

The Revolutionary City Model American Philosophical Society - 2023

Background

Over the past several years, the American Philosophical Society (APS) developed *The Revolutionary City: A Portal to the Nation's Founding* (Rev City) - a public-facing digital archive (<https://therevolutionarycity.org/>) of material created or received in Philadelphia during the American Revolution (1774-1783). *The Revolutionary City* focuses on surfacing the voices of those individuals relegated to the margins of society by their race, gender, class, religion, ability, or political affiliation.

Starting with three local partners (APS, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), and the Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP)) allowed us to focus on uniting collections with different cataloging practices and institutional resources, building sustainable workflows, and developing the infrastructure to host a major digital initiative.

During the [initial planning phase](#), we:

- Engaged a group of 16 educators, archivists, community leaders, scholars, and public historians to serve as a stakeholder team and meet over the course of one year to talk through a range of topics and issues in the design process of the online portal and contribute expertise in the work of recovering hidden voices.
- Built, developed, and populated a beta version of the Rev City portal.
- Established workflows for scalability and application beyond this project.

The pilot phase resulted with a process in which we highlight underrepresented voices by creating enhanced metadata and a series of local thematic terms that allow for easier, and more inclusive, navigation. This allows the project to tell a more complete picture of the Revolution allowing users to see their own diverse backgrounds and experiences reflected in these sources, in the shared story of the women and men who declared independence, founded a new nation, and united as a citizenry to create a democracy.

The Model

For the [implementation phase](#), we developed the Rev City Model, which:

- Identified and reviewed manuscript material proposed for ingest into the Rev City portal
- Created a digitization training program focused on scanning high quality images of material and creating enhanced metadata to highlight underrepresented narratives of the Revolutionary period.
- Tested two scenarios - One institution made their digitization equipment available, including a flatbed and book scanner. For another institution, we built an on-site digitization suite, including a computer, 3 monitors, flatbed scanner, and book scanner. (Neither institution had the digital infrastructure for long-term preservation or sustainability.)
- Placed Digitization Technicians at each site to digitize material and create enhanced metadata.
- Project Manager retrieved image and metadata files and performed quality control before upload into the Rev City portal hosted in perpetuity by the APS.

Now our goal is to create a national project that includes material from institutions throughout the country. During our two grant-funded phases, we shared our progress with local, regional, and national organizations interested in the project. From initial conversations, the Rev City team saw the need for an adaptable model for organizations of varying resources and capabilities. To this end, we've identified four types of institutions for us to test the model:

Type #1: Institution with digital infrastructure and digitization resources

This institution has digitized material ready to be ingested but needs guidance on contributing to the project.

- Examples:
 - Has digitized material uploaded to their digital repository and ready for transfer to Rev City portal via OAI-PMH
 - Has material in scope and the ability to use in-house resources (staff and equipment) to digitize and upload to their digital repository, then transfer to Rev City portal via OAI-PMH

Type #2: Institution with digital infrastructure but without digitization resources

This institution has material but minimal use of in-house resources to digitize and a need for additional resources to make material widely accessible

- Examples:
 - Has digitized material uploaded to their digital repository and ready for transfer to Rev City portal via OAI-PMH
 - Has material in scope and needs Rev City team resources to digitize material. Once material is digitized, the institution can then upload to their digital repository and transfer to Rev City portal via OAI-PMH.

Type #3: Institution with no digital infrastructure and some digitization resources

This institution has material but minimal use of in-house resources to digitize and a need for additional resources to make material widely accessible

- Examples:
 - Has digitized material and is able to transfer files and metadata to APS via external hard drive or online file sharing for upload to Rev City portal for long-term storage.
 - Has material in scope and the ability to use in-house resources (staff and equipment) to digitize material. Once material is digitized, Rev City team can then upload to Rev City portal for long-term storage.
 - Has material in scope and in-house digitization equipment. Needs Rev City team to come in and digitize material. Once material is digitized, Rev City team can then upload to Rev City portal for long-term storage.

Type #4: Institution with neither digital infrastructure nor digitization resources

This institution has material for digitization but no resources to do so nor technological infrastructure for long-term preservation.

- Examples:
 - Has digitized material and is able to transfer files and metadata to APS for upload to Rev City portal for long-term storage.
 - Has material in scope. The Rev City team brings digitization resources (staff and equipment) to the institution. The Rev City team digitizes material and uploads to Rev City portal for long-term storage.
 - Has material in scope. The Rev City team takes material to APS for on-site digitization. Rev City team digitizes material and uploads to Rev City portal for long-term storage.

One of the goals of Rev City has always been to create something that is easily replicable by other institutions. The team has used highly accessible, open source tools and software, explored various methods of aggregation, and plans to release all data, document the entire process and release any source code via GitHub. This model is not only adaptable but it also emphasizes how large, resourced organizations might help small, under-funded

organizations provide access to their collections. We expect that Rev City will become a model for other collaborative multi-institution projects and the partners will make themselves available to consult with other institutions that are interested.

Become a Partner!

Does your organization have collections related to the American Revolution (1774-1783) in Philadelphia and need help with online access and preservation?

If you are thinking of becoming a partner and would like to discuss ways to participate, please let us know. We can be reached by email at therevolutionarycity@amphilsoc.org.

Some things to consider as you identify items in your collections:

- Was the item created in, received or sent from, and/or about Philadelphia?
 - Talk to us about what Philadelphia means, we are flexible with including surrounding areas.
- Was the item created between 1774 and 1783?
 - Talk to us about material that falls just before or beyond this date scope, as well as volumes that include these dates but not exclusively.