The Post-Digital Book: Teaching Print Culture with Digital Technologies

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Welcome to DHSI 2023!

Thank you for joining the DHSI community!

In this coursepack, you will find essential workshop materials prefaced by some useful general information about DHSI 2023.

Given our community’s focus on things computational, it will be a surprise to no one that we might expect additional information and materials online for some of the workshops—which will be made available to you where applicable—or that the most current version of all DHSI-related information may be found on our website at dhsi.org. Do check in there first if you need any information that's not in this coursepack.

Please also note that materials in DHSI’s online workshop folders could be updated at any point. We recommend checking back on any DHSI online workshop folder(s) that have been shared with you in case additional materials are added as DHSI approaches and takes place.

And please don't hesitate to be in touch with us at institut@uvic.ca or via Twitter at @AlyssaA_DHSI or @DHInstitute if we can be of any help.

We hope you enjoy your time with us!
Statement of Ethics & Inclusion

Please review the DHSI Statement of Ethics & Inclusion available here: https://dhsi.org/statement-of-ethics-inclusion/

DHSI is dedicated to offering a safe, respectful, friendly, and collegial environment for the benefit of everyone who attends and for the advancement of the interests that bring us together. There is no place at DHSI for harassment or intimidation of any kind.

By registering for DHSI, you have agreed to comply with these commitments.

Virtual Sessions

Your registration in DHSI 2023 also includes access to the virtual institute lecture sessions. Access details for these talks will be shared as DHSI approaches.

Due to the high volume of attendees, please ensure your DHSI registration name or DHSI preferred name and your Zoom name match so that we know to let you into the virtual sessions.

DHSI Materials

DHSI materials (ex. videos, documents, etc.) are intended for registrant use only. By registering, you have agreed that you will not circulate any DHSI content. If someone asks you for the materials, please invite them to complete the registration form to request access or contact us at institut@uvic.ca.
If you registered to audit any workshops, note that auditor involvement is intended to be fully self-directed without active participation in the workshop. The auditor option offers more flexibility regarding pace and time with the workshop content. Your registration as an auditor will include access to some asynchronous workshop materials only and does not include access to live workshop sessions and/or individual/group instruction or consultation. Please direct any questions about DHSI workshop auditing to Institut@uvic.ca.

If you registered as a participant in any workshops, your registration includes access to asynchronous content + active participation in live workshop session(s). The workshop instructor(s) will contact you about the date(s), time(s), and platform(s) of the live workshop session(s).

If you are unsure whether you registered as an auditor or participant, please check your registration confirmation email. Further questions can be directed to Institut@uvic.ca.

The at-a-glance schedule of DHSI 2023 courses, workshops, institute lectures and aligned conferences & events can be found here: https://dhsi.org/timetable/

All times are listed in North American Pacific Time Zone.

For those who registered as participants in any workshops, live sessions for online workshops are not currently listed on the above-referenced schedule. Instructors will be in touch with registered participants directly about the exact date(s) and time(s) of their live workshop session(s).
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our partners and sponsors (including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), workshop instructors, aligned conference & event organizers, institute lecturers, local facilitators, and beyond for making this possible.

Further information

General DHSI 2023 information: https://dhsi.org/program/

Full course listings (in-person): https://dhsi.org/on-campus-courses/

Full workshop listings (online): https://dhsi.org/online-workshops/


Aligned conferences & events (online): https://dhsi.org/online-aligned-conferences-events/

Institute lectures: https://dhsi.org/institute-lectures/

Frequently asked questions: https://dhsi.org/faq/

Any questions not addressed in the above pages? Please email us at institut@uvic.ca!
The Post-Digital Book: Teaching Print Culture with Digital Technologies

Course Description
This course will help faculty, staff, and instructional technologists conceptualize, design, and explore platforms for courses teaching book history and editorial practices. The course will provide readings on the history of the book and the book after the digital turn, and together we will discuss ways to immerse students in archival, editorial, and analytical practices regardless of their access to material books in special collections. Throughout the week, we will explore digital tools and platforms and consider how to best adapt them for the study of book history. We will collaborate on designing and scaffolding assignments, consider methods for assessment, and collectively build a repository of resources, links, and prompts. At the end of the week, participants will leave with a fully designed course unit and a better understanding of how to incorporate digital tools within their book history lessons and courses.

This Course Pack: In this course pack, will you find scheduling details, as well as some suggested readings. Take a look at these readings in advance of the gathering, as they will provide useful backgrounds for our discussions. Instructions for installing some tools are also included here, in case you choose to use your own machine.

Some things to keep in mind:

- Bring your own laptop so you can access course materials and follow along with instructions
- It may be helpful to bring some ideas about what types of courses/texts you might want to teach with the technologies covered in this course, but this is not necessary. I will also provide you with sample assignments and suggestions for where to get started and we will brainstorm best practices in small groups, as well.
- If you want to walk away with fully designed materials to use in your courses, there will certainly be opportunities for hands-on work during the week. However, this course will privilege process and reflection, so if your goal is rather to absorb and talk things through, don’t worry about deliverables!
- The schedule below provides an outline of topics to be covered. As we progress through the materials, we may deviate from this depending on how quickly or slowly we are moving as a group. We may add topics depending on the collective interest of our group. During practical sessions, feel free to return to a previous method if it is more pertinent to your interests.
- Our classroom is designed to provide an inclusive environment and a place for mutual respect. Please see the DHSI Statement of Ethics and Inclusion (https://dhsi.org/statement-of-ethics-inclusion/) for the values we aim to share as a community.
- Finally: this is a course about pedagogy, so if at any point I can do anything to better support your learning, please let me know!
Schedule and Readings

Day 1

10:30am-12pm: Introductions and goals for the week
Participants will briefly discuss their plans for the week and what they hope to create while at DHSI (i.e. a unit segment; a project-based assignment sequence; a resource list/evaluation of tools). We will agree on a platform (Google Suite/Discord/Zotero) on which to start our shared resources page. Overview of examples of digital editions, virtual repositories, and letterpress printing sites/workshops. What resources are available to introduce students to rare books and book making? What are new ways in which texts are being produced and distributed?

1pm-2:30pm: DH/BH Pedagogy Challenges and Best Practices
Discussion of assigned readings and the role of book history within media and literary studies. Participants will be divided into small groups with attention to technology needs to sign up for and download required tools. We will establish goals for dealing with additional tech support needs throughout the week.

Readings:
- Conrad, Rita Marie. “The Opportunities of Digital Pedagogy” Parts 1, 2, and 3

Day 2

9am-12pm: Describing and Analyzing
Short overview and discussion of tools and assignment options to teach students about metadata, archival research, and material history. Show-and-tell of assignment ideas/plans from participants.

1pm-4pm Annotating: Hypothesis, Perusall
Online annotation tools, short instructions on how to register and use, as well as differences across platforms/suitability for teaching. Discussion will focus on scaffolding and project-based courses.
Project time – participants look over assignments/ideas they have brought along or examine examples provided. Participants begin to draft assignments or units using digital annotation or metadata and archival research.

Readings/Resources:
- Brown University, Teaching with Primary Sources. 
  https://libguides.brown.edu/c.php?g=526813&p=7341427
  https://booktraces-public.lib.virginia.edu/pedagogy

Day 3
9am-12pm: Edition Making: Scalar
Participants will learn about Scalar, a platform for digital publishing, going over basics on how to register and use each tool, overview of affordances, and discussion of best practices for classroom use. Day 3 discussion will focus on blocking out lab/technical instruction time and choosing between small course units or project-based learning.

1pm-4pm: Project time
Participants continue to work on their projects or work in groups to design or adapt semester-long digital editing and exhibit projects.

Readings:

Day 4
9am-12pm: Print Culture/Digital Culture
Overview of digital and analogue tools for teaching students about print culture and book design (i.e. folios/quartos/etc; broadsides; gathering and stitching; graphic design), and discussion of best practices for classroom use. Overview of small-stakes assignments and interactive tools.
1pm-4pm: Project time
Class will continue to work on their units/syllabi or practice designing an assignment using the tools introduced in the morning section. Day 4 discussion will focus on assessment and learning outcomes.

Readings:

Day 5
9am-10:15am: Final thoughts
Workshopping projects, revising drafted documents, publishing resource list/prompts and rubrics for sharing with DHSI community.
For the last several decades many in the field of Education focused on what word should precede the word “learning”. Should it be “traditional”, “online”, “blended”, “hybrid”, or in some cases, just a letter, like “e”? Many of those same words have also been put in front of the word “teaching”. In either case, the descriptor drew a line between one type of learning/teaching environment and another, one type of strategy to be considered and another. It made it difficult for educators to see the connection between the environments and strategies.

In the past couple of years the rise of new terminology is signalling that the lines are becoming blurred and perhaps we can again just think in terms of learning and teaching. That new terminology is Digital Pedagogy --- which considers how to teach beyond walls, seats, chalkboards, and podium (Morris, 2014) --- and yes, considers how we can use technology to enhance learning.

Where did it come from? Perhaps indicators such as approximately one-third of college students (Allen & Seaman, 2013) and projected six million K-12 (predominantly secondary) students (Picciano & Seaman, 2009) are now enrolled in an online course with several states now mandating that high school students take at least one online course to meet the requirements for graduation (Sheehy, 2012) influenced it. Add to that the mounting evidence that courses designed combining the strengths of face-to-face (f2f) instruction with the strengths of online instruction actually produces the most effective learning experience (Means et al. 2010) and it’s clear that “digital” is now the word that needs to precede pedagogy.

Change is rarely welcome, particularly in education where we are bombarded with multiple changes from multiple directions. But digital pedagogy is actually a good change and provides many opportunities to improve teaching and learning. This Part 1 of a 3 part series discusses the first of them.

Opportunity #1: In considering Digital Pedagogy, Educators have the opportunity to reflect on why we teach the way that we do, the role we play in facilitating learning and how technology can be used to enhance learning.

I’m sure your teaching has evolved over the years. You may have initially modeled your teaching after a favorite instructor or perhaps you vowed to never teach the way you were taught. Perhaps you decided that being an expert in the field and sharing those experiences would be enough. While either approach can work for a while, teaching is multi-faceted --- particularly in the 21st century! Teaching now requires not just Content knowledge but Pedagogical knowledge as well as Technological knowledge (http://tpack.org/).
Digital pedagogy calls us to envision teaching and learning within and without classroom walls. It begs the question --- what should knowledge development and the learning experience be in the 21st century? And how do you, as the instructional architect develop and guide that learning experience?

To maximize this opportunity, reflection and exploration are required. Allocate time for activities such as the following:

- Spend time reflecting on why you teach the way that you do--- even if it is only 15 minutes. You may even find it helpful to write a short reflection answering that question. What are your core values and beliefs as an educator? How can your teaching philosophy be further expressed through the leveraging of digital tools?

- Explore learning theories which provide the basis for pedagogy, such as those on this site: http://www.learning-theories.com/ . Which resonate with your current teaching practices? Which ones do you think might make you a better educator? Don’t know where to begin in reviewing the theories? Constructivism is a good place to start --- particularly Discover Theory by Bruner, Social Development Theory by Vygotsky and Connectivism by Siemens. Knowing about Bloom's Taxonomy is also important. That's under the Descriptive and Meta Theories section.

- Read one or more of the following books:
  - “The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life” by Parker Palmer. It is a “must read” for anyone who touches the life of a learner.
  - “Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher”, by Stephen Brookfield.
  - “Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom will Improve Student Learning” by Jose Antonio Bowen.

More to Come

This is just the beginning of the opportunities! Part 2 will focus on opportunities related to the learner and the learning environments.

References


Part 1 (https://teaching.berkeley.edu/news/opportunities-digital-pedagogy-part-1) in this blog series discussed the opportunity digital pedagogy provides to reflect on why you teach the way that you do and to explore current learning theories. In addition it listed a few books that you might find interesting in further developing your teaching practices. Now let's consider two more opportunities that digital pedagogy affords us.

Opportunity #2: In considering Digital Pedagogy we have the opportunity to reflect on how technology has changed Learners/Learning.

Simon and Chabris’s 1999 Selective Attention Test, also known as the Gorilla Experiment (http://theinvisiblegorilla.com/gorilla_experiment.html) highlights that focusing on one thing can be done to the exclusion of all other things. Are we focusing on how students should learn and thus missing how they actually do --- particularly in light of their technology-saturated world?

In a keynote at the 2013 IdeaCity conference, Don Tapscott discussed the results of his $4M longitudinal study of what he calls the “NetGen” (seehttp://dontapscott.com/2013/09/don-tapscott-net-generation-ideacity/) If you don't have time to watch the entire 25 minutes, start at the 19:37 time mark for his closing story as it summarizes the nature of today's learner and how they are still being successful despite learning very differently from prior generations.

We all know that the “center” of instruction has now moved from the Instructor to the Learner whose life is saturated with just-in-time online information. They are also very social and “connected”. Based on anecdotal reports from faculty, the advantage of this is that learners spend more time developing products that demonstrate their learning if peers and others are going to review it or be learning from it. If we are to meet learners where they are, a more networked and “choice oriented” approach is needed.

To maximize this opportunity to meet 21st century learners where they are:

- Think about the last thing you learned. How did that happen? What role did technology play in that? In what ways might you have more in common with your learners than you think?

- Consider administering a student survey of technology comfort/expertise; perhaps have a student technology advisory team for your course.
• Include students in the design of your course. Ask your students how they would like to communicate using technology, particularly mobile.

• Allow learners to choose the technology tools they will use to demonstrate learning to you.

**Opportunity #3:** In considering Digital Pedagogy we have the opportunity to blend the best of all available learning environments into one cohesive, effective learning experience (Blended Learning).

It’s easy (and correct) to assume that not all strategies work well in a digital environment. Gaining consensus online can last well beyond any reasonable timeframe. Conversely, not all instructional strategies work well in a classroom-based learning environment, particularly in the case of large classes. Knowledge development that requires reflective discussion cannot be accommodated in a 1-2 hour block of class time. Creating the most effective learning experience requires weaving the two environments together. Consider the following table outlining the pros/cons of each mode when planning course activities (Hew & Cheung, 2014, modified slightly):

**Strengths/Limitations of Learning Modes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode/Environment</th>
<th>Possible Strength</th>
<th>Possible Limitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face (f2f)</td>
<td>• Immediacy of conversation</td>
<td>• Time constraints for discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can read body language</td>
<td>• Introverted may not participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can build interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>• Time &amp; effort to travel to fixed location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online content delivery</td>
<td>• Learners can follow content at own time &amp; pace</td>
<td>• Speed of Internet connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning content can be easily distributed to learners</td>
<td>• Additional faculty work load to prepare online resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May not have to recreate content for each course offering</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode/Environment</td>
<td>Possible Strength</td>
<td>Possible Limitation</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synchronous online sessions (chat, audio or video conferencing)</td>
<td>• Immediacy of interaction&lt;br&gt;• Learners can participate at location of convenience</td>
<td>• Difficult to ask question and get it answered, particularly if conversation is not well-managed&lt;br&gt;• Difficult to find a meeting time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous online sessions (discussion forums or boards)</td>
<td>• Increased time for learners to reflect&lt;br&gt;• Helps introverted students to learn without feeling embarrassed&lt;br&gt;• Allows individuals to participate at own time and pace</td>
<td>• Requires self-discipline on the part of learners&lt;br&gt;• Requires online management techniques to minimize additional workload on the part of the instructors or GSI</td>
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One More in the Series

The final blog in this series will focus on opportunities related to selecting technology to enhance engagement, information delivery and assessment as well as using an Intentional Design process to assist in the selection of the correct technology tool.

Resources/References


The Opportunities of Digital Pedagogy - Part 3

Rita-Marie Conrad, PhD

October 20, 2016

Part 1 in this blog series discussed the opportunity digital pedagogy provides to reflect on why you teach the way that you do and to explore current learning theories. In addition it listed a few books that you might find interesting in further developing your teaching practices.

Part 2 focused on the opportunities digital pedagogy gives us to reflect on how technology has changed learners/learning and to consider how to blend the best of all available learning environments into one cohesive, effective learning experience (Blended Learning) using the strengths and minimizing the limitations of each learning mode.

Now let's consider two more opportunities that digital pedagogy affords us.

Opportunity #4: In considering Digital Pedagogy we have the opportunity to use technology to enhance learner engagement, information delivery, and/or assessment.

Bowen (2012) points out “technology gives us many more possibilities for learning activities and many more ways and times for stimulating and connecting with our students.” It’s important to start simplistically in incorporating digital learning strategies. Do you need learners to engage more with their peers, the content and you? Or, does it make sense for some of the information/content delivery to occur outside classroom time? Or, would the use of online self-assessments strengthen learning of the content? Begin by focusing on improving just one of these areas in your course. After you are comfortable with using technology in that area, move on to another.

On the other hand, many of us would like to improve all these areas at once. Realize that this option will require extensive planning so you’ll want to begin exploring digital pedagogy options at least 2 semesters before your digitally-enhanced course will be offered. Also, consider meeting with a CTL pedagogical consultant to brainstorm your course. Email teaching@berkeley.edu if you wish to schedule a consul

Opportunity #5: In considering Digital Pedagogy we have the opportunity to use an Intentional Design Process.
While the syllabus is an important communication tool to our students, it is not a course design document, particularly when incorporating multiple learning environments and technology tools. Course design should begin with analyzing the learners, then formulating clear learning outcomes, and then aligning the development of assessments, selection of content, activities, and technology tools, with those outcomes. If a course syllabus is developed before the actual course is designed, it's easy for content to be the focus as opposed to learning and the learners.

Some people refer to “backward design” but the term “intentional design” used by Jared and Stein (2014) is more accurate. We design a course “forward” with “intention” with the outcomes always in mind. Everything that happens in a course is mapped to an outcome. Writing an effective outcome is an art. A good resource for this can be found at [http://teaching.berkeley.edu/resources/design/course-level-learning-goalsoutcomes](http://teaching.berkeley.edu/resources/design/course-level-learning-goalsoutcomes)

The Next Opportunity

These are a few of the opportunities that digital pedagogy affords us. Where will you start? We can help. The Center for Teaching and Learning in collaboration with Educational Technology Services and The University Library have developed the Digital Pedagogy Pathways Program. For more information, contact Rita-Marie Conrad in the Center for Teaching and Learning, rmconrad@berkeley.edu or see [http://teaching.berkeley.edu/programs/digital-pedagogy-pathways-program](http://teaching.berkeley.edu/programs/digital-pedagogy-pathways-program)

Resources/References


New Directions for Research and Pedagogy in Book History

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University of Windsor

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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY IN BOOK HISTORY

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This article addresses contemporary trends in the history of the book, focusing on both research and teaching. Given the great complexity of the interdisciplinary study of book science (called ‘book history’ or ‘the history of the book’ in North America and Britain, and l’histoire du livre in France), students may be confused or overwhelmed when the subject is introduced. They may legitimately ask what they can expect to learn, and how the subject will be organized. This is especially relevant because their generation has grown up with computers and with digital texts, and also with a cultural discourse of globalization. The article considers the challenges of teaching and learning the history of the book from two points of view, both of which have produced rich results in research over the past twenty to thirty years. The first identifies each individual book as a means of communication and cultural transfer; the second incorporates “the book” as a conceptual category in larger historical narratives working from the perspectives of time and space. While both perspectives can be of value for an introduction to this protean subject, neither offers a fully satisfactory response to the challenge of producing a coherent narrative. There is a discussion of transnational approaches to the history of the book; these are compared favourably to the more limited national approach, but the scholarly impulse to undertake the latter is contextualized. The article concludes with a discussion of Digital Humanities and demonstrates how this new field of study can work collaboratively with scholars in book history.

Key words: book science, book history, communication, literature, pedagogy, nation, transnational, digital humanities.

To the seasoned scholar, and even to the well-trained postgraduate student, the history of the book is notable for its complexity. This history extends far beyond the limits of the familiar volume form to marks on stone and clay, to manuscripts produced by scribes and on typewriters, and also to pixels on the computer or e-reader screen; it encompasses the human agency that creates, mediates and appropriates the texts carried by these changing marks. This complexity makes generalization difficult, perhaps even
impossible. Even with a focus limited to the printed book in codex format, scholars know that, ultimately, every copy of every book printed from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth century is unique, and that even the superficial uniformity of machine-printed books conceals a complicated web of cultural, economic and political decisions.\(^1\) But if every single book has its own story, how can “book history” or “book science” be presented to novices as a coherent narrative? In this brief article, I will reflect on the challenges inherent in teaching and learning the history of the book by considering those challenges from two wide-ranging points of view. The first identifies each individual book as a means of communication and cultural transfer; the second incorporates “the book” as a conceptual category in larger historical narratives working from the perspectives of time and space. While I will argue that both perspectives can be of value for an introduction to this protean subject, I will also demonstrate that neither offers a fully satisfactory response to the challenge of finding a coherent narrative thread.

\section*{I}

Students in North America and Britain are often introduced to thinking about the book in historical context by learning what Robert Darnton suggested many years ago: to visualize a circuit that delineates the processes of composition, mediation, production, and reception (in modern western terms, authorship, publishing / editing, printing / binding / distribution, then reading and reviewing). This “communication circuit” starts with the author, moves on to the publisher (who has the power to make a work public) and the editor and other mediators who collaborate with the publisher to design both text and book, then to printers and other producers (plus shippers and, in Darnton’s case, smugglers); then to readers; and around again, as readers influence the next generation of writers (who are, in turn, readers themselves) [6].\(^2\)

Many scholars have critiqued the communication circuit model, recognizing that it captures only a narrow slice, even of the life of a single book. (What about the movement of a text through time, and through various textual forms and material formats, for example?) In a 2007 article, Darnton himself recognized this shortcoming and also realized that he hadn’t left a space for the survival of the book as an object, collected and collectible, enduring in libraries [7]. The circuit model is a helpful way to think about how books, especially printed ones, come into being. It highlights the elements of the creation story borne by each individual book. For students and scholars new to the field, it provides a useful reminder of how the several elements and processes are typically connected, but the model still doesn’t capture the full complexity of the collective history of the book as a material object that supports a written text.

