During the Clinton administration, there was a vision with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) that America’s heritage and history would be reflected in an interconnected series of “state” online encyclopedias—each of which could reference each other’s related specifics. Since technology has made electronic linkages to points within other web pages common place to the extent that copyright allows, the idea apparently was to engender an electronic representation of American heritages and histories that would express identifying specifics for Americans and the world at large. “Territories,” like Guam, were to be included in these electronically unionized heritages—an encouraging idea given the general American unawareness (to use a kinder word than ignorance) of Guam.

As a board member of the Guam Humanities Council I wrote the narrative for a NEH planning grant that explained the need for an online encyclopedia for Guam and the fact that size and geographic location cannot define the legitimacy that Guam has been denied on the world stage. But it did not adequately specify the mechanics involved in constructing the project. A consultancy Guam was instead given to the Council that enabled me to visit ongoing encyclopedia projects at the New Handbook of Texas in Austin (originating from a multivolume work published in the 1950s), the then online encyclopedia of New York State (eventually published as a book), and the Encyclopedia of Chicago at the Newberry Library. Although styles of expression differed, there were basic similarities such as the need for ease of access in a maze of content, editorial approaches and assignment and work strategies that all tried to address the mass of the whole of the subject. The resultant “planning” grant that we received (which preceded a three hundred thousand dollar implementation grant awarded to the Council) encompassed the justification for the project and specifics for actually carrying the project out.

In our planning grant, we began by explaining several guiding principles that are behind Guampedia. Each principle, beginning with wide-spread stereotypes about Guam that exist in America, is meant to be considered in the same way and with the same deep desire of expression that any significant hallmark of American heritage would merit and has merited among many forms of expression through the country’s cultural and artistic communities. We felt strongly that when an island like Guam,
which has been an integral part of America’s heritage, both in domestic and international senses, becomes known for little more than its brown tree snakes and its military bases, there has been a significant separation between what gets to be know for its legitimate hallmarks of life and what does not. Indeed, neither size nor geographic location has any business defining or being allotted to define legitimacy. And yet through a complex historical and contemporary network of events and popular modes of thoughts and methods of communication, legitimacy is precisely what has been denied the island of Guam.

This has basically been the case over the course of the island’s more than 100 years of association with the United States, beginning with America’s administrative control of the island after the Spanish-American War to the take over of Guam by a brutal Japanese regime shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Much of the scholarly literature on Guam’s historical and contemporaneous contexts is published in journals, a few books that clash with more inclusive and postmodernist, contemporary narrative methods, and more recently, books employing these methods such as Anne Perez Hattori’s Colonial Dis-Ease: U.S. Navy Health Policies and the Chamorros of Guam, 1898-1941 (University of Hawai’i Press, 2004).

By their very nature, online encyclopedias promise a certain omniferous bridge bearing both substance and public awareness on its wood, so that the end result is one of knowledge and meaning along with at least the beginning of a sense of a place upon which more positive thought and discussion can ensure between people who originally knew nothing about the place. The encyclopedia at a minimum holds forth this promise—unlike the existing scholarship that might seem too esoteric to some and, on the level of a past issue of a Marie Claire magazine that declared there are young men on Guam whose primary job is to deflower young virgins, is repulsive to those who know the depth of this place. The fact that this ignorant myth, flowing from a popular source, should be repulsive to all is a realistic goal because its realization is based upon the achievement of substance and upon the understanding and value of the substance of Guam and its historical heritage. Just as the contents of online encyclopedias are multifaceted in subject and accessibility—and particularly so with the construction of good search mechanisms—the knowledge and ultimate wisdom to be gained is the result of options that accommodate and satisfy the interests and desires of the user. But it is only through integrity of scholarship and thus content that any of this becomes possible.

Beyond such stereotypes are the issues of European (particularly 350 years of a Spanish presence and rule), American, and Japanese involvement with the island and how such involvements have specifically contributed to Guam’s historical tapestry. While Guampedia’s sixteen subject areas and detailed outlines of encyclopedia entries (none of which will confine the user in her or his electronic searches) provide for a thorough explanation of the Spanish era on Guam and its impact on current cultural and religious practices, the American experience that encompasses Guam is also an important component to this project. One might apply the problem of stereotypical thinking into an outcome objective that includes an American public that is more informed about Guam’s role in their history and contemporary lives. However, there are also the issues of colonialism in the American consciousness to consider. Many Americans do not consider the United States to be a colonial power and yet Guam was an American colony from at least 1898 until 1905 when a semblance of self-governance began through the Organic Act of Guam signed by President Truman. And of course some segments of Guam would argue that this colony continues today.

