

White Paper Report

Report ID: 99064

Application Number: HD5098410

Project Director: William Seefeldt (wseefeldt2@unl.edu)

Institution: University of Nebraska, Board of Regents

Reporting Period: 3/1/2010-8/31/2012

Report Due: 3/31/2013

Date Submitted: 9/9/2013

Final Performance Report

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Report Due: 11/30/2012

Date Submitted: 12/19/2012

NEH Grant # HD-50984-10

Digital Humanities Start Up Program

PI: Douglas Seefeldt

Final Performance Report

"Sustaining Digital History"

Report filed through University of Nebraska-Lincoln

William G. Thomas, Chair, Department of History, University of Nebraska, project co-director

This project aimed to build a scholarly community for the practice of the emerging field of digital history by 1.) enhancing communication and collaboration among scholars and journal editors, 2.) creating model forms of scholarship and peer review, and 3.) establishing a clearinghouse for all peer-reviewed digital history scholarship. Digital History has grown up in the last fifteen years through and around the explosion of the World Wide Web, but historians have only just begun to explore what history looks like in the digital medium. Increasingly, university departments seek scholars to translate history into this fast-paced environment and to work in digital history; however, they have found that without well-defined examples of digital scholarship, established best practices, and, especially, clear standards of peer review for tenure, few scholars have fully engaged with the digital medium.

1. Enhancing communication and collaboration among scholars and journal editors

Our project worked to develop interest in digital scholarship among history journal editors through several parallel efforts. We contacted editors and scholars involved in the History Cooperative and hosted a two-day meeting of journal editors in Lincoln in October 2010, including:

Robert Schneider, American Historical Review

Christopher Grasso, William and Mary Quarterly

Alan Lessoff or John McClymer, Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

David Lewis, The Western Historical Quarterly

Tamara Gaskell, the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography

Eliza Canty-Jones, Oregon Historical Quarterly

We hosted a meeting titled "Sustaining Digital History" the day prior to the fifth annual Nebraska Digital Workshop and invite potential authors, peer reviewers, and interested scholarly journal editors to participate. We invited Anne S. Rubin (University of Maryland Baltimore County) to attend the meeting as a practitioner/digital scholar and we invited Abby Smith Rumsey (Scholarly Communication Institute) to serve as a consulting expert to advise the group. In addition, we invited Mike Spinella from Jstor to comment on the state of online journals and Jstor's plans for potentially hosting a digital scholarship journal space. Scholars attending the Nebraska Digital Workshop who participated in the Sustaining Digital History meeting included Stefan Tanaka (University of California, Los Angeles), Andrew Jewell (UNL Center for Digital Research in the Humanities), Amanda Gailey (UNL, English Department), and Jeannette E. Jones (UNL History Department). Graduate students in attendance included: Brent Rogers, Leslie Working, Kaci Nash, Jason Heppler, Michelle Tiedje, and Brian Sarnaki.

The outcomes of this valuable editorial and scholarly meeting were several:

- a. the editors affirmed their desire for a clearinghouse of reviewers and practicing digital

historians as a means to understand the field, identify peer reviewers, and link up with scholars undertaking digital work

b. the editors appreciated a demonstration from Anne Rubin laying out the creative process in a digital project and the expectations of authors engaged in digital scholarship

c. the group considered the questions of hosting, collecting, imprinting, and indexing digital scholarship with the three groups (authors, peer reviewers, and editors), examined models for incorporating digital scholarship, and agreed in principle with the goal of greater indexing and integration of digital scholarship into the journals.

d. the group discussed a possible award or prize for digital scholarship submission to one or more of the participating journals.

2. As an outcome of Sustaining Digital History we expected to assemble a digital history scholarly journal publishing advisory group that includes key scholars active in the field, such as Edward L. Ayers, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Daniel Cohen, Amy Murrell Taylor, William Turkel, and Richard White, and others listed in our directory of digital historians, who might serve as first peer reviewers working with journal editors.

