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Volunteers begin typing 60K Hawaiian-language newspaper pages for preservation project

Photos:



In this photo provided by the Pu'a Foundation, attendees work on laptops at the Ike Kuokoa launch event on Monday, Nov. 28, 2011 at the Iolani Palace in Honolulu. Ike Kuokoa is an initiative to transcribe 60,000 digitally scanned pages into typescript that can be searched online. (AP photo/Pu'a Foundation, Huy Vo)

HONOLULU — An initiative to make Hawaiian-language newspapers searchable online will require hours of typing by thousands of volunteer typists.

Ike Kuokoa, an initiative to transcribe 60,000 digitally scanned pages, launched Monday at Honolulu's Iolani Palace with about 200 volunteers.

Using volunteer typists is necessary after funding for a Bishop Museum project ran out and because no computer software program is precise enough to handle the Hawaiian language, said Kauai Sai-Dudoit, outreach program manager. The Hawaiian alphabet has eight consonants and five vowels in words of native origin. The consonants are H, K, L, M, N, P, W, plus the okina, or glottal stop. The five vowels are: A, E, I, O and U. "One letter off and it's a totally different word," Sai-Dudoit said.

The museum project took Hawaiian-language newspapers that were sitting in archival houses and made them digital. But text files are needed so that they can go online in a searchable format, Sai-Dudoit said, adding that it would take about \$2.1 million to do that without volunteers.

"With no money, no funding and nothing but our desire, we thought, let's ask Hawaii to help us," she said. But the 1,300 volunteers who signed up as of Monday are also from beyond the islands — from Japan to Holland to all over the U.S. mainland.

Volunteers can sign up at <http://www.awaiulu.org> to be assigned a page to type. Knowledge of Hawaiian language is not necessary. Volunteers then upload the typed file, which will be reviewed by a native Hawaiian speaker for accuracy. It will take a volunteer about three hours to type a page, which has about 2,220 words, Sai-Dudoit estimated. About 3,000 volunteers are needed to complete the project by its July 31 target deadline, a date that coincides with Hawaiian Restoration Day, commemorating the end of the Hawaiian Kingdom's brief occupation by Great Britain. Monday's launch event took place during Hawaiian Independence Day, which marks the day Great Britain and France recognized Hawaii's independence.

"The repository represents Hawaiians speaking about themselves to themselves," Sai-Dudoit said. "It wasn't accessible because 95 percent of Hawaiians today don't speak the native language."

More than 125,000 pages of Hawaiian-language news were printed in more than a hundred different papers from 1834 to 1948, chronicling Hawaii as the islands went from kingdom to constitutional monarchy to republic and territory.

Sai-Dudoit said making the pages available in a searchable way paves the way for someday translating them into English. It is hoped the pages will be available by next year at <http://www.nupepa.org>, which is the Hawaiian word for "newspaper," and <http://www.papakilodatabase.com>, a database built by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.