

NYU Department of History
Thurs. 4:55-7:35
Room KJCC 428

Cathy Moran Hajo
212-998-8666
cathy.hajo@nyu.edu

History in the New Media
G57.1023 • Spring 2009

Web-based digital history projects have become an important resource for scholars and students as well as archives and public history professionals. They democratize access to historical texts and interpretations, preserve fragile original documents and contextualize documents in their historical milieu. When done well, they offer researchers powerful tools to locate, analyze and understand historical texts. This course will introduce the ideas, techniques and complexities of creating digital history texts and web sites. It will introduce standards and best practices for digitization and explain the basic steps to designing and implementing digital projects in an archives or public history setting. The focus of the course is not on the technical work of creating documents, but the intellectual work of designing digital projects that offer the best access to the documents.

ALL REQUIRED READINGS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE, SEE CLASS WIKI FOR URLS.

Required Texts:

- * Daniel L. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving and Presenting the Past on the Web* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).
- * National Endowment for the Humanities, Digital Humanities Grant Guidelines.
- * National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH), *Guide to Good Practice in Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials* (Washington, 2003).

Recommended

- * Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth, eds. *A Companion to Digital Humanities*. (London, 2004).
- * Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg, *Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice* (Walnut Creek, 1997).

Week 1 (January 22): Introduction

This session will introduce the course goals and assignments, go over the use of the class wiki and other resources, and introduce the reasons for creating digital history projects.

Recommended

- * Wikidot Site [<http://www.wikidot.com/>]

Week 2 (January 29): Evaluating Historical Materials for Digital Publication

We discuss selection. How do you select collections for digitization? This session will identify different rationales for selecting a collection of materials for digitization, looking at how historians select materials for thematic projects. The importance of delineating the project's goals before selecting materials will be emphasized.

Readings:

- * Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Owning the Past?: The Digital Historian's Guide to Copyright and Intellectual Property," *Digital History*, Chapter 7, 189-219.
- * Diane Vogt-O'Connor, "Selection of Materials for Scanning," in Sitts, *Handbook for Digital Projects*, 35-63.
- * "Selecting Materials: An Iterative Process" *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*,
- * Katie Hafner, "History Digitized (and Abridged)," *New York Times*, Mar. 10, 2007.

Recommended:

- * Rights Management, *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*,
- * "Selection and Arrangement of Documents," Stevens & Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 41-70.
- * Dan Hazen, Jeffrey Horell, and Jan Merrill-Oldham, *Selecting Research Collections for Digitization* (Washington, 1989)

Week 3 (February 5): Managing a Digital Project

After you have selected a set of historical documents or thematic topic, you must evaluate the materials and consult potential users to develop the best method for digitization. Will you focus on digitized text or images to provide the best surrogate for your documents? Session will explore issues of project organization and staffing as well as creating a plan for later expansion.
Due: Draft essay on project description.

Readings:

- * Stephen Chapman, "Considerations for Project Management," in Sitts, *Handbook for Digital Projects*, 21-34.
- * "Project Planning", *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*
- * Quality Control and Assurance, *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*
- * Robert Townsend, "Google Books: What's Not to Like?" and discussion *AHA Today*, April 30, 2007.

Recommended:

- * "What, Why, How and For Whom," Stevens & Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 25-40.

Week 4 (February 12): Designing History-Based Websites

Designing a strong website involves planning and careful attention to organization and searching. Web sites can contain a variety of materials, including primary and secondary sources, images, audio, and interactive materials. Project designers need to determine the extent of the initial site and develop plans for later expansion.
Due: Draft essay on project management

Readings:

- * Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Getting Started: The Nature of Websites, and What You Will Need to Create Yours," and "Designing for the History Web," *Digital History*, 51-140.
- * Robert Shoemaker, "Digital London: Creating a searchable web of interlinked sources on eighteenth century London," in Ian Anderson, *Digital Histories* (Bradford, UK, 2005).

Websites: Spend time on this site looking at the linked sites on a topic that you are familiar, be prepared to evaluate several sites weaknesses and strengths

- * "Best of History Web Sites," [<http://www.besthistorysites.net/>]
- * "Digital History," University of Houston. [<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>]
- * "American Memory," Library of Congress [<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>]
- * Reviews of websites at Public history.org [<http://www.publichistory.org/reviews/index.asp>]
- * [<http://www.angelfire.com/super/badwebs/>] - This is a graphic depiction of bad website design!

Week 5 (February 19): Digitizing Text and Images

The digital text that you create is a surrogate for the original. The transformation of historical objects to digital media will entail some distortion as the historian weighs readability versus strict adherence to the original. Developing a policy for digitizing texts is more complicated than just typing what you see.

Due: Draft site index

Readings:

- * Marilyn Deagan and Simon Tanner, "Conversion of Primary Sources," in Susan Schriebman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, eds. *Companion to Digital Humanities*, 488-504.
- * Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Becoming Digital," *Digital History*, 80-107
- * William Y. Armes, "Text" in *Digital Libraries* (Boston, 2000), pp. 177-200
- * "Capture and Management of Images," *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*
- * Consult several image-based projects, especially the Library of Congress' American Memory.