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\(^1\) For a cogent argument of these problems, see Dane [4, 192].

\(^2\) For textbooks, see Finkelstein and McCleery [8; 9].
The communication circuit carries an implicit bias in favour of modern individualist concepts of authorship and publishing, concepts which also underpin the disciplinary conventions marking the boundaries of literary, bibliographical, and historical research. In *Old Books & New Histories: An Orientation to Book & Print Culture Studies* I offered an analysis of contemporary scholarship by highlighting the productive tensions among the several academic disciplines within which it is practiced [12]. In North America and the United Kingdom, at least, most of the scholars who identify themselves in terms of “book history” locate their work in one of three disciplines and one of three related perspectives. Bibliographers look at “the book” primarily as a discrete material object; literary scholars think of “the book” in terms of a specific written text; and historians think of “the book” in more abstract terms as a kind of social or cultural transaction. It is difficult to match Darnton’s processes of composition, mediation, production and reception with the three core disciplines, since each process can be thought of from several disciplinary perspectives, and each discipline approaches the various processes in different ways. The balance of interests can be viewed as a metaphorical coin – it is impossible to separate the bibliographical object from the literary text, or the text from the book as they are two sides of the same coin. But when you come to the historian’s special interest, the biblio-coin is used for exchange [14]. Historians are more interested in how “the book”, conceptualized as an abstract entity, functions in a given society (or as a medium of communication between societies) than in the mechanics of particular texts or specific objects. But despite the fact that disciplinary habits of mind are so powerful, it is not possible fully to separate any of the three aspects of the book from either of the others. Although everyone who defines their research and scholarship in terms of “book history” or “book science” uses all of these approaches, the set of assumptions from the discipline in which they received their intellectual formation is likely to dominate.

In any case, there are more than three disciplines in the twenty-first-century academia with an interest in “the book” – and many of these are concerned with the workings of texts and books in contemporary society, and with modern media. The disciplines of cultural studies and communication studies are inclined to use a more theoretical language than many historians of the book feel comfortable with, such as the work of Freidrich Kittler [17]. Those disciplines tend to think of “the book” in terms of a transaction or exchange, while emphasizing larger patterns of communication, and this contributes to an enriched conceptualization of the study of book culture as inherently interdisciplinary.

Both the communication circuit and the critique in terms of disciplinary boundaries share the tendency artificially to compartmentalize separate aspects of the history of the book, aspects that actually interact with each other. Reading and
reception are not only shaped by mediation; they also help publishers and booksellers – mediators – to establish their policies. Authors themselves, however artistic their motives, are aware of the interest that publishers and readers take in their work. Thinking about production and reception in terms of categories, rather than in terms of individual texts, can be helpful in this respect. Several scholars now undertake research into how various genres are written, made public, received and preserved. The standard way, at least in North America, of using the word “genre” – in English literature, for example – is to talk about literary or textual categories (poetry, drama and prose – with the latter subdivided into novel, short story, creative non-fiction and so forth). What has been of more significance to book historians, however, is something we might identify as subject categories, where literature is seen in juxtaposition with science, history, philosophy or other subjects. The intellectual and literary categories intersect with other bookly categories, such as the material format or the target market. In Anglo-North American book history focused on the early modern and modern period, the overwhelming majority of studies are about works of literature, especially fiction. Our understanding of literary history is shaped by ever-increasing knowledge of how the processes of authorship, publishing / distribution and reading – of both canonical and non-canonical works – appeared in different cultures. But the circuit of communication made an impact on other histories, too – the histories of science, of the management of information, and of the historical discipline itself. There is a substantial minority of impressive studies of scientific books; leading scholars include Adrian Johns [15], James Secord [21], and Jonathan Topham [26]. In Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age, Ann Blair explores the techniques by which our predecessors dealt with their own problem of information overload [3]. Some scholars are now entering another subject domain by looking at the publishing history of history books – to show how changes in the realm of book publishing in the nineteenth century intersected with changes in the study of history, in particular the professionalization of history as an academic discipline, as opposed to a narrative literary form [13].

In the book business (and therefore also in the study of book history), however, there are other kinds of categories, some of which are sometimes called genres. One such subdivision is the material format in which a text appears – but the labels for format (hardcover / paperback; trade / mass-market; comic book / graphic novel; various kinds of periodicals; manuscript book; electronic-book, and so forth) tend to relate to the anticipated readership, or target market of the book, rather than to its status as a material object.

Students bring different questions, assumptions, and expectations to the history (or science, or culture) of the book. Their interests may be practical or theoretical, or perhaps a combination of both. The way in
which students will react to a communication circuit, whether or not complicated by genre categories and disciplinary boundaries, will depend on these orientations. For the student preparing for a career in library work, publishing or bookselling, a generalized awareness of the processes by which books come into being, and go into use, will help contextualize their immediate experience. When the point of view is more academic, or theoretical, reference to the broader communication circuit helps to keep the scholar in touch with the larger context into which their specific, perhaps very tightly focused, research project fits. In both cases, the books are identified as media of communication and of cultural transfer, a powerful combination of text and material object. Like broadcast and other media, books are framed in terms of forging connections between and among people.

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3 In institutions and jurisdictions where the study of the book has tended to be intellectual and academic rather than applied and career-oriented, teaching programs tend to be interdisciplinary and offered at the graduate level; the instructors involved spend most of their time teaching undergraduates within their own discipline and seldom have the opportunity to engage with colleagues who share their interest in “the book”. (One of the reasons why people enjoy the annual conferences of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing is that those meetings give us an opportunity to be with others who share their interest in “the book”. (One of the reasons why people enjoy the annual conferences of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing is that those meetings give us an opportunity to be with others who share their interest in “the book”). The great French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie once divided historians into two types – the truffle-hunter who combs the archives for detail, and the parachutist who seeks patterns in a totalizing perspective. Students often start with a parachute and only later find themselves searching ardent for the truffles. The totalizing, or universalist, way of looking at the history of books avoids detail in order to insert “the book” into larger historical narratives operating over long periods of time. The most straightforward way to approach it has been to establish a chronology – to start at the beginning, wherever that may be, and keep going until one reaches the present time. Such a project is more complex than it may first appear, whether it is applied to a nation, a political movement or to an abstract concept like the history of the book. What is meant by the terms “book” and “history”? For the purposes of this article, I am defining “the book” as a means of preserving and transmitting information, knowledge, and stories in material form, and “history” in terms of narrative and interpretation. But this definition begs a question: when does the history of the book begin, how does it develop, and where does it end? Is a universal account of book history even possible?

The conventional chronology starts with the substrate and with western Asia: records preserved on clay tablets in Mesopotamia, moving on to writing on papyrus, then parchment, then paper. The format converts from scroll to codex about the second century
CE and then again from manuscript books to printed ones about 1450 with Gutenberg in Mainz. Genres also change over time, notably with religious and scientific works giving way to the “birth of the novel” in the eighteenth century, but handpress printing continues for hundreds of years. The mechanics of book-making start moving forward again beginning in the early nineteenth century with machine-made paper and steam-powered presses. The marketing of books to a wide readership is made possible by various other technological innovations, notably paperback binding in the twentieth century – and the story culminates in the appearance of digital technology in the early twenty-first century.

Academic historians are inclined to resist the teleological notion of “progress” implicit in this well-worn narrative, but the concept is difficult to ignore altogether, especially in the classroom. The model of progress implies that the book has moved or “evolved” from a primitive to a more sophisticated medium; in particular, it has developed from a primitive to a more sophisticated means of preserving and transmitting information, knowledge, and stories. One of the challenges of instilling a sense of historical-mindedness in students is helping them to overcome simplistic notions of progress and to situate historical events, lives, and objects in specific temporal and geographical contexts. At the outset of a course of study, however, the simple chronology offers advantages to the instructor setting out to introduce the history of the book to undergraduates. Five major turning points can be reduced to fifty words: manuscript codex replaces the unwieldy scroll; printing with moveable type makes authorship, publishing, and reading accessible to elites; steam-powered technology extends accessibility to ordinary people; mass-market publishing in paperback makes the book a commodity; digital technology changes everything – the format of books, their production and marketing, and the reading experience. Scholars will easily identify the biases and oversimplifications inherent in a mini-history thus set out, but many generations of students have encountered such a streamlined narrative and used it as a base upon which to build a more complex story, and ultimately their own critical analysis.

Research over the past twenty years has critiqued the universal chronological narrative from two directions – the national and the global. Established scholars who specialize in literary history, bibliography, media studies and related subjects have acted upon a strong impulse to write a nationally-focused history of the book, organized around the literary and media history of their own country. Meanwhile a later cohort, including students of the scholars who are writing national histories, are calling for a globalized perspective capable of responding to their generation’s values.

For many scholars (and for some publishers), the self-evident way of thinking about “book history” has been in national terms: to particularize the universal narrative and establish the definitive history of authorship and knowledge production, of printing and
publishing, and of reading and scholarship for their own country. Significant resources of research grants, publishing capital, and government funding have gone into producing multi-volume histories of the book in various national configurations. Perhaps, especially for scholars whose intellectual formation took place in the 1950s and 1960s, it was the national narratives that mattered. And each country’s experience – of authorship, of publishing and distribution, and of reading and reception – was different, sometimes in unexpected ways that had to be uncovered by painstaking research and announced in conference papers that preceded the multi-volume books. But the nation-state approach is also about theory, a theory of nationalism and national identity, which goes much deeper than friendly competition between the book historians of various places. Numerous scholars and students have been persuaded by Benedict Anderson’s idea that readers form an “imagined community” whereby they define themselves in national terms because they think of themselves as reading the same novel, or the same newspaper, as someone else in the same country [1]. But Dallas Liddle [18], Sydney Shep [22] and others are using the study of material books in historical context to critique and unsettle Anderson’s influential theory.

Perhaps ungratefully after all the energy devoted to writing national histories, some commentators have begun to ask an awkward question. In an industry where the raw materials, the skilled producers, the investment capital, the products, and the customers all cross national boundaries constantly, why should “nation” be the defining paradigm? Similar questions have been asked in the broader historical profession, where an interest has developed in a globalizing or totalizing history, where accounts of imperial power are upended by examining them from the point of view of colonial resistance. Scholars reason that it should be possible to consider both sides of the imperial / colonial transaction, and the way they affect each other, at the same time. Some even speak of an “entangled” history (l’histoire croisée) [28]. One example of a transnational history of the book is The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress by Isabel Hofmeyr who is based in South Africa [11]. John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress is thought of as a quintessentially English book rooted in the English Reformation, along with the Bible, likely to be the only book owned by working people right through the nineteenth century. Hofmeyr convincingly recasts it as an African book; she finds many editions in African languages, with illustrations and variant translations, each of which appropriated the text for African purposes.

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on books, even literary classics, which had been created a long way from where they were being recovered. Other historians of the book, notably Robert Fraser [10] and Sydney Shep [22], have followed Hofmeyr in seeing the possibilities for removing the unnatural barriers of nation and state in our accounts of what happens to a book over the course of years, decades or centuries, as its composers, producers and consumers move – not in a decorous circuit handing the book on from one to the next – but undertaking vast journeys across and around the world, taking texts and books along and transforming them in the process. In my experience, students are receptive to an approach like this, one that upsets preconceived ideas and offers attractive alternatives.

The transnational approach is not distinct, however, from the chronological, the national, the communication circuit or disciplinary boundaries. In this context, it is useful to return to something Darnton wrote in 1994:

“[In spite of] the internationalization of the field, one can still detect national accents among book historians. The English tend to emphasize analytical bibliography and printing; the French, quantification and socio-cultural history; the Germans, economics and the book trade. Those emphases derive from the erudite traditions of the nineteenth century, and to a large extent they correspond to the nature of the documents available in each country... In moments of pessimism I sometimes think that the pattern of book history looks different in each country simply because each country has preserved a different kind of source material” [5, 3].

This passage was written around the time most of the national histories of the book were being founded as research and publishing projects.

If one were to map the three core book-history disciplines on to what Darnton said at that time, “the English” would be the bibliographers (and the literary scholars) interested in the text in relation to the material object, and “the French” would be the historians doing quantification and socio-cultural history, as would “the Germans” with an alternative historical focus on economics and trade. But merely to attempt such a mapping is to see it dissolve. For one thing, the “history-from-below” tradition in Britain (associated with E.P. Thompson) is another way of doing social and cultural history and the one that is very attentive to trends in the print culture [25]. And scholarship in continental Europe is attentive to materiality, although not from the analytical-bibliography point of view. All these national scholarly traditions also work with material texts (either literary texts, or with journalism in the form of newspaper history). So Darnton’s “national accents” can be muted to some extent. His “moment of pessimism”, though, conveys a crucial point about the different kinds of source material each country has preserved. In the case of Germany, it is the archival record, rather than the national propensity, which makes the history of the book in Germany seem to be about trade. Certainly for Britain, very few booksellers’ records have survived, and those who study Britain also don’t have ways to trace the production of cheap tracts that
were equivalent of the “bibliotheque bleu” in early modern France. Apart from the vagaries of archival survival, the differences from one nation’s book culture to another have more to do with the ways in which the practices of making, distributing and reading books differed (and still differ) from one place to the other than with their “erudite traditions”. Nor do many books remain in the nation where they were first written and read.

While all this research and theorizing about the history of the book has been going on among scholars, the world has gone through two or three decades of profound transformation. Old political alignments and conflicts have given way to new tensions and fresh challenges. The economic and cultural developments, often labelled “globalization”, have altered many assumptions and conventions. And the rapid developments of the internet and of digitization have affected every aspect of the book in contemporary society. Professors are discovering, sometimes to their chagrin, that students don’t learn the way their parents and grandparents used to do. And young people, including university students, share the values that shape their perspective on their studies – values about the environment and about racial and gender equality, for example. Students in 2013 may balk at the assumptions inherent in both the communication circuit and in the standard chronology. Because they are citizens of a globalized world and feel as comfortable with digital texts as seventeenth-century children did with printed books, they are liable to object to the Eurocentric character of these simplified accounts. Neither allows for the history of the book in Asia, for example, where pictographic writing systems have meant different developments in relation to printing [19]. Even in the European context, there is no room in the circuit model or the universal chronology for specific regional histories – the persistence of handwritten books in Finland [20], or the resistance in Lithuania to the banning of the national press in the nineteenth century [24]. Nor does the narrative apply to any situation where we want to take into account the writing systems used by aboriginal people; in the case of Canada, Germaine Warkentin argues that we should learn to think of the beaded wampum belts used by some native-Canadian tribal groups as a form of “text” – and therefore to think of the history of the book in Canada beginning with native peoples’ writing systems, rather than with introduction of the first printing press in the eighteenth century [27]. As a result of these attitudes, not least of which is the independent thinking characteristic of contemporary students, both the circuit model and the universal chronology become more useful as introductions to the complexity of the study of book culture than ends in themselves.

III

Since about 2011, digital humanities has become a very significant trend in literary and historical scholarship, although “humanities computing” dates back to the 1940s. The terms embrace a number of methodologies
and theoretical approaches to bringing the computational power of digital technology to bear on the problems of humanities scholarship, such as the analysis of texts and of movements in human geography. Digital humanists trace trends by parsing large chunks of text in machine-readable form, by mapping trade statistics using the Geographic Information Systems software, and by developing various ways of visualizing trends drawn out of large bodies of data. A number of scholars in this field are driven by a consciousness of the parallels between the Gutenberg moment of 1450 and our contemporary transition from the printed page to digital devices. Already digitalization and the internet have affected the experiences of authorship, publishing, and reading. Scholars such as Ray Siemens [23] and Matthew Kirschenbaum [16] are working to interpret the way we use new technologies by bringing to bear their deep understanding of the way the printed page has been designed, produced, and used in the past. This is not a simple matter of “history repeating itself”, but rather of a contemporary technological revolution helping us to contextualize the technologies of print-on-paper that the twentieth century took for granted.

Students encountering the history of the book for the first time in university classrooms do not regard the printed book as an unproblematic (because over-familiar) technology in the way their parents and grandparents did. But while they approach the digital book and related media such as websites with nonchalance, they are also acutely aware of changing technology, because such changes have been their life experience. People in their twenties and younger are sometimes called “digital natives” – as opposed to the “digital immigrants” who remember arriving on the shores of computer-based textuality. One of my students once wrote in her final examination paper for a course on the history of the book: “The book is a shape-shifter” [12, 3]. It was deeply gratifying to see the complex knowledge of generations of scholars translated, through my teaching, into the language of popular culture.

To approach the history of the book by a chronology is to pose serious questions about its beginning and its contemporary manifestation. The scholars working on these two aspects, archaeologists and anthropologists at one end and digital humanists at the other, share some assumptions about “the book” with the literary, library and historical scholars who focus on books from the middle ages to the twentieth century. The latter group have developed such concepts as a communication circuit, a focus on both national and transnational narratives, and critiques of disciplinary and category boundaries. The lesson taught to newcomers is also constantly being re-learned by experts: the texts of books change over time, the material format keeps shifting, too, and the ways we use the book in various societies transform along with text and format.
REFERENCES


NAUJOS KNYGOS ISTORIJOS TYRIMŲ IR PEDAGOGIKOS KRYPTYS

LESLIE HOWSAM

Santrauka


Įteikta 2013 m. sausio mėn.
Abstract

Digital Humanities has become a “hot” topic in academia over the last few years, primarily in research and scholarship. While many push forward into new realms of using technology to articulate cool findings, others at non-research intensive universities are moving forward with engaging their undergraduate students in various forms of Digital Pedagogy, a facet of Digital Humanities. Single-day bloom-and-fade projects, individual assignments, and larger scaffolded projects all comprise Digital Humanities curriculum. Here, I provide examples of all three types of projects and include a discussion about risk, play, and productive failure to situate my type of pedagogy in a non-research intensive university setting.

Over the last five years, scholars from various realms of the Humanities and beyond have been grappling with the definition of Digital Humanities and have even felt significant backlash against the phrase and the movement. William Pannapacker’s February 16, 2013 *Chronicle* article, “Stop Calling It 'Digital Humanities” articulates a divide between Humanists and Digital Humanists that smacks of intellectual insecurity. Pannapacker suggests that we rename the entire field of Digital Humanities to mitigate the recalcitrance of some faculty towards “digital” since some faculty believe that Digital Humanities has become the latest fad in theory and methodology, a well-funded fad, but a fad nonetheless. While Pannapacker’s article does not defend or support this position, what is more revealing are the comments – the overwhelming question throughout:

What is digital humanities?
An all-inclusive big tent?
– The Digital Humanities?
An interdisciplinary methodology?

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1 This essay is based upon a talk I gave at the Austin College Digital Humanities Colloquium (https://triproftri.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/its-not-about-the-tools-austin-college/) and many of my Fair Matter blog posts (http://fairmatter.com). I’m grateful to colleagues in both of these venues for their thoughtful feedback.

2 http://chronicle.com/article/Stop-Calling-It-Digital/137325/
– digital humanities?
The Wikipedia entry, authored by those who participate in Digital Humanities, recognizes and records these debates but makes an attempt at inclusivity:

Digital humanities
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The digital humanities is an area of research, teaching, and creation concerned with the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities. Developing from an earlier field called humanities computing, today digital humanities embrace a variety of topics ranging from curating online collections to data mining large cultural data sets. Digital Humanities currently incorporates both digitized and born-digital materials and combines the methodologies from the traditional humanities disciplines (such as history, philosophy, linguistics, literature, art, archaeology, music, and cultural studies) with tools provided by computing (such as data visualisation, information retrieval, data mining, statistics, computational analysis) and digital publishing.

Even after Matthew Kirschenbaum published a 2010 article in the ADE Bulletin³ that articulates a strategy for incorporating Digital Humanities into English Departments and highlights the primary tenets of this field, here we are three years later still attempting to define this thing, Digital Humanities.⁴

³Kirschenbaum’s article was subsequently adapted for Debates in the Digital Humanities.
⁴ Digital Humanities gained prominence and momentum because of its shift in methodology. Literature scholars have become very vocal about DH as a field. With that being said, Composition and Rhetoric scholars have a long tradition of Digital Humanities and Digital Pedagogy in their field – without necessarily naming it and/or defining it as such. What I address in this article is specific experience from teaching literature courses, but my pedagogy is foreign when set against the pedagogy of many of my literature colleagues. The idea behind Digital Humanities and Digital Pedagogy is that the assignments can be adapted to many different disciplines. Though both fields have come far even since I wrote the initial draft of this article in February 2013, there are still some who insist that Digital Pedagogy has nothing to do with Digital Humanities. My question for them: why?
To better understand that Digital Humanities is as much about process as it is about scholarly work-product, the field turned to its own participants for definitions, most specifically during the Day of Digital Humanities, a project that chronicles and reveals the complicated professional lives of those who staunchly declare themselves Digital Humanists and those who are tentatively DH-adjacent.

From these variant definitions, it is clear that being a Digital Humanist does not necessarily involve having some sort of street credentials in coding or programming. Instead, Digital Humanities is a broad umbrella that is full of shifting boundaries and disciplines, hence the “Big Tent” that will later be called into question. Digital Humanists use traditional research methodologies to study history and culture in concert with new strategies for creating meaning and, eventually, scholarship.

