

## SUPPORT FOR THE LEARNER: WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

### Summary of Proposal

#### **Description of Project Goals and Major Activities**

Traditionally, anyone setting out to learn a new topic would take a pad of paper, start with resources available at home, visit the reference area of the local library, then move on to a steadily widening circle of resources: the library stacks, other libraries, museums, archives, local, state or federal government agencies, cultural and historical societies, newspapers, experts, and so on, depending on the topic and the purpose. A well-tested practice is to follow the traditional “5Ws and the H”: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How? – and to use corresponding specialized resources: biographical dictionaries, gazetteers, chronologies, and subject headings. The library reference collection is especially convenient for addressing the What?, When?, Where?, Who?, Why?, and How? because it has a carefully selected specialized resources.

The huge national investment in collection, preservation, conservation, and digitization in museums and libraries has been resource-centric and the digital environment is still weak in providing an effective counterpart of the traditional reference library.

The purpose of this project is to show how existing and emerging standards and protocols can be used or adapted to create a structured *intermediate infrastructure* in support of learners with respect to the questions: What? Where? When? and Who? A client interface with links to existing specialized resources will be created and evaluated for two purposes: (i) Teachers seeking additional resources to supplement textbooks; and (ii) Contextualizing objects in library and museum collections by identifying the objects in other collections that are most closely related with respect to place and time of origin and human associations.

#### **The Anticipated Results**

The anticipated results will be a prototype demonstrating how the digital environment can be enhanced so as to advance the educational goals of libraries and museums. Recommendations will be made for the improvement of standards, protocols, and best practices.

If successful, this project would increase the ability of libraries and museums to support a nation of learners and pave the way for a greater return on the large investment made in library and museum collections.