American patriotism nevertheless grew on Guam and was particularly strong during World War II when Japanese soldiers forced Chamorros on Guam to labor on numerous projects and often executed anyone who disobeyed or appeared to act subversively. Chamorros were crowded into caves and executed by grenades and bayonets. The Fena
cave—an anticipated entry in Guampedia—where such a gruesome execution occurred shortly before the American invasion of July 1944, remains a central historical location for Chamorros throughout the island. Indigenous Chamorros have continued to enlist in the U.S. armed services at a high per capita rate. Guam had the highest number of deaths by servicemen per capita in the Vietnam War than did any other state in America. These apparent forms of contradictions reflect an elongated process of appropriations of change and of reaffirmations that speak to the depths of history that Guampedia intends to communicate.

Besides the role that Guam plays in America’s history in terms of freedom, independence, colonialism, and self-determination, the history of Guam also stands upon its own regional merits in the centrality of its role in the Western Pacific. Important geographic linkages existed before and after European contact and administrative rule. Acknowledging these links will enable Guampedia to go beyond its historical relationships with the United States and other world powers and examine regional contexts that impact local values, issues, and cultural practices. In addressing these key areas of Guam’s heritage, Guampedia will meet its overall objective of holistically describing its past and present, both locally and globally, in an electronic format that makes its heritage available to the world (and particularly to the American public whose influence in Guam remains an element of its own heritage) and to the local environment where it promises to make significant contributions to the island’s educational, cultural and economic environments. A very significant, anticipated military build-up on Guam could potentially also afford Guampedia with a role in both educating and extending an awareness of Guam to military personnel with that wood of the omniferous bridge.

Much of the planning grant’s early efforts were directed toward the compilation of working entry lists that address all areas of Guam’s past and present and toward establishing organizational principles to guide each entry and ultimately each subject area to completion. This required a two-pronged approach. After the Council received the planning grant, professionals with expertise in each of the original fourteen subject areas outlined in the NEH planning Grant were invited to attend a breakfast presentation on the proposed project. Following a discussion on the objectives and far reaching cultural and educational potentials of the project, most of these professionals began to attend regular meetings aimed at obtaining more detailed input on these subject areas and on the overall project. These professionals, the majority of whom are academics associated with the University of Guam, began meetings and discussions with their colleagues on and off-island with the goal of creating detailed entry outlines that would comprehensively treat their respective subject areas.

As rubric area outlines were submitted by each rubric chair, the Editor-in-Chief, now the project’s Humanities Scholar, and a new Managing Editor began to analyze each outline for comprehensiveness of coverage from as far back in Guam’s past as was possible to the present day. They worked to determine potential areas of duplication while also pointing out specific subjects that still require distinctive treatments within the context of different subject areas. This feedback was given to the rubric chairs who subsequently revised and expanded or contracted their outlines as appropriate. An additional subject area, Health and Medicine, was added and a final, sixteenth subject area entitled Sports was also eventually added and qualified rubric chairs assigned. The result is the detailed entry outlines for sixteen subject areas that will make up the text of Guampedia and which are available under the Brows Subjects section of the Guampedia temporary website at www.Guampedia.com. We plan to replace this site with a permanent Guampedia site in January 2007 that will employ the ‘back-end’ software that has been under developed for at least a year. This software, which is currently in the testing stage, will provide text and media editors with the means to work electronically with submitted entries that will eventually be uplifted to the front-end of the site for public use. Entries from the
‘back-end’ section of the software will be matched with various forms of medias—photographs, maps, drawings, audios, and videos.