I am a Digital Humanist. Most assuredly a moniker I adopted to embrace my desire to create digital editions of little-known but important nineteenth-century literary materials. But, my cross-disciplinary methods and methodological boundaries as exemplified in the below image: the pink, green, and yellow blobs are a visualization of my goals for last year, written on notecards and taped to my closet door. In addition, the requisite two computer screens, an open Twitter client, and a Skype session in-progress with Jentery Sayers demonstrate my Day of Digital

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5 http://dayofdh2012.artsrn.ualberta.ca/
Humanities. My study and workspace are also littered with books, 200-year old books, shelves of books, journals, and important manifestos on Digital Humanities. By virtue of being a history of the book scholar, I’m invested in the cultural ramifications of all facets of human endeavors from 1780 to 1850. Though these include ultimately dealing with print literature, my work ranges into scientific discoveries, mechanization of paper-making, gender studies, archival work, politics, development of financial institutions, architecture, fashion, and more.

For me, and I suspect for many Digital Humanists, the personal definition of Digital Humanities evolves depending upon the work. My original definition of Digital Humanities, articulated only four years after graduating and accepting a position at San Jose State University, focuses on research and my burgeoning interest in using digital tools in both graduate and undergraduate courses. (See my definitions of Digital Humanities in my 2009 and 2012 definitions below.)

In 2012, I realized that I had to align my type of Digital Humanities with the mission of my university, not because I was forced into this paradigm or because I longed to move into a research-intensive program. My definition changed because my students were hungry for it; and, like me, they didn't know exactly how to embrace technology and the shift in learning strategies – except through trial and error. By engaging in Digital Pedagogy, I shifted my definition of Digital Humanities to reflect an attempt to empower my students to engage with technology in ways that were still evolving on my campus. I tried to teach them Digital Humanities through our classroom interactions and assignments and then I let them go to explore and experiment without me. The results were sometimes disastrous before 2012 while I was still figuring out how to bring Digital Humanities to my kind of students at a comprehensive, Master’s-granting state institution where STEM departments receive a majority of the funding. But, something happened in 2010 and 2011 to open pathways for my students to realize that they were building projects that could be classified under this larger movement of Digital Humanities. Where I had used digital tools in the past to supplement my lectures, I began to ask students to discover and explore digital tools on their own and bring them back to class with a demonstration on applicability and use. Students began to “screw around.”
The culminating event that signaled the relevance of using emergent technologies coupled with the tenets of Digital Humanities made clear that my re-adjusted definition of Digital Humanities was one that was important for my type of students: In 2012, I sent two of my students to an undergraduate-only conference to demonstrate their nascent digital project. The result was a sense of empowerment and belief in the work that they had already done, even though it was a work-in-progress:

Re:Humanities '12: March 29-30, 2012 sponsored by Bryn Mawr, Haverford, & Swarthmore Colleges. Re:Humanities is the only national digital humanities conference of, for, and by undergraduates. Supported by the three colleges and a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the conference invites undergraduate researchers to present original contributions to the developing field of digital humanities -- applying traditional humanities questions to computing technologies, and vice versa. (http://blogs.haverford.edu/rehumanities/)

At this conference, faculty were not allowed to dominate conversations; we could nod in agreement or ask probing questions during the breaks. But, this gathering was and is about our students and their work:

“It affirms the idea of a liberal arts classroom…. People are collaborating on an intimate level.” (Hema Surendranathan, Re:HUMANITIES video)

“When you’re doing research that you have some control over [and] it has meaning outside of the classroom to yourself, there is a greater sense of ownership and intellectual empowerment.” (Andrew Powers, Re: HUMANITIES video)

Though many of these student participants came from small liberal arts colleges where the student-faculty ratio contributes significantly to student success, the message is the same: students thrive in an atmosphere of discovery where they are allowed to intellectually explore particular areas of study with the help of an infrastructure put in place by faculty members. The faculty become invisible to these students in their projects. This is a goal of Digital Humanities, at least it is in my pedagogical practice. But, first, the campus infrastructure needs to be established, whether it be a small liberal arts college, a large research institute, or a non-research state university. That is what I have been doing for the past eight years: establishing infrastructure and very patiently integrating Digital Humanities into my pedagogical imperatives, but not without some struggles.

What’s it like at a non-R1 doing DH? Confusing.

In my recent tenure dossier,6 to my university’s administrators, at conferences,7 in coffee meetings, over lunch, across Twitter, in webinars,8 within Day in the Life of Digital Humanities,9 and in an occasional article, I have been discussing the efficacy of bringing students into Digital Humanities. I have

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6 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2011/08/18/sabbatical-application-success/
7 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2011/06/24/thatcamp-pedagogy-bootcamp/
8 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2011/03/02/writing-coding-first-year-composition/
9 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2011/03/13/day-of-dh-2011/
accomplished this somewhat by inviting them to use digital tools to collaborate on assignments or to simply expose their ideas by posting to class-public forums. While some assignments and strategies have been successful, playing within Digital Humanities has forced me to revise my definition of “success” and instead think about productive failure for both me and my students.\(^\text{10}\)

In a 2010 talk, “The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around,” Stephen Ramsay declared that for most scholars browsing the stacks in a library involves a sense of exploration, even willing playfulness. What Ramsay addresses here is a seemingly disorganized conglomeration of information – things that scholars find fascinating, engaging, cool – stuff that may not be publishable according to current standards for scholarship – data that inevitably needs to be shared in order to be relevant. In other words, the enthusiasm created by scholarly discoveries is made public through such social networking venues. For Ramsay, being an academic promises, even requires, unbounded playing and learning in order to achieve cultural literacy – in other words, *screwing around*. For him, this is the foundation of Digital Humanities along with a few other mainstays.

Luke Waltzer points out that perhaps Digital Humanities, at least during the 2011 MLA Convention, was merely replicating that institutional hierarchy that is so prevalent in American education: “pedagogy, curriculum development, and the scholarship of teaching and learning remain what Steve Brier has called ‘the ugly stepchildren of the university.’ Those particular paths of inquiry continue to be undervalued by institutions and less energetically pursued by academics than the discipline-based research with which the majority of humanists began their careers” (336). Waltzer declares that Digital Humanities has not “done much to reorient academic thinking . . . to show how the values and lessons at the core of the field might reshape the role of the humanities in the university of the future” (337)\(^\text{11}\) – at least not then.

Composition & Rhetoric as a field has been addressing the use of technology, communications, and digital media in the classroom for quite some time. Scholars such as Virginia Khun and Cheryl Ball and various conferences, including Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and Computers & Writing, have created and maintain a knowledge base that focuses on teaching and learning in higher education – and all embrace variant forms of scholarly communication, from long-form

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\(^\text{10}\) http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/pannapacker-from-mla-failure-is-the-new-normal/30864

\(^\text{11}\) See also Stephen Brier’s assessment of Digital Humanities and its lack of pedagogical focus, “‘Where’s the Pedagogy?’ The Role of Teaching and Learning in the Digital Humanities” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*.  

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arguments to archiving poster sessions and multi-media representations of teaching. *Kairos*,¹² established in 1996, *ProfHacker*,¹³ and HASTAC¹⁴ capitalize on variant forms of scholarly communication to entice readers: HASTAC leans heavily on new and emerging scholars who contribute regular blog posts; *Kairos* publishes open-access, peer-reviewed journal articles in multi-modal forms; and *ProfHacker* uses a mix between blog posts and journalistic-style articles written by a variety of academics.¹⁵

Melissa Terras called for this type of change in her 2005 Digital Humanities Conference presentation, but Digital Humanists have only begun to organize Digital Pedagogy into a subset of Digital Humanities studies within the last three years.¹⁶ Some of these issues were addressed in the year following the 2011 MLA Convention, and done in such a way to be inclusive, exploratory, productive, and exciting, including the establishment of *Hybrid Pedagogy*.¹⁷

**How to do Digital Pedagogy? Take it to Students!**

Workshops about Digital Pedagogy have sprung up at various disciplinary conference in the work of 2-hour, full day, and multi-day events. Many small liberal arts colleges have become keen on helping their faculty address the labor issue of re-construc- ting assignments and syllabi to engage with a new type of learning.¹⁸ When I run these workshops, I don't address the tools. Instead, we begin with a sense of the elements that engage with Digital Humanities:

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¹² [http://www.technorhetoric.net/](http://www.technorhetoric.net/)
¹⁵ *ProfHacker* publishes multiple posts weekly in the online *Chronicle of Higher Education* on a variety of topics, including teaching. As of March 2012, over 400 blog posts on teaching topics have been published.
¹⁸ See the contents of various workshops from those presented by me, Rebecca Frost Davis, Jentery Sayers, and the Digital Humanities Summer Institute: [http://triproftri.wordpress.com/category/workshop/](http://triproftri.wordpress.com/category/workshop/)
Collaboration is the lynchpin to supporting all of this productivity, learning, experimenting, and knowledge acquisition. This unwritten goal was reinforced by a few tech industry magnates at Stanford’s Bibliotech Symposium\(^\text{19}\) in 2011 and 2012: the CEOs want Liberal Arts and Humanities doctoral students who can command language, interpret technical jargon into metaphor and narrative, and work collaboratively in team situations. Humanities scholars often think of themselves as the lonely bibliophiles in the library stacks, quietly slaving over monographs. But, Digital Humanities has exposed the fallacy of that paradigm — even required that Humanists consider exposing their collaborative work, even if it isn’t digitally-inclined.

I propose that undergraduates and Master’s students can offer intriguing,\(^\text{20}\) if not altogether unique, perspectives on work in Digital Humanities — beyond the limitations of classroom-specific assignments, that life-long learning that could translate so well to economic/employment success.

**Collaboration as a Tool**

Inviting students into the same scholarly realm that is responsible for constructing large-scale digital projects and shifting scholarly communication inevitably requires a revision to traditional pedagogy. What if faculty thought about students as *life-long learners* in the way that David Warlick has proposed?\(^\text{21}\)

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<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Obligation: Students are culturally obliged to work for the teacher &amp; for compensation (<em>below</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Institution defined grades and gateways to college (another institution) and a good job (another institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of Operation</strong></td>
<td>Compliant, group-disciplined, objective-oriented, and trainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
<td>Compelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equipped</strong></td>
<td>..with packaged knowledge and tools for recording packaged knowledge — prescribed and paced learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Measuring what the student has learned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^\text{19}\) [http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/bibliotech/about-us](http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/bibliotech/about-us)


\(^\text{21}\) Warlick composed this chart in a blog post focusing on revising “teacher” into “master learner” in order to step away from the slightly contentious relationship that many classrooms and institutions foster by their very nature. See “Are They Students or Are They Learners” ([http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/?p=2762](http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/?p=2762)).
These life-long learners are collaborators who are curious and work towards measuring reward based on the process, instead of quantifying learning through exams or rote memorization. Can Digital Humanities and Digital Pedagogy work better towards creating these life-long learners?

The key lies with using the tenets of Digital Humanities noted in the image above, just as Paul Fyfe has suggested in “Digital Pedagogy Unplugged.” In 2008, Cathy N. Davidson declared that collaborative archives and decentering knowledge and authority leads to Humanities 2.0, “a humanities of engagement that addresses our collective histories and concern for history…this engagement entails a willingness to reconsider the most cherished assumptions and structures of their discipline” (“Humanities 2.0” 715). In this piece, Davidson declares that faculty are all Digital Humanists now, a conversation that was rife throughout the 2012 MLA. She cursorily refers to pedagogy in this *PMLA* opinion piece, but much more fully develops these ideas about shared production of knowledge in her experiments with collaborative assignments.22

Much in line with Warlick, Davidson and David Theo Goldberg re-think ideas behind collaboration: “Participatory learning includes the many ways that learners (of any age) use new technologies to participate in virtual communities where they share ideas, comment on one another’s projects, and plan, design, implement, advance, or simply discuss their practices, goals, and ideas together” (12). For Davidson and Goldberg, participatory learning can happen anywhere and differs from the instructional technology (or tools) that foster learning in many college and university settings. This type of learning can be harnessed towards collaborative projects. But Davidson and Goldberg warn that this type of pedagogy is about process, not product (15) – a strategy that would make any department chair or dean anxious.23 Perhaps the issue here can be resolved by using a more exact vocabulary to inscribe participatory learning into undergraduate curriculum.

What happens when “collaboration” is included in the department’s student learning goals and outcomes? How can that type of intangible work be graded, assessed, documented, and quantified – especially when departments are being asked to provide quantifiable materials for five-year program reviews? The first question, usually, comes in the form of teaching strategies.

Though collaboration is one of the main methods employed by Digital Humanities scholars, Rebecca Frost Davis asks the difficult question: “how do you teach collaboration” (“Yes,” para. 1)? Admittedly, student resistance and assessment rubrics sometimes impede use of these strategies.24 But, this too is changing.

Frost Davis points to a grading rubric (offered by Value, American Association of Colleges & Universities) that defines collaboration teamwork: “behaviors under the control of individual team members (effort they put into team tasks, their manner of interacting with others on team, and the quantity and quality of contributions they make to team.”25 The rubric focuses on process rather than product – another major criteria of Digital Humanities scholarship and defined in the learners column of Warlick’s chart. Frost Davis continues with her report on a panel of speakers who focus on assessing and teaching collaboration:

We need to scaffold teamwork by breaking it down, modeling it, and giving students multiple experiences. For example, LaLonde described a less-successful project style where teams divide up the content, work separately, and then one person knits it together at the end of the project.

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22See Davidson, “Collaborative Learning for the Digital Age.”
23Davidson and others have written extensively on altering teaching strategies based on the “new economy of attention.” See Gordon and Bogen, “Designing Choreographies for the ‘New Economy of Attention’” and Cathy N. Davidson *Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn*. I've written about how to articulate your Digital Humanities & Pedagogy work in promotion documents (http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2012/10/01/promotion-documents/).
O’Donnell, however, talked about teams built based on members’ dispositions and skills, such as free discourse, open communication, and conflict resolution. (“Yes,” para. 7)

Two case studies in the April 2011 Digital Humanities and the Undergraduate demonstrate the efficacy of projects that “deploy collaborative approaches to engage students directly in the scholarly process, using practice to support learning and to connect undergraduates to their broader fields of inquiry” (para. 3). One group from SUNY Geneseo uses wikis to create communities of practice and facilitate critical analysis – an infrastructure that mimics Digital Humanities scholarship. The second group, using a project-centered bibliographical database and based at Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania, promises a database that will “greatly enhance the writing of new histories of the novel.” Though the promises of completing the project are attractive to scholarship, they are not necessarily integral to student learning – and even Digital Humanists caution against this idea of completion.

Are faculty asking students, especially undergraduates, to resolve the issues that plague Digital Humanities – at least the battles with traditional scholars that have dogged the community? This dire need for “completion” stems from institutional pressures to produce something that validates the field, and then shepherd it through peer review and, for students, to work towards a grade. But, if faculty excise the pressure to produce and instead reward students for screwing around, much the same that we would like to do with research and scholarship, that leads us to Davidson and Goldberg’s participatory learning edicts and true collaboration instead of the much-dreaded “group work.”

Even in Digital Humanities courses, faculty don’t always differentiate between group work and collaboration. In her review of 134 syllabi, Lisa Spiro found that only fifteen syllabi used collaboration as an “explicit learning outcome” (“Knowing” slide 18). Instead, the syllabi rely on “group work” as a phrase to imply “collaboration.” Jentery Sayers explains this difference in his Introduction to Digital Humanities syllabus:

Collaboration need not be identical to “group work.” The purpose of the clusters in this class is not to simply get more done in less time. It is not to divide labor in order to merely increase efficiency. It is to work in such a climate that you learn from each other, question each other, and synthesize your ideas in a complex fashion, building upon and highlighting your individual interests and reluctances. (“A Note on Clusters”)

In his essay, “Tinker-Centric Pedagogy in Literature and Language Classrooms,” Sayers again addresses collaboration but in a more playful sense: tinkering, a less-structured version of collaboration and participatory learning, embraces “inexpert, tactical, and situational experimentation [and] lends itself well to introducing students of literature and language to otherwise unfamiliar modes of learning” (1). Sayers advocates for a playful construction of projects that is also self-reflective and self-sustaining beyond the conclusion of the course – essentially engaging his students in Digital Humanities infrastructure projects but without confining them to the goals of an already-established scholarly digital project. Sayers even explicitly writes collaboration into a set of student learning goals: “Collaborate with their peers through not only the use of new technologies but also an agreed-upon and democratic workflow” and “Collaboratively produce a proof of concept for a new digital humanities project, which is relevant to students, staff, and faculty at the University of Victoria” (HUMA 150 syllabus). If faculty can teach students that intellectual pursuit in a collaborative setting will yield a much more engaging experience, then we can move past their inevitable groans about group work.

26See Brown, et al., “Published Yet Never Done: The Tension Between Projection and Completion in Digital Humanities Research.”
This all sounds great! What's the down side?

I come from a very different type of institution: 4-4 teaching load often with 3-4 preps and 80-90 students. And, this is the California State University that has been in the New York Times, among other publications, as the first comprehensive Master's-granting state university to adopt the MOOC-based model in consultation with Udacity and EdX at MIT. In a university-wide press conference about the MOOC model in SJSU's STEM courses, the participants articulated successes about employing distance learning in remedial courses. I stood at the microphone, faced our Provost, and asked the question: “Where are the Humanities?”

I meant it as a rhetorical question, but the Provost went on to identify the reasons for piloting this distributed learning model with STEM first. The EdX representative offered that the Humanities could not be included because the EdX people had not figured out how to automate the grading of essays – and this was the only understanding of teaching in the Humanities and the liberal arts offered.

During the course of my time at the microphone, I identified myself as a Digital Humanist and assured the Provost and others that a cadre of SJSU faculty already use technology in our courses, but the use was not necessarily meant to replace face-to-face interactions. The Provost’s response heralded a fundamental misunderstanding about the Humanities that was inevitably transferred to Digital Humanities. If the Humanities equates only with writing and written assignments, where is the place for Digital Humanities in my campus’s infrastructure? How will the College of Humanities & Arts obtain a computer lab if what we ask students to do is thought to be only to word process on those machines? My particular population of students comes under-prepared for university-level work. Over the last eight years, I have had to learn how to engage them and their different learning styles – not only asking them to screw around, but also inviting them to do the risky thing and play.
In *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology and the Future of the Academy*, Kathleen Fitzpatrick warns that academic futures need to be governed by expansive change: “We need to think less about completed products and more about text in process; less about individual authorship and more about collaboration; less about originality and more about remix; less about ownership and more about sharing” (83). If scholarly communication needs this type of revision, then I suggest so too does undergraduate pedagogy. But, something happens when we start incorporating Digital Humanities and Digital Pedagogy into the undergraduate classroom, something that is not embraced in academia: failure. Digital Humanities scholarship requires collaboration and playfulness – both risky endeavors in any Humanities classroom because of the need for assessment, structure, rules, and bounded learning. But, what happens when we modify some of the institutional structures and student learning outcomes to accommodate these two methods for learning and add into the curriculum a requirement for building something, anything, within the undergraduate classroom? The students collaborate, screw around, and build materials for public scholarship, but we all risk failure – and then learn from it.

Work on collaborative projects with our undergraduate students is often exhilarating and produces interesting learning outcomes. But, those successes are fewer than we think; failures are more often the norm: failure to complete the project, failure to assess student input adequately, failure to adequately explain the experiment to our colleagues, failure to fulfill institutional norms.

**Sneaking DH/DP into the Room – What Happens?**

I teach with an eye toward Digital Humanities in all of my courses: from first year composition to graduate courses specifically on the topic. In Fall 2012, my British Literature lower division English majors went from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to the MMORPG *Diablo III*. My role in the classroom is to help students think critically about the technologies that govern their everyday lives, and I engage them with technology in several different types of Digital Pedagogy. But, to begin, let’s simplify these levels:

**3 Levels of DH-inflected Courses**
- Single day assignments that are intended to bloom and fade with relevance only to that class meeting;
- Individual assignment(s) that employ emergent technologies to facilitate screwing around and play; and
- An entire course scaffolded in multiple assignments that culminates in a final project.

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**Bloom & Fade**

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Katherine D. Harris @triprofti Mar 20th, the article on Center Free Collaboration just invigorated 1 talk, 1 article, 1 new course proposal. thx @nowviskie Details

Bethany Nowviskie @nowviskie Following

@triprofti Awesome! It’s a model I love (& grew up in: SpecLab was deliberately bloom-and-fade). Lots of @scholarslab initiatives are, too.
Though Bethany Nowviskie created this bloom-and-fade category for scholarly collaboration, it works well with the daily rigor of in-class exercises. By using bloom-and-fade strategies, faculty can implement a given tool during a class session without asking students to theorize its use, investigate its efficacy, or even interpret its cultural value. Bloom-and-fade is meant to be seamless but employ collaboration without turning the project into a multi-day or scaffolded assignment. I used this strategy for my course, TechnoLiterature, in Fall 2012.

I walked into my course, TechnoLiterature, to 35 fresh faces, most of whom were new to college and San Jose State University. Many of them attended their first classes this morning and looked woefully unimpressed with their entry into adult education. The course, Great Works of Literature in its most generic sense, fulfills a lower division general education requirement in “letters.” Students chose the class because it fit with their schedules, and most bemoaned having to take any literature course at all. I lead with the juicy detail that the last two weeks of the semester would be spent playing a third person role playing game, Diablo III. The mild nods indicated extreme enthusiasm from the frosh. “But first,” I warned, “we have to discuss narrative and technology. We need to establish some definitions. Then, and only then, can we get into gaming.”