Reference:

- * "General Principles of Transcriptions and Proofreading," "Transcription: Types of Sources," and "Presenting the Text," Stevens & Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 71-156
- * Howard Besser, "Introduction to Art Image Access," Edited by Sally Hubbard with Deborah Lenert
- * Steven Puglia, "Technical Primer," in Sitts, *Handbook for Digital Projects*, 83-102.
- * Modern Language Association, "Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions," 2006
- * Association for Documentary Editing, "Minimum Standards for Electronic Editions," 2002

Week 6 (February 26): Adding Value

Digital history projects are more than just a compilation of texts. Projects add value to the documents through context and annotation, illustration and commentary. Deciding how much information to provide and how to provide it is a crucial aspect of the project.

Due: Draft essay on digitization and samples

Readings:

- * "Introduction to Metadata," Tony Gill, Anne J. Gilliland, Mary S. Woodley
- * "Principles of Annotation," and "Forms of Annotation," in Stevens & Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 157-198.
- * William Y. Arms, "Information Retrieval and Descriptive Metadata," in *Digital Libraries* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 201-220
- * University Publishing in a Digital Age

Recommended:

- * Model Editions Partnership, "Historical Editions in the Digital Age," 1999
- * Scholarship on the Web: Managing and Presenting Footnotes and Endnotes on the Web

Week 7 (March 5): What do Users Want? - Lecture tonight by Amanda French

Digital history projects on the World Wide Web reach larger and broader audiences than similar print-based projects. Digital projects need to consider the needs of this diverse audience and develop the tools they need and want.

Readings:

- * Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Building an Audience," *Digital History*, 141-159
- * Wendy Duff, Barbara Craig, Joan Cherry, "Historians' Use of Archival Sources: Promises and Pitfalls of the Digital Age," *The Public Historian* May 2004, Vol. 26, No. 2: 7-22
- * Assessment of Projects by User Evaluation, *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*,
- * Distribution, *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*.
- * John K Lee and Brendan Calandra, "Can Embedded Annotations Help High School Students Perform Problem Solving Tasks Using A Web-Based Historical Document?" *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, Fall 2004, 37:1, 65-85.

Recommended:

- * Suzanne R. Graham, "Historians and Electronic Resources: Patterns and Use," *Journal of the Association of History and Computing* 5:2 (Sept. 2002)

Week 8 (March 12): Tagging

The key to long-lasting digital material is the use of XML tagging to describe format and content. Digital projects need to develop a sense of what they want to describe and create tagging guidelines to create consistent treatment.

Due: Draft essay on added value

Read:

- * Women writer's Project, "What is TEI,"
- * Jerome McGann, "Marking texts of Many Dimensions," and Allen H. Renear, "Text Encoding," in Susan Schriebman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, eds. *Companion to Digital Humanities*, 198-239.
- * "Digitization and Encoding of Text," *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*

Recommended:

- * Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Appendix Database Software, Scripting Languages and XML," *Digital History*, 249-260

Week 9 (March 19) Spring Recess - no class

Week 10 (March 26): Independent work on projects.

Week 11 (April 2): Interim Reports on Projects

Discussion of students projects and problems/solutions to date. Discussion of final project format.

Readings:

- * NEH Digital Humanities Guidelines
- * Paul Conway, "Overview: The Rationale for Digitization and Preservation," in Sitts, *Handbook for Digital Projects*, 5-20.
- * "Developing Best Practices: Guidelines from Case Studies," in Sitts, *Handbook of Digital*

Projects, 103-139.

Week 12 (April 9): Developing Content for History-Based Websites

In this session we will explore the variety of ways historians use historical materials in Web sites, including historical exhibits, teaching sites, textbases, companions to museum, video or television programs, documentary editions, and on-line archival collections. We will also examine directions for the next generation of websites.

Due: Draft tagging guidelines and sample

Readings:

* Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Collecting History Online," *Digital History*, 161-188

* Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," 1999.

* Carole L. Palmer, "Thematic Research Collections," in in Susan Schriebman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, eds. *Companion to Digital Humanities*, 348-65.

* Cathy Stanton, "Historians and the Web," *The Public Historian*, 24:1 (Winter 2002), 119-25.

* Jeffery Pomerantz, "Google Scholar and 100 Percent Availability of Information," in *Information Technology and Libraries*. Jun 2006 25: 2; pp. 52-57.

Cases:

* The Digital History Reader, an education site

Reference Readings:

* "Audio/Video Capture and Management," *NINCH Guide to Good Practice*

Week 13 (April 16): Introduction to GIS, Mapping, and Databases

Provided by the Data Service Studio. (Tentative)

Week 14 (April 23): Individual meetings on projects

Please arrange with either Cathy Hajo or Amanda French

Week 15 (Apr. 30): Presentation of Projects

Five minute descriptions and explanation of how approached the grant proposal format.

Due: Written website comparison

Final project due on May 7*