

Potential Projects for the Fondren Fellows Program, 2017

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Jesse H. Jones Exhibit

Project Timeline

summer or fall of 2017

Project Description

The Jesse H. Jones Family and Personal Papers is one of the most significant acquisitions of the Woodson Research Center in the area of Houston and Texas history. Received from the Houston Endowment and processed in 2015, the collection is ready to be the focus of an online exhibit. Scans of the materials would be used to create an online exhibit using the Omeka platform detailing the history of Jones and his impact on local, state, and national history.

The Jones collection is highlighted by the Jesse H. Jones personal papers consisting of correspondence, photographs, financial, legal, speeches and business records, as well as the political, civic-related and public service records for which Jones is well known. Of interest is Jones' World War II service as Secretary of Commerce and head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and his involvement with the building of the Houston Ship Channel and the 1928 Democratic National Convention held in Houston. An extensive collection of individual, group, event photographs, and photographs and drawings detailing many of the extant buildings in downtown Houston is included.

Jones established his own company, the South Texas Lumber Company and expanded into real estate, banking, and commercial buildings and as the largest developer in the area was responsible for most of Houston's prewar construction of over 100 buildings in Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas, New York City. Between 1908 and 1912 he bought part of Houston Chronicle, became chairman of the Texas Trust Company, president of National Bank of Commerce, an original stockholder in Humble Oil and Refining Company (later Exxon), and as chairman of the Houston harbor board, raised money for the Houston Ship

Channel. During World War I President Woodrow Wilson named him director general of military relief for the American Red Cross, he became sole owner of the Houston Chronicle in 1926, and in 1928 as director of finance for the Democratic National Convention, was instrumental in bringing the convention to Houston. President Herbert Hoover named him to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed him head of the RFC (1933-39) and Federal Loan Administrator (1939), and at the same time Jones became Secretary of Commerce, making him the most powerful man in the country after the President.

Key Tasks for Fellow

- Review the collection to identify a narrative of the exhibit (parts of Jones's life to highlight)
- Train by WRC mentor in the Omeka platform
- Select items for the online exhibit that are visually compelling to scan (WRC mentor will scan the items selected and work with the Fellow to create the appropriate metadata)
- Prepare the Omeka layout
- Write the text for the Omeka exhibit

Fellow Qualifications

- An interest in history (this may be an appropriate project for an historical methods class)
- The ability to identify items that contribute to the narrative of Jones's life
- Strong research and writing skills

Learning Opportunities for Fellow

Students would learn how to analyze primary sources and develop a narrative based on these sources; students would also learn how to prepare an exhibit, and become familiar with the Omeka platform.

Promoting Archival Collections via Wikipedia

Project Timeline

Spring, summer or fall of 2017

Project Description

This project will have two components. First, the fellow will enrich current Wikipedia entries with references to Woodson collections/records. This will act as a good starting point to gain familiarity with writing in Wikipedia and build his/her profile within the Wikipedia community. Second, the fellow would select strong candidates from the Woodson's collection that need a Wikipedia entry (well-known people, places, businesses, or events). The fellow will then write a Wikipedia article. To create a strong article, this will require the student to use sources from the collection/records or within the greater library's resources. By

doing this research and adding the references to the Wikipedia article, the new entry has a very strong chance of not being taken down or altered by the Wikipedia community.

After writing the entries, the student can then promote the new entries to the greater community via the Woodson blog and the library's social media channels.

Based on work by a student last summer, writing one post could take between 10-20 hours. Here is a sample of the work that an undergraduate student can do:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_Hall_\(Houston,_Texas\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_Hall_(Houston,_Texas))

This project would be suitable because it would increase the student's skills working with primary and secondary resources, increase visibility of library materials among researchers, and could also increase goodwill among the outside community. The Liberty Hall Wikipedia entry was very popular among current and former Houstonians and helped people understand how an archive/library saves and promotes community histories.

Key Tasks for Fellow

Learning Wikipedia's Wiki markup language, selecting which archival collections (well-known people, businesses, events) would need a Wikipedia entry, using primary and secondary sources, writing new entries, and promoting his/her work.

Fellow Qualifications

The student would need to be a strong writer and have strong research skills.

Learning Opportunities for Fellow

The student would learn how to use primary and secondary resources to write an encyclopedic style entry. S/he will also learn how to promote his/her work through various communication channels. Furthermore, the project will improve the student's writing skills and give him/her a more nuanced perspective on the nature and quality of online sources, as the fellow really learns how Wikipedia works.



Developing a Plan for Research Data Management Graduate Training

Project Timeline

Spring or summer of 2017

Project Description

In order to do good research and meet professional norms, graduate students in most if not all disciplines need to know how to manage data effectively. However, many graduate students do not receive significant training in research data management. A recent report on research data management at Rice recommended

that Fondren Library expand its efforts in data management education. The Fondren Fellow would pursue this recommendation by researching how other institutions train students in research data management, studying the local environment, and devising plans for a graduate education program at Rice.