Take it to the limit: Collaborative Play
Heroes in Diablo III

One student approached me about playing a different game, one that she was more familiar with, and then asked me to articulate why I had chosen Diablo III:
1. The game contains an extensive narrative;
2. The setting, though apocalyptic, takes advantage of medieval castles, ruins, graveyards, and villages, much like our opening novel, Frankenstein;
3. The characters become involved in economic exchange, such as employing a blacksmith and a merchant;
4. The opening trailer is slightly reminiscent of a Miltonic “end-of-days” scenario and the scene begins with an old man buried in books attempting to discern the future based on the history;
5. The historical references to runes and ancient cultures uncannily pushes toward the mythological journeys of Beowulf and Odysseus;
6. We may have an inside connection to Blizzard, the company that created the game; and
7. The game is new; I was hoping no one had really played it yet.

Before they could achieve that final foray into the narrative constructs of Diablo III, my students have to prove that they can handle the overwhelming amount of information that happens in a role-playing game, that they could think critically about it. So, we started with blogs, but more importantly, I tried to shift their thinking away from linear textuality.

Using Your Tools: Visualization on White Board
Old-School Infographic of *A Clockwork Orange*

http://www.fairmatter.com/2012/10/old-fashioned-visualizations.html

By using the whiteboard and open discussion in a bloom-and-fade moment, we were able to visualize the complicated relationships in *A Clockwork Orange*. After our infographic session on *A Clockwork Orange*, students in TechnoLiterature began to grapple with issues of biotechnology in Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*. On our first day of discussion, six students provided the class with information about Carter, the dissemination of this novel, its characters, and the biotechnology that demands suspension of disbelief, as with most of Carter's novels. Though no digital reader version of the novel exists, students accessed the Amazon and Barnes & Noble reviews to investigate the public reception of this novel, and they noted that quite a few of the write-ups suggested baffled and baffling responses.

All of this discussion sparked conversations about the essence of humanity. Is it Descartes’ cognitive function, “I think, therefore I am?” Or, is it hope and despair, construction of a belief system, the creative function? I asked students to write a blog post about *The Passion of New Eve* that focused on issues of gender – a post like most of the other posts that they have been writing all semester. As first and second
year students, for the most part, they struggle to articulate their ideas in complex, sophisticated writing. But, I think this is my fault. When we moved into discussions about *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the novel that is the basis for *Blade Runner*, students jumped into action to have an incredibly heated discussion about humanity and artificial intelligence. We returned to the question “What makes us human?”

So, I asked them to use their smart phones (for they all own one) to create a photo-based blog post to answer the following questions:

- What makes us human?
- How are humans technologically dependent?
- How is humanity intertwined with technology now?

By creating a single assignment and asking them to engage with technology that they already possessed, I encouraged them to be creative in their photo-blogging. Surprisingly, the entries for this blog post were dynamic, engaging, creative, thoughtful, well-written, and more. By releasing them into a creative endeavor to screw around with technology that they handle everyday, these students differentiated themselves from their technology to suggest that humanity uses technology as a tool and is not necessarily completely integrated. (They are not cyborgs. Interesting.) More so than any other set of students, these first and second year students in a California State University are aware of the imposition and interruptions that technology creates in their lives. This completely dispels my notion that most students are merely consumers of technology, *techno-zombies* as one of my Library & Information Science students put it. Have I been wrong all along? Or have these students learned to articulate critiques of technology because of our discussions?

In another course, British Literature Survey 1800-Present, I spontaneously invoked bloom-and-fade again, also using blogs to articulate the immateriality of the material text. In an attempt to gain the attention of these English majors, I asked them to tear up their copies of *The Hours*. They had expressed discontent over the novel, and its original inspiration, *Mrs. Dalloway*. But, for the most part, they refused to tear the pages of their two-dollar copies. When four students committed to this challenge, I collected the pages and threw them around the floor – all the while walking on the pages. One student tweeted that she wasn't okay with this at all. Students were then asked to collect pages at random to create a version of pastiche that mimicked the literary pastiche that was employed in *The Hours*. Most students attempted to re-create an exact replica of the book. But one student decided that she would create a metaphorical pastiche of hours surrounded by the material text.

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**Bloom & Fade:**

*Sacrilege to the Book*  

![Photo Credit: Nahida Nina](http://www.fairmatter.com/2012/11/sacrilege-to-the-book.html)
In this same course, I prepared students to use Twitter as a vehicle for understanding a particular character in another example of a single assignment. One student tweeted as the teacup in *Jane Eyre*, while another interacted with Mrs. Dalloway as Frankenstein's creature. The outcome was interesting, but not altogether cohesive.

The most interesting intervention into the digital comes not from these first and second year students, but from my English majors in a British Literature survey course.

In a mini-scaffolded project, a group, the Men's Melange, worked on a later literary annual as a research project, *The Comic Offering*, and struggled throughout to find information on its editor, Louisa Sheridan. They were frustrated at not finding anything on this particular woman editor, though she was incredibly popular during her lifetime, and the lifetime of the literary annuals.

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These students know nothing about metadata, tools, or these silences in the archives — but they experienced a moment of feminist regret...AND SOLVED IT! They photographed the 300pp book, including the covers and proceeded to focus their research on ideals of femininity and beauty. These four young men scoured the Internet for images of other literary annuals to fill out their ideas and in the end decided to add to the scant information offered on Wikipedia.

But, this project was a failure. I later learned that the group had been lead by an extremely engaged student — who, in the end, did all of the work. Though we used the below collaboration rubric to govern teamwork, the students lagged in their commitments. The group came to a halt in their communication and finally asked me to step in. At that point, I used resolution strategies taught to me by those in the technology industry: the entire group sat together and articulated three things that they learned and three things that they could do better. This style of management didn't allow students to turn the session into a complaint round-up. Though they walked away with a sense of limited collegiality, this particular project and assignment failed according to my student evaluations. Many noted that the lack of structure was daunting — they weren't used to it.

![Image](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/teamwork.pdf)

This was the first year that unabashedly included collaboration and teamwork in an assignment. Students were graded based on this scale, and they graded each other explicitly.
Public Scholarship: Graduate Students create digital scholarly edition to submit for peer review

- Follow our progress on Twitter #beardstair
- Check the blog:
  - http://beardstair.wordpress.com

During Spring 2013, I taught the first Introduction to Digital Humanities course in our graduate program. I threw out all of the grading strategies and structured assignments – Mark Sample has recently blogged about removing the scaffolded project because it's too limiting, like training wheels for a budding cyclist. The grad students constructed the project with the intention to submit it finally for peer review with Scholarly Editing or some other organization. In the end because the project could not be “completed” as a scholarly edition, the project participants instead compiled, wrote, and submitted an article about the nature of collaboration in a project-centered graduate course. As with any course, there were challenges:

Smaller Issues:
1. Crafting learning outcomes for courses, syllabi & assignments: High Impact Practices & assessing them;
2. Professional documentation for both student & faculty requires “doing the risky thing,” committing to playfulness, & documenting failure;
3. Collaboration vs. group work: students as “learners”; grading collaboration;
5. Scaffolding within a single course.

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29 http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm
30 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2012/03/31/plenary-rehumanities-2012/
31 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2011/06/19/pedagogyplayposter/
32 http://triproftri.wordpress.com/2012/03/19/risking-failure-a-cuny-dhi-talk/
Lessons Learned: Great!
1. Students appreciate freedom to explore
2. Students enjoy collaborative moments
3. Students embrace interdisciplinarity
4. Students want ownership of their projects
5. Students revel in becoming the “experts”
6. Students understand the rigors of public scholarship
7. Students are willing to become Digital Humanists

Lessons Learned: Challenges
1. Students need guidance & project management
2. Students require boundaries with scaffolded assignments
3. Students need to work towards completion inside the curriculum

In the final meeting of this graduate course, we discussed the successes and failures of the course. One participant noted, for the first time that semester, that “collaboration” as we had defined it all semester had not been satisfying. He craved the verbal jockeying and public sharing of his version of collaboration. Others agreed (as did I to some extent). In the end, the participants were able to relate the department’s student learning outcomes to the skills that they had acquired, but they were still anxious about the assessment, i.e., their grades. At that point, I awarded everyone an A but asked that they all evaluate each other based on the Teamwork Value Rubric mentioned above. The course was so unconventional considering our graduate curriculum that I thought it wasn’t fair to grade them on methodologies that they were acquiring – even towards the end of the semester, most of them confessed that true collaboration had been difficult. A colleague sat in on the course to evaluate my teaching and noted that the challenge of a project-centered course would inevitably be the grading structure to make it align with department goals. This dilemma, the infrastructure, comes up again even in Spring 2012. It’s not only equipment and materials that are necessary, but also the ideological infrastructure that’s needed to revise the curricular policies. But, I have had the benefit of thinking about these revisions because of my workshops and discussions with various types of faculty over the last two years.

Digital Pedagogy is not about the Tools
Though at many workshops faculty often request to begin with the tools, to understand how to use them in front of their students, I ask them to reconsider. When doing Digital Pedagogy, THE TOOLS ARE THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES: Bamboo DIRT offers a wide selection of tools to help decide that.

Instead, I encourage faculty to think about the learning outcomes as they are relevant to their types of students. Here is some help with
how to create an assignment that focuses more on engaging learning than on the tools:

- economize across courses
- leave room in syllabus for a skills day
- have students work with each other
- start small with one assignment
- a full semester needs a series of scaffolded assignments
- assess your learning goals and add one or two
- have students continue to reflect on the process
- chronicle where you and students didn't meet the ideas
- revise for the next class
- keep versions of your syllabi for comparison in your yearly review materials
- assess institutional culture
- discuss the change with your chair
- work with an Instructional Designer if you've got one
- assess the technology available on campus
- assess student access to technology
- seek out others on campus working through technology
- be prepared with an elevator blurb about how technology altered the learning outcomes in the classroom (not just a bag of tricks)

Some Digital Humanists are Making it Difficult. Why?

From the outside, the Digital Humanities community is collegial, bombastic, fun, and full of intellectual jockeying. But often I find myself at odds with their missions to build things that others then use. And, I hear from too many other Digital Humanists that teaching is not their primary goal, that they use students to advance existing projects. I am starting to read and hear more and more about those who take these bloom-and-fade projects to their students, those projects intended for classroom use. Or those projects that are entirely student-driven. This is our bread and butter, undergraduate education. So, why then did MIT publish in 2012 “A Short Guide to Digital Humanities” that completely silences my brand of Digital Humanities? The broadly-disseminated pdf Guide, a final supplement included in the collaborative, open-access book Digital_Humanities, declares itself to be a helpmate to administrators, department chairs, and tenure and promotion committees:

This final section of Digital_Humanities reflects on the preceding chapters, but can also stand alone as a concise overview of the field. As digital methodologies, tools, and skills become increasingly central to work in the humanities, questions regarding fundamentals, project outcomes, assessment, and design have become urgent. The specifications provide a set of checklists to guide those who do work in the Digital Humanities, as well as those who are asked to assess and fund Digital Humanities scholars, projects, and initiatives. (121)

Those who are judging tenure and promotion cases, the administrators who decide on funding one project over another, the review panelists that pore over the plethora of worthy projects are the intended audience for this Short Guide. But, inexplicably, the Short Guide makes a move not only to define “Digital Humanities,” but also what is outside that definition in the section entitled “What isn’t the Digital Humanities?”:

33At around the same moment as the Short Guide was disseminated, Brett Hirsch’s edited collection of essays on Digital Pedagogy was finally made available in an open access form. But, Hirsch’s collection doesn’t proclaim to define Digital Humanities or even Digital Pedagogy. Instead, it offers reflections on using digital tools in all types of classrooms – even offering advice to the graduate student who has no Digital Humanist in his/her program. Though a boon to the profession, Hirsch’s collection did not make the same entrance as the Short Guide.
The mere use of digital tools for the purpose of humanistic research and communication does not qualify as Digital Humanities. Nor, as already noted, is Digital Humanities to be understood as the study of digital artifacts, new media, or contemporary culture in place of physical artifacts, old media, or historical culture. (122)

This is a troubling definition full of exclusions. If the Short Guide is meant for wide distribution to administrators, then the authors of this defining moment in Digital Humanities excludes a host of faculty who teach at non-research intensive universities and colleges. Why isn’t the use of digital tools to perform humanistic inquiry part of Digital Humanities? The pamphlet sparked a Twitter-verse storm that culminated in an ongoing argument hosted by David Golumbia in his two blog posts, “Digital Humanities: Two Definitions” and “Building and (Not) Using Tools in Digital Humanities.”

Golumbia writes at length:

Note that this language, dismissive, assured, and not worried about outsiders looking in—indeed, part of a section telling academics how to evaluate DH work for tenure—directly contradicts the bolded section of the definition on UCLA’s own website, where “interprets the cultural and social impact of new media” is among the first descriptions offered. In fact, “interpreting new media” is specifically one of the contentious areas in the fights about DH definition—part of what most of the big-tenters would like included, and what we feel the narrow-DHers purposely exclude (although the justification for this exclusion is rarely if ever made clear)…. I will say as carefully as possible that this dynamic is exactly what I have seen in DH: one unthreatening, expansive definition when outsiders look in, another, exclusionary, imposed by a small but powerful and influential subset of DHers, forcefully advocated behind the scenes.

But never, before, have I seen it so clearly and demonstrably in public…. The Digital_Humanities book is written as if it speaks with authority over both what the field is and how it should be practiced, although it does not appear to do much to explain the source for that authority.

To be somewhat bombastic: the Short Guide smacks of elitism as if the authors have no idea what it’s like to teach a 4-prep semester in an underfunded university system that thinks MOOCs will save us from the expensive task of remediating our students from the abysmal public education that they have received K-12.

Nothing gets done with a 4-prep or even a 4-course semester. No more tweeting. No intellectual pondering. During those semesters when I have a new prep (which is almost every semester), the most I can write about are my assignments and my students’ progress and failures. And even those are just blog posts.

No, teaching at a non-R1 and doing Digital Humanities requires a certain do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos. But, DIY also implies uncompensated and oftentimes un-credited work. For the longest time Digital Humanities has advocated going out and doing. Being plucky. Taking the initiative. At a non-R1, this means teaching classes, writing traditional scholarship, then, and only then, adding some Digital Humanities sauce to everything else. There just isn't time. The only way to combat that encroaching workload is to engage students in Digital Humanities – basically to throw them in the deep end of Digital Humanities with some guidance to see how they break it. And break it they do.

While there's external pressure to conform to the Short Guide’s version of Digital Humanities, there's also internal pressure at my non-R1 to prove the validity of Digital Humanities as a scholarly field. Or, there's a call to educate administrators, tenure and promotion committees, and colleagues. Inevitably, there's a misunderstanding that Digital Humanities means online publishing or online teaching. And, this is where my non-R1 is right now.

In Fall 2012, I taught 120 students, including an online Intro to Digital Humanities course for our School of Information and Library Science. Because faculty are engaging more and more with students
via email, our physical office hours are required for only two hours per week. I took that to heart so I
could finish up some other projects leftover from my sabbatical. That was a mistake. Though I spend
countless hours responding to emails, that Fall, I had a line of students waiting to see me in person. And
then there was the Skype and Google Hangout schedule of individual meetings. I am a hard grader, but
I'm also available to help them reach those grades. So, in order to give them what they need, I need more
hours in the day. That's what it's like to teach at a non-R1, even a non-liberal arts college.

Now, do some Digital Humanities on top of that. And do the Digital Humanities that the Short Guide
suggests? My students wouldn't gain anything by being the peons of a Digital Humanities project. My
students will gain much by being the advisory board or the editorial board of a project, though.

In the Fall, I taught 3 non-DH courses, but turned them into Digital Humanities courses without the
benefit of a Digital Humanities center or even a computer lab – primarily because the College of Arts &
Humanities doesn't have its own computer lab. I use the DIY ethos for Digital Humanities. Or maybe it's
Rambo-Digital Humanities. In past years, I've been sneaking Digital Humanities into my courses, not
requesting student evaluations in those courses, experimenting with student knowledge of technology. In
Fall 2012, I determined not to do that any longer and created Digital Humanities assignments that really
define Digital Pedagogy: Tweeting as a Literary Character, revising a Wikipedia entry, several blog posts
about MMORPG play, constructing visual essays. It's not the Digital Humanities that this latest Short
Guide proposes, but it's Digital Humanities in the sense of Digital Pedagogy.
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Teaching with Primary Sources

Resources for primary source pedagogy at Brown and beyond.

Virtual sessions and guidance

If you're interested in incorporating a session, activity, or assignment into your remotely-taught class in spring or summer 2021, our teaching staff can help! To request a class session, please complete this form, or contact Heather Cole, Head of Special Collections Instruction to talk through possibilities.

Digital Pedagogy

- TPS Collective
  The Teaching with Primary Sources Collective site, a project from the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association for Research Libraries, collects assignment ideas, discussions, and other resources for instructors and library staff.

- TPS Collective Crowdsourse for moving archival and special collections instruction online
  Teaching with Primary Sources Collection community crowdsourced resource; a continuously-growing Google Doc

- Early Printed Books
  Resource for instructors and researchers working with books from the early modern period. Includes pedagogical exercises and tools.

- Working with EEBO and ECCO
  A how-to lesson on working with Early English Books Online and
Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, focusing both on the basics of searching and navigating interfaces

- **Teaching with rare materials in epidemics**
  Discussion with many helpful links.

- **Teaching digitally with primary sources**
  This white paper explores the opportunities and challenges of teaching with digital primary sources, including relevant literacies and issues in finding, evaluating, and citing digital primary sources, emphasizing ethical use and concluding with existing models for teaching.

- **Teacharchives.org**
  Resources and exercises on teaching with primary sources, from the Brooklyn Historical Society.

- **Teaching the History of Cartography: A Case for the Marriage of Special Collections and Distance Learning**
  This paper discusses the ways in which special collections resources (maps, atlases and related materials) can be used in conjunction with existing distance learning technologies to expand access to educational opportunities in the field.

### Resources for assignments and activities

Exploring ways to incorporate engagement with primary sources in your course while teaching remotely? This guide provides a selection of ideas and resources to inspire new modes of research and discovery.

- **Teaching materiality online**
  Guide to virtual primary source exploration from Duke University's Rubenstein Library.

- **What's a digital image?**
  From earlyprintedbooks.com; this exercise encourages students to look at digital images of books as images, rather than as transparent representations of a book.

- **A book's "horizon of expectations"**
From earlyprintedbooks.com, this exercise encourages students to think about what sort of context might have shaped the reception of a book when it was published.

- **Omeka**
  Open-source web publishing platforms for sharing digital collections and creating media-rich online exhibits. Easy-to-use tool for group and individual student projects.

- **Scalar**
  A free, open source authoring and publishing platform that’s designed to make it easy for authors to write long-form, born-digital scholarship online. Scalar enables users to assemble media from multiple sources (including archival collections) and juxtapose them with their own writing in a variety of ways, with minimal technical expertise required. A helpful intro to Scalar can be found here: https://scalar.usc.edu/works/intro-to-scalar-1/index

- **Scribe framework: crowdsourced transcription**
  Scribe is a highly configurable, open source framework for setting up community transcription projects around handwritten or OCR-resistant texts. Scribe is particularly geared toward digital humanities, library, and citizen science projects seeking to extract highly structured, normalizable data from a set of digitized materials (e.g. historical manuscripts, account ledgers, catalog cards, or maritime logbooks).

- **The Archaeology of Reading exercises**
  Using resources on the Archaeology of Reading site, these exercises (with related reading assignments) examine collectors and readers and the ways marginalia interacts with a printed text.

- **Smithsonian Digital Transcription Center**
  Join 14,674 "volunpeers" to add more to the total 515,472 pages of field notes, diaries, ledgers, logbooks, currency proof sheets, photo albums, manuscripts, biodiversity specimens labels that have been collaboratively transcribed and reviewed since June 2013.

- **National Archives Citizen Archivist program**
Assist the U.S. National Archives in tagging and transcribing material from its collections.

- **History of the Book coursebook**
  
  The History of the Book is a networked resource focused on the production and reception of materials related to the history of the book and literacy technologies, broadly conceived. This ongoing project is being developed by Professor Johanna Drucker, working with staff and students based at UCLA to provide an online environment for research and learning.

**Freely-available online collections of rare books & manuscripts**

This is not an exhaustive list, but a selection of easily-navigable online resources on a variety of topics. Contact Brown University Library staff for additional resources related to other topics, or browse our other research guides. A crowdsourced list of online collections can be found here, and another comprehensive list compiled by the Bibliographical Society of America can be found here.

**North American Collections**

- Digitized material from the Brown University Library
  
  Browse Brown's collections of music, poetry, military history, American history, the history of Brown University, and more.

- **John Carter Brown Library**
  
  Digitized materials focusing on the colonial Americas.

- **Digital Public Library of America**
  
  Online exhibitions, primary source sets for teaching, and other resources from collections across the U.S.

- **New York Public Library Digital Collections**
  
  Hundreds of thousands of items, on topics ranging from menus to LGBTQ+ history to dance, science, and much more.

- **Smithsonian Libraries: Digital Collections**
Over 35,000 digitized books and manuscripts as well as digitized photo collections, ephemera, and seed catalogs.

- Umbra Search
  Over 730,000 items from U.S. libraries relating to all aspects of African American culture and history.

- National Library of Medicine Digital Collections (Bethesda, MD)
  History of Medicine worldwide, especially Historical Anatomies: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/home.html

- Biodiversity Heritage Library
  Global collection of works on natural history.

**European Collections**

- British Library Digital Collections
  Includes materials digitized from with the BL's collections, including maps from Britain and around the world, sound recordings, illuminated manuscripts, 19th century books using early photographs for illustration, and others.

- Europeana
  Interface available in English and 26 other European languages. Cultural heritage from European museums, galleries, libraries and archives; includes material from research libraries throughout the European Union.

