

Open Folklore Project: Background Briefing for Consultants

Written by the Open Folklore Team, 5/30/13

- Tim Lloyd, Executive Director, American Folklore Society
- Julie Bobay, Associate Dean for Collection Development and Scholarly Communication, IU Libraries
- Moira Marsh, Folklore Librarian, IU Libraries
- Jen Laherty, Digital Publishing Librarian, IU Libraries
- Garrett Montanez, Lead Web Architect, IU Libraries
- Jason Baird Jackson, Associate Professor of Folklore and Director of Mathers Museum, IU

Overview

Open Folklore, founded in 2008 and available online since 2010, is a scholarly communications resource that is making a greater number and variety of useful resources, published and unpublished, available for the field of folklore studies and the communities with which folklore scholars partner.

From the start, we have thought of Open Folklore as a bazaar rather than a cathedral. Lacking outside funds to build an edifice, five years ago AFS began pursuing partners with which we could build, operate, and sustain a scholarly communications initiative for folklore studies out of our collective internal resources. Fortuitously, at the same time the Indiana University Bloomington Library (IUBL) and its Digital Library Program were looking for a partner with which to build a collection of distinction within its own energetically developing program of digital initiatives.

Fundamentally, this partnership is built upon a significant congruence between the IUBL's mission of collection development and AFS's mission of providing wider and more open access to more forms of folklorists' work. IUBL also brings a long-standing top-level institutional commitment to folklore studies as a subject area, and a world-class technology infrastructure. AFS also brings a strong and committed network of members and institutions in the academic, government, and non-profit sectors. Open Folklore also benefits from a happy circumstance of scale: it would be quite difficult to undertake Open Biology or Open History with the same small-scale and relatively straightforward infrastructure.

One way to think about Open Folklore is as a website or as a scholarly portal. Another is as a branding effort or unifying label for a collection of projects, efforts, and services being pursued by AFS and IUBL, all aimed at making more of the scholarly literature, and a greater range of scholarly resources in folklore studies, openly available for those

who need them. A third is as a case study for productive and effective collaboration between an academic library and a scholarly society.

There are, of course, considerable efforts and costs involved in building and maintaining OF. These efforts and costs are distributed among AFS staff and volunteers (governing Board and committee members, scholarly communications innovators, and many committed individuals and organizations), and among IUBL leadership, professional, and technical staff in a number of library offices, as well as faculty, staff, and students in IU's Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology.

In the future we may be presented with opportunities to develop Open Folklore in major new directions—in fact, several of the folklore and anthropology blog postings responding to our initial OF announcement suggested some such potential developments, and new scholarly publications initiatives to be centered at IUBL (see below) will offer others. Such an effort may well require both outside funding and a renewed and careful long-range sustainability planning effort. Our work with you as consultants is in fact part of such an effort. But for the present we continue to operate within our means as described here.

Partnership

OF's primary partners - the American Folklore Society and the IU Bloomington Library - initially created two other levels of OF partnership: Strategic Partners and Friends of Open Folklore.

Open Folklore strategic partners are organizations with content that is critically important to folklore scholarship, whose values and goals are closely aligned with Open Folklore's, and who are committed to devoting resources to achieve shared goals. Open Folklore highlights these organizations' content, acknowledges their importance to the success of the project, and hopes to actively pursue new forms of collaboration with them.

The [Utah State University Libraries](#) is our first Strategic Partner. Utah State University has been a leader in folklore scholarship, instruction, and collection building for over 40 years. The [USU Libraries' Special Collections and Archives](#) is home to the [American Folklore Society Papers](#) and the [Fife Folklore Archives](#), one of the largest repositories of American folklore in the United States. Also within the USU Libraries is the [USU Press](#), which has published cutting-edge folklore studies for over thirty years. Many of these collections, including all the Press books, are freely available to researchers in digital form, with records for new items and collections from the USU Libraries continually added to Open Folklore.

