

Smithsonian Institution
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
Digital and Emerging Media Department

Digital Collection Materials Project, Phase I: Survey
Request for Proposal: Time-Based Media Curatorial Assistant

For consideration, please submit your proposal to cooperhewittdigital@si.edu by December 20, 2016. See *Proposal Submission Guidelines* in Section XI of this document.

I. Introduction

Of the more than 210,000 objects in the Smithsonian Institution (SI) Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (CHSDM) collection it is estimated that roughly 150 items incorporate digital materials—information conveyed in a digital form. These include objects with hardware and software components like home and office electronics, personal computing and mobile devices, and media players. This also includes born digital works—examples of design that originated in electronic form and are saved as digital data, such as software applications and media assets like videos and computer-aided designs.

CHSDM will embark on the Digital Collection Materials Project in 2017 as the first major initiative by the museum to address the conservation needs of digital materials. The project will be organized into three phases: Phase I will be the design and execution of a collection survey (1,408 hours); Phase II will be the conduction of case studies (1,056 hours); and Phase III will be synthesis of survey results and case study findings in order to make recommendations for the future implementation of a strategic plan of care, preservation, and responsible acquisition of digital materials in CHSDM's collection (704 hours). This Request for Proposal pertains to Phase I only. Applicants are encouraged to apply for multiple project phases as subsequent Request for Proposals are announced.

For this work, CHSDM requires the services of a qualified Time-Based Media Curatorial Assistant (the *Contractor*) to provide professional and technical conservation services.

This project received Federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, administered by the National Collections Program and the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee.

II. Scope of Work

This Statement of Work pertains to Phase I: Survey only. The Contractor shall perform up to 1,408 hours of professional and technical services related to Digital Collection Materials Project.

Working closely with CHSDM staff and Media Preservation Specialist, Technical Lead (*Contractor 2*), the Contractor shall perform the following activities:

- A. Audit of items to be surveyed. The preliminary list created by CHSDM staff may be edited at the suggestion of the Contractor based on his/her curatorial insight.
- B. Assisting in design of survey form. Based on conservation and collections management best-practices, as well as the nature of the CHSDM collection, the Contractor shall design the survey form to be used in the survey project.
- C. Collaboration on database implementation. The Contractor shall advise on the design of a project-specific database, or method of incorporating survey information into existing database(s) to house survey information.
- D. Selection of appropriate curatorial documentation methods to record multiple aspects of a survey items. Documentation methods may include:
 1. Photography, sound recording, and/or videography;
 2. Interviews;
 3. Illustrations, diagrams, and/or charts;
 4. Code commenting;
 5. Written descriptions.
- E. Generation of curatorial documentation for each survey item.
- F. Decision-making in conjunction with CHSDM staff and Contractor 2 as to what aspects of survey items to document. Curatorial documentation may record a combination of aspects, potentially including:
 1. Impact;
 2. Significance;
 3. Rarity;

4. Production methods and design processes;
5. Behavior and the role of user input;
6. User experience and types of uses;
7. Types of output and the properties of output;
8. Artist/designer intent;
9. Variability;
10. Provenance;
11. Exhibition history;
12. Relationship to various modes of study such as: computer history, media studies, game studies, design history, material culture, and/or history of technology;
13. Relationship to various areas of practice such as: interaction design, human-computer interaction, product design, game design, and/or industrial design.

- G. Archiving of documentation generated in the survey in designated project storage repositories and databases.

The following tasks will be required of the Contractor:

- A. Movement and handling collection items;
- B. Photography/videography;
- C. Data entry;
- D. Digital asset management;
- E. Condition reporting;
- F. Research;
- G. Regular blogging or other form of public reporting.

III. Contractor Qualifications

The contractor performing under this contract is required to have the following:

- A. Experience handling artifacts.
- B. Experience with collections management or museum registration.
- C. Knowledge of contemporary and historic practice as it pertains to: interaction design, human-computer interaction, product design, game design, and/or industrial design.
- D. Graduate training or commiserate experience in humanities, including: digital humanities, computer history, media studies, game studies, design history, material culture, or history of technology;

IV. Quality Assurance

- A. The Contractor shall follow proper object handling techniques and CHSDM collections management procedures, policies, and protocols.
- B. The Contractor shall work cooperatively with CHSDM staff, and other contractors, to safely and professionally process CHSDM collections.
- C. All objects shall be handled with care and attention during all processes that maintains the condition of the objects' integrity.
- D. Any concerns or questions shall be brought to the attention of the COTR or their assigned individuals.
- E. The Contractor shall perform services to the highest professional standards, according to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines of Practice, American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, and the Oral History Society Principles and Best Practices.

V. Period of Performance

The period of performance for this contract shall proceed upon the completion of a signed purchase order, commencing on/around Monday, January 16, 2017 and completed no later than Friday, September 1, 2017.

VI. Option to Extend Services

The CHSDM has the Option to extend the services for the contract at the end of the period of performance if deemed necessary.

VII. Work Details: Schedule, Environment, Location

The Contractor will be required to work a portion of contract hours in the CHSDM main offices and/or collections processing/storage facilities. He or she will also be permitted to work remotely with the prior approval of the COTR when off-site work is possible. On-site work will occur at

either 9 East 90th Street, New York, New York or CHSDM Collections Storage Facility in Newark, New Jersey.

