CFM 2013 Digital Badging PILOT Project

Project Overview

In 2013, the Alliance's Center for the Future of Museums is collaborating with long-time AAM online learning producers, partners and sponsors, LearningTimes, to develop, prototype, test, and evaluate a digital badging (virtual credentialing) system. This pilot project will provide a formal structure that enables users of CFM resources and related materials to earn credit for mastery of content and skills pertaining to futures studies.

This project will enable users to interface with CFM content using LearningTimes BadgeStack, an open source platform that integrates with the Open Badge Infrastructure (OBI) standard created by the Mozilla Foundation. BadgeStack is currently in use by a number of nonprofit organizations, including the Smithsonian Institution, the American Association for State and Local History and the New York Department of Education.

In the long term, this pilot project will help the Alliance consider whether to adopt digital badging for a broader array of its content, establishing a credentialing system that is widely recognized in the museum field.

What is Digital Badging?

Digital Badging is a way for content providers to credential users of their material. By providing a structure to access resources, track progress, and assess mastery, digital badging enables learners to demonstrate their attainments to peers and prospective employers. Similar to the badging system used by scouting programs, each "badge" represents mastery of a particular topic or attainment of a particular goal. A learner can access digital resources and/or in-person training and take on-line assessments or submit work for evaluation. A digital badge, once awarded, can be displayed on a learner's website or e-resume. By clicking on the badge, anyone evaluating the learner's credentials can find out what content the badge represents, and what work was completed in the course of earning the badge.

Why is Digital Badging Important?

The relevance of traditional forms of credentialing is increasingly coming into question as students struggle to calculate the value of a degree versus educational debt and the prospects for employment; people already in the workforce face the need to continually re-train while money, and time, to support participation in workshops and short courses are increasingly scarce. In this rapidly evolving educational environment, digital badging has emerged as an alternative credentialing system that enables learners to assemble their own curriculum from a wide variety of (mostly) on-line resources, and get credit for what they know and what they've achieved. Last year, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan identified digital

badging as an important emerging educational technology that "has the potential to propel a quantum leap forward in educational reform." The MacArthur Foundation launched a $2 million "badges for learning" competition and gave a $1 million grant to Mozilla to work on the Open Badges Infrastructure, a platform that will be used by all winners of the competition.

Project Participants

Two groups of volunteers, comprised of 25-50 people each, will be invited to test the CFM Digital Badging program in 2013. The first group will be given access to the CFM BadgeStack before the 2013 annual meeting in late May, the second in summer, 2013.

Participants will be asked to test the badging system by choosing and completing a number of learning assignments which may include, for example:
   » Reading forecasting reports from CFM and other sources
   » Consuming other futures content from popular literature, film or video
   » Generating original materials such as trends-analysis and scenarios
   » Creating personalized systems for scanning, organizing and sharing information across social media platforms.

Each assignment will be assessed ("graded"), by some combination of standardized testing and submission of work products.

By participating in this pilot project, users will be better able to:
   » Access digital resources and/or in-person training related to futures studies
   » Measure achievement through on-line assessments or project work submitted for evaluation
   » Demonstrate their attainments to peers and prospective employers via websites and e-resumes.

Participants who complete a certain number of core assignments (to be determined) will earn one or more digital badges that certify their achievement. These digital badges, which can be displayed on the participant's digital resume, web-based profile, etc., will link to content on the Alliance website explaining what it represents. The time needed to complete a single assignment might range from one hour (for reading a brief report or watching a video, and completing the associated assessment) to several (for generating original content). Participants will be asked to try to complete at least three assignments in the six months after you enroll in the test program, and to complete an evaluation of the badging system at the end of the year.

To volunteer to test the CFM digital badging program, email Vanessa Jones, project coordinator, at vjones@aam-us.org