industrialized in the same period. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Franco-American Collection of the Lewiston-Auburn College of the University of Southern Maine (1995-2018, 2019-present) and the Board of the Gendron Franco Center in Lewiston (2011-2019). While chair of the department of French and francophone studies at Bates (2006-2011) she led an effort to integrate community-engaged learning at all levels of the curriculum. She is the co-author, with James Myall, of a history targeted to a general audience, *The Franco-Americans of Lewiston-Auburn* (The History Press: 2015) based in large part on oral histories she and her students conducted in the local community. She also served as lead scholar on a permanent exhibit, funded by the Maine Humanities Council, at the Gendron Franco Center about the work of the Grey Nuns in Lewiston and co-produced, wrote, and narrated a documentary on the work of this Québécois religious order with local Franco-Americans. She was named to the Franco-American Hall of Fame by the Maine State Legislature in 2014 and received the Donald Harward Award for Service Learning Excellence from the Maine Campus Compact in 2015. She is a past president of Women in

French, an international professional organization dedicated to women writers of French expression, and serves on the editorial board of Women in French Studies.

James (Jamie) Ritter, MLIS (Maine State Library; NEH HCRR grant Advisory Board) was selected by the Maine Library Commission in December 2014 to serve as Maine State Librarian. In that role, he is the chief administrator of the Maine State Library and works to ensure the agency fulfills its mission to advance and promote library services and collection resources for all of Maine, as well as extend the library's services relating to emerging technologies and research & development initiatives. Mr. Ritter began his career at the Maine State Library in 2012 as director of Reader and Information Services. In his tenure there he reorganized public areas in the Maine State Library to provide more comfortable and efficient workspaces for library users and launched a "remaker space" to allow public access to technology to facilitate the digitization of photos, audio and video. Prior to joining the Maine State Library, Mr. Ritter served as Deputy Director of the Camden Public Library. As a member of the library's management team, he had oversight of all fund development activities and assisted the Library Director in operations, strategic planning, personnel, and other responsibilities required to operate the library in a superior manner. Mr. Ritter also has extensive corporate experience having worked for MBNA as Vice President in Administration and Community Relations, and for Camden National Bank as Senior Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Planning. During Mr. Ritter's employment at MBNA, he oversaw the creation of the MBNA Foundation Library Grants Program, and served as the program's first director. This program awarded more than \$2 million in grants to libraries across Maine. A former member and Chair of the Maine Library Commission, Mr. Ritter was part of the creation of the Maine State Library's 2011-2013 Strategic Plan. Additionally, he served as Chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee – a sub-committee of the Maine Library Commission – to develop and advocate for legislation impacting Maine's libraries. He received a BA in Political Science from the University of Delaware, and his MLIS at Drexel University.

Other team members that joined during this grant's period of performance in an advisory capacity, and in replacement of or addition to previous staff at their respective institutions are:

Kate Bradley, MLIS, MA (Assumption University; Advisory Board Member, 2021-present) is the Librarian/Archivist for the French Institute at Assumption University. She worked previously at The Trustees of Reservations (Massachusetts), the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum (Palm Beach, FL), and the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation (Plymouth, VT). She is on the board of Digital Commonwealth, a non-profit collaborative group that provides resources and services to support the creation, management, and dissemination of cultural heritage materials held by Massachusetts organizations.

Anna Faherty, MLIS, MA (University of Southern Maine; Advisory Board Member, 2021-present) is the archivist at the USM Franco-American Collection. She is a graduate of

Simmons University's dual degree Master's program in History and Archives Management. Before working at the Franco-American Collection, she worked at Fort Ticonderoga, an eighteenth-century military site integral in the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years War) and the American Revolutionary War. Anna's historical background is in labor and immigration in the United States from the 19th-early 20th centuries.

Patrick Lacroix, PhD (University of Maine at Fort Kent; Advisory Board Member, 2021-present) is the Director of the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine at Fort Kent. After earning history degrees at Bishop's University and Brock University in Canada, Dr. Lacroix attended the University of New Hampshire on a Fulbright scholarship. He completed his doctorate in 2017. His dissertation was published by the University Press of Kansas as *John F. Kennedy and the Politics of Faith*. He is also the author of *"Tout nous serait possible": Une histoire politique des Franco-Américains, 1874-1945* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2021). Dr. Lacroix's research on Quebec migrations and Franco-American history has appeared in many peer-reviewed journals in Canada and the United States. He has taught at UNH, Phillips Exeter Academy, and liberal arts colleges in Canada, notably offering courses on modern American history, Acadian history, and Canada-U.S. relations.