- Plantin Moretus
  Interface in English
  Publications on bibliophilia, printing & publishing, and book history
  25,000 printed books, 600+ manuscripts from this Dutch printing museum.

- The Archaeology of Reading
  A fully-digitized collection of early modern printed books with marginalia from John Dee and Gabriel Harvey.

**Asian Collections**

- East Asia Digital Library
Operated collaboratively by The National Library of Korea and the National Diet Library in Japan, the EADL makes primary materials about East Asia available free of charge and in multilingual format.

Resources requiring a Brown login

- Arte Publico Hispanic Historical Collections
  Series 1 presents a digital collection of historical content pertaining to U.S. Hispanic history, literature and culture, while Series 2 presents manuscript, book, and newspaper content in the areas of Hispanic American civil rights, religion, and women’s rights ranging from the eighteenth through the twentieth century.

- Early American Imprints
  Full-text access to the 36,000 American books, pamphlets and broadsides from 1639-1819

- Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)
  Includes books, pamphlets, essays, broadsides and more. It contains works published in the UK during the 18th century plus thousands from elsewhere. ECCO is primarily in English, but does include other languages.

- Early English Books Online (EEBO)
  From the first book published in English through the age of Spenser and Shakespeare, this collection contains about 100,000 titles on English literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, theology, music, fine arts, education, mathematics, and science.

- Early European Books
  Traces the history of printing in Europe from its origins through to the close of the seventeenth century, offering full-color, high-resolution facsimile images of rare and hard-to-access printed sources.

- HathiTrust Digital Library
  A partnership of academic & research institutions, offering a collection of millions of book and ejournal titles digitized from...
libraries around the world.

- Nineteenth Century Collections Online
  Focusing on primary source collections of the long nineteenth century.

Crowdsourced & Community Digital Collections

- Our Marathon
  A crowdsourced archive of pictures, videos, stories, and social media related to the Boston Marathon; the bombing on April 15, 2013; the subsequent search, capture, and trial of the individuals who planted the bombs; and the city’s healing process.

- Charlie Archive
  Documenting the vigorous debate about fundamental political and ethical issues that followed the 2015 terrorist attacks on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

- Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Digital Humanities Projects & Resources

- Diversify your book history syllabus
  A crowdsourced collection of books and articles relating to all aspects of book and printing history and material culture.

- Archives & Social Justice Reading List
  Reading list that includes curated resources of interest as well as an outline of selected readings by the reading group hosted at the University of Texas at Austin loosely facilitated throughout the years by LLILAS Benson and Harry Ransom Center staff.
Find unique copies of 19th- and early 20th-century books on library shelves

SUBMIT A BOOK

Thousands of old library books bear fascinating traces of the past. Readers wrote in their books, and left pictures, letters, flowers, locks of hair, and other things between their pages. We need your help identifying them in the stacks of academic libraries. Together we can find out more about what books were and how they were used by their original owners, while also proving the value of maintaining rich print collections in our libraries.

CURRENTLY COLLECTING IMAGES and CITATIONS of MARKED COPIES OF LIBRARY BOOKS PUBLISHED BEFORE 1923. We are focusing on CIRCULATING AND RESEARCH COLLECTIONS (not rare books or special collections). Join the search!

Download the Data Set for Book Traces: Civil War Era Readers and Their Books in Virginia Libraries from UVA's LibraData:


Explore our CLIR-funded project at the University of Virginia:

http://booktraces.library.virginia.edu

Search the Book Traces database of over 12,000 University of Virginia books:

https://booktraces.lib.virginia.edu/

Now Available!

Book Traces: Nineteenth-Century Readers and the Future of the Library

In Book Traces, Andrew M. Stauffer adopts what he calls "guided serendipity" as a tactic in pursuit of two goals: first, to read nineteenth-century poetry through the clues and objects earlier readers left in their books and, second,
to defend the value of keeping the physical volumes on the shelves. Finding in such books of poetry the inscriptions, annotations, and insertions made by their original owners, and using them as exemplary case studies, Stauffer shows how the physical, historical book enables a modern reader to encounter poetry through the eyes of someone for whom it was personal.
March 2015
February 2015
January 2015
December 2014
November 2014
October 2014
September 2014
August 2014
July 2014
June 2014
May 2014
April 2014
Pedagogy

Interested in using Book Traces in the classroom? You are in the right place. This is a directory of resources intended to help you develop, adapt, and implement learning activities related to book history through the materials available via the Book Traces project. What research questions could students ask and/or what research projects could students develop using these materials?

We want to hear from you! Send us your assignments and ideas: email Amanda Licastro [amanda.licastro_at_gmail.com]

**Would you like students to engage in transcription work?**

**Would it benefit students to learn how to categorize, tag, or otherwise identify and sort these materials?**

**Transcription Assignment #1**

For a limited time, students can curate materials on our "From the Page" site: https://fromthepage.com/khj5c/book-traces-civil-war-readers-and-their-books-in-virginia-libraries

**Would you like students to engage in data mining/visualization techniques?**

Downloadable dataset coming soon

**Would you like students to engage in historical or genealogy research diving into one annotator or donor?**

**Genealogical Research Assignment #1**

Two sample essays:
https://booktraces.library.virginia.edu/reflections-on-researching-book-traces/
https://booktraces.library.virginia.edu/book-find-the-partridges-live-on/

More sample essays:
Would you like students to discover and upload examples of annotations in local library collections?

Stacks Search Assignment #1 [by Katherine Harris]

Are you interested in annotation as readerly practice, in analog and digital formats?

Annotation Assignment #1

Amanda Licastro, PhD
Director of Pedagogical Initiatives
Emerging and Digital Literacy Designer
University of Pennsylvania
KEYWORD
Annotation

CURATOR
Paul Schacht, State University of New York at Geneseo

CURATORIAL STATEMENT
When the Renaissance humanist Erasmus offered advice on the best way to write in the margins of books, he both “reinforced the common practice of many centuries” and paved the way for later champions of annotation as a pedagogical tool. Twentieth-century philosopher Mortimer Adler advised readers that although marking up...

Read More...

ARTIFACTS

Annotation Assignment

Jonathan Burton’s assignment uses social annotation to sharpen students’ close reading skills and teach collaboration. Working in teams, students select passages from the assigned reading that they consider “rich in figurative language, curious in form or otherwise abundant in detail,” transcribe them in Google Docs files, and annotate them. In a second round, they respond to some of their classmates’ annotations. Finally, students draw on their annotated transcriptions to produce brief “problem papers.” This assignment takes advantage of a simple digital tool with a very shallow learning curve to move students past the “solitary-reader-meets-text” model of textual analysis and scaffold their development of a more comprehensive argument. It can be easily adapted to any text.

Annotating The Elements of Style

Laura Lisabeth

Laura Lisabeth, Saint John’s University, NY
Using PBWorks, a group of Laura Lisabeth’s students produced this artifact for a class she describes in her article “Empowering Education with Social Annotation and Wikis,” published in Web Writing: Why and How for Liberal Arts Teaching and Learning. This anthology of essays on digital writing pedagogy was itself assembled through an open peer-review process. (The CommentPress version of Lisabeth’s essay may be found at webwriting2013.trincoll.edu/citation-annotation/lisabeth-2013/?doing_wp_cron=1442324637.128830907290039062500.) Lisabeth asked students to respond to Strunk and White’s Elements of Style—a freighted cultural object—encouraging them to comment not only discursively but also in ways that make use of links (literal or figurative) to other objects. This emphasis on objects deliberately pulls against the conventional notion of social annotation as conversation.

Alan Jacobs

Like many of the other artifacts collected here, Alan Jacobs’ assignment is designed to encourage close reading. But Jacobs’ explanation of the assignment also invites students to consider both their reading and their writing historically. Pointing out that commentary is a genre, he questions the cultural assumption that it is “passive” in comparison to the genre most students are asked to master in college: the argumentative essay. Jacobs has students compile an anthology of writings in CommentPress, a plug-in for the WordPress blogging platform, then comment on these writings collaboratively. As he points out, the anthology, too, is a genre, and together the two genres of commentary and anthology represent major traditions of religious reading.

P. A. Baer

P. A. Baer’s annotation assignment for a course on Old Norse Gods and heroes was developed as part of a course on digital pedagogy taught at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI), by Katherine D. Harris, Diane Jakacki, and Jentery Sayers. It illustrates the value of social annotation for teaching students to read images as well as text. Baer’s assignment has students use Aannotate, a platform that permits users to select image regions for annotation. She asks students to think of an unfamiliar image from Norse
Advanced, Student agency

Video Annotation Assignment

Jennifer Proctor

Jennifer Proctor's video annotation assignment uses an open-source platform for which the creator, Mozilla, has chosen to discontinue support: PopcornMaker. It thus illustrates one of the risks of social annotation and of digital pedagogy in general. However, it is included here not for the choice of platform but for the shape of the assignment and the fact that the annotated object is a moving image. Proctor's assignment establishes a very particular framework for the student's annotations, asking students to consider, for example, how reality is mediated and processed in the clip they are to annotate. Any platform that supports video annotation, such as SocialBook, could work for this assignment; another option would be to use open-source video annotation software such as that being developed by the Open Video Annotation Project.

Sample of Student Conversation

Bob Stein

This screenshot of an upper-level British literature survey class is included in Bob Stein's blog post “SocialBook in Action,” which illustrates the range and power of SocialBook as a collaborative annotation platform. Readers can establish social identities with avatars and belong to multiple groups. They can engage in rich, detailed interpretive discussion in the margins of a text, and they can connect these discussions to their broader social presence online; for example, by “liking” a marginal comment on Facebook. As Stein points out in his blogpost, the “emerging class of applications” to which SocialBook and other platforms collected here belong might be called “[collaborative] thinking processors” as opposed to reading environments or word processors. The stronger...
the social ties in a platform for collaborative annotation, the greater
the likelihood that a class moves from conversation to a genuine
sense of community.

Instructor Comment in *The Readers’ Thoreau*

Paul Schacht

I have included my own comment in the margin of Henry David
Thoreau’s *Walden* here to illustrate how an instructor’s annotation
can make connections between a text under discussion and other
texts in a variety of media. An instructor’s comment can also
prompt students to consider a particular passage in the larger
context of the work or in the context of ideas. This social edition of
*Walden* can be found at *The Readers’ Thoreau*, a site that embeds
a library of Henry David Thoreau’s works in a social network built
with *Commons In A Box* and *CommentPress*: Kristen Case
(University of Maine, Farmington) and I describe how the network
operates and our experience teaching with it in "Reading
Deliberately: Thoreau Online.” Like *SocialBook*, *The Readers’
Thoreau* attempts to build a sense of community among readers by
extending their connections beyond the margins of the text.

Annotation Lesson Plan

Rachel Arteaga

Rachel Arteaga’s lesson plan for annotating a portion of *Moby-Dick*
using MIT’s *Annotation Studio* not only encourages close reading
and collaboration but also illustrates the variety of textual features
that can be brought to students’ attention through annotation. It
also encourages students to think about those features
taxonomically by taking advantage of *Annotation Studio*’s ability to
accept comment tags. Arteaga divides her students into five groups
focused on annotating the following: vocabulary; cultural, literary,
and geographical references; claims; tone, language, and syntax;
and social contexts.

Guidelines for Annotating Fiction

Meera Nair

Meera Nair’s “Annotation Exercises for Fiction Boot Camp” has been
included here for its attempt to define what an “excellent fiction
annotation” should contain, as well as for its use of *Genius* as an
annotation platform. Most of the social annotation assignments collected in this keyword ask students to generate interpretive or explanatory annotations; Nair’s does the same, but her assignment also asks them to comment on passages with an eye toward craft—focusing, for example, on characterization, scenic presentation, and thematic development. Genius is a platform that many students will already be familiar with, and it is one where they can join a larger community of readers interested in annotating literature (particularly song lyrics) collaboratively. Nair describes her use of social annotation to teach fiction in her essay “Annotate the Plot: Using Annotation to Write Better Fiction.”

**Related Materials**

*Annotations at Harvard.* Harvard University, 2019, annotations.harvard.edu/.

*Candid 2.0.* New York Public Library. candide.npnylg.org/text/.

*Hypothesis* YouTube Channel. www.youtube.com/user/hypths.

*MIT Annotation Studio* YouTube Channel. www.youtube.com/channel/UC701jx4rVA2eQSgjKy_g.


**Works Cited**


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Related Keywords

Archive | Community | Curation | Language Learning | Network | Online | Open | Reading

Text Analysis | Video

This site is part of Humanities Commons. Explore other sites on this network or register to build your own.
Book history pedagogy often teaches students the hands-on skills of book production as a means of understanding the social and theoretical concerns of authorship, reading, and publishing. In book history classes students edit texts (Kelemen 160), make paper (Barrett 146), and even read by candlelight (Stam 74). Book history pedagogy has been drawn to this method of combining theory and practice because it allows students to focus on the many different people involved in the creation of any kind of text who have an impact on a text’s interpretation. As book history scholarship has become as concerned with digitized texts as physical ones, it seems a fitting time to widen book history’s practical pedagogy into the methodologies of the digital humanities and have students experience the communications circuits of online texts as well. In my senior assignment course at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), as students both develop and reflect on print and digital media, I ask them to replace a competitive, evolutionary narrative in which successive innovations replace outmoded technologies with a model more akin to Susan Gustafson’s work, which explains that we should study “verbal media as always emerging, always in flux, and always in relation to one another” (353). By inhabiting roles related to media production students begin to interrogate the ways in which print and digital media inform and influence one another.

This article discusses the layout and outcomes of my senior assignment course focused on the interplay between the fields of book history and the digital humanities. SIUE’s senior assignment program is a nationally recognized capstone experience in which students create large-scale senior projects; in this English department version, the seminar course culminates with a fifteen-page research paper. SIUE is a master’s comprehensive university with a mixture of traditional college students living in dorms, commuting students with families, first generation college students, and students transferring from community colleges. The last time I taught the course, two of the students came to SIUE directly from high school, one was a transfer student, four had children at home, another was returning for her second degree, and several were English Education majors about to begin their student teaching in the fall. This is usually the students’ first experience both with book history and with web production. The small class size and advanced student level makes the senior assignment course an ideal
environment for pedagogical experimentation. Students are prepared for some of the unconventional aspects of this course even if they are unfamiliar with the content. My version of the course requires students to create rare book exhibits in both physical and digital forms in order to explore theoretical questions about the production, dissemination, and reception of texts in both print and digital forms.¹

I hold the class in SIUE’s library, a space that is itself engaged with the interplay between print and digital forms. The class met full time in their conference room and computer labs, creating a direct partnership with library faculty that has proved beneficial to students. This gives the students first-hand knowledge of the ways in which print and digital media interconnect in a research library’s holdings. Our library’s archivist, Steve Kerber, and librarian, Lydia Jackson, provide students with instruction about the co-existence of print and digital resources on site. Although the university’s special collections department is small, it holds a variety of artifacts representative of book technologies from different historical periods and some nineteenth-century journals of local interest that I incorporate into the course alongside digital manifestations of similar artifacts.

Students are better able to analyze discourses about materiality and digitization if they produce both kinds of media. As the course’s core assignment, student groups apply their theoretical readings to interpretive case studies and create physical and digital exhibits that use the university’s special collections for materials and are later displayed in the library’s presentation cases. Students design their digital exhibits using Omeka, an open-access content management system for collecting and exhibiting artifacts, developed at George Mason University. Students derive the images for their online exhibits by photographing the items in their physical cases. Like WordPress, Omeka is free to download, but users must host the site on their own servers. The sites are open for public viewing, but the sites’ dashboards (or working spaces) can be password protected using students’ e-IDs for authentication. Omeka is user friendly and requires very little additional technical support.

Although creating exhibits is perhaps not as hands on as having students bind books or write code, it allows them to participate in many of the interpretive roles we discuss in class while engaging with historical texts. Students become authors as they write original content for the exhibits. They photograph and manipulate images. They edit the work of other students. They publish their content on the web. Finally, they act as audience members for their classmates’ work.

The exhibits that students create are themselves meta-narratives about audience, intentionality, and medium. I group course content around three broadly conceived case study themes that have both historical and contemporary resonances—“The Text in Time,” “Everything is an Edition,” and “Authorship and Authenticity.” Each student group is assigned one of these themes to explore in their exhibits. In the latest version of the class, the “Text in Time” group focused on the evolution of slang dictionaries.
starting with Samuel Johnson’s Preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language*, which makes distinctions about what words are worthy of documentation, moving through two centuries of content-specific slang collections, and ending with the online Urban Dictionary. Their work considers paths of influence among the slang dictionaries and how the shape of these eighteenth-century catalogs of “vulgarity” compare to Johnson’s tome. The group organized both their physical and digital exhibits chronologically, but the physical version of their exhibit privileged the size and variety of slang dictionaries, while they used their digital exhibits to expound more on the dictionaries’ publication histories.

The “Everything is an Edition” group explored Walt Whitman’s corpus and poetic influence, and asked why his writing has been such a prime subject for digital humanities scholarship. The group was particularly interested in the cooptation and adaptation of Whitman’s words, and their web exhibit included more multimedia exploration than the other groups because they provided excerpts from Levi’s jeans “Go Forth” advertising campaign and the Woody Guthrie/Wilco/Billy Bragg song, “Walt Whitman’s Niece.” Both their physical and online exhibits adapted the metaphor of grass, seed, and organic materials to consider how Whitman’s words sprouted in unlikely places. The group was particularly focused on the question of how much authorial control Whitman would have wanted to exercise over these later adaptations given that he so carefully crafted *Leaves of Grass* during his lifetime, possibly printing most of the 1855 edition himself and playing a continuous role in the typography and cover design of all subsequent editions.

The “Authorship and Authenticity” students each took their own approach to the theme, covering topics as diverse as canonicity, the censorship of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, fan fiction, and the authorizing prefaces of Frederick Douglass’ multiple re-writings of his biography. One student included several examples of books that have been attributed to the same author for years, even though the author’s heirs, as in the case of Frank Herbert’s *Dune* series, are now writing them. This group’s work explored the tenuous strands of authorial control through multiple lenses, and because they included four diverse case studies, their exhibits illuminated the many forms of collaboration present in every interpretive act.

The work of creating these exhibits begins in the first class. In its first version the course focused on transatlantic book history of the nineteenth century, and students turned in their exhibits a week before their final papers. I have since revised the syllabus to address broader theoretical issues related to book history and the digital humanities so that students can draw on their previous experiences in course work and literary interests as they develop their major papers. Students who had previously taken a course in the history of the English language chose the slang dictionaries topic, and indicated that looking at the physical texts gave them a new understanding of how readers interacted with these texts, some of which even included lined paper so that readers could record words they heard on the streets.
around them. One of the English education students read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* for a class on secondary education pedagogy. She carried her earlier explorations of censorship through to an examination of E.W. Kemble’s original illustrations for the novel in her exhibit, which ultimately led her to a rewarding paper topic arguing that the illustrations and Twain’s text satirize minstrelsy.

In order to encourage this kind of working freedom for students, the syllabus emphasizes the relationship between theory and practice rather than specific literary readings. In each class period students use a case study to explore one of the themes that they will later use to frame their exhibits. I use books in the library’s special collections department and online resources to illuminate theoretical readings from Finkelstein and McCleery’s *The Book History Reader* and Erick Kelemen’s *Textual Editing and Criticism: An Introduction*. These thematic case studies necessitate conversations about variability, intentionality, and format within specific cultural contexts. For example, one of the “Everything is an Edition” case studies examines various editions of Susan Warner’s domestic nineteenth-century American novel, *The Wide, Wide World*. Warner’s novel has been reprinted over one hundred times since its original publication in 1851. As a primary example of the American domestic novel in the evangelical tradition, *The Wide, Wide World’s* versions reveal not just the history of the text, but also the shift in literary respectability away from domestic novels like Warner’s. As a class, we look at photocopies of Warner’s manuscript, examine the first edition, peruse nineteenth-century reprints of the text, study a 1986 scholarly edition of the novel, and examine several online reproductions, including Google Books’ black-and-white scans derived from microfilm, Project Gutenberg’s HTML version, and several images of the book available on *The Wide, Wide World Digital Archive*. Students need only a basic introduction to the book’s content to begin to see the theoretical issues of authorial authenticity, textual manipulation, and social influence at work in the book’s many editions and variant illustrations.

Rather than moving through a chronology of technological change, students bounce between physical and digital examples, with special emphasis on new media productions of historical texts. This format helps students question common misconceptions about technological change, such as those Robert Darnton recently outlined in a blog post for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, including, “the book is dead,” “the future is digital,” and “all information is now available online.” Students in this course instead witness the ways in which media mutually inform and influence one another. Our only literary text, Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000), serves as a base example of this print/digital interplay. This novel translates the supposed hypertextuality of the web onto the printed page, forcing readers to shift forward and back through footnotes to appendices, at points turning the novel this way and that to read its unconventional print. This novel with no epicenter serves as a meditation on the shift away from the stable metaphor of the embodied book.
provides the class with an organic introduction into the study of book history and the digital humanities because it breaks down binaries of material print and virtual web. While in some respects the novel suggests that ordering is futile, the text also sees this quest to “make sense” of knowledge as a necessary human endeavor that is central to our anxieties about a rampant information age.

Smaller activities encourage students to reflect on materiality in relation to both physical and digital media prior to completing their exhibits. After lectures on book technologies and terminologies, students visit the special collections holdings of another library in the region to examine an object that they think may be of interest to their exhibits and/or their final papers. Students visited Washington University, the St. Louis Mercantile Library, and the Missouri History Museum and Research Center. This assignment uses tools of book history: Students develop detailed bibliographic analyses, photograph books digitally, and write a three-page paper that discusses the relationship between the book’s text and paratext. This early work prepares students to close-read paratextual details prior to completing their exhibit work and final papers. In the course’s most recent iteration I tell students about book history scholarship on a variety of material texts. Students examined railroad logs, dictionaries, graphic novels, and letters in addition to more conventional literary texts. One student subsequently wrote her final paper on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)’s *Little Red Songbook* because of her success with this preliminary assignment.

