



NASS IDEAS Award Application – 2011

State of Delaware

Nominating Secretary of State: The Honorable Jeffrey W. Bullock

Contact: Christopher Portante, Community Relations Coordinator
christopher.portante@state.de.us
(302) 857-3038

Project Title: Going “Inside the Delaware Public Archives” with YouTube

Project Lead: Stephen Marz, CA, Delaware State Archivist

Brief Description: The Delaware Public Archives (DPA) was the first state archives in the nation to develop a series of videos, accessible through YouTube, for the purpose of educating the public about the Archives’ mission, holdings, and public accessibility to a wealth of historical and cultural information. All of the videos were produced in-house from script writing to filming to posting. At present, 13 videos have been produced with a total of 6,000 hits between them. Additional videos are in production.

Nomination Area: State Heritage

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inside the Delaware Public Archives, a new YouTube video series, was initiated in September 2009 with the first video being posted to the Archives website the following month. Over the next 17 months, the Delaware Public Archives (DPA) has continued to produce videos on a range of subjects that inform the public about what the DPA does, about its vast holdings and collections, and about the use of and access to these materials.

The DPA and the Delaware Government Information Center (DGIC) – both agencies of the Delaware Department of State – began as collaborators on the new video project which involved the creation of YouTube videos to provide information about DPA to historians, genealogists, researchers and other interested individuals in an online video format. These videos focus on the archival holdings and collections of the Delaware Public Archives and other features of the Archives, including its traveling exhibits program and what to expect when you visit the DPA. This series of YouTube videos is the first known instance of a State Archives using this media format to promote its collections and facilities.

Under the leadership of Stephen Marz, CA, the Delaware Public Archives has been increasing its overall use of social media and social networking to share with the public what it does and how accessible its information is for the amateur genealogist, the history enthusiast, and any other person who is interested in learning about the First State's history and people. As the official guardian of Delaware's state, county, and local government records, the Delaware Public Archives – established in 1905 – stores millions of records that reveal the cultural, social, and political history of Delaware and the nation.

Along with daily tweets, blogging, and Facebook, the staff decided that a series of YouTube videos would be an excellent way to reach out to citizens who are more frequently turning to social media to gather information. It was agreed that the product would have to be of the highest quality and that all of the work – script writing, blocking, narrating, filming, and film editing would have to be done in-house and within limited fiscal constraints.

While many people in government shy away from new technology and the hard work that goes into movie making, the Archives Outreach Team embraced this challenge. Through the tutelage of an experienced videographer and photographer in the DGIC, two Archives staff members learned how to write scripts, film, edit, and finalize the videos. Tom Summers, who appears in all of the videos as our presenter, had never served as an on-camera personality before, but he worked diligently to bring the Archives to life on film. After having DGIC's assistance on the first couple of videos, Archives staff was able to do the entire production on their own with only the equipment being borrowed from DGIC.

The series has covered subjects including Delaware's Ratification document, manuscript genealogies, photographic collections, vital statistics, tombstone records, and the "Vietnam Mailbag" Exhibit. For this video, the presenters took viewers to the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover Air Force Base to show another side of the Delaware Public Archives—its traveling exhibits program.

Attention was paid not only to the information and the length of the videos (approximately 2 minutes), but also to developing interest by taping in different settings applicable to the subject matter. In discussing census records, for instance, Tom Summers focused on one particular family in Camden, Delaware and began his presentation at their circa 1787 house.

This very low-cost project exemplifies some of the best practices in state government: use of technology in an effective and approachable manner to reach the most members of the public; cross-training/mentoring of staff to perform new duties (and empowering them in the process); and cooperation and sharing of ideas between agencies and strengthening relationships and a collaborative *esprit de corps*.

The mission of the Delaware Public Archives is two-fold: First, they manage and preserve the records of Delaware's democracy that document the obligations and rights of citizens and enable them to judge the performance and accountability of public officials in carrying out public policy. Second, they are charged with promoting a greater awareness of the history and heritage of the First State and its people.

This project brings our resources to people who would not ordinarily know much if anything about the DPA and its treasures. For some, the Archives only equates to genealogy research. For others it means government records. And for still others, the first thought that comes to mind is of historical state documents like the Delaware Royal Charter, the Ratification document, and others that are often exhibited on special occasions. *Inside the Delaware Public Archives* allows for broad knowledge across all of these groups, presenting to a worldwide internet audience and encouraging all to explore the many offerings of the DPA.

Moreover, in some cases, people are intimidated by going to the Public Archives, if only because it is a government facility with seemingly overwhelming amounts of information. By using Archives staff members as the on-air video talent, the accessibility of the staff is highlighted, as is the helpful nature that they display to visitors day in and day out. There is little doubt that these videos have increased the knowledge people have of the Delaware Public Archives and have made it clear that it is available to all.

State media has tapped into the Archives' YouTube videos and its other social networking ventures for features in their publications and TV programming. The videos were not intended to tell a whole story, but to pique people's interest and bring them to the Archives to visit and likewise draw them to the Archives website, Facebook page, blog and/or Twitter feed.

Expansion of the Archives' use of social media features continues. Already in production are two more videos: one will present Delaware's unique boundary markers; and the other is a Spanish-language video which focuses on informing the public about specific types of documents available at DPA such as vital statistic records and school records and advises viewers on the availability of interpreters.

The *Inside the Delaware Public Archives* YouTube series has also become a model within state government, and has already succeeded in inspiring other agencies in Delaware to adapt the model for their use.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS



Link to the DPA video playlist:

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5BB8F609C34A047F>

Screenshots from a few of the DPA videos:

"Vital Statistics" - Inside the Delaware Public Archives 01



"Ratification Document" - Inside the Delaware Public Archives 02



"Vietnam Mailbag Traveling Exhibit" - Inside the Delaware Public Archives 12



"U.S. Census and Delaware" - Inside the Delaware Public Archives 10

