

Crash and Burn: Learning from Failure

—

Adam Wanter

My Failure/s

Failing on the timeline:

Not doing enough project prep

Failing to take into account possible project setbacks



Little more about me

MidPointe Library System

In charge of the Library's local history and genealogy material - physical and digital

MidPointe is a medium sized library system in Butler County

We had 2 ½ employees, including myself, working on digitization related projects

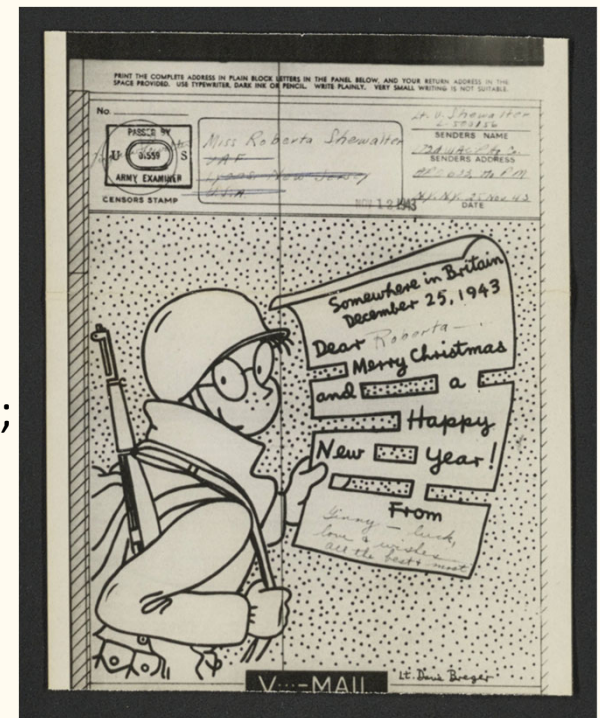
Most digitization work itself was outsourced, with metadata work being done in-house

The Virginia Shewalter Letters Collection

270 letters and v-mails written by Virginia Shewalter - a local service woman with the WAAC & WAC from 1942 to 1945

Collaborative project with the West Chester and Union Township Historical Society

Library's responsibilities: Re-house and process the collection; digitize the material; create transcripts; host the material; create programing and educational resources around the material



Cutting myself short

Grants - they like end dates

Partners - they like to know when they will get their stuff back

My reaction: I'll have the project completed by (insert mostly arbitrary end date that makes sense with some other things going on).

My major mistakes:

I had done very little prep work - w/ no sample portion completed for reference

I assumed mostly smooth sailing



Source of Failure

Overconfidence



What Went Wrong?

Processing took longer than expected...

Which led to a delay in getting the materials sent out for digitization.

Next, the transcription project took longer than anticipated - all letters were handwritten in cursive, so no OCR

(However, it was under budget... which led to the problem of having to find a way to allocate grant money...)

Finally, to create all the metadata I wanted was going to take significantly longer than I had planned

Making due

To account for the shrinking amount of time, elements of the project were abandoned

Optimal fields were cut, in favor of focusing on what was required to make a good record over a great one

Whole aspects of the project were indefinitely delayed - such as actual teaching resources (which is still outside of my ability to put together - so much work!)

Completed collection: <http://www.midpointedigitalarchives.org/digital/collection/MPD01>

Letter for June 17, 1945: <http://www.midpointedigitalarchives.org/digital/collection/MPD01/id/959/rec/1>

Lessons Learned

Always know what you are working with!

Have a clear sense of what it will take to accomplish all of your goals

Be able to prioritize outcomes

Be flexible

Manage expectations throughout the project - be open and transparent

Questions for the entire panel



Popcorn and Remy

