Educator's Guide to Community History Websites

- What is a Community History Website?
- How does the school fit into the Community History Website project?
- Planning: Setting Goals & Selecting Objectives
- Getting Started
- Support for Educators
- Teacher Recertification

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This guide is meant as a supplement to other resources provided to community teams that undertake Community History Website (CHW) projects. While this Guide offers unique information to educators, participating teachers and other school personnel should be familiar with the general resources as well, found at www.mainememory.net/resources.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HISTORY WEBSITE?

A CHW is a stand-alone site within Maine Memory Network that serves as a virtual local history hub for a Maine city, town, village, island, or other community. It is the most intensive Maine Memory Network project type. More than 20 such sites have been created over the past decade, representing all corners of the state. Most include 50 or more digitized primary source items from local historical collections, a broad overview of the community's history (a "narrative"), and multiple short exhibits—illustrated historical stories—about people, places, events, time periods, or other aspects of the community. These sites can be found at www.mainememory.net/our_partners.

Community sites employ user-friendly ExhibitBuilder and SiteBuilder tools embedded in Maine Memory to create the exhibit pages and can choose from among several templates (e.g. color and layout), add a variety of pages and text, and insert and arrange images and links.

The origin of the Community History Website model is the Maine Community Heritage Project, which ran from 2008-2013. More about that project can be found at www.mainememory.net/CHW. Although this project no longer exists in name (nor are stipends available), communities may still choose to build a community history site. Traditionally, the project model calls for a collaboration between at least three organizations: a historical society, archive, or museum; a public library; and a school. Other organizations may be invited to join the team as well.

Building a CHS takes a substantial amount of time, up to a year. A school can choose to be involved for the entire process, during which time students participate in all aspects of the project, or for a shorter time with more limited involvement. In the past, projects have aligned with the academic year and kicked off in August or September, with the site published and a culminating community event in May or June. However, the project can be started at virtually any time that works for the community and the school.

Maine Memory staff provides training, support, resource material, and will attend team meetings throughout the life of the project. As with CHW, Maine Memory staff will help teams to develop a deadline-driven calendar to plot out the work of the project.

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL FIT INTO THE PROJECT?

A school may be invited by another organization to participate in the project, or may instigate the project by reaching out to a member of the local historical society. Either way, each partnering organization should be given equal footing in the CHW project. At least one educator must participate in team meetings and may want to consider having 1-2 students sit on the planning team as well.

While there are specific project activities, the CHW project is designed to be flexible and easily tailored to best meet the needs of your community and curriculum objectives. What are you and your students going to get out of it? You decide, keeping in mind that you and your students have much to share in this collaborative project. The CHW offers numerous opportunities to develop skills and relationships that enable you to more effectively engage the community. It provides meaningful opportunities for students to further develop and apply their research, technology, communication, and writing skills in an authentic setting. The extent of student involvement depends upon the number and type of academic goals that are set.

PLANNING: SETTING GOALS & SELECTING OBJECTIVES

The first place to start is to identify what you hope to gain and what you would like your students to gain by participating in a CHW project. Here are a few general questions to consider and think about:

- What kind of experience do you want your students to have?
- How does the CHW fit into your curriculum?
- Will you be using the CHW as a service-learning project or as a community service activity? (Tying into Maine Learning Results (MLR) - Social Studies A3)
- Will you utilize the CHW in an interdisciplinary fashion with other teachers?
- Will the project be a school-wide or team-wide focus?
- More specifically:
- What do you want your students to learn?
- What are some potential topics that you might explore?
- Are there specific Maine Learning Results standards that you would like to target?

- Do you want your students to…

- Learn and/or apply research skills?

- Evaluate the credibility of sources of information?

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources?

- Be able to recognize and analyze various interpretations?

- Gain a better understanding of historical themes and/or eras?

- Learn and/or apply technological skills?

- Become more responsible and involved members of their community?

- Be able to write academic essays?

- Be able to summarize information?

- Understand the influence of geography on place?

- Further points to consider…

- What is your school's policy for publishing photographs and work of students?

- Will you be required to obtain parental permission?

- Of course, time is a major factor. Have you selected objectives that can be realistically attained in the course of the school year?

Set attainable goals and try to remain flexible as the project progresses. Sharing your classroom goals, topical and/or thematic interests, and vision for student involvement with your local team will serve to further develop this project. Your team members and the organizations they represent can be valuable resources. The CHW project provides tremendous potential for cross-organizational and generational collaboration. The first step in developing these important relationships is to share your ideas.