I encourage students to apply the same descriptive skill to digital texts. They write a review of an edition of a book represented in a digital humanities archive, paying particular attention to how archives explain their own construction, how they display the books they represent, and how they describe the physicality of these books for their users. Students often notice that some sites include only HTML visualization but not image-based facsimiles. In other cases, there is no information about the book’s size or color. Sites rarely represent the fore-edges and mechanics of a book’s motion upon opening—details that can explain a book’s quality, intended audience, and level of use. Students also consider features of these digital editions that are unique to the medium, such as the capability to use the browser’s “find” function to search for a particular word or phrase. In a review of *The William Blake Archive*, one student noted that Blake’s art seemed privileged above his poetry because of the emphasis on screen calibration and the multiple comparisons available for individual prints. As with their bibliographic analysis, this exercise asks students to think critically about how the medium influences interpretation.

This textual work comes to fruition when students read Sylvia Plath’s *Ariel: The Restored Edition*, a print facsimile of Plath’s original manuscript, and develop a rationale, in class, for how they would visualize one of the poems on the web, taking our theoretical readings into account. This activity allows us to discuss the possible benefits and disadvantages of specific approaches to the digital medium, without reference to whether their
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visualization is practical. This semester one group argued that a digital
image of Plath’s manuscript was the only reliable method for displaying the
text, whereas another group imagined an encoded text with links to
to changes made in Ted Hughes’s edited version of the poem. The last group
was flummoxed by how best to represent the possible orderings of their
poem within the context of the full manuscript. Students realized that
online editions frequently experience a tension between readability and
hypertextuality. The more textual and contextual elements a digital text
attempts to demonstrate, the less readable it becomes, as we discussed.

Activities like these, which have students critique, visualize, and
manipulate digital texts, put them in the role of scholar rather than student.
They establish an ownership of their own intellectual development
through building things rather than only reading about them. At the 2011
MLA, and later on his blog, Stephen Ramsay controversially defined the
digital humanities as being about “building things.” Ramsay’s statement was
divisive because other scholars assumed he was excluding theoretical
approaches to New Media that study rather than manipulate or visualize.
I would argue, however, that the most productive aspects of the digital
humanities arise when building leads to theorization, and it is this process,
unique to the scholarly production of the digital humanist, that is neces-
sary for the undergraduate classroom. According to Tara McPherson,
“hands-on engagement with digital forms re-orient scholarly imagination
...because scholars come to realize that they understand their argument
and their objects of study differently, even better, if they approach them
through multiple modalities and emergent and interconnected forms of lit-
eracy” (121). These scholarly realizations that arise from “doing” and
“building” are just as valuable for student researchers. Undergraduates need
not know every intricacy of the Text Encoding Initiative’s standards for
sustainable web development in order to benefit from building things.
Allowing them to participate in the visualization of rare books will lead
them to valuable questions about the distinctions between web and print
and the future of information storage.

Ideally, students’ exhibit case studies should address how form influ-
ences interpretation and vice versa. The assignment guide states, “You
should ask a worthwhile research question related to your theme that you
answer with the items in, content of, and design of your exhibits.” I pres-
ent examples of the exhibits that students have created in previous semes-
ters and describe my own experiences with collaboration and the process-
es of organizing and designing a web site. These examples help students
limit the scope of their projects. They consider whether earlier students
have been successful at manipulating color and pattern in their physical
exhibits. This semester students observed that exhibits that present multi-
ple perspectives on the same question are more successful and engaging
than those that provide didactic answers.

Groups meet once a week during class. Students decide together how
to break up the work and develop a timeline for their project progress. In
their groups, students talk about their work habits, their past experiences with web development, and how they think they might strategize to complete the exhibit work. Their assignment guide includes the strategic plan of a hypothetical group so that students have one example of how they might organize their workload, but they are free to develop their own.

During this period of conceptualization and planning, students often need an additional theoretical perspective to encourage them to think about how an audience will relate to their exhibits. Most students have spent little time considering the implications a public might have for a text’s eventual format. Students read Michael Warner’s “Publics and Counterpublics,” in which he argues that the “public” is a constructed imaginary that “exists only as the end for which books are published, shows are broadcast, Web sites are posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced” (50). According to Warner, media cannot exist without a public, and publics cannot exist without media. Warner argues that we have developed a cultural imaginary of a concrete and defined public made up of individual citizens who are simultaneously reading the same books or newspapers, but the web is challenging the stability of constructed publics through its indeterminate temporality and spatiality. We cannot as easily imagine the bound and limited area of a public in the non-limited context of the web. This is a difficult reading for students, but it helps them to think critically about their own imagined public.

Students explore Warner’s concept of public by visiting exhibits currently on display in the region and analyzing how they develop an argument through their visual and textual explanations. In the first course, students visited the Lincoln Museum in Springfield, Illinois. One student observed how the experience of walking through Lincoln’s life chronologically with the sensorial influences of sound and image forced her into an emotionally charged state as she approached the final exhibit depicting Lincoln’s casket and funeral procession. The final room accompanies pictures of Lincoln’s funeral with a life-size replica of Lincoln’s casket and loud funereal music which, the student explained, conscripted her into a state of collective national feeling, forcing her into identifying with Lincoln’s nineteenth-century sentimental mourners. Experiences such as this allow students to think about the physical exhibit as more than simple image and text.

Students also view digital exhibits, such as *Mark Twain in His Times* and *Publisher’s Bindings Online*. These sites have detailed historical and contextual apparatuses to support the digital objects they include, and they provide students with models for considering how they might write for an online audience. After reading pieces from *The Yahoo! Style Guide* and *Writing from the Web*, we discuss assumptions about audience and composition for a variety of media. These guides discuss how to successfully break up text to avoid unnecessary scrolling and writing shorter sentences to interest shorter attention spans. After this reading students engage in a constructive conversation about the assumptions we make about reading and
the impact of format. This is a pivotal moment for analyzing material versus
digital environments, and students begin considering how to best engage
their audience in the design of their sites.

In order to apply their reading of Warner and their position as audi-
ence members to their role as exhibit builders, each group develops an
analysis of its audience. They consider who will interact with their mate-
rials, what might attract them, and how they will respond. Students, who
have passed through the library’s presentation space, can imagine other stu-
dents perusing the cases on their way to the computer terminals and they
have developed basic ideas about how to attract this population. However,
students also realize that the audience for the web exhibit frustrates their
initial expectations. While they can imagine a specific location, time, and
even library clientele, they have no idea who might be looking at their
website or when or where or if it might be visited. We discuss how their
perceptions of technology and its uses relate to their own preferences for
material culture. Although these students may use web sources to write
their papers, they are English majors who usually prefer physical copies of
books. They have also been in a variety of English classes in which profes-
sors value print sources more highly than digital counterparts, and so they
have developed a skepticism about online media of all kinds that they do
not bring to their experiences of print. These conversations allow us both
to dissect the concept of audience as historical authors and publishers
would have understood it, while remaining critical of the ways that stu-
dents are imagining and conscripting an audience of their own. In teach-
ing evaluations one student noted: “This class gave me a whole new per-
spective on audience; I wasn’t just worried about what Professor DeSpain
wanted. I kept thinking about students in the library and my other profes-
sors. At the same time, I knew that I couldn’t really know fully what these
other people might think about my work, and I started to understand why
my intentions were only part of the puzzle.”

As students work on these exhibits, they draw diagrams of how items
will be placed in the cases and how they will hierarchically distribute data
on their sites. This work necessarily involves analyses of the differences
between two- and three-dimensional space. Students begin to notice the
limitations of the two-dimensionality of the web. Omeka allows students
to experiment with visualization and archival sustainability without requir-
ing complex encoding, but its “what you see is what you get” exhibiting
templates also greatly limit student manipulation. These templates offer few
choices for organizing images and text, and students have very limited pos-
sibilities outside of those confines. I provide students with some basic HTML
tags in their Omeka instructions, and a particularly well-trained student
can easily manipulate Omeka’s code, but the typical English major does not
have such refined web skills. For the group working on Walt Whitman’s
multiple editions, Omeka’s limitations were particularly pronounced. Their
physical exhibit included a four-foot-long paper timeline comparing
Whitman’s editions of Leaves of Grass to events occurring in US history.
Although a timeline is not outside the realm of possibility when working with code, Omeka’s exhibiting software does not allow for this kind of flexibility; the best that they could do was write out a less dynamic timeline. This group was also hoping to allow users a space to manipulate the text of “Song of Myself” and create their own edition of the poem by dragging and dropping lines into an order of the user’s choosing, but they realized that interactivity could also be greatly limited in a web environment without the necessary technological skills.

Students in the last course noted how isolating their work with Omeka could be compared to the work of implementing the physical exhibits. On the night we build the library cases, students sit around tables sharing paper cutters, holding up the lids of the cases for one another, and running back and forth to the printer as they revise ideas collaboratively and find errors in their copy. The “Authorship and Authenticity” group devised their work so independently that each member developed her own small case study, and yet the communal tables of the library forced them to help one another proofread, develop labels, and position objects in the cases. In contrast, when they developed their Omeka exhibits, they sent all of their copy to one web-savvy student who did most of the work of making their objects viewable. In another group, one of the members was taking the class via Skype due to personal reasons, but even with these limitations this group did most of their work with one basic concept to which all four members equally contributed. I ask students to evaluate these work habits and the complexity of their collaborations after the exhibits assignment is completed: How often did they exchange ideas via e-mail prior to our night in the library? What various forms of communication did they use? How did their face-to-face work ultimately transform their web production as well? One student observed that just as print and digital textual production now seem to work alongside one another and influence one another, so too has collaboration become a complex entanglement of multiple forms of media. In their reflections students indicated that they sent e-mails, used Facebook to share images, exchanged items by uploading them to their Omeka sites, talked face-to-face, looked over paper drafts, and texted as they were completing their projects.

The mutual formulation of the two media also necessitates classroom conversations about documentation, searchability, and sustainability. One of the primary concerns about the digitization of rare books is that unlike their material counterparts, digital editions are more ephemeral. The digital humanities has attempted to address this concern by establishing a set of encoding standards developed by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), that allows for interoperability between systems and the ability to represent content regardless of technological change. A problem with the TEI standards is that there is a steep learning curve for faculty as well as students.

Omeka encourages students to address questions of reliability and sustainability without participating in advanced encoding. Because Omeka is primarily a space for collecting and visualizing digital artifacts, the software
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emphasizes the importance of adding items using Dublin Core, a set of metadata standards used for item description and cataloging. Although Dublin Core usually uses tags like TEI, Omeka simplifies the process through a data-entry interface. When students add an item to Omeka, they input descriptors into catalog fields such as title, subject, and description. Once an item is uploaded to the collection, the other students in the group can access it, and even a user not connected with the class can choose these items to create their own exhibits on the site; this makes it especially important for students to be thorough and specific as they add the Dublin Core information for each item.

Students also enter tags for each item that will allow for more comprehensive searching. As part of the exhibits assignment, each group creates a controlled vocabulary for their Omeka sites as an in-class exercise. Thus, students can see the complications that arise when a team of people who are involved in a digital project aren’t all using the same vocabulary and are rarely in the same room simultaneously. The “Everything is an Edition” group had a revealing conversation about how they should tag elements of Whitman’s various editions and what language they should use to describe the media used by the artists he influenced. This is an important lesson about human fallibility and manipulation that students often presume does not play a role in their online research. The exercise also has an impact during the second half of the semester when students begin research for their final papers. By then, students have direct knowledge of why they should try multiple databases and experiment with a variety of search terms because they also participate in the process of cataloging and tagging. In final evaluations, one student wrote, “inhabiting these roles made me much more consciously aware of the function and impact of texts, both scholarly and non-scholarly.”

Questions of textual manipulation also arise as we discuss the process of digitization itself. Using digital cameras, students experiment with the best angles, lighting, and backdrops. Students also learn how to optimize images for the web while still retaining the quality of the original file, and we discuss best archival practices for storing original data. A number of questions result from this practice: How does their image work relate to the physical object? What about the physical object can and cannot be conveyed digitally? What new characteristics does this object accrue through digitization? After their sites are completed we discuss comparative image quality and what that might mean for some of the texts displayed. The “Text in Time” group had a range of image angles, perspectives, and sizes in their finished site, and students discussed what was lost and gained via these digitization practices and decisions. This group noted in their evaluations that they should have developed a best-practice strategy for photography just as they had for tagging.

The success of this assignment depends on students constantly connecting their reading to their experiences with the exhibit and back again. At the course’s end, students reconsider the similarities and differences
between digital and print media. They use Robert Darnton’s idea of the communications circuit to create a visual map of the roles they inhabited as they developed their exhibits, drawing arrows to represent points of contact between their work and the work of other students. These become very complex graphics that are not nearly as clean as Darnton’s circular route from author to reader. This allows students to begin to ask deeper questions about historical texts too, and how every book has a story of production and reception worthy of examination. In the resulting conversation, most students agree that web production is more complicated and collaborative than they had imagined. They also note that, contrary to the myth of the web as a limitless space for visualization, most software built for ease of use inhibits the possibilities for displaying materials more than a physical space ever could.

This book history/digital humanities classroom ultimately gives students a more complex critical perspective of both physical and digital texts and breaks down easy print/digital binaries. One student explained, “learning about the practice of textual editing and the manner in which texts have evolved made me newly conscious of the various aspects of the process both online and in books. It made me more attentive to the roles I was assuming and reminded me to also be attentive to my audience. I’ve never written for an audience before, and it made me develop an entirely new style knowing that the Omeka exhibits would ultimately go live.” Classroom projects that encourage students to consider the crossover of print and digital media disrupt the myth of the internet as a space devoid of responsibility and human intervention. Involving students in the analysis of digital artifacts and in the process of creating their own digital projects gives them direct insight into the multiple participants who are involved in the formation of a text’s meaning, even as it challenges students’ perceptions of a straightforward technological progression from print to digital media.

Works Cited


<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/>.


Remixing the Canon: Shakespeare, Popular Culture, and the Undergraduate Editor

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A word cloud of student expectations on the first day of any Shakespeare course would likely include, in large font, the words scary, hard, complicated, and old (whether the language or just the bard himself). Students’ fear of Shakespeare has become such a standard at this point that the popular study-guide website, Sparknotes, has created a special section of the site called “No Fear Shakespeare.” The site purports to address readers’ unfamiliarity with early modern English by offering translations in “the kind of English people actually speak today” (“No Fear Shakespeare” 2017). Yet, although the plays’ language and syntax can certainly play a role in generating dread, it is perhaps Shakespeare’s status in the literary canon that seems most daunting. Undergraduate students in general and students of color and minorities in particular often associate Shakespeare with a rigid, colonialist history, and part of an elitist academic discourse community that is at best alienating and at worst inaccessible. In turn, teaching Shakespeare in undergraduate classrooms demands that instructors deconstruct Western assumptions about canonicity and cultural value.

Digital pedagogy can offer a productive way to address this inherent disconnect by fostering social knowledge production and creativity. Instructors interested in book history and bibliography in particular have a wide range of new digital tools available for developing collaborative, project-driven courses. Open-access, public editing platforms like Scalar facilitate this process by providing spaces where students learn to actively question and respond to literary and historical authority, and to engage with texts and editorial practices on their own terms.¹ Scalar’s unique affordances (such as

¹ Scalar is a platform developed by the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture, which “seeks to enrich the intellectual potential of our fields to inform understandings of an expanding array of visual practices as they are reshaped within digital culture, while also creating scholarly contexts for the use of digital media in film, media, and visual studies” (Scalar n.d.).
the creation of reading “paths,” relatively simple user interface, and multimedia annotation tools) make it the ideal platform for engaging students in authentic, public-facing academic writing.

Project-based courses are particularly useful for classes that involve digital literacy and scholarship, as students are encouraged not to simply acquire and apply technical skills but to see the outcome of their work take concrete (if digital) form (Helle et al. 2006). This essay outlines one such approach, where students at York College, a liberal arts college in Jamaica (New York State), collaborated on a pop-culture digital edition of Shakespeare’s plays. Rather than approach the plays as formal, academic editors, students in ENG 318 (“Shakespeare: The Major Works”) were asked to think of specific ways in which Shakespeare resonated in the culture they were already consuming, including television shows, books, music, and art. The course encouraged students to forge close, personal relationships with the plays and to articulate these relationships in ways that might help future learners connect with Shakespeare. In addition to questioning the playwright’s position in the Western canon, students pushed back against accepted readings, layering the text with their own interests, critical interpretations, and individual perspectives. With the help of Scalar, we sought to build community within and beyond the classroom, to discuss the value of social knowledge creation, and to produce a version of Shakespeare that was uniquely “ours”—the readings of a largely black and brown, cross-national, and cross-generational discourse community.

This essay explores the benefits and challenges of using digital editing as a platform for social knowledge production. First, I discuss the underlying impetus for the project, my choice of Scalar as a digital platform, and a number of specific assignments designed to develop skills toward the final edition. Next, I analyze examples from student work, considering the larger implications of students’ annotation choices and the thematic focus each of them chose for their acts. Finally, I outline some of the potential pitfalls of this course. My aim is to privilege students’ discovery, negotiation, and ownership of ideas. As a result, I intentionally focus on successful student-writing samples, placing the onus of failure on the instructor. While this essay reflects on the value of teaching with digital tools such as Scalar, I propose new ways of thinking about Shakespeare pedagogy more broadly, focusing

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2 For more concrete examples of how faculty conceptualize and deal with PBL, see Lee et al. 2014.
on what new insights may be drawn from creating a collaborative, context-specific edition of Shakespeare’s plays.

Course design

York College is an incredibly diverse institution, where the vast majority of the student population is black and brown, many of whom are first-generation students, either immigrants themselves or part of immigrant families.³ As a result, students at York are often eager to understand and critique hegemonic structures, particularly with relation to canonic literature. When it comes to Shakespeare, as one student has noted, his centrality in the Western canon often obscures the work of people of color writing in and beyond the early modern period outside of Europe, imposing a version of literary history that positions Shakespeare as a unique and inimitable genius.⁴ In turn, many students find themselves alienated by his works, and they enter the Shakespeare classroom expecting to passively receive historical, critical, and analytical resources they might memorize but may never quite “own” or contribute to. In ENG 318, I address this by encouraging the practice of social annotation which, as Paul Scharcht argues, “stands in marked opposition to those aspects of higher education pedagogy and scholarship that remain, even in democratic societies, hierarchical, exclusive, proprietary, and competitive” (Schacht 2016, parag. 6). Digital tools help enhance this open and democratic approach by encouraging public forms of discourse: as I explain below, students were challenged to not only seek out individual connections to the plays but also to argue why their annotations could be more broadly relevant to future students taking ENG 318 or similar Shakespeare courses at other schools.⁵

The course, subtitled “Shakespeare in the Digital Age,” applied project-based learning strategies to help students produce a digital edition of Shakespeare’s plays that tied characters, themes, and motifs to works from contemporary popular culture (see appendix: “Pop Culture Edition”). I first ran the course

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³ As an instructor who herself is Latina-Brazilian and an immigrant, many of the research interests and concerns that drive my students resonate with me on a personal level. Indeed, the impetus for this project was a by-product of conversations and debates I have had with students in other classes I teach at York.

⁴ I am grateful to Alexis Haynie for bringing this very crucial discussion into our “Introduction to Literary Studies” classroom.

⁵ The value of the digital humanities within undergraduate pedagogy has been gaining more critical attention. See for instance Clement 2012, Murphy and Smith 2017b, and Silva and Schofield (forthcoming).
in fall 2015 with a class of thirty students and again in fall 2016 with nearly half the enrollment (sixteen students). The enrollment number allowed for a well-balanced breakdown: groups of five students were each assigned to a play we were scheduled to discuss between weeks four and nine, ensuring that all groups (even those working on one of our last plays in the term) had plenty of time to draft and revise their final project. The course was designed primarily to generate an atmosphere of authenticity wherein “individuals engage in practices of value to themselves and to a community of practice” (Barab et al. 2000, 38). Toward that end, the students and I negotiated definitions of popular culture. Building such a definition helped ground many conversations in class regarding who gets to decide what counts as “high-brow” culture in seeming opposition to popular culture (Lanier 2002, Bristol 1996, Hawkes 1992, Burt 2002, O’Neill 2014). Many students worried that their preferences toward non-Western culture (consuming only anime and manga, for example) or “throwback” viewing/reading habits (one student brought up The Jeffersons) could not be qualified as pop culture. After a number of one-on-one conversations, I followed up with the class and we collaborated on a definition that centralized students’ own interests and values: we agreed that any work of fiction in any media (television, print, film, music) that remained culturally and personally relevant to them would fall within our understanding of “pop culture.” Although rather broad, this definition takes into consideration what Alastair Pennycook calls “transcultural flows,” which in a classroom context calls for “taking student knowledge, identity and desire into account [in order] to engage with multiple ways of speaking, being, and learning, with multilayered modes of identity at global, national and local levels” (Pennycook 2006, 15). Finally, we reserved classroom time to discuss best practices for editing work on Scalar. Working with Scalar 1.0 became particularly challenging, as the marginal references moved

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6 Although I revised some of the prompts, the overall course design remained relatively stable. Below, I discuss student examples produced in both semesters: one from fall 2015 (Fasanya) and two from fall 2016 (Etienne and Miller). Student work has been reproduced with permission.