The editors did not see this advisory group as a high priority, preferring instead to work within their current editorial board structures. We did not pursue this objective further. The current structure of peer review combined with our Digital History Index (see below) was a system the editors found sufficient. Editors have used the Index already to line

3. Identify, peer review and publish a number of digital history projects in a number of scholarly journals.

This was an ambitious goal and one we did not have time and resources to meet fully in the course of the grant. Journal editors preferred to hold peer review within their current operating structures rather than federate that role. We sought to identify potential peer reviewable works of digital scholarship through networking among digital history scholars. Several projects came forward from UNL: in particular, Seefeldt worked with his graduate students in the William F. Cody digital project to create a series of digital research analysis modules (www.codystudies.org), some of which are being developed for peer review in scholarly journals. William G. Thomas has been working with graduate student Leslie Working, and his collaborators Richard G. Healey (University of Portsmouth) and Ian Cottingham (UNL, Computer Science) on his Digging into Data Challenge grant for "Railroads and the Making of Modern America" to produce a peer reviewable "App." He is considering electronic submission to the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, *Southern Spaces*, or *The Journal of the Civil War Era*. Other scholars, including Jon Christensen (UCLA), used the Sustaining Digital History project to initiate communication with the project editors and other editors (such as Environmental History) regarding possible electronic submission and digital peer review.

An outgrowth of the Sustaining Digital History project was the wider dissemination of the concerns related to digital scholarship and peer review. Thomas was selected for the Board of Editors of Anvil Academic, a new digital scholarship peer review publishing venture. Seefeldt was selected for the Board of Editors of the digital arm of *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*.

4. Expand the Digital History site by building on our directory of digital historians and experimenting

with digital “digital history reviews” of projects and tools that take full advantage of the medium. Establish Digital History as the clearinghouse for the best digital history scholarship.

We have made substantial progress on this aspect of the project. We worked with UNL graduate research assistant Kaci Nash to overhaul the design and organization of the Digital History Project web site (<http://digitalhistory.unl.edu>) to highlight “Documenting,” “Doing,” and “Teaching” digital history to aid in defining and sustaining this emerging mode of scholarly research and communication. We have put together a “Directory of Digital Historians” that we discussed at our meeting last fall and prototyped during the first year of the project. It now has approximately 140 entries seeded from a number of sources (conference programs, digital history reviews, word of mouth, self nomination, etc.) <<http://digitalhistory.unl.edu/database/>>. We have also expanded the “Project Reviews” section from twenty (20) to approximately fifty (50) projects written by UNL graduate students as projects in digital history courses taught by professors Seefeldt and Thomas: <<http://digitalhistory.unl.edu/p-reviews.php>>. We plan to expand this section and the “Tool Reviews” section when we move the Digital History Project to the WordPress platform in the spring of 2013 and open up the editorial functions to other digital historians who have expressed interest in collaboration.

5. Sponsor and organize sessions to share this work at both the AHA and OAH annual meetings during the winter & spring of 2011, with one panel of journal editors on the topic of “the future of the journal in the digital era” and another panel of scholars presenting their own digital history scholarship at each meeting.

This objective was perhaps our greatest success in the project. The participating editors and scholars proposed several digital history and publishing session for the American Historical Association annual meeting and the Organization of American Historians annual meeting (the OAH did not accept our proposals for two panels at the Milwaukee meeting, unfortunately). Two panels were accepted for the 2012 meeting of the AHA in Chicago.

These sessions addressed a range of questions. One question is whether there are alternative ways of writing history than the analytic essay. Are journals interested? Are our colleagues interested? If so what is making this move difficult? What are the financial ramifications of digital production and/or digital journals for journals themselves and for their associations? What becomes a sustainable model financially as well as intellectually going forward? Who will be the audience for our online journals? These questions addressed wider themes that AHA President-elect William Cronon raised in *AHA Perspectives*, as well as vital issues around what one participant called “the weakening binaries in the digital realm: professional/non-professional; academic/public; specialist/synthesizing.”

Other members of our panel focused on these questions: What genres will emerge as the most robust in the journal niche of the short-form communication? What have you done so far to take a traditional journal into the digital age and what are the next steps? How is digital scholarship like and unlike the traditional forms of scholarship that your journal deals with? What are the challenges a born-digital “article” (entity?) poses to the double-blind review process at a scholarly journal? What challenges does it pose to editing, production, and distribution? To what extent do you think your journal will be-- or should be--transformed by digital technologies by 2022?