Central to the success of Open Folklore are those publishers, repositories, and organizations that are actively increasing the range of openly available scholarly resources in folklore studies. A large number of organizations and rights holders have generously contributed to the building of the Open Folklore portal and cultivating an open access scholarly communications system in folklore studies; so many, in fact, that we cannot list them all here. Some organizations, however, have taken special and conscious steps to partner with the Open Folklore Project, and we recognize them as Friends of Open Folklore. These organizations' goals and values align with the project; they are actively pursuing partnerships with the Open Folklore project, and in making their scholarly materials accessible, have made the conscious choice to use interoperable systems that facilitate their inclusion in the Open Folklore search tool. The current Friends of Open Folklore are:

- [Center for Folklore Studies, Ohio State University](#)
- [Ethnobotany Research and Applications](#)
- [Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics](#)
- [National Folklore Support Centre](#)
- [World Oral Literature Project](#)
- *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*
- Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America

Liberating content

The OF team has championed the extension of the HathiTrust (HT) permission agreement workflow (http://www.hathitrust.org/permissions_agreement) to folklore serial runs. In partnership with the rightsholders of the serials, the OF team provides guidance for making content open access within the HT repository. We've mainly considered the editor of the run, the organizational director of the publication, or the publisher as the rightsholder who can sign the HathiTrust permission agreement (http://www.hathitrust.org/documents/permissions_agreement.pdf) and make the compiled issues open access. On good authority from the legal counsels of IU and the HathiTrust we believe this is lawful. If we endeavored to provide open access at the article level, individual article rightsholders would have, in many cases, been required to sign the HT permission agreement making the project nearly insurmountable.

Accomplishments:

In 2012 we opened content to a dozen serials in HT. In addition, the OF project has extended the use of the IU institutional repository, IUScholarWorks Repository, to archive the primary non-scholarly AFS publications. The OF team has also spoken with several other libraries operating institutional repositories. We've provided guidance on

how to structure the metadata and collections of their serial runs so that the Open Folklore search function can retrieve those files.

In 2013, with the aid of a student intern, we will attempt to open approximately 3-4 dozen more serials in HT.

Bumps in the road:

Much of the content in the HT came from Google scans and unfortunately the HT does not always have the digital copies of the scans per the various library/Google contracts. Occasionally we find holes in what HT has versus what a library, such as IU, sent to Google for scanning. Sometimes HT is successful retrieving such scans from Google and sometimes cannot. While there are ongoing investigations into these matters, the IU Libraries has and will continue to make new scans and send them to the HT to fill in gaps when retrieving Google scans is impossible.

Early on in this process we attempted to work with Google to open these runs in Google Books – essentially providing multiple duplicative open copies. However, the process to open materials in Google Books is truly designed for books only and proved unwieldy. While unfortunate, we abandoned this aspect of the project and have solely focused on opening content in HT.

Future:

We realize that the list of folklore journals to open is relatively finite. Our next step will be to look at monograph serials runs. Further afield or as they arise, we will address individual monographs.

Outreach

The outreach efforts of OF work on several levels. These map onto the three “ways of thinking” about OF described above. In its “website or scholarly portal” guise, outreach work involves behind-the-scenes activities such as recruiting OA publishers or repository collection managers to the OF community, usually in conjunction with discussions aimed to harvesting content for OF Search. In a public way, outreach activities focus on notifying the folklore studies community, scholars in neighboring fields (such as anthropology and literature), and the “general public” about enhancements to the portal. The regular communications channels of the AFS and Indiana University, the portal’s own news function, and Facebook and Twitter are the tools we use for this purpose.

As a broader initiative aiming to educate the folklore studies community and others about open access and to promote the pursuit of open access initiatives, the OF team

undertakes a range of outreach activities, including face-to-face seminars and training sessions at AFS annual meetings, and mediated outreach to specific constituencies, such as academic department chairs and public sector folklore program directors. The regular communications channels of the AFS are a key tool for this work.

Some outreach work has also gone into telling the OF story beyond the circle of professional folklorists. Presentations by OF team members have been given in computing, library, and anthropology settings and this has resulted in significant wider discussion of the project and its specific strategies. These kinds of discussions and engagements link to the project's nature as a proof-of-concept exercise exploring "productive and effective collaboration between an academic library and a scholarly society."

In summary, the channels through which outreach work now flows include behind-the-scenes engagements (in person, phone, email, teleconference) with specific potential or present partners and friends, combined with face-to-face engagements at professional meetings (AFS, AAA, libraries related, publishing related, ACLS related, technology related, etc.), use of multipurpose mediated channels (IU press releases, AFS news systems) and OF-specific channels (OF News, OF Facebook, OF Twitter).

