

WCU craft revival Web site is hit

A recently launched Web site headquartered at Western Carolina University that contains information about the craft revival period in the Southern Appalachian Mountains has attracted hundreds of hits after just 18 months in operation, and the number of hits is expected to climb as more information is added to the online collection.

Visitors to the site, which is located at <http://craftrevival.wcu.edu>, are finding the beginnings of a digital archive of materials from the craft revival of the late 1800s and early 1900s, said Anna Fariello, leader of the state-funded project.

"This was an important period for our region of the Southern Appalachians," Fariello said. "Without the craft revival, much of the work of the mountain craftspeople would have been lost and their skills might have died out. That means there would have been only a very limited foundation for today's continuing craft activities."

Instead, the revival triggered the growth of handcraft guilds, weaving centers and folk schools; attracted tourists, scholars and artisans to the region; helped to promote the sale of traditional mountain crafts; and shaped the development of new craft forms as mountain tourism flourished, she said.

The story of the revival and the people who were involved as both sponsors and workers is the focus of the online craft revival collection, which features images of craft objects, documents, photos and other materials now scattered in museums, craft schools, libraries and local historical societies. "When the project is complete, that material will be gathered into one Web-based digital archive that will be accessible to the world," Fariello said.

Much of the material is coming from the project's established Heritage Partners, including the John C. Campbell Folk School, Penland School of Crafts, WCU's Mountain

Heritage Center, Special Collections in the university's Hunter Library, and Southern Highland Craft Guild. The collection is expected to be completed by spring 2008.

Other cooperating partners have contributed items such as botanical images of madder, indigo and cotton, which were used extensively by weavers; pictures of John Campbell from the Southern Historical Collection; and a photo of Penland School's Lucy Morgan, a craft revival supporter, from the N.C. State Archives.

"It is clear that the project is developing partnerships among lending institutions in

a way that could only be hoped for in the planning phase of this project," Fariello said. "Their contributions will add significantly to the value of the entire collection."

Western's Craft Revival Project is funded in part by a grant, renewable for three years for a potential total of \$350,000, from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, through the North Carolina State Library.

For information about the craft revival project or to schedule a program about the project, contact Anna Fariello at 227-2499 or via e-mail at fariello@email.wcu.edu.