City Voices:
A University-Community Collaborative

Mark Tebeau
Cleveland State University
National Council for Public History, April 2008

Integrative Public History

- Process as important as content
- Interpretive history as a tool for building meaningful and self-conscious connections between research, teaching, and public history
- breaking down barriers between ivory tower and community
- collaborative: Students and communities as true partners in constructing history
- Investment by community in scholarship
Project began w/ a Problem

- Projects with students
- Projects with real results, visible products
  - Not student as mere workers
- Projects that empower students
- Projects that make the city & its history into an interpretive laboratory
- Projects that engage the community
- Projects that involve the community
- Projects that recovers the city as a place

Experiments in Teaching Regional History

Sound Portraits—2002

- Students wrote, produced, and recorded “sound portraits” about Cultural Gardens for Partner w/WCPN in 2002 as part of “Accents” programming
- Model for collaboration along Euclid Corridor
- Sample: *Italy in America: Mussolini’s Gift*
- Interactive website:
  - [http://www.culturalgardens.org/](http://www.culturalgardens.org/)
  - [http://www.wcpn.org/accents/feature.html](http://www.wcpn.org/accents/feature.html)
Experiment continues; Challenge Grows

- What is the role of the Community in this process?
- The Community as partner
  - Provide assistance to students
- Community as audience
  - Provide audience for work

- In this model, the community is passive
- How to activate the community?

Experimenting with Web Sites
Community role expands

• Making the community an active partner
  – Re-imagining their role
• Community as a constituent
• Communities as a client
• Community receives tangible product

• Community as an active partner
• Who/what constitutes the community?

Euclid Avenue as Vehicle for Community

• Cleveland’s spine
• North: Industrial lakefront; West: Public Square, Downtown Shopping, Theater District, and CSU; East: University Circle Cultural District; South: Residential Neighborhoods
• Embodies the story of industrial cities in the 20th Century: Ethnic identity; consumer culture; popular entertainment; declining downtowns; changing transit; and the politics of race.
EUCLID CORRIDOR
Transit Redevelopment & History Project

- Greater Cleveland RTA—redeveloping Euclid 50-plus years in making
- Cleveland Public Art—the 1% Solution—public design process
- Oral history as a way of understanding and hearing urban American as a lived experience; also as a way of clarifying and revealing the complex and interlocking history of landscapes and their residents.
- Creating a coherent “sense of place” along Euclid Corridor
  - Interactive Oral History Kiosks
  - Telling stories through images and sound
  - Situating transit users and residents in time and place
  - Thus, orienting the corridor and our neighbors to the region, city, and individual communities

Model: Distributed Processing

- Computing, solving complex math problems
- Wiki as a web-based model
- Scholarship is a model

- Providing tools
- Providing forum
- Shared authorship

- Authority and problem-definition remain with scholar
Example: Shopping

Example:
Neighborhood & Baseball
Community History: Scholarship

- Cultural Gardens & Urban Vernacular
- Ironworking as Urban Vernacular
- Tourism in the Rustbelt

The Legacy of Industrial Production

- Rose Iron Works: Budapest to Cleveland; begun in 1904
- Longest continuously operating ironworking firm in USA
- Decorative to War Production to mass production (CAD production)
Shaping the International & Regional Vernacular

- Art Deco (Paul Feher)
- Hopkins (Schrekengost)
- Williamson Building (Walker & Weeks)

Students/community members as researchers
- done in the context of their coursework—accountability & raising the stakes
- under close supervision & guidance—facilitation model
- Pedagogical experimentation—digital equipment; editing sound
- “StoryBooth”—controlled environment

Building a Sustained Leadership—A Research Team
- Identifying/Recruiting Interview Subjects
- Production: ideastream (WCPN & WVIZ)
- Production II: School of Communications, Authentic Films, Epstein Design
- Technical Assistance—Library of Congress; Mike Frisch, University of Buffalo
- Building Community Support: Cleveland Museum of Art, WRHS, Neighborhood CDCs, Ohio & Erie Canalway, Shaker Lakes, City Club
- Building Digital Infrastructure: Omeka & Center for History & New Media
- Funding—Writing Grants, Creative Support, Building on Social Studies Program & ongoing Teaching American History Programs

Euclid Corridor History Project emerges as Collaborative Work
Techniques: Interview Facilitation

- Rigor in content; excellence in technical quality
- Better management of logistics in working with students, partners, & team
- Archive development and facilitation
- Project integrity & continuity
- Community Partners
- Flexibility
- Challenges
  - What is the facilitator’s role (listen to Loconti)
    - Interview dynamics (two people in room)?
    - Who is in lead (consider teacher/student power relation from get go)?
  - Logistical
    - Different time commitment for team
    - Requires higher level of expertise among all team members
    - Training for facilitation
  - Building community partnerships
    - Training
    - High level of rigor
    - Archiving
    - responsibilities

Listening
The Agora Theater
Tools for Teachers

- Leveraging Federal Funding, Teaching American History Grants
- Teachers as Collaborators
- Teachers as Storytellers
- Teacher as Interpreter
- Teacher as Public Historian

Tools of Partnership

- Xythos Drive
- Training Sessions
  - Filmmaking
  - Oral history
  - Documentary history
- Indexing (Interclipper)
- Professional Development
- Web Development
- Omeka (CHNM)
Digital Oral History: Interclipper

- Sound Matters
- Index to Oral History Collections
- Access to Sound as Primary Source by community
- Deeper Engagement from Partners

Putting it Together on the Street:
Building a prototype of Kiosk Interface
Production with Students

• Precursors: Digital Equipment and Facilitation
• Students doing research-based presentations that make true use of multiple medias
• Enhances quality of work: sound, content; (not to mention making it logistically viable from an instructor’s standpoint)
• Moved the Bar
• But, dependent on more technology
  – Audio editing software
  – Server technology for sharing
  – Training in technology (for instructor and students)
• AND, final products, still demand production expertise
Euclid Corridor History Project as Integrative Public History

- Students/community members as researchers
  - done in the context of their coursework—accountability & raising the stakes
  - under close supervision & guidance—facilitation model
  - Pedagogical experimentation—digital equipment; editing sound
  - "StoryBooth"—controlled environment
- Building a Sustained Leadership—A Research Team
- Identifying/Recruiting Interview Subjects
- Production: ideastream (WCPN & WVIZ)
- Production II: School of Communications, Authentic Films, Epstein Design
- Technical Assistance—Library of Congress; Mike Frisch, University of Buffalo
- Building Community Support: Cleveland Museum of Art, WRHS, Neighborhood CDCs, Ohio & Erie Canalway, Shaker Lakes, City Club
- Building Digital Infrastructure: Omeka & Center for History & New Media
- Funding—Writing Grants, Creative Support, Building on Social Studies Program & ongoing Teaching American History Programs
### Final Thoughts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Writing Regional History** | - Collaboration: CSU, ideastream, Cleveland Public Art, RTA, community and students  
- Documenting and Teaching as Key Roles—research, writing, digital editing (indexing), and presentations |
| **Re-thinking History** | - Cities as sites of memory; as shared collective  
- History as creating connections  
- History in a distributed processing model |
| **Public History as Community Building** | - Partner Interviews; regional and/or LOC as archival source  
- Process not just outcomes  
- Collaborative verse individual authorship |
| **Undergraduate Teaching & Teacher Workshops** | - Undergraduates represent history in new ways; new way of thinking about students  
- Building curriculum in Region around History Content  
- Teachers as partners in interpreting and teaching history |