Additional staff from contributing institutions who facilitated collaboration with *FADA/PFA*, or who assisted with collections metadata transformation and ingest are:

Renée Burkett, Special Collections Librarian, McArthur Public Library, Biddeford, ME

Paul Carnahan, Librarian, Vermont Historical Society

Jim Kuhn, Associate Director and Hobby Foundation Librarian, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin

Rebecca Parmer, Head of Archives and Special Collections, University of Connecticut

Kate Phillips, Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, Vermont Historical Society

Emma Prichard, Cataloger, Northeast Historic Film

Aaron Rubinstein, Head, Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts

Janet Shideler, Professor of Modern Language, Siena College

Carolyn Vega, Curator, The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library

Appendix C - Functional Requirements

A list of functional requirements for our portal in-development, drafted June 2019 and submitted with NEH HCRR Foundations proposal. For a more detailed picture, see [White Paper: Portal Design and Tool Expectations \(Fall 2019\)](#)

Functional Requirements (as of 2019 June 1)

- ADA compliance (UM System specified)
- Faceted searching; hierarchical facets
- Support for content in French and English
- Support for bilingual content
- Support for internal metadata update/supplement
- Support for metadata fields unique to the Portal (ie. parish identifiers; theme headings; historical event headings; etc.)
- French/English user interface
- Capacity to harvest/aggregate metadata from multiple institutions that: use discrete systems, adhere to unique metadata profiles
- Display of multiple item types (sound; image; moving image; text; 3D object)
- Display of collection finding aid content

Potential Features:

- Full-text content search of linked items
- Capacity to store digital objects alongside item records
- Bookmarking

Appendix D - Annual Report and other documentation

See here for complete report:

[Annual Report: Franco American Portal Project, Project Year One \(2019\),](#)

as well as other project related documentation: publicity, white papers, public presentations.

