World War II After Action Reports: Making history digital.

A digitization project of the Library of the Marine Corps

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library of the Marine Corps proposes to digitize 27,000 pages of World War II after Action Reports. The papers are over 60 years old and are rare and fragile. Continued viewings of the papers is no longer advised because of their age and condition, therefore the staff of the Library of the Marine Corps would like to outsource the digitization project. Digitizing the papers will allow students, researchers, faculty and patrons of the library to continue viewing these papers that have such significance of our world history. The library is requesting $50,255.00 to outsource the project to a vendor who specializes in digitization. The project will occur over a four-month period.

THE LIBRARY OF THE MARINE CORPS

The Library of the Marine Corps (LoMC) is located aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, in Quantico, Virginia. Housed inside the Alfred Gray Research Center, this grand facility has breath-taking views of the Potomac River. The LoMC consists of four branches: the Research Library, The Archives and Special Collections Library, The Virtual Library and The Family Library.

The Research Library supports the 1500 students that attend Marine Corps University (MCU) at Marine Corps Base Quantico each year. With a collection of
140,000 volumes and over 400 periodical subscriptions and access to over 120,000 microforms, the military academic collection provides the materials necessary to carry out the Professional Military Education (PME) of Marines (http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/mcu/grc/lomc). Also referred to as the University Library, library staff provides direct support to students and faculty of Marine Corps University.

The Archives and Special Collection Library maintains Marine Corps publications, papers, maps, photographs and other documentary sources received by the MCU or by the Marine Corps itself (http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/mcu/grc/lomc). Five archivists assist patrons in their studies utilizing the 6 million items housed in the archives. The archives provides access both digitally and non–digital with an emphasis on expedition and amphibious warfare. J. Michael Miller has been the Archives and Special Collection Head since 1983 and is recognized for his expertise in many areas of history, particularly World War II. In 2001 he received the Robert D. Heinl award for best article on Marine Corps history for his trilogy “Marines in the Boxer Rebellion” which appeared in Leatherneck a Marine Corps magazine.

The Virtual Library manages the digital information resources used within the branches of the LoMC. Staffed by four librarians and a library technician, they work closely with the Archives Library. The Virtual Library, which is led by Theresa Anthony, maintain the catalog, organize the electronic resources and provide access to the digital collections. They ensure delivery of the documents on the open Internet to ensure the
students of MCU, faculty and researchers as well as marines and others with an interest in military history have access to the materials. An example of a popular online exhibition put together by the LoMC of Marines in Beirut can be found on their website at http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/mcu/grc/archives/Pages/default.aspx.

Marines and families stationed at MCB Quantico will enjoy the quaint Family Library. They offer fiction and non-fiction books, including young adult and children’s materials. Access to personal computers and the Internet is also available at the Family Library. Various programs are held for children and adults alike.

Marine Corps Base Quantico, established in 1917 is referred to as the “Crossroads of the Marine Corps”. At any given time there are more than 16,000 civilians and Marines on base, attending training or enrolled in Marine Corps University (www.marines.com). In actuality 6,700 of the Marines can call the base home. Additionally, 2,500 family members reside on base and 6,900 civilians make the daily commute to work on the base (www.quantico.usmc.mil).

MCB, Quantico, located 36 miles south of Washington D. C. covers roughly 100 square miles in Prince Williams, Northern Stafford County and Southeastern Fauquier County. The surrounding area is home to Marines and their families, retirees and civilian employees working aboard the base. Located outside the front gate of MCB Quantico, the National Museum of the Marine Corps has welcomed 1.7 million visitors since it opened in November of 2006 (www.usmcmuseum.org). Additionally, 30,000 runners participate
in the “Peoples Marathon” or the Marine Corps Marathon held each year. Headquartered at MCB Quantico the marathon begins and ends near the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia (www.quantico.usmc.mil).

MISSION STATEMENT

The LoMC has adopted a mission statement aimed specifically to accommodate the Marines serving worldwide. The goal is to:

Support the study and research throughout the Marine Corps in expeditionary, tactical, operational and strategic warfare in a joint and combined environment by providing comprehensive, storage, retrieval, analysis and distribution of war fighting-related information. It provides worldwide access to an extensive collection of monographs and journals, historically significant documents, products of current scholarly research and operational planning and lessons learned in order to support professional military education, and stimulate the development and implementation of concepts, doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures (www.marines.milhttp://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/mcu/grc/lomc).