The AHA panels, presenters, and abstracts were as follows:

“Digital History: State of the Field”

Chair, William G. Thomas, U. of Nebraska

Panelists:

Jon Christensen, Stanford U.; Jo Guldi, U. of Chicago; Andrew Torget, U. of North Texas

Abstract:

Digital History as a field emerged with the explosion of the World Wide Web, since 1994, the dominant means of information access, knowledge acquisition, and communication for the public and increasingly for the scholarly community. Because the medium is so new and the technology so quickly changing, we have only just begun to explore the new forms that historical scholarship might take. We need well-defined examples of digital scholarship, established best practices, and, especially, clear standards of review for tenure. We know that time has not solved the problem; indeed, recent studies show that scholars in history and other humanities disciplines are as wedded as ever to traditional forms of communication. Young humanities scholars, especially in history, are not experimenting in the digital medium in large part because the wider professional culture has been slow to change. A whole range of social and cultural barriers confront scholars who consider digital scholarship. Their departmental colleagues know little about digital technologies, practices, or methods, and their promotion and tenure committees, outside reviewers, and upper administrations often consider peer-reviewed monographs the sole basis for advancement.

The current problem is multifaceted—administration leaders often seek to promote digital technologies in teaching or research, yet department tenure committees often rank digital work below a published monograph; libraries have taken the lead in creating digital research platforms for faculty, yet university presses and scholarly journals remain the gold standard for tenure and promotion; senior faculty often feel liberated to embrace experimentation, yet junior faculty often prudently avoid risks. The growth of digital history, it should be stated, has been given shape and encouragement most directly by the leading professional associations and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The *American Historical Review* offered a pioneering set of peer-reviewed digital articles, the *Journal of American History* has reviewed leading history web sites, and the NEH has funded important history projects, from The Valley of the Shadow to Zotero, and created a portal for leading digital sites (Edsitement). These steps have provided absolutely critical opportunity for scholars to work in the digital medium.

The problem historians face now is institutional, structural, and social, and this panel discussion by a slate of researchers actively pursuing digital forms of scholarship is aimed at discovering and lowering these barriers in the discipline of history.

“The Future of History Journals in the Digital Age”

Chair, Douglas Seefeldt, U. of Nebraska

Panelists: Christopher Grasso, The College of William & Mary; David Rich Lewis, Utah State University; John F. McClymer, Assumption College; Abby Smith Rumsey, Scholarly Communication Institute; Stefan Tanaka, U. of California at San Diego; Allen Tullos, Emory U.

Abstract:

As digital technologies advance rapidly, as vast repositories of information come online, and as more and more people participate in the digital revolution around the world, historians face a very important set of decisions about the nature of historical scholarship and its forms. Yet, few venues exist for scholars to conceive, produce, and distribute their digital work, or to communicate with one another about the forms and practices of the digital medium. While several funding institutions have committed significant resources to the development of digital collections and tools, most prominently the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, scholars perceive few options for publishing digital work and university presses and leading journals have been slow to embrace "born digital" scholarship. The professional associations (the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians) have taken crucial steps in promoting digital scholarship and provided essential leadership. Our challenge now is to build on their foundation and create a wider scholarly community of authors and journal editors around Digital History to identify, peer review, and disseminate article-length digital scholarship by placing these works in some of the leading journals.

One of the most important aspects of this roundtable discussion will be to explore ways to reduce the gap between the scholarship in the profession's journals and scholarship on the web. After significant discussions with History Cooperative journal editors over the course of the past year and a half and during meetings at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln last fall, supported by an NEH-funded Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant titled "Sustaining Digital History," digital historians Douglas Seefeldt and William Thomas have found wide support for taking some steps to close this gap. Journal editors see the burgeoning work on the web and recognize its value. They also recognize the challenges of peer reviewing this work. Currently, the journals serve as the gatekeeper and record of scholarship in the fields of history, yet most do not yet index, review, refer to, incorporate, imprint, or publish anything from the digital medium. Conversely, the independent scholarship historians have produced on the web remains all too often unconcerned with peer review, editorial control, and incorporation into the scholarly record. Because digital work is rarely featured or recognized in the profession's leading journals, among other reasons, younger historians have proven reluctant to develop born digital scholarship and departments have had difficulty evaluating this scholarship for promotion and tenure.

This roundtable discussion seeks to explore avenues of practice for integrating digital scholarship into the record of professional scholarly activity and to consider how best to help authors, reviewers, and editors negotiate a difficult transition.