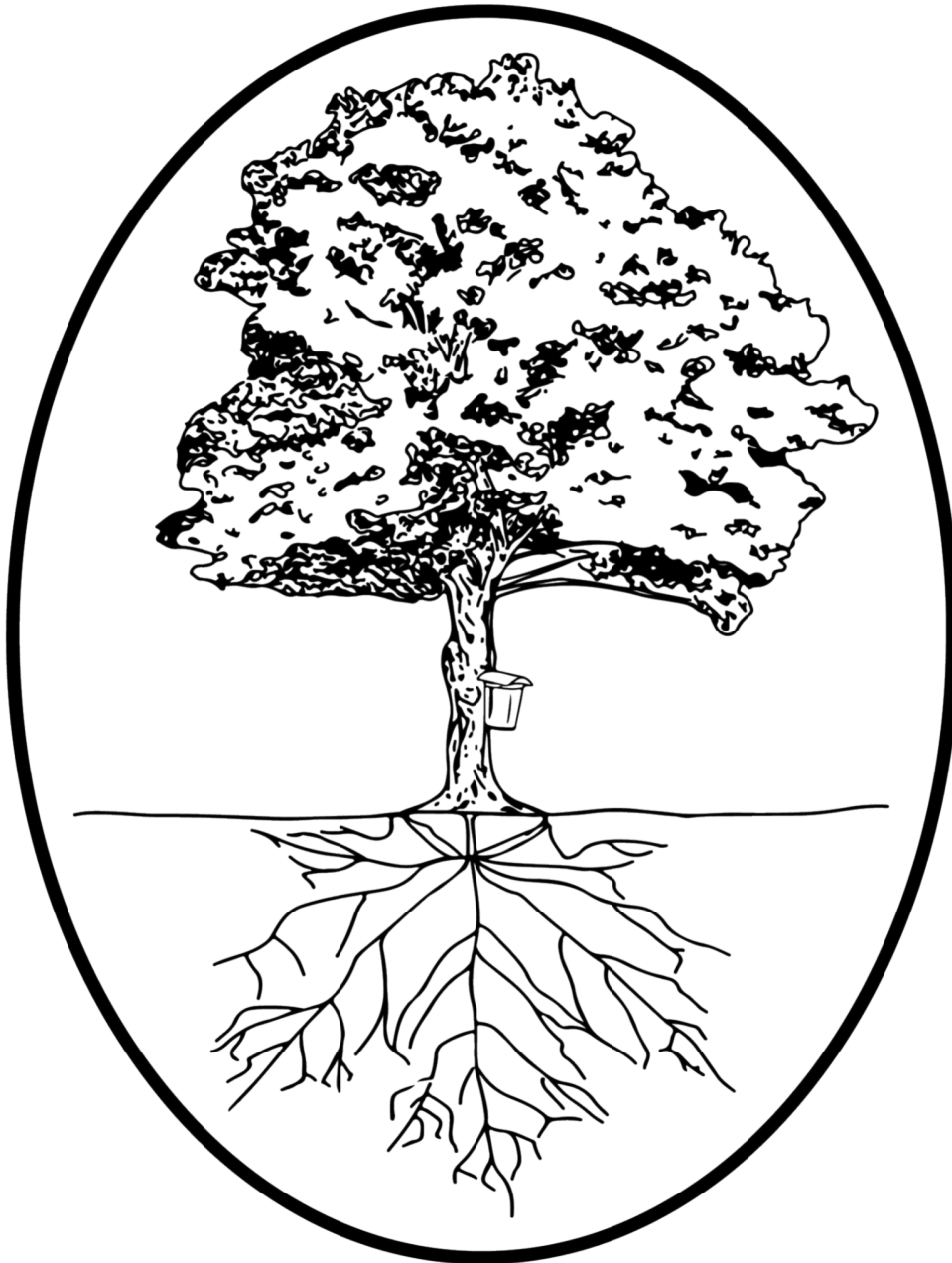
Appendix E - NEH Grant Working Timeline

See here for complete timeline:

[NEH HCRR Foundations Grant Working Timeline](#) (4/7/2020-2/28/2022)

Appendix F - Logo for Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain

The below logo was designed by FADA/PFA Advisory Board member, Libby Lipin, of Assumption University, for use on the portal. Libby's other work can be found here: <https://libbylipin.com/>



Appendix G - FAP Metadata Profile

Below represents the complete *Franco American Portal Project* metadata profile with relevant DPLA fields, DACS fields, and the resultant list of fields in Islandora 8 for *FADA/PFA*. The three sheets below represent: object record profile; collections record profile; *FADA/PFA* record profile.

-Object-level fields

Profile	Label	DACS equivalent	Usage	Data type	Obligation	NOTE
DPLA	Alternate title		Any alternative title of the described resource including abbreviations and translations.	Literal	0 - n	
DPLA	Collection		Collection or aggregation of which described resource is a part.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Contributor		Entity responsible for making contributions to described resource.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Creator*	Name of Creator(s)	Entity primarily responsible for making described resource.	Reference	1 - n *	REQUIRED MINIMUM ["unknown" if necessary]
DPLA	Data Provider*	Name and Location of Repository	The organization or entity that supplies data [to DPLA] through a Provider. If a Data Provider contributes data directly [to DPLA] (i.e., not via a Provider) the values in edm:dataProvider and edm:provider will be the same.	Reference	1 *	REQUIRED MINIMUM
DPLA	Date	Date	Date value as supplied by Data Provider.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Description*		Includes but is not limited to: an abstract, a table of contents, or a free-text account of described resource.	Literal	1 *	REQUIRED MINIMUM
DPLA	Extent	Extent	Size or duration of described resource.	Literal	0 - n	

DPLA	Format		Physical medium or dimensions of described resource.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Identifier	Reference Code	ID of described resource within a given context.	Literal	0 - n	
DPLA	Is shown at*		Unambiguous URL reference to digital object in its full information context.	Reference	1 *	REQUIRED MINIMUM
DPLA	Language *	Languages and scripts	Language(s) of described resource. Strongly recommended for text materials.	Reference; Literal?	1 - n *	REQUIRED MINIMUM [if no language noted (photograph, etc.), "N/A"]
DPLA	Place		Spatial characteristics of described resource, such as a country, city, region, address or other geographical term. Captures aboutness.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Preview*		The URL of a thumbnail, extract, or other type of resource representing the digital object for the purposes of providing a preview.	Reference	1 *	REQUIRED MINIMUM
DPLA	Provider		Service or content hub aggregating or providing access to the Data Provider's content. May contain the same value as Data Provider.	Reference	0 - 1	
DPLA	Publisher		Entity responsible for making the described resource available, typically the publisher of a text (not edm:dataProvider or edm:provider).	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Relation		Related resource.	Literal or reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Replaced by		Another resource that references, cites or otherwise points to the described resource.	Literal	0 - n	

