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Hands-On Assignment #2: Community Archives

INFO 756: Digital Preservation

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I've been in contact with the minister of a church, located in a low-income, minority community; to help him showcase the church's history relating to an orphanage they managed for a 100-year period. The five important activities that would help this community are to....

1. Acknowledge the staff members and learn their responsibilities and skills
2. Create funding for the church in order to buy the collections the minister needs
3. Find a suitable technology to record and preserve the collections
4. Create social media account to reach out more readers and visitors
5. Recruit volunteers to help with preserving the collections

The first step is to get to know the staff at the church. I would have to learn about their duties and responsibilities and think about if they could help the minister and me with the celebration of the church's orphanage history. Usually in a church, there are different types of pastors, the administrator, accountant/treasurer, communications director, volunteer coordinator, facilities manager, etc. Within the staff, I would have to talk to each individual, and get to know them. If one of them is in charge of the money, I would immediately recruit this staff member to be in charge of the money that would be involved with the purchases of collections of the church orphanages. If one of the staff members were tech-savvy, I would recruit this staff member to be in charge of community outreach by using social media. I expect the church staff to be visionary and creative in order to make this event happen for the minister.

The second step is to create funding for the church in order to purchase the documents the minister needs for the event. In order to do that, we would have to hold events for the community, announcing what we're going to do, and during church services. We would have to go outside the community to find more funding. I would reach out to my folks from different neighborhoods and communities, letting them know what the minister and me are doing. We have to explain to everyone within and outside the low-income community that the documents we want to use is very important to the church, and its importance to bring awareness to its history. When we get enough funding, the minister and I would begin purchasing the documents of the church orphanage.

The third step is when we bring in the tech-savvy. Since the church takes place in a low-income neighborhood, I would think about the simple technologies and software in order to make this work for the church. My experience of seeing Microsoft Word and Excel being used in archives took place at my local community college. It's a very small archive that doesn't have much. While talking to an archivist there, he told me he was using mostly Microsoft Word and Excel to catalog and preserve the collections and documents. Another thing he was using to showcase his collections was Omeka and the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). He also requested to display his collections at a state level: POWER Library: Pennsylvania's Electronic Library. If I do exactly what this archivist does, this project with the minister would work. The first step is to catalog the documents into Microsoft Word and Excel. Typically in small archives I went to, they mostly use a simple scanner to import the documents into the computer. After all the

documents are scanned into the computer, I would work with one of the staff members of the church to draft an exhibit of the church's orphanage history either on Omeka or DPLA. As mentioned earlier, I would need someone who's creative and visionary to help me make this exhibit happen. The examples of virtual exhibits are beneficial for the event because this would help bring more recognition from other places. If we use POWER Library, then it shows that the state of Pennsylvania supports this project we're doing.

After everything is created and put up online, we would need someone in charge of social media to bring awareness to the exhibit we created online. We would hold an event to debut our exhibit of the church orphanage history. Everyone's using social media now these days to catch up with friends and hang out. This brings us the opportunity to share our event to the public. It would be nice to expand our audience outside the church community so we can spread the word.

Lastly, the church has to recruit more volunteers who are interested in preserving the church's history through the archives we created. We would look for volunteers who are interested in learning about the basics of archiving and digital preservation. If we get volunteers like that, there's a better chance the documents we collected and preserved will continue to live on. There might be a possibility this would turn into an unpaid internship.

One of the challenges I would face in this project is whether if we have enough documents of the church orphanage. If there weren't enough documents to fulfill this, we would have to think about different topics relating to the church's history. But, if the minister is 100% committed to focus on the church's orphanage history, then we would have to go *everywhere* in the USA to find the documents we need. Otherwise, we would have to think of Plan B.

Another challenge I would face is time. What if we don't have enough time to put this project together? When purchasing the documents, we would have to wait days and weeks for them to arrive at the church. Also, what if one of the staff members doesn't have much technology experience? It would take time for them to get to use different software like Microsoft, Omeka, or DPLA.

The church orphanage project is something I want to help with. No matter if the church is located in a low-income neighborhood, I want to make sure I make their project happen. It takes adjustments to make this project run smoothly instead of starting from scratch. If we start from scratch, we're forgetting the most important part of the project: the community involvement. I want to make sure everyone's involved, and bring more recruits to help out. With the power of social media and digital libraries, it would help bring more audiences and recognitions from hopefully big-named places or our own state government.