Technology

The technology used for the Open Folklore project was chosen both for practical reasons (that the technology was in use at IUB Libraries) and its potential to fulfill the initial project goals in a relatively short development period. The technology used is centered around two applications, the Open Folklore portal and the American Folklore Society Ethnographic Thesaurus.

The Open Folklore portal <http://www.openfolklore.org/> was created using the Drupal content management system (CMS) and development framework and has two main purposes: 1) an educational and advocacy function and 2) a search of Open Access repositories and journals in the discipline of Folklore. The educational and advocacy function is facilitated by Drupal's CMS functionality. It allows OF team members to have accounts that allow them to update content and add news items without needing server access. The CMS also serves as a kind of central hub or web location that is themed and branded providing an identity.

The Open Folklore portal also functions as an application that harvests metadata from Folklore Open Access repositories and journals using the OAI-PMH protocol. The harvested records are then discoverable via an Apache Solr faceted search. This collection of folklore research materials is "curated" by the Open Folklore group and is

expanded / added to by working with partners in the Folklore community. One of our project's activities is to educate folklorists about how they can add their Folklore research materials to repositories and Open Access journals so that research can then be added to Open Folklore for further discovery and access.

We are currently in the process of upgrading the Open Folklore portal to improve the search functionality. The new functionality will provide more flexible faceted searching and will accommodate a wider variety of repository materials without overwhelming the search results. (for instance IU Folklore Collection in HathiTrust:

http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mb?a=listis;c=992786597;sort=title_a;pn=1;lmt=ft)

Another vital part of the Open Folklore project is the American Folklore Society Ethnographic Thesaurus. "The *AFS Ethnographic Thesaurus* is a searchable online vocabulary that can be used to improve access to information about folklore, ethnomusicology, ethnology, and related fields. The American Folklore Society developed the *Thesaurus* in cooperation with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress and supported by a grant from the Scholarly Communications Program of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation" (<http://openfolklore.org/et/>).

The web version of the AFS Ethnographic Thesaurus (ET) is a Java web application built using the Click framework <http://click.sourceforge.net/>. The ET is updated and maintained using the thesaurus software Multites <http://multites.net/> . It has often been expressed that additional development could make this important work be useful to Folklorists. For instance it has been suggested that creating a tool that would allow ET terms to be inserted into repository metadata, could be of great help to repository managers.

Collections

We divided collections into 4 overlapping categories, based on the rubric that we thought folklore researchers most often used for thinking about resources: 1) Books; 2) Journals; 3) Websites; and 4) Gray Literature. Gray literature includes both published and unpublished materials, such as scholarly works in progress, abstracts of conference papers, syllabi, white papers, and exhibition catalogs. Across all categories, we restrict Open Folklore collections to materials that are open-access and useful for research in folklore as either primary or secondary sources.

The collections scope of Open Folklore includes everything that might be of interest to scholars in folklore and related fields—a policy that is based on the one that the Folklore Collection in the Indiana University Libraries follows, albeit extended to websites and gray literature. Thus our reach goes beyond folk literature, costumes,

foodways, and calendar customs to include material that could be classed anywhere in the LC call number ranges such as music, art, architecture, parapsychology, etc.

Our scope includes works with both scholarly and popular treatments, both primary and secondary sources. Thus far we have focused primarily on English language works, because we view our primary audiences as folklorists in the U.S.

Open Folklore “collections” includes things that are curated in the institutional repository for Indiana University, but the majority are curated elsewhere, for example by publishers, Hathi Trust, institutional repositories at other schools, and on organizational websites. Thus Open Folklore is a virtual collection consisting of metadata that we can harvest from various sources.

The gray literature category offers an opportunity to begin to respond to a service that professional folklorists have long asked for but which the traditional library collection could not fill, namely, to serve as a clearing house for the many and various publications that folklore organizations and professional folklorists produce in the course of their work. This category includes folk arts and public sector folklore products are numerous but have little or no bibliographic control. Increasingly, this material is in multimedia formats. This category also includes records from ethnographic folklore archives.