While videos across a gamut of subjects—dances, villages, a virtual tour of a location, historical war footage—can be matched with appropriate entries, audio tapings promise to provide an opportunity for the island’s elders and others, with their permission, to express their experiences and personal knowledge of important events on Guam (such as the wartime Japanese occupation of the island) to the rest of the world. These audio links will be treated as ‘my history’ sources of information that will extend the content of an entry while simultaneously providing a mechanism for preserving these older and experienced voices. Common to ideas about historic preservation on Guam is the concern with the passing of these elders and with them the direct linkages to elongated time periods from which are derived contemporary notions of cultural identity. While some oral projects on Guam have captured these people’s voices that have witnessed a wide range of change and endurance, these voices are more often than not stored away or accessible only to those who know of their existence and are able to retrieve them. Their placement on Guampedia online entries along with newly generated voices will literally change this situation forever. Other audio attachments will be used to help facilitate Chamorro language appreciation and knowledge in the classroom and of course anywhere else this material is electronically accessed. The same is planned for several other languages of Micronesia. Audio sources will also expand the textual entry by providing examples of cultural performance traditions such as the interactive Chamorro poetry genre of the Kantan Chamorrita, contemporary and historical jazz on Guam, and other elements of Guam’s heritage that would be incomplete without a supplemental rendering in sound.

Guampedia is being built on the premise that we are laying a foundation for the comprehensive, written preservation of Guam’s heritage and that as such, Guampedia will serve as the encyclopedia depository of this heritage that can be updated as events merit and through the efforts of future generations. Establishing this foundation now will enable us to make a significance difference that will facilitate the work of future contributors to the content of Guampedia. In terms of the simultaneous pressures and desires to preserve and teach this heritage, this generational concept remains one of the primary motivational factors in this project. Like any other project that undertakes the substantial objectives and responsibilities that Guampedia does—actually, as any serious encyclopedia of a place and thus a heritage would undertake—its realization depends upon the commitment and actions of those who accept a part of it and understand and accept the depth of the content that will determine its success.

These individuals, whether they are writers, consultants, editors, or individuals who can provide access to a range of visual and textual resources have all contributed toward the realization of these responsibilities and its realization remains dependent upon continued contributions in numerous roles. The project itself has been relatively successful in securing grants of $135,000 from the U.S. Department of Interior, $375,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (during last year’s grant cycle, NEH awarded Guampedia $300,000—the only online encyclopedia to be awarded a grant), over $50,000 from the Guam Preservation Trust, $46,000 from the NEH’s ‘We the People’ grant initiative for Guampedia’s Religion section, and lesser amounts from a few other sources.

Guampedia is following the technical and information standards of the National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage’s “Guide to Good Practice in the Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials” (http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/) and established standards for better interoperability that will enable software and hardware on different machines from different vendors to share data. All standards and contents will have simplicity of use as their basic operational
mark. And entries treating subjects that can become dated will have a review date feature attached to them that notifies editors within a specified time frame. While the same could be done for photographs and other media, multiple photographs can be attached to single entries and made available for readers through an optional gallery-type of function through which all photographs can be seen and enlarged as desired. A growing database of historical photographs from numerous sources has already been constructed as has a collection of digitized films originally derived from video and reel formats (such as World War II footage and clips from the early Protestant churches on Guam). As of this writing, at least 120 written entries have already been developed.

Guampedia is a project of both principle and substance—principle in its determination to accurately describe and place the island’s vast heritage in the local and global consciousness where it belongs—and substance in the execution of the strategies to create an online encyclopedia of quality and integrity through which current and future generations can document the heritage of Guam. Users will be provided with a vast array of information covering a wide range of topics about Guam, all of which will be peer reviewed, fact checked and edited in a rigorous editorial process. And all of which will convey the multifaceted nature of an island whose deep and wide heritage does not easily equate with the relative smallness of its place.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT**

Nicholas J. Goetzfritz is a Professor of Library Science and Micronesian Studies at the University of Guam. He has served as a library and college administrator, Chair of the University of Guam’s Micronesian Studies graduate program, and as Chair and current member of the board of directors for the Guam Humanities Council. He was also recently a Visiting Fellow at the East West Center in Hawai‘i. He has experience as a collection development and reference librarian and has published books on historical interpretations of Micronesia (with Dr. Karen Peacock), indigenous Pacific literature, and indigenous navigation and voyaging as well as various chapters and articles on information issues in Pacific communal contexts, Pacific ethnomathematics, and Pacific library history. He is also the Humanities Scholar for the Guampedia online encyclopedia project at www.guampedia.com

Professor Nicholas J. Goetzfritz, Robert F Kennedy Library, University of Guam, UoG Station, Mangilao Mangilao, Guam 96923.—ngoetzfr@uog9.uog.edu