**IMLS and John D. Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation Digital Learning Lab Grant**

**Second Advisory Council Meeting**

**April 18, 2013**

**Alabama Museum of Natural History Room 124 at 6:00 p.m.**

The advisory council meeting was held concurrently with the first teen advisory board meeting which was held in the Discovery Learning Lab of the museum. The teen meeting was conducted by Allie Sorlie, Education Specialist, Alabama Museum of Natural History.

**Teen Advisory Board Meeting**

*Teen advisory board meeting included:*

* An introduction to the facility
* A brainstorming session about the times the lab should be open for unstructured (“hanging out”) time
* A discussion about the name of the space
* A discussion about the types of activities teens would like to do in the lab
* Time for students to have some hands-on experience with the iPads and laptops. Prior to the meeting staff had opened various applications on the iPads and had loaded some GIS layers into a map, including a 3D map and GoogleEarth

**Advisory Council Meeting**

*Advisory Council Meeting included:*

* An overview of the grant for those not present at the initial meeting
* An announcement of the plan to open the Lab on Wednesday, April 24th from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. for supervised, unstructured use
  + Parental release forms will be distributed to all students attending the open lab hours
  + After the first visit, students will be required to have the signed release form on file in order to use the lab or attend related programs
* A discussion on upcoming summer programs that will integrate Learning Lab technologies:
  + **Expedition** – The Museum of Natural History will be conducting its 35th annual field science expedition in Greene County, Alabama during the month of June. Both middle school and high school students will be participating and will have an opportunity to use technologies to record, share and expand upon their experiences in the field.
  + **Science Day Camp for Middle School Students**  - The Museum of Natural History will be conducting a science day camp for middle school students during the week of July 22nd through the 26th. Students will have the opportunity to go into the field with a variety of experts including biologists, forest ecologists, and paleontologists. Participants will use GPS units to track locations as well as iPads and computers to create field journals of their experiences.
* A discussion on the issues identified in response to questionnaires from the first Board meeting:
  + Transportation of students to and from the museum for open lab hours and programs and parking constraints on the University campus
    - Suggestions included opening the lab on Saturday mornings to avoid parking problems
  + Challenges of access for disadvantaged students, particularly in terms of transportation
    - Suggestions were made by teacher Yosondra Irby that buses may be available as part of the city schools’ enrichment program and a possible collaboration with the school system to bring students over the summer to the lab in conjunction with other activities
  + Challenges of attracting students to the lab and programs
    - Suggestions included the idea to target one school and use counselors and teachers to help in providing names of students for programs as well as for the teen advisory board
    - It was also suggested that the lab plug into already-existing projects that could be complimented by students utilizing the Learning Lab

*Suggestions for types of programs to attract and retain student participation:*

* GIS – Geographic Information Systems – was discussed in depth. The group decided that GIS should not be included in the first programming attempts because it might be too difficult for students and this might discourage students to continue to use the lab.
  + Several attendees commented that they were not familiar with GIS and so speculated that most students would not be familiar with GIS either
  + It was suggested to highlight and focus more on projects and skills rather than particular software programs and technologies
* There was discussion on ways to find technologies that would be attractive to students including giving the teen advisory board a list of possible technologies and activities to choose from instead of having them list those that they would most like to have in the lab
* Suggestions were made for easing students into more complex technologies:
  + Using GoogleEarth and the Story Map features of ArcGIS Online, both of which are relatively user-friendly and would allow students to conduct research and post content on-line
  + Naming the programs in ways that would be less intimidating; i.e. to avoid programs named “GIS Workshop”
* It was suggested that the lab use resources available through YouMedia and other experienced cohorts in initial phases and then adapt our programs over time to meet the needs of our own lab
* There was in-depth discussion on attracting students to the lab and programs which included these suggestions:
  + Having a computer “carnival” which would provide an array of activities from which the students could choose
  + Centering activities on things that students already enjoy such as games or Instagram (photo app)
  + Having a reward system that allows students to earn either something tangible like a certificate or badge or gift card or something intangible such as a digital badge. Digital badges, since they employ “leveling up” principles, might be something that would attract and retain students
  + Having a theme-based event perhaps based on a popular movie such as *Inception* and create activities around that theme
  + Using Facebook (particularly the timelime) and Twitter to get students discussing activities in the lab and connecting with friends

*Additional points of discussion were:*

* Using a Twitter account to keep advisory council members connected and to encourage sharing of ideas
* Importance of getting teens interested and keeping them interested in the programming and activities
* Importance of beginning evaluations immediately

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m.