These panels discussed the significant gap in the social and cyber-infrastructure for supporting digital scholarship in history. Pointing out how young humanities scholars, especially in history, are not experimenting in the digital medium in large part because the wider professional culture has been slow

to change. In fact, as Robert Townsend's 2010 survey of AHA members regarding research and teaching published in *Perspectives* found, half of those polled have considered publishing online, noting the benefits of reaching a wider audience, publishing their work more quickly than via print, and the ability of the digital medium to reach a wider audience of historians, among other factors. It is crucial to note that among those who have not yet published any form of electronic scholarship but would consider it, they overwhelmingly cite the perception that online scholarship lacks the scholarly recognition and prestige of print publication (Robert B. Townsend, "How Is New Media Reshaping the Work of Historians?" *Perspectives on History* November 2010). Essays in the January 2011 issue of *Perspectives* written by AHR editor Robert Schneider and John Thornton, a member of the AHA's Research Division, further explore the cost and benefits for historians of the current "digital turn" in the humanities. These panelists hope to make it possible for scholars to create, publish, and review digital scholarship and, in effect, to mainstream this work within the disciplines and through the leading professional journals.

As digital technologies advance rapidly, as vast repositories of information come online, and as more and more people participate in the digital revolution around the world, humanities scholars face a very important set of decisions about the nature of scholarship and its forms. Yet, few venues exist for scholars to conceive, produce, and distribute their digital work, or to communicate with one another about the forms and practices of the digital medium. We take as something of a mantra Jerome McGann's dictum from his 2008 article "The Future is Digital," that "The matter won't become clear, one way or the other, until we undertake to design and implement a working model." This roundtable discussion explored avenues of practice for integrating digital scholarship into the record of professional scholarly activity and to consider how best to help authors, reviewers, and editors negotiate what is a difficult, but ultimately profitable transition from print-based scholarly communication standard to an approach that makes room for a variety of modes.

Participants on the panels of these two sessions and editors associated with the project came to a "brown bag" session with Seefeldt and Thomas to discuss next steps and future developments that would benefit the project Sustaining Digital History. The group agreed that a series of digital humanities NEH Institutes at participating institutions would greatly benefit the project, spark models of digital scholarship, and provide participating journals with potentially reviewable works.

Conclusion:

We expect to continue the work in Sustaining Digital History through several venues. First, we will be moving the web site and its ongoing development home to Ball State University where Seefeldt is now teaching and leading research in digital history. We will be implementing a more user-friendly Digital Historians Index so that visitors and self-register more easily and we will simultaneously deploy more social media tools to support registration. Additionally, we will release in Spring 2013 the Directory of Digital History Scholarship, as a first effort at categorizing peer reviewed scholarship in digital history. Finally, we will begin planning a Digital Humanities Institute proposal at two or three institutions whose faculty have expressed already an interest in partnering on an institute.

Since this proposal several initiatives have simultaneously developed to open venues for digital scholarship and peer review, including innovative post review models such as The Journal of Digital Humanities. Other new ventures include Anvil Academic and Scalar. We are pleased to have

contributed to this innovative movement. Our project enabled some developments in history journals, notably the upcoming American Historical Review digital scholarship article contest and the JGAPE digital arm's further growth. Some journals have adopted web site reviews and are attempting to more systematically consider digital work as scholarship worthy of record in their pages. Nevertheless, we are struck by the lack of progress as well--most journals continue to work exclusively with traditional form articles and the energy around digital scholarship is continuing apace outside of the world of many history journals. Nevertheless, our project and the critical support of the NEH helped mainstream these concerns at the American Historical Association annual meeting and among gatekeepers in significant ways. We are grateful to the NEH for its support and its patience as we have worked through difficult and challenging issues for the profession and the future of digital scholarship.

APPENDICIES

A. Screen Shot of *Sustaining Digital History* blog section. The project blog includes the meeting schedule, professional biographies for presenters, journal editors, and grant project directors, a bibliography of selected relevant publications and materials related to the Sustaining Digital History initiative, and the project Purpose Statement document.

B. Screen Shot of *Sustaining Digital History* project. In addition to the Blog mentioned above, this website includes sections on "Documenting" digital history (Directory of Digital Historians, NEH Digital Humanities Grant, Project Reviews, Tool Reviews), "Doing" digital history (Essays, Interviews, Lectures), and "Teaching" digital history (Student Projects, Syllabi).

C. Promotional postcards, Digital History Project. 1,000 4-1/4" x 5-1/2" full color cards and 1,000 3" round stickers for distribution at conferences and other professional meetings.