DPLA	Replaces		A related resource that is supplanted, displaced, or superseded by the described resource.	Literal	0 - n	
DPLA	Rights holder		A person or organization owning or managing rights over the resource.	Literal	0 - n	
DPLA	Rights statement *		The value given here should be the rights statement that applies to the digital representation as given (for example) in edm:object or edm:isShownAt/By.	Reference	1 *	REQUIRED MINIMUM
DPLA	Subject	Access Points	Topic of described resource.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Subtype		This property relates a resource with the concepts it belongs to in a suitable type system that captures categories of objects in a given field.	Reference	0 - n	See list of preferred subtype values [Appendix C]
DPLA	Temporal coverage		Temporal characteristics of the described resource. Captures aboutness.	Reference	0 - n	
DPLA	Title*	Title	Primary name given to the described resource.	Literal	1 - n *	REQUIRED MINIMUM
DPLA	Type		Nature or genre of described resource. Strongly recommended.	Reference	0 - n	

-Collection-level fields

Profile	Label	DACS equivalent	Omeka equivalent (DC or Added item-type element)	Data type	Obligation
DPLA	Collection Title*	<i>Title</i>	Title	Literal	1
DPLA	Collection Description*	<i>Scope and Content</i>	Description	Literal	1
DPLA	Is shown at*		View Archival Collection at Home Institution OR View Finding Aid at Home Institution	Reference	1
DPLA	Data Provider*	<i>Name and Location of Repository</i>	Home Institution	Reference	1
DACS	Conditions Governing Access*	<i>Conditions Governing Access</i>	Access Rights	Literal	1
DACS	Languages and Scripts*	<i>Languages and Scripts</i>	Language	Literal	1
DACS	Administrative/Biographical History*	<i>Administrative/Biographical History</i>	Provenance	Literal	1
DPLA	Identifier*	<i>Reference Code</i>	Identifier	Literal	0 - n
DPLA	Date*	<i>Date</i>	Date	Reference	0 - n
DPLA	Extent*	<i>Extent</i>	Extent	Literal	0 - n
DPLA	Creator*	<i>Name of Creator(s)</i>	Creator	Reference	0 - n
DACS	Identification of the whole/part relationship of each level to the next subsequent level	<i>Identification of the whole/part relationship of each level to the next subsequent level</i>	Has part	Literal	1 - n
DPLA	Subject	<i>Access Points</i>	Subject	Reference	0 - n

-FADA/PFA record profile

Label (on front-end)	Header for Import CSV	Notes
Resource Type	field_resource_type	Required by Islandora; terms come from Resource Types taxonomy
Contributing Institution	field_contributing_institution	Taxonomy
Repository	field_repository	Taxonomy
View at Contributing Institution	field_view_at_contributing_insti	Link field
Identifier/Call Number	field_identifier	Text
Collection/Part of	field_collection_part_of	Text
Title	Title	Text
Description	field_description	Text
Author/Creator	field_linked_agent	Linked agent
Date(s)	field_edtf_date	EDTF format
Date Issued	field_edtf_date_issued	EDTF format; needed for Newspapers.
Genre	field_genre	Text
Topic/Themes	field_topic_themes	Taxonomy
Geography	field_geographic_subject	Nested
Family Name	field_subjects_name	Linked agent
Source Language	field_language	This is the source language
	langcode	This is the language of the NODE itself.
Subject Heading (LCSH AAT)	field_subject	Linked agent
Copyright Statement/Conditions governing use	field_copyright_statement_condit	Text
Conditions Governing Access	field_conditions_governing_acces	Text
Related Items	field_related_items	Node reference
Existence and Location of Originals	field_existence_and_location_of	Text
Administrative/Biographical History; Provenance	field_administrative_biographica	Text
Extent	field_extent	Text
Arrangement	field_table_of_contents	Text
Materials Specific Details	field_materials_specific_details	Text
Collection Inventory	field_collection_inventory	Text
Notes	field_note	Text
Recommended Citation	field_recommended_citation	Text
Model	field_model	Required by Islandora - terms come from Islandora Models vocabulary