7 I intentionally assigned a completely different selection of plays in the second iteration of the course so that we could build up our collaborative edition (we used the same Scalar book both times). See the course site (http://scalar.usc.edu/works/shakespeare-in-the-digital-age) for the full list of plays.

8 As Juliette Levy states, this approach requires a “philosophy of teaching in which students are stakeholders of the learning process rather than subjects of it” (Levy n.d.). See also Cook-Sather 2002.

9 I’m grateful to Matt Garley for pointing me toward this reference.
arbitrarily across the page whenever the user scrolled down, making it difficult to ascertain what lines corresponded to which references. Nonetheless, Scalar is a convenient and relatively easy-to-use platform, ideal for this kind of project for a number of reasons: 1) it does not require software installations; 2) it allows for multiple author roles; 3) it offers a flexible design; and 4) it includes the option of “paths” to customize readers’ experience.

Collectively, students had to work in groups to develop a cohesive edition of their play. Individually, however, each student was allocated to a single act, and instructed to collect references specific to the themes, motifs, and plot elements pertaining to that act. Although we discussed the formal prompt for the final project early on, the only overall direction was that students keep a running list of potential references and ideas using a medium and platform of their choice (e.g., Evernote, Google Drive, or old-fashioned pen and paper). I intentionally did not introduce them to Scalar until much later in the term, when we were able to meet at computer labs and work through step-by-step tutorials. In order to ensure (as much as possible) that each group included some tech-savvy learners as well as more practiced close-readers, I developed a “knowledge survey” that asked students about their experience with Shakespeare, their familiarity with early modern language in particular and literary analysis in general, and their comfort level using new technologies.

All of our work for the course, including five responses, a short formal paper, and in-class writing, was designed to build critical as well as technical skills students would need for creating their edition. Their first response assignment invited students to explore and evaluate existing online sources

10 In the second iteration of this course we switched to Scalar 2.0, which provides more static marginalia but still seems to have a problem regarding placement of the images and videos (e.g., some annotations appear ten or twenty lines below the highlighted quotes). Scalar has become a reliable and iterative platform for pedagogical projects: Vimala Pasupathi, Heather Froehlich, and Emily Sherwood for instance are currently editing a digital textbook for instructors and students interested in digital humanities approaches to Shakespeare (public site forthcoming). I was part of a group of scholars who contributed to the first iteration of this project during a Shakespeare Association of America seminar in spring 2017.

11 This approach was inspired by Miriam Posner’s blog on the use of self-guided tutorials and group work to help students acquire new technology skills. See Posner 2015.

12 Our completed project, including student work from 2015 and 2016 courses, can be found at http://scalar.usc.edu/works/shakespeare-in-the-digital-age/.
for Shakespeare’s plays, including *Folger Digital Texts*, *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, and *Open Source Shakespeare*, and compare these with their own printed anthology (The *Norton Shakespeare*; see Greenblatt 2008). Together we tried to design criteria for defining a “good” edition, including elements such as number of footnotes, ease of access, navigability, and design. In their responses, students interrogated the ways editorial practices heavily influence readership and reception. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many students preferred digital editions to their printed anthology—not simply because websites do not require lugging around a heavy textbook, but because the hypertext allowed them to navigate non-linearly across plays, scenes, or paratextual materials. Students’ familiarity with websites and online reading further contributed to making the works appear less intimidating. And yet, many students noted that they could not properly interact with those digital editions by way of annotating, tagging, or adding sticky notes to mark important places. Some students felt that digital editions were not useful for undergraduate-level scholarship, because they often lacked contextual essays or footnotes.

These reflections helped define our goals for the Scalar edition, which was deliberately aimed at undergraduate students and readers interested in becoming more acquainted with Shakespeare through a less-intimidating format. Additional small-stakes assignments encouraged students to build components for their edition, such as annotated bibliographies with academic sources for their assigned play, and a collaborative “editor’s introduction” (drafted in response 3 and revised for response 5) that required them to consider the specific goals, potential audience, and central arguments for their edition.

The “editor’s introduction” assignment was the only formal requirement for collaborative work. Since most York students find it difficult to coordinate schedules outside of work and family obligations, I scaffolded the project so as to allow for in-class group meetings and collaborative writing. With several successful examples of editorial introductions in hand (including both our anthology and digital samples from *Open Source Shakespeare* and *Internet Shakespeare Editions*), I asked students to consider the rhetorical goals of critical introductions in general and the specific ways they could also function to assign credit and acknowledge students’ labor. Because Scalar does not

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13 On the pitfalls of public writing within humanities courses, see Josephs 2018 and Jenkins 2009. On the ethics and roles of undergraduate research in digital pedagogy, see Murphy and Smith 2017a.

14 All student work in the public site is credited in each play’s “Editorial Introduction.”
assign authorship to individual pages, we used the introductions to outline each student’s contribution to the work. In response to class discussions surrounding the uncertain nature of the term popular culture, these introductions further gave students the opportunity to articulate their choices and look for common threads across the group’s references as a whole. In addition to asking what Shakespeare meant to them on a personal level, this assignment also introduced students to editorial practices and conventions, encouraging them to reflect first-hand on the influence editors have over the ways we read and study texts.

A multimodal platform by design, Scalar provided space for more formal writing assignments like the essays discussed above as well as our informal interventions like video- and image-centered marginalia. Despite certain structural limitations, Scalar provided a cohesive template where students had control over their own pages but did not have to concern themselves with the visual design of the project. Per the requirements of the assignment, each student was assessed on their ability to:

1. briefly summarize the chosen pop culture reference,
2. explain the critical connection between the source and the action of the play,
3. clarify how drawing this connection enhances our reading of the play itself.

These goals were designed to evaluate students’ familiarity with their assigned play as well as their ability to craft persuasive arguments about Shakespeare as a “rhizomatic” object, encompassing “the vast web of adaptations, allusions, and reproductions that comprises the ever-changing phenomenon

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It should be noted that I did not work with students to select or encode the text of the plays. Although there is much to be gained from introducing students to collation and copy-text selection practices, I wanted them to focus on learning how to use Scalar and on collecting their references. In the first iteration of this course, I preloaded the Scalar page with transcriptions from Open Source Shakespeare. In response to issues with format from copying and pasting the text from the website (for example, line numbers all but disappeared), the second edition of the project used the HTML transcriptions provided by the Folger Digital Texts. This approach was not without its challenges: for instance, the Folger editions did not always correspond with the text from our printed anthology, making it difficult for students to find the appropriate line numbers for their annotations. In one particular case, the lines a student wanted to use in Measure for Measure (1623) were missing entirely, and we had to manually add them using a different copy.
Andie Silva

we call Shakespeare” (Lanier 2014). Indeed, while my initial expectation was that students would seek out books, comics, and films that explicitly adapted Shakespeare and his plays, they pushed our understanding of adaptation much farther, inviting comparisons to works that claimed no official ties to or inspiration from Shakespeare, such as Beyoncé and Rhianna lyrics, films like Moulin Rouge and Titanic, and TV shows like Battlestar Galactica and House of Cards. As one student explained, it was as if “culture that I consumed in the past, or was currently consuming, grew tentacles that connected to the themes of Shakespeare once I was made aware of the project.”

Our use of Scalar also invited unplanned conversations about copyright and fair use, as we considered the broader demands of an increasingly-dynamic visual culture. For example, many links that were active at the time students added them were later taken down from YouTube due to copyright violations, while others could never be uploaded in the first place because they belonged to proprietary streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu. Students who did not or could not provide a visual illustration for their work felt as if their project was somehow lacking, even though the use of images was never a feature they had identified as a requirement for successful scholarly editions. Yet, these setbacks also allowed many students to more carefully consider the role of the textual notations that were required to accompany the text; because some annotations lacked videos or images, students understood that their editorial notes needed to be particularly detailed and carefully edited to ensure clarity.

Nevertheless, the course succeeded in getting students to produce original and thought-provoking work. Over the course of the term, we discussed the role of editorial practices in shaping the reception history of Shakespeare’s plays and the emergence of Bardolatry, and considered the impact of popular culture on the production and reproduction of cultural norms. By combining digital technologies with traditional close-reading practices, this project effectively immersed students in the process of conceptualizing, curating, and publishing a digital edition. Digital projects require careful descriptions

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16 The next section of this essay discusses some examples in more detail.
17 Afolami Fasanya composed this as part of a short reflection for our collaborative presentation at the CUNY Digital Humanities Initiatives (DHI) lightning talks, 2015. As I discuss below, Afolami applied a social justice lens to his interpretations, thinking through how contemporary culture, from Harry Potter to world renowned artist Kahinde Wiley can be read in relation to Shakespeare’s own efforts toward representation of people of color.
about methodology, audience, and data collection. As such, they provide an ideal platform for conversations about discourse communities, encouraging students to find authentic ways to engage with early modern literature.

As they compiled a list of potential references for their assigned play, students were faced with broader questions regarding project management and editorial choices, as well as technological obsolescence. This hands-on process ensured that students did not simply use digital tools but rather engaged critically with the ways such tools have the power to shape their learning. Student feedback confirmed that students found themselves deeply and personally connected to their assigned play. Their annotations required them to showcase a much deeper understanding of the themes and motifs in their play than can typically be accomplished in a survey course (particularly in a course capped at thirty students). Scalar provided students with a platform on which to develop public-facing scholarship, helping them push the boundaries of traditional academic research and literary analysis. These goals are arguably crucial to any twenty-first-century classroom since, as J. Elizabeth Clark claims, “the future of writing—based on a global, collaborative text, where all writing has the potential to become public—informs our classrooms and forms a new, ‘digital’ imperative, one that asks how we can reshape our pedagogy with new uses of the technologies that are changing our personal and professional lives” (Clark 2010, 28).\(^\text{18}\)

**Digital editing and feminist critique: three student samples**

The most successful contributions to the project came about as a combination of independent research and collaborative work.\(^\text{19}\) Those students who were able to meet and discuss ideas outside of class managed to compose cohesive introductions and rationales, which in the end helped guide the central arguments within their individual acts. Students who considered the project as an extension of and complement to in-class lectures saw in their annotations the opportunity to undertake analyses of minor characters and, more broadly, to reflect on how gender, race, and ethnicity feature across Shakespeare’s works in fascinating yet problematic ways. Afolami Fasanya, for instance, found himself surprised to discover that Shakespeare’s plays included minorities as protagonists. This realization propelled him to think

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\(^{18}\) On public- and open learning, see the entire special issue of the *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy (JITP)* 2014.

\(^{19}\) All writing quoted below is presented with permission from the students. I would like to thank Afolami Fasanya, Claudia Etienne, and Kirsten Miller for their thought-provoking interventions and excellent contributions to the project.
about the cultural constructs of race both in the early modern period as well as in the contemporary Western world. In his annotation for act 2 of *The Merchant of Venice* (1600), for instance, he observes that Dobby, the house elf from the film series *Harry Potter*, and Launcelot were both constrained within the limitations of their social status in ways that denied them agency. They both relied on their socially- and economically-superior allies to “provide” them with their freedom (Figure 1).

![Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets](image)

This clip shows Dobby the house elf being set free by his master Lucius Malfoy, or Harry Potter. However you want to see it. Dobby is a character that grapples with loyalty to his master versus his own agency. He does things that strongly demonstrate his desire to be free from the Malfoy's. Ultimately, due to structure, he can't be the one to set himself free. It belongs to someone else. This is the case with Launcelot, who wants to maintain loyalty but also wants nothing to do with his master, Shylock. It is his father who has the power to set him free from Shylock, no matter how strong his own desire burns.

**Figure 1. Afolami Fasanya’s annotation for 2.2.102–12.**

Fasanya’s argument raised deeper issues regarding power and class in *The Merchant of Venice*, focusing on a character we did not have much time to
analyze in class. Even when Launcelot was the subject of conversation, we often focused on the ways the character helped contextualize Jessica’s conversion and her treatment of Shylock. Yet this character can be crucial to deconstructing some of the play’s problematic binaries. Laura E. Donaldson argues that although Launcelot’s character is often reduced to the role of clown, he can in fact be “a figure so threatening that readers privileging homogeneity and segregation must necessarily remain blind to the way he generates other constellations of meaning within the play” (Donaldson 1995, 199). Calling for a perspective that blends post-structuralism with Gloria Anzaldúa’s New Mestiza theory, Donaldson looks at Launcelot’s place outside the Christian/Jew binary, positioning him as a case-point for “the mestiza’s capacity ... not only to destabilize but also to transform the agonizing opposition of the Christian and Jew” (Donaldson 1995, 195). Fasanya’s annotations reflect a similar call for disruptive readings, focusing on the Other as central, rather than incidental, point of analysis.

The same critical impulse is evident when Fasanya draws a connection between the play and the work of Kehinde Wiley, an African-American painter known for recasting European, heroic, and iconographic paintings with black and brown models (Figure 2). Rather than locate Shakespeare at the center of his analysis, Fasanya himself becomes the critical interpreter of the racialized bodies in Merchant of Venice. Instead of focusing on Shakespeare’s choices for characterizing Shylock, Fasanya considers another displaced Other, the Prince of Morocco, as a “foreigner trying to fit into European customs.” Significantly, Fasanya’s connection here bypasses a discussion of Shakespeare’s choices in representing a black figure, but instead makes this a point to reflect on the broader significance and potential disruption of the black body in a European context.

As may be evident from the examples above, students enrolled in the second iteration of this course benefited from having strong models to inspire their own editions. In their final drafts, a number of students chose to address the corruptive nature of hegemonic power and its inevitable ties to toxic masculinity. In her annotations for act 2 of Measure for Measure (1623), for example, Claudia Etienne focused on the incongruous association between law, mercy, and social class using examples from films and television shows such

20 In this way, our first edition became what Trevor Owens called “the required reading that we write ourselves”—it became a platform for students to produce material for future students, therefore disrupting the top-down delivery of content from instructor to student. See Owens 2012.
as 300, Titanic, and The Flash. Etienne began by exploring how Christian values often become convenient facades that conceal prejudice and discrimination. In particular, she reflected on the power structures that allowed for Angelo’s unrestrained behavior and trapped Isabella into an impossible decision. As she observed, Angelo’s position as interim duke and his reputation as a man of honor both play a role in his choice to proposition Isabella. Connecting Lord of the Rings’ protagonist Frodo to Angelo, Etienne concluded that “temptation” was a running motif in Shakespeare that allowed the playwright to critique the unchecked power structures of early modern England (Figure 3). Rather than judge Angelo’s decision, Etienne chose to reflect on the ways the play’s cultural imperatives ultimately set the characters up for failure.

Figure 2. Afolami Fasanya’s annotation for 2.7.16.

As a whole, Etienne’s annotations are evidence of her semester-long interest in the intersections of gender, class, and politics. Looking back on her knowledge of the plays as a whole, Etienne concludes that “duplicity is one of Shakespeare’s more enduring themes”—in comedies, feigning and disguise become a strategy employed by lower-class and women characters in order to bypass restrictive or excluding power dynamics. Yet, as Etienne notes, Angelo’s disguise is more complex, since “the disguise was [in fact] Angelo’s reputation and the outward
persona he shows the world.” Although we did not cover notions of interiority too deeply in class, students like Claudia Etienne and her group mate Kerstin Miller produced thought-provoking reflections on the centrality of identity as performance in Shakespeare. Looking beyond the theatrical conventions of asides and soliloquies, they found in Shakespeare’s plays a constant tension between outward and inward expressions of the self. As Miller so poignantly asks, “are we wearing a mask, or are we the mask?” (annotation for 3.1.5).

Figure 3. Etienne’s annotation for 2.2.218–20.
Miller’s question and indeed her pop culture reference (the film *The Mask*) exemplify one of the most unexpected results of this project: students’ ability to draw critical connections between the most seemingly disparate genres and cultural elements. Students like Miller were quick to understand that, as Marjorie Garber so aptly observes, “Shakespeare makes modern culture and modern culture makes Shakespeare” (Garber 2008, xiii). The project additionally encouraged students to discuss deeply endemic problems with relation to the treatment and representation of women. Identifying misogyny in popular culture was arguably too easy: as Etienne notes, films like *300* continue to feature plots where women’s bodies and sexuality are exploited for the sake of drama. These films, and the realities they illustrate, shed light on the larger problem, “which is that women are subject to laws created in a male dominated world” (Miller, annotation for 3.1.106–10). By drawing a connection between *Measure for Measure* and a *Battlestar Galactica* episode depicting a ban against abortion, Miller further reflected on how little power women had and continue to have over their own bodies. Conversely, whenever women do assert their power (in Shakespeare and beyond), they are often, like Isabella, “labelled as misandrists and carry over unpleasant [i.e., derogatory] titles” (Miller, annotation for 3.1.153–57).

These three examples showcase the range of critical issues students chose to address in their Pop Culture Edition project. While none of the abovementioned students focused solely on a single topic, their annotations revealed how much passion they developed toward their “adopted” plays. Indeed, the most successful annotations were ones where students looked for references in films and shows they already knew and loved, and where their research was undertaken consistently throughout the semester. The students who fully embraced the project saw their research change over time—some annotations were abandoned along the way while new ideas were identified in conversations during group meetings. Although some students struggled at first to find sources, our broader definition of popular culture was flexible enough to inspire even those students who did not watch television or who were not familiar with many American or otherwise Western-produced films. My own assessment also changed as I learned more about students’ individual projects and goals. The prompt for the project implied a cultural-studies focus, but many annotations excelled in traditional close-reading. A number of successful annotations eschewed comparisons to contemporary issues altogether, reflecting instead on how modern shows and films could help other Shakespeare learners better analyze character motivation, themes, or recurring motifs.
Digital pedagogy: challenges and reflections

Through the process of conceptualizing, collecting, curating, and writing their pop culture references, students created their own discourse community and definitions of cultural criticism. Further, they resisted forms of passive learning in favor of questioning and remixing canonic texts, holding both academic critics and their own contemporary culture accountable for reproducing problematic representations of class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Yet the course was not without its challenges. In both sections (fall 2015 and fall 2016), we did not work with Scalar until later in the term, by which time students were expected to have a complete list of references including links, images, and any relevant notes. This choice affected some students negatively, as it did not provide them with much motivation to work on drafting sections of the project earlier in the semester. Even by the time we began peer- and instructor review, I found that a number of students had not managed to post their references to their assigned act. Because Scalar stores pages on the back end, student editors had to deliberately select lines in their acts where they wanted to attach their annotations, which would otherwise remain invisible to anyone visiting the site. For those students working at the last minute, much of the page creation was completed during computer lab hours, and many of those students did not finish their work in time to receive feedback.

As I mention above, image and video selection provided another unexpected challenge. Even when students chose to use open-access platforms like YouTube, many of their videos eventually disappeared from the site due to copyright infringement issues. As this project thrives on the use of visuals, the loss of video segments had an immediate impact on the longevity of the project. Instructors considering a similar project should think carefully about their goals for the project. If their goal is to create a stable, reliable resource for future Shakespeare students, some class time should be devoted to discussing fair use in detail, pointing students to Creative Commons image repositories such as Flickr, and discouraging the use of proprietary material. Such restrictions are, of course, particularly difficult when it comes to a project focused exclusively on analyzing popular culture. Instructors may decide that the immediate project outcomes (including individual benefits with regards to student learning and knowledge creation) supersede any outside audience beyond the classroom. In my course, my goals were to centralize students’ knowledge creation first, and to build a fully-functional resource second. As I continue to think through the purposes and goals of this course, I find that the process of building the edition, and understanding as well as
questioning the roles of publishers in how and why we read the canon, are the most valuable takeaways of the course.

Additionally, because students were only collecting (but not writing about) their sources throughout the term, overall final annotations displayed varying levels of critical analysis. To address this, the second iteration of the course included more writing and revision opportunities. Even so, a response assignment requesting annotation drafts may help with early- or mid-term assessment. Another major hurdle, particularly for small liberal arts colleges such as York College, is the issue of access to technology, both individually for students who do not own computers or laptops, and at the institutional level, where computer labs are in high demand and thus difficult to schedule. Students without access to the technology may feel at a disadvantage, and may thus require additional support in the form of office hours and in-class time to work on their projects.

Writing for a public audience can encourage students to think more carefully about self-presentation, tone, and style, but such an audience may indeed never come to fruition without intensive marketing and publicity. Instructors engaged in digital pedagogy must consider how to manage expectations for small-scale digital projects and design their learning objectives accordingly. In light of the learning objectives for our course, the potential disappearance of YouTube videos did not affect students’ performance or indeed my assessment of their work. Although the addition of images and videos made the edition more attractive and took advantage of Scalar’s versatile affordances, our primary goal was always to produce the kinds of in-depth written analyses English majors are expected to master. This perspective reinforces the fact that digital tools need not necessarily reconfigure pedagogical practices, but instead offer new avenues for student-centered learning, particularly in the ways students take ownership of the production of knowledge.

Carefully scaffolded digital pedagogy projects can encourage students to interrogate who controls and who has access to the academic production of knowledge. Platforms like Scalar invite the disruption of temporal and physical learning spaces by providing several different layers of content creation and user experience. By focusing on popular culture as their driving inspiration, students were encouraged to collapse time and periodization, looking instead at the (often ahistorical) ways in which hegemonic powers impact social norms and individual behavior. Although this approach may be particularly suited for courses that center on more canonical authors, many of the practices discussed here are likely useful for other literature surveys,
and particularly for courses that cater to non-English majors. By centering on process and creativity (foregoing in particular a formal, end-of-term essay), this assignment provides a platform for students to showcase their critical thinking and close-reading skills. Students who may be intimidated by formal academic essays but nonetheless are thoughtful critics will especially benefit from such work; I believe a number of my students might have slipped between the cracks otherwise, and I would have lost an opportunity to talk to them about how to effectively apply their ideas to essay writing and help them overcome any potential barriers in terms of their self-confidence as authors. While digital tools can arguably complicate the learning process by requiring the teaching of technical skills in addition to the teaching of literature, overcoming the challenges involved in building an online edition provides a form of tacit knowledge that is otherwise difficult to acquire. Provided that instructors are open to identifying, addressing, and discussing problems as they surface, such challenges can be productive for developing and supporting authentic learning environments. After all, identifying errors and learning from failure is often the only way digital and analog projects—especially in undergraduate classrooms—move forward.