D. Rachel Ensign, "Historians Are Interested in Digital Scholarship But Lack Outlets," *Chronicle of Higher Education* blog "Wired Campus" entry on "Sustaining Digital History" project, October 5, 2010. <<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/historians-are-interested-in-digital-scholarship-but-lack-outlets/27457>>

E. Jennifer Howard, "Historians Reflect on Forces Reshaping Their Profession," *Chronicle of Higher Education* January 8, 2012. The section "Going Digital" dedicates a paragraph to our AHA panel "The Future of History Journals in the Digital Age" quoting panelist Stefan Tanaka. <<http://chronicle.com/article/Historians-Reflect-on-Forces/130262/>>

F. Question list for "The Future of History Journals in the Digital Age" panel discussion at the 2012 American Historical Association conference.

Digital History Project

An NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant

AHA Day 2: State of the Field

Posted on [January 14, 2012](#) by [Jason Hepler](#)

In the second workshop session sponsored by the AHA Research Division, Prof. William G. Thomas chaired a panel with Jon Christensen, Jo Guldi, and Andrew J. Torget. The purpose of the panel was to examine ways that digital scholarly work was being produced.

Jon Christensen sought to answer to questions: 1) what has the research produced?, and 2) so what? He presented on the research for his book *Critical Habitat: A History of Thinking with Things in Nature*. Much of the digital output from the book, which can be viewed at the [Stanford Spatial History Project](#), sought to use spatial analysis to examine historical correlations. Data, he reminds the audience, is shot through with historical contingency. Thus, you need new methods to see through the data.

Jo Guldi suggested that digital materials press scholars to consider sources in larger scales of time and place, indeed, may even demand larger scale and longer periods. Methods of digital history help raise new questions. Guldi argues that we are secure in our traditional methods of doing micro history, but we don't know how to release macro history in our work. The Annals school attempted this, but required large research teams. Mass digitization, however, gives us new tools. She demonstrated her uses of [File Juicer](#) and the timeline feature of [Zotero](#) to highlight ways of examining the *longue durée* of

history.

Andre Torget illustrated his [Texas Slavery Project](#) and how spatial analysis helped him raise new questions about the extension of slavery into Texas. He spoke also about the challenges of translating digital work into traditional narratives. His dynamic maps of Texas speak as a sort of argument on their own, but moving that into print is a challenge and ultimately falls short. Some models of moving digital to print exist, he points out, including William Thomas's [The Iron Way](#) and Richard White's [Railroaded](#), but the book remains the standard for tenure and promotion.

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AHA Day 2: The Future of History Journals in the Digital Age

Posted on [January 14, 2012](#) by [Jason Heppler](#)

At session 136 on Saturday, Prof. Douglas Seefeldt led a roundtable discussion with Christopher Grasso, David Rich Lewis, John F. McClymer, Abby S. Rumsey, Sefan Tanaka, and Allen Tullos. The purpose of the panel was to explore ways to reduce the gap between scholarship in the profession's journals and the scholarship of the web. University presses and scholarly journals remain the gold standard for tenure and promotion, and time has not solved the problem of valuing digital work below that of print.

Those participating faced a series of questions. They spoke on the steps they were taking to move their journals into the digital age. Some are making concerted efforts to incorporate new

digital supplements to their journals while others, like the peer-reviewed [Southern Spaces](#), is entirely digital.

The issue of peer review was a key focus in the discussion as well. The editors generally agreed that double blind peer review panels could maintain their function, but also begin bridging the gap of print and digital by incorporating experts on the content and experts on the digital to talk together and assess how well content and form interact. Stefan Tanaka challenged the idea, suggesting that double blind review is only one of several ways to do peer review. He also pointed out that a peer review process exists online, and these discussions needed to happen online where the scholarship is being produced. An example that Tanaka points to is blogs, where people are doing serious, public scholarship and should be recognized as communities of conversations.

Open access formed another nexus of the conversation. Open access digital publishing gives authors an idea of how many people are viewing their work. Abby Rumsey provocatively suggests that libraries have the money to fix the problem — they have the ability to reshift their budgets and support digital humanities without any problems. Exploring the digital space means being more demanding about libraries finding solutions, and they can find solutions by reallocating budgets. “University libraries still have a lot of money,” Rumsey suggested. “If faculty demanded they support digital and open access scholarship, they would.”

