1 Description of the project and its significance

The Pleiades project (http://pleiades.stoa.org) is producing a durable, open-access "Web 2.0" gazetteer for the Greek and Roman world, together with reusable, open-source software necessary to develop and maintain similar digital publications. The present proposal seeks $330,753 NEH funds outright, which (combined with $186,538 in cost-share) will transform Pleiades from a promising research and development effort into an essential component of the emerging cyberinfrastructure for the humanities.

Pleiades (named for the daughters of Atlas in Greek mythology) builds upon the NEH-supported Classical Atlas Project (CAP; 1988-2000), which produced the prize-winning *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (R. Talbert, ed., Princeton, 2000) and to which the Ancient World Mapping Center (AWMC) at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill is heir. With funding from an NEH Preservation and Access Research and Development Grant (January 2006 – June 2008), the AWMC launched Pleiades by prototyping web resources describing historical spatial information digitized from a subset of the CAP compilation materials. This information includes the locations and attested names of historical and archaeological sites, transportation networks, regions and peoples, together with bibliographic citations leading to additional information about them. A content management system that permits scholars, students and enthusiasts worldwide to suggest corrections and updates to the gazetteer was the major deliverable of the first grant. The Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) at New York University joined forces with AWMC in early 2008 to advance the effort; it now serves as partner and technical host for Pleiades. With additional funds from an NEH/JISC Joint Transatlantic Digitization Collaboration Grant (dubbed "Concordia"; April 2008 – March 2010), ISAW/AWMC worked with the Centre for Computing in the Humanities at King's College London to add more CAP content (Tripolitania to Oxyrhynchus) and to develop a standards-based mechanism for linking Pleiades to external digital publications of primary source documents.

Key print reference works in the humanities – particularly geographic ones – have long been recognized as prone to obsolescence. Digital reference works have been viewed as the solution to this problem, having lower production costs and larger potential for dissemination via the Internet. It has only recently become clear, however, that to be successful such works must continue to become better the more they are used. Tim O'Reilly calls the requisite give-and-take between users and resources the essence of "Web 2.0."[1] Sustainable digital reference works need users like flowering plants needs bees. Consequently, scholarly workflows must change if they are to engender sustainability for publicly accessible work. Pleiades embodies this essential dynamic. NEH support for the community-building phase of Pleiades will unlock far-reaching innovations essential to preserving key reference works: their relevance will be maintained, and their value enhanced, for scholars, students and the general public. Community engagement is the antidote to obsolescence.

The present proposal outlines the second phase of the project, in which we shift our focus from design and development to community-building and content creation. We will attract and keep new users by filling Pleiades with compelling, comprehensive content. This work will include the addition of all remaining legacy CAP information and its enhancement with new material from several sources, including Harvard's Center for Geographic Analysis. We will further support our users' research and publication success through community-prioritized improvements to the user interface, expanded format alternatives and interoperation with other digital publications in the field.

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[1] Tim O'Reilly, "Web 2.0 and Cloud Computing," *O'Reilly Radar*, 26 October 2008, http://radar.oreilly.com/2008/10/web-20-and-cloud-computing.html.