Appendix H - Contributor MOU



Franco American Digital Archives

Portail franco-américain

Memorandum of Understanding: Institution contributing to Franco American Digital Archives

This memorandum serves as an understanding between you, _____ (*name of contributing organization; hereon called "Contributor"*) and the University of Maine Franco American Programs and confirms your participation as a Contributor of content to Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain ("FADA") (formerly the Franco American Portal Project, "FAPP"). This memorandum delineates expectations concerning our goal to facilitate public access to Franco American cultural and historical heritage by aggregating available metadata of historical materials, including collection finding aids and thumbnail images (where applicable), making these materials more broadly discoverable through the FADA portal (hereon called "Portal"), and promoting their preservation and use at and through Contributor institutions and/or repositories.

Basic expectations of relationship between Contributor and FADA include the following:

-FADA's Portal includes data that is freely available. FADA aggregates item and collection metadata and, where appropriate, preview or thumbnail images from the Contributor in order to provide greater visibility and discoverability of the Contributor's historic materials. Contributor's participation within FADA depends upon the inclusion of a Contributor's item and/or collection metadata within the Portal.

-Contributor agrees to generate and share item and collection metadata according to the recommendations of the FADA metadata profile, or to allow the harvesting of Contributor content metadata to be transformed by FADA staff into the FADA ingest template.

-Contributor and FADA agree to make good faith efforts to communicate about changes that may be made to and/or discovered within local descriptive metadata already entered into the Portal, in order to reflect these changes appropriately within the Portal, where applicable.

-Contributor agrees to communicate with FADA staff about the creation of new catalog records or other metadata for items and collections that fall within the scope of the Portal, or to provide opportunities for FADA staff to research newly described local materials to determine their scope, in order that this metadata might be aggregated appropriately for public discovery through the Portal.

-Contributor and FADA team will work together to determine Contributor materials that fall within the scope of FADA, and maintain an ongoing conversation of selections of materials to be included within the Portal.

-All search activity within the Portal ultimately points back to wherever an item or collection is hosted by a Contributor for detailed viewing and access, or for more information about acquiring access. The Portal

points equally to digitized content and not-digitized content, sharing either a Contributor's preferred online location, physical location, or both, for engaging items and collections.

-FADA will supplement Contributor's item and collection metadata in order to improve item and collection discoverability in the context of the Portal. This includes but is not limited to:

- including a link that indicates the home location of items and collections;
- placing items and collections beneath general topics in the portal presentation layer;
- including French and/or English translations of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) that Contributor has applied to items and collections;
- adding supplemental descriptive metadata concerning geographies, parishes, surnames, or other descriptive features related to linked items and collections;
- translating records and record metadata between English and French, so FADA records are available in both languages

-Contributor may freely reuse FADA supplemental item and collection metadata at their own discretion.

-Contributor's participation within FADA may be ended at any time on written notice. Although both parties intend for this understanding to be an ongoing commitment through the life of the project, either party may opt out on written notice if they determine that participation is no longer feasible. Contributor may choose to withdraw representation of their materials from the Portal; their item and collection metadata will be removed from the Portal within 90 days of the Contributor's written notice of withdrawal.

FADA would not be as strong as it could be without every Contributor's commitment to it. It is our hope that the FADA will boost the visibility and use of every Contributor's collections and institutions, both online and in person, while increasing the value and complexity of the conversation between Franco American history collections wherever they are located.

We, the undersigned, indicate our commitment to the mutual expectations written above.

Contributor Program/Department & Institution

Contributor institutional representative name (printed)

Contributor institutional representative name (signed)

UM Franco American Programs' FADA representative name (printed)

UM Franco American Programs' FADA representative name (signed)

Date

Appendix I - Publicity

Press Release: "[NEH funds development of first-ever online, bilingual portal to several Franco-American archives](#)" (21 April 2020)

A University of Maine initiative to create a first-ever bilingual portal to Franco American heritage records from archives in the United States and Canada has received a nearly \$60,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Franco American Programs at UMaine, which is spearheading the Franco American Portal, also was awarded \$10,000 from the Maine Bicentennial Commission for a similar project titled "Where Were You." That effort involves developing an online public history, genealogy and map of Franco American populations in Maine.