Journal editors suggested that they are open to the idea of digital scholarship and are waiting for more submissions of such work that force them to think about ways of incorporating digital work into their apparatus.

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AHA Day 2:

Presenting Historical Research Using Digital Media

Posted on [January 9, 2012](#) by [Jason Heppler](#)

At session 75 on Saturday, "[Presenting Historical Research Using Digital Media](#)," the presenters introduced several new modes for presenting their scholarly work. The session included a [companion website](#) that contained resources for each of their talks.

Monty Dobson, a historian and archeologist, discussed his work in documentaries and showcased his upcoming PBS series, [America from the Ground Up](#). Originally designed as a half-hour video for his classroom after he became frustrated with the lack of material on the history of the interior U.S., the project has grown into a four-part series. He hopes that his work will focus our attention more squarely on the interior United States, promising the audience that not once will he mention George Washington when discussing the arrival of Europeans and Americans to the region. In confronting a narrative that is East Coast centric, he hopes to reshape public history and examine the history of a region more closely aligned with New France rather than the experiences of the coast.

Phil Ethington discussed geo-historical visualizations. Digital media, he reminds us, is important because of its substance and what we're communicating. The media is not the message; rather, the media enables new ways of seeing the past. He has developed [HyperCities](#), built for urban research and collaboration, as a method to examine how people came to understand their place and space. Ethington also pointed the potential of nonprofits and community-based organizations to use HyperCities as a way to crowd source their local history.

Katrina Gulliver discussed her process of starting up her podcast, [Cities in History](#). She came to podcasting as an experiment in learning how to do this technically, but also to think about presenting her work to a general audience. She

outlined the various off-the-rack and easy to use tools she uses in her setup, including [Jellycast](#) and [GarageBand](#) to record and [Tumblr](#) for her site.

Jennifer Serventi ended the session discussing the variety of digital projects that the National Endowment for the Humanities funds and things to think about when writing proposals to the NEH. Serventi reminded the audience that humanities projects should use the best genre or medium for the project, whether it was a book, podcast, film, or otherwise. She also pointed to the NEH's new [database of digital projects](#) as a way to begin learning about the sorts of projects that have been funded and may serve as a starting point for our own proposals.

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AHA Day 1: Pioneers Discuss the Future of Digital Humanities

Posted on [January 9, 2012](#) by [Jason Heppler](#)

The panelists at session 67 "[The Future is Here: Pioneers Discuss the Future of Digital Humanities](#)," the presidential session chaired by outgoing AHA President Anthony Grafton, included presentations by Erez Liebman Aiden and Jean-Baptiste Michel from Harvard University and Blaise Aguera y Arcas from Microsoft. Both presentations emphasized the necessity of collaboration and opportunities that digital computing offers humanist inquiry while also warning about the pitfalls of relying on digital technology.

Aiden and Jean-Baptiste outlined [culturomics](#) in their talk that almost exactly [followed their TED talk](#). Aiden and Jean-Baptiste provided examples of word-frequencies and usages over time. Using 5 million books digitized by Google, they insisted their

methods gave insight into a sort of cultural genome. They also confronted five “myths” of those critical of their approach to analyzing historical documents, insisting they were not trying to replace historians with machines but rather build tools that historians may find useful in their work. In their most provocative section of the talk was a discussion of new work they’re undertaking in to “cultural inertia,” or asking the question of whether we could use cultural data and history to predict the future. History, they concluded, will remain the domain of close reading, primary sources, and interpretation, but will also include big data, massive collaboration, data interpretation, computation, and science.

Blaise Aguera y Arcas, known for his work on [Photosynth](#), discussed his effort to understand typefaces in Gutenberg’s printing press. He examined how type was configured using clustering software and high resolution images of letters to analyze the components that made up the text. Moreover, he asserted that Gutenberg’s real contribution was the development of fonts rather than moveable type. At the core of his talk was an emphasis on collaboration. Only through collaboration in several areas of expertise could he come to understand different aspects of typesetting. The same holds true for any aspect of the past. Collaboration will be essential after the digital turn because we cannot make assumptions about digital data — the rise of proprietary digital environments, the inability to truly own data, the misguided notion that one can own a gadget, the filter bubble, and no guarantee that the lights will remain on. Invention does not happen in a vacuum. Rather, collaboration is essential for exploring or generating new ideas.