Our collection of websites has a dual role: to provide access to a searchable collection of reliable websites, and to create a permanent archive of those sites. We have created an Open Folklore collection in Archive-It to accomplish both goals. We began by crawling the websites of every academic folklore program in North America and the websites of several important public folk arts organizations—including, notably, two websites that were about to go dark and which we were able to preserve at the eleventh hour. The website collection in particular raises issues that traditional library collection-building does not encounter, in that we are making decisions about which sources are reliable and worthy of being archived. In traditional collections, decisions about quality and importance have already been made by publishers or peer review.

Possible relationship with evolving IU Office of Scholarly Publishing

On July 1, 2012, the IU Provost created the Office of Scholarly Publishing. “The new office will assume operational responsibilities for [IU Press](#), the university's long-running academic publishing house, and several related university initiatives, as it aims to strengthen IU's central missions of scholarship and teaching and create a model of effective, sustainable 21st-century academic publishing....In addition to IU Press, the Office of Scholarly Publishing will include elements of the IU Libraries' digital publishing program, including [IUScholarworks](#), and the [eTexts@IU initiative](#), the university's effort

to partner with textbook publishers and other vendors to establish new models of electronic textbook delivery that will substantially reduce costs for students. The office will be chartered as a partnership between the Office of the Vice President for Information Technology and the dean of the IU Libraries.”

<http://www.iub.edu/search/index.shtml?q=office%20scholarly%20publishing>

Executive Associate Dean of the IU Libraries, Carolyn Walters, was appointed to a 3-year term to serve as Interim Executive Director of the new office. She is working with a faculty advisory board on which Jason Jackson and Julie Bobay serve. Her largest tasks in year one have focused on moving the IU Press physically into the Wells Library, proposing a financially sustainable business model for the IU Press, and drafting a strategic plan for the Office of Scholarly Publishing.

The Office of Scholarly Publishing could have direct or indirect impacts on the Open Folklore project, depending on how the university chooses to define “scholarly publishing.” If a very broad definition is adopted, much of what we do in the Open Folklore project could be seen as publishing and thus carried out within the OSP organizational structure - archiving web sites; liberating closed content either through HathiTrust or an open-access repository; hosting the Ethnographic Thesaurus and possibly the National Folklore Archives Inventory System; exposing open access content around the world through Open Folklore search. Jen Laherty, Digital Publishing Librarian and a member of the Open Folklore team, as well as other open access publishing/digital projects librarians, may report through the OSP rather than through Libraries’ Collections or technology units. Open Folklore could have access to additional publishing expertise within the OSP, such as intellectual property consulting and advice.

Possible discussion questions:

- What strikes you as particularly noteworthy or exciting in the accomplishments of Open Folklore to date? What opportunities do you see that OF can or should pursue?
- How does OF relate to other open access initiatives that you know of? What can we learn from them?
- We can see many strengths in our present “bazaar” approach, which has leveraged core partner goals of collection development and open access, and energetic collaborative labor donated “off the books” by the founding partners, to create success in the absence of formal business or sustainability plans. As we grow and develop, and as surrounding circumstances change, what steps in the direction of formalization will be most important to ensure that we build our

institutional strength while sustaining the collective ethos that has led to our success? What examples might we consider as models?

- Should we consider establishing an editorial board to advise on future directions for OF generally, or collections specifically, and if so how should it be constituted and what should its role be?
- We have made relatively little use of various partners in OF's present activities or in discussion of its governance or future possibilities. What examples of well-functioning consortia exist elsewhere in the world of contemporary scholarly communications that we might consider as models?
- Assessing and perhaps revising or extending OF outreach efforts will be part of the project's current deliberations and planning. While it has proven relatively easy to involve motivated and informed small-scale actors--such as a single gold OA journal project--in OF's work, it has proven more challenging to engage with academic unit heads (who would need to sponsor greater green OA repository use in the field). This specific dynamic can be a token of the questions facing OF outreach going forward.
- Technology choices:
 - Is there a better way to disseminate the ethnographic thesaurus than the technology we have selected?
 - Should we consider different technologies for various pieces of OF?
 - New Website: reactions, advice
- Collections:
 - Initially, we have chosen to focus on collections that belong to our partners, especially the American Folklore Society and Utah State University Press. We have also had a de facto North American and English-language emphasis. How should we prioritize future directions for collection growth?
 - What criteria should we use to build the Open Folklore collection of curated websites in Archive-It?

- What new opportunities for projects such as Open Folklore might such a combined Office of Scholarly Publishing support?