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The Library of the Marine Corps has a collection development policy that works in conjunction to support the goals of Marine Corps University:

1. To acquire and maintain collections of library and archival information sources adequate to support the curriculum as well as needs of other researchers and
2. To incorporate effective and efficient technologies into the delivery of resources, services and instruction when appropriate.


**STATEMENT OF NEED**

To meet their goal of providing resources to Marines worldwide, the Archives and Virtual Libraries work together to ensure that access to archives is readily available. The World War II After Action Reports are fragile. Students have limited access to them because of their current condition. The LoMC is proposing that After Action Reports from WWII be digitized into PDF format. Digitizing the papers will allow access to students, enabling them to study and evaluate the reports to aid them in their coursework.

Abby Smith of the Council on Library and Information Resources states “an institution must ask itself what can be gained from digitization, and whether the valued added is worth the price” (Smith, 1999). The LoMC indeed sees that the value of digitizing the papers exceeds the cost. Providing access to the papers whether it be non-digital or digitally falls in line with the mission statement and goals of the LoMC’s collection development policy; therefore library staff are confident in their decision to take on this project. During the months of March and April 2011, visitors accessed the archives digital materials 1,061 times viewing 20,129 pages (Theresa Anthony, personal communication). In 2010 two digitization projects were successfully completed by
outside companies specializing in digitization. Over 1 million papers were digitized over fifteen months.

Students, faculty and researchers will benefit from the digitization of the papers. Because of their condition, staff members only handle the papers. Once the papers are available digitally access to the documents will increase, allowing faculty and students of MCU the ability to utilize the papers during their study. Since supporting the university is a primary goal of the LoMC, completing a project of this significance will engage students further in their studies of expedition and amphibious warfare. More importantly, the papers will be seen as they were written 60 years ago and will reach users across the country, not just those with access to the archives. The goal of this digitization project is to provide access for anyone interested in World War II.

Over the years digitization projects have become increasingly more popular. Over time, documents become fragile and difficult to read and digitizing offers a chance to capture the documents and prolong their visibility. The National Archives and Records Administration recently digitized the top 100 Milestone Documents. These documents were chosen because by visitors to the website because of their significance in history but it is the access itself to the documents themselves, as they were written in their original format. The LoMC has over six million documents in their archives and the ability to preserve some of these documents and share them not only with marines, but also with anyone interested in learning about history is vital to keeping a record of our history. Further, a project as this supports the goals of the collection development policy to
“incorporate effective and efficient technologies into the delivery of resources”

PROPOSED PROGRAM

The WWII After Action Reports are currently stored in 39 Hollinger Archival Boxes. Many of the 27,000 pages will require stabilization and preservation prior to digitization. Taking on a project of such delicacy requires staff to be knowledgeable in the process of stabilization and preservation. Even though there are several archivists familiar with the basic processes of scanning documents, the desktop scanners they have are suitable for small projects. Much of the staff’s workday is devoted to maintaining the archive collection and providing assistance to researchers and students visiting the archives each day. Research recently conducted by Jenifer Schaffner of Online Computer Library Center, Francine Snyder of the Guggenheim Museum and Shannon Supple of University of California at Berkley support the need to digitize materials. With delivery the “goal” of any digitization project “user need and access to collections must drive all digitization of archives and special collections” (Schaffner, Snyder and Supple, 2011).

The Implementation Schedule

The LoMC will work with FEDLINK in choosing a vendor for this digitization project. The FEDLINK program “helps librarians, contracting officers and finance staff
save time, effort and money when buying and using commercial online service, CD-ROM, books, periodicals and other library and information services”
(http://www.loc.gov/flicc/contracts/index_contracts.html). Working with FEDLINK will allow the LoMC to find a qualified vendor that specializes in handling fragile papers. It also gives the library some flexibility in locating a vendor that is located close to the facility. Transporting fragile documents is a concern for library staff and keeping it local allows the work to be delivered by library staff.

Once a vendor is identified the Head of the Virtual Library will begin the process of preparing materials for digitization. Working closely with an archivist and the virtual library head the library technician will begin by creating an inventory of the documents, ensuring important metadata is included. This finding aid, will include: Collection Title, Box Number, File Number, Page Numbers and any special handling concerns. The finding aid contains the necessary information for researchers to locate items while they are doing research. The LoMC uses a standard format in PDF form that is easily scanned to the library’s website to provide assistance for those utilizing the website.