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AHA Day 1: Digital Humanities: A

Hands-On Workshop

Posted on **January 9, 2012** by **Jason Heppler**

On Friday, January 6th, Session 36, “[Digital Humanities: A Hands-On Workshop](#)” sponsored jointly by the AHA Research Division and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, introduced attendees to a variety of approaches in digital methods for research and teaching. Six stations were arranged around the room that allowed attendees to wander from topic to topic and engage in conversations, questions, and demonstrations. Topics included digital publishing with Dan Cohen, who discussed a variety of different methods that scholars use to communicate their work. He also talked about [Digital Humanities Now](#) and the platform that runs it, [PressForward](#).

Jeff McClurken presented on teaching with social media and shared his experiences with using Twitter, Facebook, and blogs for the classroom. McClurken collected many of the resources he discussed on a [page he created](#).

Fred Gibbs discussed text mining and offered examples from his experiences in using the method for research. Gibbs also has a [companion website](#).

Rwany Sibaja talked about digital storytelling and using multimedia in narrative. He has collected several [tools and resources](#) for others to check out.

Jennifer Rosenfeld talked about the resources available at [TeachingHistory.org](#) and how the website can help students gain a better understanding of the types of evidence used by historians.

Patrick Murray-John discussed content management systems, including Zotero, and its usefulness in categorizing, tagging, and collecting data and information.

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Digital Historical Scholarship and the Civil War

Posted on [January 8, 2012](#) by [kacinash](#)

The Civil War lends itself greatly to the digital medium. In addition to the subject's scholarly contingent, it also possesses a great public audience of increasingly computer literate members. This question of audience was something addressed in the AHA Panel wittingly titled "[Hardtack and Software: Digital Approaches to the American Civil War](#)," a digital spin on John D. Billings' popular 1887 reminiscence *Hardtack and Coffee: Or The Unwritten Story of Army Life*."

Of the four projects presented during the session, two seemed to be readily open to the inclusion of the general public as well as the more general scholarly audience—[Visualizing Emancipation](#) and [Sherman's March and America: Mapping Memory](#). Yet the ability to play with data and explore the history provided by the digital medium promotes public use as well. [Civil War Washington](#), while being a repository for scholarly information about the nation's capitol, may also be of interest to "amateur" Civil War scholars. [Mining the Dispatch](#) is admittedly geared toward academics, however, Nelson's findings will be of interest to any student of the Civil War, with or without professional scholastic credentials.

Each panelist provided an overview of their respective projects, which I shall not repeat here. Readers are encouraged to visit the sites and interact with them for themselves. Instead, each presenter introduced the scholarly findings or evidence displayed or exhibited in the projects. The tools and technology employed by each project received relatively little attention. During the comments section of the panel, Robert Nelson asserted that the

challenge is to produce scholarship that is going to be of interest to scholars of the *subject* not the *technology*. We must focus on historical questions and historical moments, not on techniques.

This thought was one that stayed with me more than any other aspect of the session. If we want the discipline of history to be receptive of works created through and with the digital medium, it is essential that we emphasize the *scholarship* that is being produced, not the *way* in which it is being produced. In order for “doing digital history” to become synonymous with “doing history,” we need to convince the field of the validity of digital scholarship.

Back to the issue of audience, users outside of the academy — Civil War “buffs,” teachers, and students— are likely unconcerned with whether or not what they are interacting with is considered scholarship by academics, but rather what they can learn from utilizing such projects. To me, a Master’s student with career ambitions in the public history sector, this is the most exciting aspect of combining technology with doing history—its ability to make history more accessible and appealing to the public. Whether through providing access to documents and visualizations which allow a thorough analysis of Washington, D.C. or using an algorithm to reveal large societal and cultural patterns over thousands of newspaper articles, the digital medium is truly an effective way both to craft history and to communicate it.

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The Future is Here: Digital History at the 126th Annual Meeting

Posted on [January 6, 2012](#) by [kacinash](#)

“[The Future is Here](#),” a series at the 2012 AHA meeting, will feature numerous presentations and discussions on Digital History. Several graduate students who are attending these panels will post reactions to these panels as well as participation at the [THATCamp](#) hosted on January 5.