Key Tasks for Fellow

Working with Rice's Research Data Management Team, the Fondren Fellow would:

- * Conduct a literature review to identify best practices and models in research data management training.
- * Through interviews, surveys or other mechanisms, determine what training in data management graduate students at Rice currently receive, what training they ideally should receive, and how best to deliver this training.
- * Write a report summarizing findings and making recommendations for developing a data management training program at Rice.

Fellow Qualifications

Ideally a student working on this project would have:

- * Excellent research skills
- * Experience conducting research interviews
- * Strong writing skills
- * The ability to work independently
- * An interest in data management and education

Learning Opportunities for Fellow

- * How to frame and pursue a real-world research project
- * How to conduct an environmental scan
- * How to write a professional report
- * How universities are approaching research data management education



Mapping Civil War narratives [continuation of ongoing research project]

Project Timeline

spring 2017

Project Description

Materials related to the U.S. Civil War are an underused strength of Woodson Research Center's collections. Letters, diaries, scrapbooks, and other materials from North and South are represented in several collections. Some of these materials have been scanned individually, but only now through this fellowship being examined from a bird's eye view, identifying the most represented parts of the country in the collection,

noting records from less heavily documented battles in the war such as the Battle of Galveston, analyzing the variety of formats of the records – and discovering threads for possible future research in these collections, based on this new examination. This would be an expansion of the exhibit building upon the work achieved by our current Fondren Fellow (Fall 2017).

Key Tasks for Fellow

- Review collections to identify relevant materials
- Continue to build on collection map begun in Fall 2016
- Receive training by WRC mentor in the Omeka platform as a possible exhibit location
- Select items for the online exhibit (WRC mentor will scan the items selected and assist with creating the appropriate metadata)
- Receiving training by GIS staff on use GIS software and Storymap development
- Further develop the Storymap begun in Fall 2016
- Possibly prepare companion Omeka platform exhibit

Fellow Qualifications

- An interest in history, U.S. history, interest or experience with GIS software, strong writing skills

Learning Opportunities for Fellow

Students would learn how to analyze primary sources and develop a narrative based on these sources; students would also learn how to prepare an exhibit, and become familiar with the Omeka platform and GIS software.



Conducting a Faculty-centered Information Needs and Resource Assessment

Project Timeline

2017 spring

Project Description

The big challenge we face about our collection budget is: we continue to receive new journal subscription requests from faculty. However, we don't have enough continuing money to cover these costs. In order to subscribe to new journals, we have to cancel some current journals first. Under this situation, conducting a faculty-centered information needs and resource assessment is an essential step to assure the library's collection meets the current needs of the community.

Conducting a faculty-centered information needs and resource assessment for all departments is a big project. It is impossible for the Fondren Fellow to finish it in one semester. Therefore, the work will serve as a pilot project and the Fondren Fellow will be responsible for part of the project. We will focus on evaluating faculty needs and current science and engineering journal subscriptions this time. As a result, we selected up to six science and engineering departments, such as civil engineering & environmental engineering, computer

science, earth sciences, electrical & computer engineering, materials science & Nano Engineering and mechanical engineering. If successful, the assessment method will be introduced to other subject areas.

- Working with the acquisitions department to get the last three years' usage data for current journal subscriptions
- Conducting interviews and surveys to know faculty needs
- Writing a report
- Making recommendation decisions regarding purchases and cancellation

This project is suitable for the Fondren Fellows Program because the Fondren Fellow can learn research methods, survey and analysis skills.

Key Tasks for Fellow

- Conducting a literature review
- Working with the advisor to conduct interviews and surveys to know faculty needs
- Writing a report (based on the usage data, faculty feedback and survey results)

Fellow Qualifications

- Excellent communication skills
- Excellent research skills
- Excellent writing skills

Learning Opportunities for Fellow

- How to frame a real-world research project
- How to do a literature review
- How to conduct interviews and surveys



The Library Web Site for Millennials

Project Timeline

Spring of 2017 or Summer of 2017

Project Description

The Fondren Library website was redesigned in 2015. The UX Office and the Fondren Web Team utilized mixed methods of surveys, usability testing, focus groups, and one-on-one contextual inquiries to design a site that met user needs.

Did we succeed? What can we do better? The Fondren Fellow will investigate student and faculty perceptions of the viability of using the library's online presence for research. The web team is interested in how do users respond to the library website and research inquiries when something is broken, incorrect or confusing. How can these behaviors be directed in ways to help improve library service? Does the web site meet the needs of undergraduate students? Do students understand the language "jargon" that still exists on the web site? What would a next-generation web site need to look like to be viable for student researchers?

Key Tasks for Fellow

- Develop a survey to reach users about how they are using the web site.
- Interview stakeholders about their behavior when a resource is "broken."
- Suggest ways to improve the use of the library website by students--including the "bento box" and the "library catalog."

Fellow Qualifications

- Some coursework in Human-Computer Interaction, Usability testing, survey construction, or ethnographic research.
- Strong interpersonal skills and some data analytic skills (Google Analytics and/or qualitative analysis software.)

Learning Opportunities for Fellow

To understand user needs in a digital research environment.