The library technician will sort and index the papers indicating any special handling instructions of the papers. Since many of the papers are fragile and over 60 years old, most of the papers will require special handling. One of the advantages of working with a vendor who specializes in digitization is the experienced staff. Details will be worked out ahead of time with the vendor as to the special handling requirements of the papers. Since library staff will not have to be trained in using the equipment that
in–house digitizing requires, working with an outside vendor will also save valuable
time and there is no cost associated with training staff or purchasing equipment. Daniel
Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig of George Mason University wrote about digitizing history
in their book: Digitizing History: A Guide to Gathering History on the Web. They point
out “as the commercial digitization business grows, vendors are more likely then even
well funded large libraries to have specialized staffs and the latest technology
(www.chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/digitizing).

**Required Materials**

The entire collection of WWII papers will be sorted, indexed and prepared for
delivery. To ensure safe delivery the papers will be sorted using reinforced file folders,
which are labeled and assigned to a Hollinger Archival Box. The library technician will
ensure safe handling of documents by wearing special cotton gloves. The boxes will be
labeled chronologically with approximately 692 papers per box for a total of 39 boxes.

Library staff will deliver the boxes to the vendor once the coordination of the
project has been finalized. Library staff will have access to a van that they will use to
transport the boxes to the vendor. In the past a local vendor was used because of the
close proximity to the LoMC. The preparation of the documents will be ongoing and it is
expected that the digitization project will take four months to complete.

The Head Virtual Librarian will communicate with the vendor during the process
to address any problems or situations that may arise. The vendor is responsible for any
equipment failure and increase in costs associated with the project, which is an important factor in the decision of the library staff. By utilizing an outside vendor, the library will be able to stay within their budget and any unforeseen costs will fall to the vendor. A vendor will be chosen based on past performance, location, cost and the ability to finish the project in an efficient manner.

Once the digitized papers have been returned to the LoMC, the library technician will once again inventory the documents. The archival staff will review the digital images to ensure they are acceptable for archiving and the Virtual Library will compress the images for web presentation. The finding aid will also be scanned and uploaded to the library website to assist researchers in locating materials.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the project will begin immediately upon the return of the documents. Staff from both the Archives and Virtual Library will ensure that the documents are legible and visible to students. Access to the documents is expected to increase because of the easier access to students and researchers. What once had to be handled with extreme care or not at all, now allows for students to view whether they are at MCB Quantico or stationed around the world. It also allows access for others, that don’t have access to the base and the LoMC, which is the goal of this project.

After the virtual library has prepared the documents for web presentation, staff will monitor the usage by visitors to the archives in house and by the amount of times the
pages have been viewed online. Faculty and staff of MCU will be notified that the collection is available digitally. The LoMC is currently and successfully using social media sites to promote their facilities and collections. They will continue to update patrons via Twitter, Facebook and Flicker spreading the word about the new collection of World War II after Action Reports. The head archivist will continue to add information to his blog about new projects as well.

CONCLUSION

General Douglas Macarthur, Supreme Allied Commander of South-West Pacific in 1945 said, “It is my earnest hope—indeed the hope of all mankind—that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past, a world upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance and justice.”

This digitization project will provide access to significant documents of World War II. It is the hope of the Library of the Marine Corps that in providing this access students, researchers, and faculty will be able to research the past to help protect and plan for the future. The papers are an important part of our world history and are a great way to learn about an important time of our military history. Imagine looking at papers as they were written over 60 years ago. Digitizing history does just that, it give us a chance to look at the past.
REFERENCES


## BUDGET

### Salaries

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<th>Position</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Base Salary</th>
<th>Total Salary</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archivist</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual Librarian</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Technician</td>
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Subtotal: $10,450.00

Benefits @20%: $2,900.00

**Total Salaries & Benefits**: $12,540.00

### Supplies & Materials

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<th>Cost</th>
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<td>Acid free file folders</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Archival Storage Boxes</td>
<td>$400.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>White cotton gloves</td>
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<td>Gas for van</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office supplies</td>
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### Scanning

- 27,000 papers at 1.20: $32,400.00

**Total**: $50,275.00
I certify that:

• This paper/project/exam is entirely my own work.
• I have not quoted the words of any other person from a printed source or a website without indicating what has been quoted and providing an appropriate citation.
• I have not submitted this paper / project to satisfy the requirements of any other course.

Signature:  Jody L. Schmidt