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Digital History Project

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Documenting Digital History

As we begin to explore what history looks like in the digital medium, we need to see examples of excellent digital historical scholarship, established best practices, and, especially, clear standards of peer review for tenure and promotion in history departments. This section contains a Directory of Digital Historians, an Index of Digital Scholarship, information on the National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Humanities Start-up Grant, Digital History project reviews, and new media tool reviews . . . [\[more\]](#)



<JAN 03 2012>

Added link to [Guidelines for Evaluating Digital Scholarship](#) compiled by the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities.



<DEC 01 2011>

New submission form added to [Directory of Digital Historians](#).

Doing Digital History

Digital History is about digitizing the past certainly, but it is much more than that. We aspire to create ways for people to experience and participate in history, as well as to see and follow an argument about a major historical problem. This section contains essays on the process of creating works of digital historical scholarship, interviews with leading practitioners, and lectures by digital historians sharing their work . . . [\[more\]](#)



<FEB 12 2012>

Added the essay, "What is Digital History? A Look at Some Exemplar Projects".

Teaching Digital History

As Digital History becomes more prevalent, we will be teaching with digital sources and teaching digital methods. Teaching Digital History involves methodological questions, narrative theories, computational programming, technical writing, group projects, and digital media productions. This section contains links to undergraduate and graduate student projects and course syllabi . . . [\[more\]](#)



<FEB 12 2012>

Updated list of [Syllabi](#).



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digitalhistory.unl.edu

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln



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- Undergraduate Class Projects
- Graduate Student Research
- Course Syllabi



The project is edited by Douglas Seefeldt and William G. Thomas and was initially developed in 2007 through the generous support of the John and Catherine Angle Fund, graduate students from the Department of History, and production assistance from the New Media Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The project received additional funding from the NEH Office of Digital Humanities through a 2010 Digital Humanities Start-up Grant.



Roundtable questions/topics for discussion
“The Future of History Journals in the Digital Age,” Douglas Seefeldt, Chair
2012 American Historical Association conference

[CG] What have you done so far to take a traditional journal into the digital age and what are the next steps? To what extent do you think journals will be--or should be--transformed by digital technologies by 2022? [How can we get the good digital scholarship into the minds of historians who are accustomed to encountering such scholarship via journals and books?]

[ASR] Who will be the audience for our online journals? How will the digital format weaken the familiar binaries of professional/non-professional; academic/public; specialist/synthesizing?

[DRL] what are the financial ramifications of digital production and/or digital journals for journals themselves and for their associations? What becomes a sustainable model financially as well as intellectually going forward? [It's a practical question of sorts that also gets at issues of changing membership patterns (as well as readership or scholarship) within the profession as well as by an interested public]

[ASR] You have expressed the concern that too much discussion about \$\$\$, important as it is, may bog us down because there really are no ready models yet. But you contend that we must start with the premise that the fate of journals—the fate of the scholarship that gets communicated through journals, to be more precise--should be decoupled from the revenue models for societies. Or else.....

[AT] Do we see libraries increasing stepping up to publish journals in the way that some are now housing university presses?

[CG] How is digital scholarship like and unlike the traditional forms of scholarship that your journal deals with? What are the challenges a born-digital "article" (entity?) poses to the double-blind review process at a scholarly journal? What challenges does it pose to editing, production, and distribution?

[JM] JAH's insistence upon applying print journal criteria (number of pages, for example) to online projects. More specifically, the JAH is determining whether or not to include online scholarship in its index of recent scholarship. Not making the index means that your work does not exist.

[ST] Are there alternative ways of writing history than the analytic essay [spatial, data mining, deep databases, etc.]? Are journals interested? Are our colleagues interested? If so what is making this move difficult? [How should the discipline rethink itself and how should scholarly journals fit into it?]

[ASR] Genres always emerge as a response to audience. What genres will emerge as the most robust in the journal niche of the short-form communication? [Is the journal a “community” or just the expression of one part of a community?]

[CG] Is there a point where trying to increase readership for sustainability (or other noble goals) comes into conflict with the scholarly mission of the journal.

[ASR] what conventions of the journal are optimized for print (page limit might be one) and we should feel okay about letting go of in the digital? And which new convections can we imagine as optimized for the digital?

[AT] It is clear that the tendency among digital scholarship is to support OA via Creative Commons licenses or other methods. What are the ramifications of Open Access principals to the history journal model?

[All] [Creativity, in the form of digital historical scholarship, is coming from the authors now. How do we need to redefine the definitions and roles of authors and editors/publishers in light of this? And where does the “brand” come from? Does the digital format change/challenge that authority?]