The Contractor is not an employee of the Smithsonian Institution.

- A. The Contractor shall perform up to 1,408 hours during the duration of the contract. The specific work schedule will be determined by mutual agreement between the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) and the Contractor.
- B. The total number of hours per week may vary at the discretion of the COTR due to project needs in a given week or in order to accommodate vacation schedules and/or sick time.
- C. One week in advance, the Contractor will submit to the COTR for review and approval all dates for time out of the office.
- D. The Contractor must be able to lift and move numerous objects throughout the day.
- E. The Contractor will record his or her own hours and make available to COTR regularly.
- F. The Contractor will communicate with the COTR regularly.
- G. Remote work is permitted under this contract with the prior approval of the COTR; additional worksites include:
 - 1. CHSDM Collections Storage Facility
Newark, New Jersey
 - 2. CHSDM Main Offices (Manhattan)
9 East 90th Street
New York, New York
- H. Parking is available at the Newark facility for those who wish to drive. Transportation between the CHSDM Newark worksite and a Manhattan pick-up location is also provided by the Smithsonian Institution at no charge to the Contractor. The shuttle schedule is as follows:

8:15 AM pick-up: 7th Avenue and 16th Street in Manhattan
Morning drop-off: CHSDM Newark worksite

5:00 PM pick-up: CHSDM Newark worksite
Evening drop-off: 8th Avenue and 14th Street in Manhattan

- I. The CHSDM Newark facility is open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The CHSDM Main Offices are open 7:00AM to 9:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Both facilities are subject to closure during federal holidays and government furlough.

VIII. Smithsonian Furnished Property

CHSDM shall provide the following:

- A. Access to designated CHSDM office and collections storage facilities.
- B. Work space in CHSDM collections storage area(s).
- C. Equipment and supplies.
- D. Access to a personal computer.
- E. Access to Collections and Image database, Microsoft applications, and telephone.
- F. Contractor identification badge.
- G. Smithsonian Network Credentials: the Contractor will be given a network logon account and access to the Smithsonian's data network. In order to gain access to SI's computer network, the Contractor will be required to read Smithsonian Directive 931 "Use of Computers and Networks," and sign an affirmation that he/she agrees to comply with SD 931, to act in a responsible manner, and to respect and maintain the security of all systems to which access is provided. In keeping with Smithsonian policy, the Contractor is required to complete a short on-line computer security training program annually.

IX. Deliverables

The Contractor shall:

- A. Produce a finalized list of items to be surveyed in collaboration with Contractor 2 and CHSDM staff.
- B. Design a survey form to be used in the execution of the Digital Collection Materials Project in collaboration with Contractor 2 and CHSDM staff.
- C. Advise on the design of a project-specific database, or a method of incorporating survey information into existing database(s) to be used in the execution of the Digital Collection Materials Project.
- D. Conduct curatorial research to understand and document the key aspects of survey items.

- E. Select and apply appropriate curatorial documentation methods to survey items.
- F. Archive curatorial documentation generated in the project survey in designated project storage repositories and databases.
- G. In consultation with the COTR, plan and publish public reports on survey findings and methodology.
- H. Summarize significant accomplishments and progress made in the survey of digital collection materials upon completion of contract.
- I. Maintain frequent contact with the COTR throughout the duration of the contract, sharing notable project findings, challenges, and considerations as they arise.

X. Invoicing and Payment Schedule

Invoices shall be submitted bi-weekly, including a detailed progress report detailing the number of hours worked and the results of their efforts. Billing is for hours worked and does not include lunch or breaks.

III. Proposal Submission Guidelines

For consideration, submit your proposal to cooperhewittdigital@si.edu by December 20, 2016.

You may submit a proposal for this contract position as an individual or as a business entity. *

- * For business entities: you may apply to cover a single contract position (either *Media Preservation Specialist* or *Time-Based Media Curatorial Assistant*), or you may apply to cover both positions. If your proposal covers both positions submit a single cover letter in the body of an email, addressing each contract position in a separate section; list for each: position title; interest; qualifications; and availability. Attach two PDFs to the email, each addressing the Deliverables for one contract position. Submission of a curriculum vitae is optional for business entities.

ALL APPLICANTS, follow these procedures to apply:

- A. In the body of an email compose a **cover letter** that includes the following:
 - 1. The title of the contract position(s) for which you are submitting a proposal;
 - 2. A brief description of your interest in the contract role(s);

3. For individuals: an itemized overview of how you meet each Contractor Qualification (Section III, items A through D);

For business entities: an itemized overview of how you will provide a contractor who meets the Contractor Qualifications (Section III, items A through E);

4. Respond to the time requirements of the contract with a statement of your availability:
 - a) CHSDM prefers to begin the contract work in January 2017. Are you available to begin at this time? If not, when are you available to begin?
 - b) The Statement of Work allows up to 1,408 hours of contracting, the equivalent of approximately 8 months of full-time work. What do you propose your work schedule will be (full or part-time)? By what date do you estimate that you will be able to meet all of the contract deliverables?

- B. Attach as a PDF Document to your application email:

An **itemized response to each Deliverable listed in the contract(s)** (see Section IX); describe your ability to meet each deliverable based on your skills and experience.

- C. Attach as a PDF Document to your application email: your **curriculum vitae**.

- D. Submit all proposal materials to cooperhewittdigital@si.edu by December 20, 2016.