Researchers of history and culture of the French Canadian and Acadian diaspora of New England sometimes struggle to find primary sources when pertinent records are not catalogued with relevant identifiers, or are otherwise difficult to access, says Susan Pinette, director of UMaine's Franco American Programs. The online, bilingual Franco American Portal will make these Franco American records more visible, searchable and accessible to researchers, educators, students, genealogists and the general public, says Pinette, also a professor of modern languages.

The University of Southern Maine Franco-American Collection; University of Maine at Fort Kent Acadian Archives; Assumption College's French Institute, Worcester, Massachusetts; and Saint Anselm College Msgr. Wilfrid H. Paradis Archives and Special Collections, Manchester, New Hampshire, joined UMaine's Franco American Programs in developing the online gateway. Jacob Albert, project manager for UMaine's Franco American Programs, guides portal development, and Pinette oversees it.

"Collaboration has been so important to every aspect of this project. Our portal is meant to help people discover disparate materials that are hard to find, but do so in a way that relies on the good work that collecting institutions do to preserve these materials and make them accessible," Albert says. "This model allows materials that live all over North America to be in conversation with one another in a single space. The possibilities for research and understanding are so wide and so rich."

The website will provide access to books, letters and other correspondence, scrapbooks, family and business records, photographs and other media depicting Franco American history, culture and people, all curated by the portal project team. Portal users will be able to browse and search through the catalog of records featured on the website, which the portal will categorize by indicators like place, family name, or subject. Once a user selects an item to view, the portal will connect them to that item at its original source in the digital sphere or a physical archive.

In addition to connecting users with records from their own universities' collections, the team behind developing the portal will seek to partner with other institutions across the United States and Canada, including the Library of Congress, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Harvard University and others so the portal could provide access to their archives. The group will also digitize physical records highlighting the Franco American experience.

The team expects the online gateway to highlight well-known works not typically emphasized as products of Franco American heritage in that way. Pinette says showcasing different records of Franco American individuals, families and institutions from disparate collections in the portal will help broaden a shared understanding of the American experience.

NEH, one of the largest supporters of humanities programs in the U.S., allocated the grant for the Franco American Portal project as part of a \$22.2 million package of awards for 224 initiatives across the U.S. The grants were awarded to top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent and external reviewers.

UMaine's Franco American Programs strives to increase access to Franco American research through digital scholarship, regular programming, publications and curriculum development. The portal project expands that effort by filling a gap in locating Franco American primary sources, Pinette says.

"Little of these communities is known, however, outside of the communities themselves and some academic circles," Pinette says. "The Franco American community's negotiation of identity from its eighteenth-century inception in the United States through the present day therefore represents an untapped, rich case study of our country's changing cultural landscape over the past two centuries in language, labor and industrialism, post-industrialism, government, religion, the arts and education, acculturation and assimilation, transnational movement, migration and community building."

The "Where Were You," online resource from UMaine's Franco Americans Programs will showcase where Maine's Franco families live now, where they lived in 1820, and the social, cultural, and economic conditions of that time.

Pinette says it will include a dynamic, layered, sortable and customizable map linking specific contemporary surnames from Franco American towns in Maine to their 1820 parish in French-speaking Canada; written entries detailing local, regional, and parish histories in Francophone Canada in 1820; resources highlighting the music, folkways, foodways and other realities of that time and place, and more.

UMaine has been active in Franco American studies for more than 50 years. The university established the Franco American Centre in 1972, then created a Franco American Studies Program, still the only one of its kind in the U.S., in the 1990s.

Contact: Marcus Wolf, marcus.wolf@umaine.edu

Appendix J - Franco American Collections Consortium: Mission, Vision, and Purpose (summer 2021)

Mission

Franco American Collections Consortium works together to make accessible the history and culture of Franco Americans in the Northeast and beyond.

Vision

Together, we keep Franco American history and culture alive.

Purpose

Franco American Collections Consortium is a collaboration of universities, archives, and centers that maintain vital collections of books, documents, photos, oral histories, art, maps and artifacts related to French-Canadian and Acadian heritage communities. We collaborate to unite resources, create educational materials, provide leadership, and promote Franco American literacy among researchers, academics, the general public, and Franco Americans themselves.