GETTING STARTED

Based on the objectives that you have selected, determine what activities your students will participate in to attain the identified objectives. Following is a general framework and some potential student-related activities.

I. CHW SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

The collaborative nature of the CHW means that you and your students will be working alongside other community members to attain the large group's shared goal of the publication of your town's Community History Website on Maine Memory Network. It is not necessary to have your students

involved with each and every one of the steps of the CHW, but it is important to remember that while your students have much to learn, they also have much to share and contribute. They are a valuable part of this collaborative project. Below are some potential activities that are parallel to or complement the CHW specific activities. (These activities were originally written for the CHW and follow the general academic calendar timeline used in that project.)

SPECIFIC CHW ACTIVITY	POTENTIAL CLASSROOM CONNECTION
Community Resource Gathering This process begins with the planning team in August (and the larger community in September) and lays the foundation for the narrative, exhibits, and selection of items for digitization. It involves brainstorming and documenting resources and identifying topics and themes.	- Most likely your students will begin the project following the planning team's initial resource gathering process. However, students can still be involved. For example, you may want to have students conduct their own process and add new results to the team's list of resources. - To expand a bit further, you might consider having students communicate with organizations and/or businesses in your town. They could explain their involvement in the project and interview or survey individuals regarding what they might know about or have that would be of interest to the community's project. Maine Learning Results (MLR) Connection: Social Studies (SS) A1; English Language Arts (ELA) C1, E1

Digitization & Cataloging Each organization within your community that holds historic collections that will be used in the CHW project will become a Maine Memory Network Contributing Partner and be able to upload, catalog, and manage the items in Maine Memory. Digitization requires a computer with Internet access, a scanner, a digital camera, and photo editing software.	- Students could choose a topic or theme and select historical items that support it. MLR Connection: SS A1, A2; ELA C1 - To introduce the idea and importance of selection, you may want to consider having students bring in a few personal items that help tell their personal story. You can help them make the connection that much like the items that they choose to represent themselves, the items they select to tell part of your community's history are important and *what* they select is as important as *how* they tell it. - Students could digitize and/or catalog each item, working with members of your local historical society or other interested community members. MLR connection: ELA A3
Illustrated Online Narrative The narrative will provide a broad overview of your community and place it in the context of Maine and U.S. history.	Students could create a timeline connecting local history to the larger historical context. MLR connection: SS E1; ELA B1, C1

Online Exhibits Online exhibits explore and share specific topics or themes connected to the history of your community.	Students could complete an online exhibit. The process could include: selecting a topic, conducting research, writing an academic essay and/or summary of information, compiling supporting materials, designing the exhibit format, creating the exhibit. MLR connection: SS A1, A2, E1, E2; ELA A3, B1, B3, C1
Website Production Your community's local history website is the culmination of the collaborative project. It is the place where your team will showcase all of its work. The site will be housed within the Maine Memory Network.	Students could assist with the design and construction of the site. MLR connection: ELA B1
Community-Wide Celebration Ideally, the team will hold a culminating event at the end of the project to mark the launch of the town's website and celebrate the team's efforts.	Two or more students should play a role in the development of the celebration. What form the celebration takes will help determine how you might involve students. - Will there be an opportunity for students to speak about their involvement? - Are there additional products that could be displayed at the celebration (i.e. original pieces of art, poetry, collages, pictographs, physical exhibits)? - Is there a group of students that could document the CHW year and share an iMovie, scrapbook or slideshow of the project year?

II. INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY HISTORY WEBSITE PROJECT

Oftentimes, buy-in and support from your larger school community can help increase excitement and interest around the project.

- Have you shared information about your school's involvement with your colleagues, administration, superintendent, school board?
- Do you intend to send a letter home informing parents/guardians of their child's involvement?
- How are you going to hook and reel your students in to this project?
- Will you create a kick-off celebration?

Activities to consider:

- Because the CHW project is a collaborative effort that involves other organizations, ask students to generate a list of ways in which they think they could contribute to the project, as full partners.
- Conduct a large group brainstorm to document what your students presently know about local history and/or what they would like to know. This simple activity can be very helpful in determining particular knowledge and interests. It is also useful to revisit the results near the completion of the project as an informal assessment of student learning.
- Invite other team members into your classroom to help explain the project and to provide an overview of why they wanted to be involved in a project that celebrates local history. Is there a little known fact or story that a community member might share with your students about local history that would entice students to continue to explore the history of their community?
- Take students on a visit to your partnering organizations.

III. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CONSIDERATION

With a collaborative project, it is important for the team to share a common vision and work together to reach the team's agreed upon goals. The CHW project offers the flexibility of incorporating additional project goals and activities into the CHW year. The possibilities are truly endless; stay focused on setting attainable and manageable goals for the project year. The relationships, training, and

experience that you will gain this year will help to further develop and expand this project in future school years. For some examples of optional activities, see the list below.

- Conduct oral history interviews.

- Produce iMovies.

- Student journaling or blogging of CHW experience.

- Then & Now comparisons.

- Craft online or physical copies of activities for younger children to learn about the history of their community.

- Create an expedition to a certain era and connect your community to it (for example: research what your community was like during the 1920s).

- Design timelines connecting local history to the larger historical context.

- Create an original piece of art, poetry, creative writing piece, collage, or display that reflects what students have learned or experienced.

- Produce a newspaper, newscast, or radio program as another way to share your community's history.

IV. HELPFUL SKILLS TO STUDY HISTORY & PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY HISTORY WEBSITE PROJECT

In order for students to glean as much as possible from the CHW project experience, it would be beneficial for them to master some necessary skills that will help them be able to study history and become more informed thinkers. Listed below are suggested skills that students should be introduced to prior to or during their participation in the CHW.

Knowledge/Skills Needed	Maine Learning Results Connection	Previously Attained	Pre-Project Teaching	To Be Taught as Part Of CHW
Define history ~ how we study it ~ why we study it	Social Studies (SS) E1			
Distinguish between primary and secondary sources	SS A1 English/Lang. Arts (ELA) C1			
Evaluate sources ~ reliability ~ validity ~ bias ~ time and place rule	SS A1 ELA A4, C1			
Analyze interpretations of events ~ recognize different perspectives ~ develop questions based on primary source materials	SS E1 ELA A4, C1			
Navigate and search MMN	ELA C1			
Understand how to properly handle historical materials				

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

Education support for Maine Memory Network projects includes two members of Maine Historical Society's Education Department. You may contact either of the following people to get started with a project.

- Larissa Vigue Picard, Director of Education, oversaw the MCHP program between 2009-2013, and can work with teachers and team members to develop project objectives, a deadline-driven calendar, and work plan. She can also attend and facilitate some team meetings. Contact information: lvpicard@mainehistory.org; 207-774-1822 x215.

- Kathleen Neumann, Manager of Education & Interpretation, is a former middle and high school classroom teacher. She can work with teachers to embed MMN into their curriculum, and design specific classroom and community activities for students based on the overall project objectives. She can also provide demos of Maine Memory Network for students, and train them how to use specific Maine Memory tools. Contact information: kneumann@mainehistory.org; 207-774-1822 x214.

In addition, Maine Memory Network has three other staff members who may interact with the team and educators at various points in the project. These include:

- Kathy Amoroso, Director of Digital Projects, who oversees the division and handles technical questions about the Maine Memory database, accounts, and equipment.

- Candace Kanes, Curator, who reviews all content that goes into Maine Memory and can also provide in-classroom presentations to students on "doing good history" and how to think about brainstorming and creating online exhibits.

- Tilly Laskey, Content Manager, who reviews each digitized item and its cataloging record before it goes online. She works with team members uploading material to the network to make sure it is correctly scanned and cataloged, and adds important meta data to the record so that the public can easily find it as they search the network.

TEACHER RECERTIFICATION

Maine Historical Society-approved contact hours for recertification are available to all teachers participating in the CHW project. *Contact hours* are defined as time spent at CHW activities such as monthly team meetings, MHS trainings, or one-on-one consultations/meetings (in person or over the phone) with MHS staff. Your MHS liaison in the Education Department will keep track of these contact hours and provide teachers with documentation at the end of the project.

Time spent teaching students or engaging in CHW-related activity on one's own (reading, research, online work) is NOT counted as part of the official MHS contact hours. However, teachers may wish to keep track of any additional time spent on the project and request additional credit hours for recertification on their own. These additional hours would need prior approval by your local recertification steering committee.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Education section of the Maine Memory Network website, www.MaineMemory.net.