Appendix: “Pop Culture Edition”: prompt from Shakespeare in the Digital Age course

As we always discuss in class, editors and publishers play a big role in how and where we read texts. The plays we experience today have come to us from mediator upon mediator: not just Shakespeare himself, but his actors, first editors, eighteenth-century editors, and contemporary critics and scholars, all whom have had a hand on explaining to us what these works mean. As such, it’s important that we question and deconstruct some of these editorial practices, trying to see the plays within and beyond pre-imposed interpretations in order to find our own way.

But editions are important: Shakespeare exists within a rich culture that extends before, during, and much after his own time. Without contexts, we miss out on the things that have made and continue to make Shakespeare relevant to readers, writers, and artists alike. As such, our goal in this class is not simply to understand what makes a strong critical edition, but to actually produce our own. I have started a book on the platform Scalar with full-texts of the plays we will study. Early in the semester, everyone will be assigned a play and a single act. As a group, as well as independently, you will work throughout the semester to produce an annotated edition that focuses solely on Shakespeare and popular culture.
Much of your work throughout the semester will be part of that edition. In addition, you will also have an important, semester-long task: to keep track of references to and about your assigned play (and potentially specific elements regarding your assigned act) which will later in the term be used as annotations (like footnotes, but more interactive, because they’ll be online and can include media files, images, and links) to our critical edition. I encourage you to go outside the box: look not only for films and television, but other ways in which artists have created new things after being inspired by the bard: comics, games, Twitter characters, blogs, Tumbrls, Memes, even dolls and household objects. Anything goes! Ok, there are a few rules:

1. **By the time you meet with your group to compose Response 3, you should have at least four (4) references** to share. Those do not need to all appear in the final edition, but they will be a start as you collaborate with your group to find a guiding rationale.

2. **By Week 13, you should come to class ready with a list of selections you wish to include in the Critical Edition. You will learn how to post them on Scalar, so you’ll need to keep track of links and make sure everything is appropriate for public consumption (no copyright violations).**

3. **Your goal for the end of the semester is to have at least ten (10) references annotated in your act. At least five (5) of those should be directly in reference to the play you’re working with, not just references to Shakespeare.**

4. **At the last class meeting of each month (Weeks 5, 9 and 13) you should be prepared to print or email me a list of the links, images, videos, etc you have collected. This will ensure that you’re continuously looking for ideas and new things to add and that you have plenty of items to choose from once your group decides on a rationale. Your list will of course grow as we move through the semester, but I expect at least two to three new items at every check-in date.**

Here are some things you can start doing now to help you find and maintain this list:

- Sign up for a Google Notification for new publications about Shakespeare (requires Google account)
- Follow Shakespeareans on Twitter (some to get you started: @MichaelWitmore; @wtfRenaissance, @folgerlibrary, @paulbudra, @internetshakes, @goodticklebrain)
- Consider using a tool like Evernote, Pocket, or Zotero to keep track of your findings
WORKS CITED


Like so many others, my introduction to remote teaching was an abrupt and rapid process of trial and error. I started as the curator of the University of Florida’s rare book collection in the summer of 2019. I spent the next semester and a half establishing connections with faculty and bringing courses in to do in-person instruction: single sessions per course, often a combination of show and tell and hands-on activities and discussion. In mid-March, as warnings became more dire, I had a group of thirty students coming in to the collections to see a facsimile of the Codex Murúa, a 16th-century Mesoamerican manuscript, and discuss its materiality. The instructor wanted the whole class to get up close with the facsimile and two other 16th-century books, and rather than cancel the visit this seemed like the ideal setting to jump into Zoom instruction on extremely short notice.

After finding a conference room in an adjacent library, I set up the books and made an unfortunate discovery. The only webcams we had available (borrowed from our desktop computers) had no autofocus. Luckily, since the professor was discussing from the same room, I was able to spend most of the session hovering the webcam and tripod around the books, and I’m pretty sure that we were able to pull things off without making anyone seriously motion sick. After a few more experiments that semester, I led a grant team comprised of small group of my colleagues in UF’s Special and Area Studies Collections. We’ve spent the past year investigating a variety of technologies, borrowed and bought, to give students up-close access to our materials and provide content for community groups who would normally have visited in person.
Throughout the year, most of these “virtual visits” involved pre-recorded video segments. Since webcams were harder to come by than toilet paper, live-streaming materials didn’t really become possible for us until well into the Fall semester. Our earliest visit videos were set up much like smaller versions of in-person presentations—I would consult with instructors to find a group of three to five objects relevant to the course and a narrative thread that ran through them. Videos ran from 15 to 25 minutes, and I sent them to instructors in advance of the discussion along with questions for the group to consider before logging into Zoom.

This video was produced in October 2020 for an outside group, and was recorded on a GoPro with a USB microphone (hidden off camera).

By the start of 2021, we had brought in higher resolution webcams, as well as a larger document camera, which let us incorporate books from the videos into live Zoom discussions.
These extra options allowed us to pre-record less, edit more, and experiment with different ways of filming. Our spring videos dropped to twelve minutes on the high end and six on the low, and we were able to make more versatile use of the content. All told, over a dozen of these videos reached students at UF and around the state of Florida, with some featuring in campus activities, book displays, and on our YouTube channel.

This past July, classes started to enter our buildings for the first time in over a year, and all signs we’ve received from the University (still) point to the expectation of regular, in-person instruction in the fall. So what becomes of the cameras, microphones, and video editing equipment? Even with practice, the time that it takes to create and provide content in advance is significantly more than the effort of setting up an in-person class, or a Zoom class for that matter, and it’s much less forgiving than open-ended discussion. But I don’t plan to
abandon the videos entirely. The main advantage that I’ve found to sending courses content in advance is that it aids student learning over and above what a repeat visit could offer, and made me think much more critically about the ways that I design student activities in the collections.

This was a recorded in February 2021 with a DSLR on a tripod. Recording in different spaces and balancing background music was still a work in progress.

Going forward, video introductions offer us solutions to two barriers to active learning that existed prior to March 2020. The first obstacle is space in our library, which has always been at a premium. Even for classes that are able make it to our reading room, a group of 30 students (or even 15) could not interact with a single facsimile volume at the same time during a hands-on session without some sort of technology helping them, and we can’t permanently build technology into the room we use for instruction. We can now perform the same sorts of discussions that would previously have needed a dedicated seminar room, or (as we did this month) offer hybrid options to instructors whose students might not all be able to attend comfortably. For those who can’t make it on Zoom, take-home activities around exhibits and collection items have given us the chance to participate alongside other libraries in campus events as we hadn’t been able to before.

By far the largest barrier to active learning is the time required to contextualize and introduce materials which the class may not have time to fully explore, and which they are likely encountering for the first time. Even with planning, the introductory portion of a visit limits the amount of time that students can spend with the materials, especially in cases where class periods last less than an hour. Pre-recording material (in whole or in part) and embedding it in course sites allows us to introduce not just the content of the object but how it moves and behaves as a physical object, as Emily Spunaugle and Megan Peiser emphasized in their post earlier this year. Even a brief video can scaffold in-person assignments and activities, and give students something they can return to quickly over the course of the semester. This should lead to more, rather than fewer, students looking to come back to the reading rooms and use the collections.
This was the last video we produced (in April 2021) in order to add a digital component to a display in our main library.

In terms of designing lessons, scripting and filming has shown me how much I was relying on more material for flexibility and spontaneity, rather than intentionally building it into the questions I asked. After this year’s experiments, I’m proposing that my department create a series of five-minute “Object Lessons,” where each curator picks an object that they love to teach with and one material question it best illustrates. The first part of the lesson introduces the item, the second uses one or two examples to pose and illustrate the question, and the final part offers options for its further investigation by placing it in its historical and cultural context. Since the learning curve for making and recording videos is steep, asking other curators to start from where they are most comfortable and focused should help with the scripting process. My hope is that with a small library of these lessons we can embed one or more in the canvas pages of courses who plan to visit, and introduce the students to general topics in material culture, research practice, and the history of a particular genre or period before they encounter the object, or one like it, in person.

Building virtual elements into our instruction program can make our materials more approachable, and make our students more comfortable and creative in using them. Below I offer three ways that I plan to integrate pre-recorded content with in-person instruction in classes this coming year, along with the exercises that inspired them. Recording material has its limits, and we shouldn’t push the technology—or ourselves—where it doesn’t want to go. As we’ve worked through different ways of meeting people wherever they are this past year, it’s become clearer than ever that we shouldn’t expect our students all to be in exactly the same place.

**Sample Uses for Pre-Recorded Content**

**Jumping-Off Points**

For one of my favorite lessons from 2020, a class on Northern Renaissance Art, I filmed an introduction which included a book of hours printed in Paris in 1498. I wanted the class to discuss something concrete about the book, so I also sent still images from two
contemporary books produced in the same city which had digitized by other institutions, one being a manuscript illustrated by the artist who designed the borders and miniatures for the print books. In class, students broke into small groups to discuss how the composition and illustration of the different copies and editions of the book of hours compared to each other, and how artists’ work filtered through different intermediaries.

**A Flipped Classroom with Course-Specific Collections**

This approach ties digital content more closely with the assignments of a course, with an in-person visit in the middle. Two courses in the Spring 2021 used a similar group of rare materials on seventeenth and eighteenth-century Atlantic piracy. One was a small seminar geared towards thesis research methods and the other was a much larger freshman class where students were given the option of using special collections materials to compare and contrast historical and popular conceptions ideas of piracy.

I shared the same introductory video for both, but for the larger class we built a wider digital collection of materials, along with a brief PowerPoint presentation to introduced them to the students. For our in-class session, we gave the students a choice of three short primary sources from different categories and collections (such as a 1958 map of shipwrecks in the Gulf of Mexico) that we could analyze and discuss in a small group, in essence doing a scaled-down version of their final assignment.

Instead of using curator time for a show and tell visit, we were able to provide further scaffolding for a course’s assignment. The larger freshman course will be taught each semester for the next five, and can be added to or modified without having to be made up from scratch. Even if we show materials in person, having content and context available through the Canvas platform (and not just on a cart in the reading room) should make it easier for students to return to at different points during the semester, especially when the time comes to do their assignments.
Bonuses Tracks

These are single videos or standalone activities that can be launched from a website or QR code. For our finals week, we designed an activity which we called Dive into Tunnel Books, where students could make their own books using pre-cut pieces. Our conservation department put together the kits, I recorded a context video, and the curator of our Book Arts collection, who teaches book arts in our School of Art and Art history, recorded a tutorial video. We posted both videos to YouTube but embedded all of the content for the lesson on a page of our website.

The webpage with the activity portion can be hidden if we don’t want it to appear, but the videos are still publicly available and can call attention back to our collections. As a bonus, exercises like these can be scheduled, filmed, and produced on a schedule independent from the semester, when it might be possible to secure help from students with skills in video or audio editing, and where partnerships with other departments or institutions can develop.

Neil Weijer, University of Florida
On the things I’ve learnt from a few years teaching students how to ‘read’ a digital instantiation of a book is that without some knowledge of the wider context of that digitization – the platform, database, collection, or archive – it can be difficult to understand why the way digitized books look the way they do. This worksheet enables students to begin to learn what’s involved in the digitization of books. In particular, it aims to help students explore the various legal, technological, and economic factors involved in the creation of large-scale digital collections; and also the cultural contexts of representation and access against the hype of universal knowledge. The in-class task, a paper prototype of a digital archive, works particularly well to bring home the difficult choices between sometimes contradictory factors involved in real-life digitizations. The session is part of a second-year undergraduate module entitled ‘Literature and Digital Culture’, following on from discussions in previous weeks about the digital medium, the digital divide and information privilege, and the representation of gender, race, sexuality, and intersectionality in Wikipedia articles.

**PART ONE**

**Please read (see reading list below)**

1. On the ‘universal library’: EITHER Paul Hammond, chapter three; OR Marilyn Deegan & Kathryn Sutherland, chapter five.
2. Intersectionality and access: ONE of these: Amy Earhart / Jacqueline Wernimont & Julie Flanders / Adeline Koh.

**How to read a digitisation**

The questions below will help your digital literacy and will enable you to assess the differences between digital collections of books. This involves a bit of detective work, since some collections don’t give full information about themselves, or make it difficult to find: just try to find out as much as you can. Some of this information you might be able find by browsing the archive website (for example, look for pages labelled ‘About’, ‘History’, ‘FAQs’). Don’t worry if you are not be able to answer all these questions in relation to your chosen archive: this itself might be significant in relation to the question of access.
1. Is it a standalone collection or a collection that is accessed via a platform? (e.g. Jisc Historical Texts or Gale Primary Sources are platforms that give access to multiple individual collections or archives).

2. Try reading and/or downloading material to get a feel for each site.

3. Is it paywalled (e.g. via our library), or free to access? Is it commercial or scholarly? What kind of organisation is it? How is it funded or supported?

4. How is it digitised? Is it images or text, or both? Are the images colour or b&w? If it has text, how was the text created? Was it transcribed (copied by hand), or created by automated software (OCR)? Was it edited?

5. Does it tell you about the original source of the material (the library or archive in which the physical copy is held)? Does it give you any other details about the individual books or materials?

6. Is there any information about the copyright status of the book images or text?

7. Is it delimited (e.g. by genre, period, geography, nationality, etc)? Does it tell you how the material was selected?

8. What terms, language, or imagery does the collection use to describe its ethos or aims?

**Choose one collection from these:**

- Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)
- Early Caribbean Digital Archive
- Google Books
- Jisc Historical Texts - access to Eighteenth-century Collections Online (ECCO); or Early English Books Online (EEBO)
- Project Gutenberg
- Rosetti Archive
- UbuWeb
- Women Writers Project
PART TWO

The second part of the session is a paper prototype experiment, and enables you to experience the issues in the creation of digital collections, drawing on your research and analysis. In teams, imagine that you’re either scholars, or university librarians, or a commercial digital publisher, or a collaboration (hint: it makes a difference), and you are in a position to plan a digital collection. What would it be? You can be as realistic or as utopian as you like! Answer these questions to help you plan and write a rationale for the project.

1. Who is it for?
2. How would it be funded?
3. What limits would you have to place on the collection? What kinds of material would you include (or not include)?
4. How would you present the books? (photographic images? text only? Both? OCR or hand-transcribed?). Why?
5. What kind of access to the material would – or could – you allow (free or paywalled? Can users download material or not)?

Further Reading


http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/digitizing/4.php


Deegan, Marilyn, and Kathryn Sutherland. *Transferred Illusions: Digital Technology and the Forms of Print* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009)

<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fbb36bfbdb1e/section/cf0af04d-73e3-4738-98d9-74c1ae3534e5> [accessed 23 July 2020]

Findlay, Peter, ‘Commercial Digital Archival Collections and the Charges for Accessing Them’, *Jisc Content and Digitisation*, 2019 [A report on costs to libraries to buy and access digital resources in the UK]


Mak, Bonnie, ‘Archaeology of a Digitization’, *Journal of the Association for Information Science*
and Technology, 65.8 (2014), 1515–26 <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23061> [on EEBO]

Sherratt, Tim, ‘Unremembering the Forgotten’, in Debates in the Digital Humanities, 2019 <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/be608100-95b6-4e48-bfd5-a82a588da8f1#ch12> [accessed 21 July 2020]


Integrating Assessment and Instruction: Using Student-Generated Grading Criteria to Evaluate Multimodal Digital Projects

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Abstract

In this article, I explore how we can link assessment to instruction and the multimodal composing process by inviting students to generate the grading criteria for new media assignments, and I show how this approach influenced students’ composing and understanding of multimodal texts. I first detail the scaffolding processes I took to help the class learn to construct the evaluative criteria for a digital video project, describing the course curriculum, instructional approaches, and assignments. Then drawing from extended interviews with three learners, I present their perceptions on how the collaborative construction of grading standards affected their learning and comprehension of new media rhetoric. I close with pedagogical recommendations for instructors who teach multimodal digital writing and who seek to integrate the collaborative construction of grading criteria into their classroom. © 2012 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Evaluation; Grading; Student-generated grading criteria; Video composing; Multimodality; Multimodal assessment; Multiliteracies

“To have effective and productive assessment, assessment that teaches, all stakeholders involved in the assessment must be a part of the entire process. Students can’t simply be recipient of assessment. They must be central to the practices in the classroom.”

Asao Inoue

“Much as teachers need to expand their view of learning goals to include more significant learning, they also need to expand their view of feedback and assessment to include more educative assessment.”

L. Dee Fink

1. Introduction

When teaching first-year composition, I aim to help students develop multiliteracies (Anderson, 2008; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007; Selber, 2004; New London Group, 1996) by exposing them to and teaching them about different modes of writing—alphabetic, visual, and aural. For one of their final assignments in the course, students produce multimodal projects using video editing software to demonstrate their understanding of the rhetorical functions of sounds, images, and alphabetic texts. While digital video is not an unfamiliar media to learners who watch countless YouTube clips in any given month,¹ they may not be cognizant of the rhetorical operations and effects at work. Brian Huot (2002a)

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¹ In 2010 alone YouTube reported a 137% increase in the number of video uploads on its Web site (Yarow & Angelova, 2010).

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2012.04.002
observed that learners often have difficulties articulating the rhetorical functions of a text, moving “prematurely and uncritically to an evaluative decision” (p. 177). Teaching how to analyze and compose a multimodal video, hence, helps them become rhetorically aware and critical of a pervasive medium and enables them to see and use technology as a rhetorical tool to enrich their communication. Grading multimodal videos, however, presented a concern in my teaching. What criteria, I wondered, should I use to evaluate students’ works, given the complexity of multimodal integration? Through their survey research on multimodal writing sponsored by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), Daniel Anderson et al. (2006) discovered that writing instructors often feel they have “little help in conceptualizing multimodal assignments” and assessing students’ projects (p. 79).3 Similarly, Elizabeth Murray, Hailey Sheets, and Nicole Williams (2010) found that “a significant number of composition instructors. . . feel uncomfortable assigning multimodal projects in their classrooms due to concerns with assessment” (para. 1).

The assessment of multimodal “texts” is not only a concern of the instructor, however. It is a crucial skill students need to acquire to succeed as writers. Learning to evaluate the effectiveness of a text is an important part of being able to write and read well. According to Huot (2002a), students must be able to evaluate their own texts in order to revise effectively, making assessment a crucial part of composing; it is not discrete from the writing process. Recognizing its significance, Diane Penrod (2005) has identified assessment as one of the proficiencies that instructors must help students master: “Students will [need to] come to know the criteria others use to judge the quality of an electronic text, how an electronic text should be judged within various contexts, and how to secure evidence to measure a text’s value according to different audiences’ contexts and criteria” (p. 62). Given the importance of assessment to instruction and students’ growth as writers and the dilemma that teachers face when grading new media4 texts, the evaluation of multimodal projects is an issue that warrants additional research and theorization.

Drawing upon communal assessment practices (Inoue, 2005; Spidell & Thelin, 2006; Leahy, 2002; Shor, 1996), feminist principles (Shiffman, 1997; Royster, 1996), and instructive evaluation (Borton & Huot, 2007; Penrod, 2005; Fink, 2003; Huot, 2002a, 2002b; Soles, 2001), this article presents an “educative,” (Fink, 2003) communal-based approach for teaching and evaluating multimodal video projects: Invite students to draft their own grading criteria. In a scaffolding process that lasted five weeks, students in my course analyzed sample media clips, individually developing and refining evaluation criteria covering a range of rhetorical concepts. Then, in discussion with the class, I consolidated these criteria into one comprehensive document that I used to grade the assignments and that students utilized to help them compose and revise their videos.

In what follows, I detail the scaffolding process I took to help students construct their evaluative criteria, and I examine how the use of student-generated grading criteria impacted students’ learning and understanding of multimodal video composing and digital rhetoric. I begin by describing the course curriculum, pedagogical process, and assignments in depth. Then drawing from extended interviews with three students who were formerly enrolled in my first-year composition class,5 none of whom had composed a video before my course, I present their perceptions about the affordances of creating and using student-generated grading criteria. By asking them in detail to reflect on their video composing process and by analyzing their projects and interview reflections, I show the benefits and challenges of such pedagogy. I close with recommendations for instructors who teach multimodal digital composing and who seek to integrate the collaborative construction of grading criteria into their classroom.

2. Current approaches for evaluating multimodal composition

Since the “multimodal turn” in writing studies in the 1990’s, compositionists have proposed disparate methods for assessing multimodal work. I will briefly detail current assessment practices to later demonstrate how mine builds upon and differs from them.

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3 Similar to Huot (2002a) and Inoue (2005), I use the terms evaluation and assessment interchangeably.

4 In this article, I use the terms multimodality and new media interchangeably. My definition of new media is informed by Cynthia Selfe’s (2004): “Texts created primarily in digital environments, composed in multiple media (e.g., film, video, audio, among others), and designed for presentation and exchange in digital venues.”

5 The participants I recruited for this study were former students who were not currently enrolled in any courses I taught. With IRB permission, I contacted them via e-mail, and three agreed to an interview. I conducted the interviews face-to-face with a computer handy so we could talk and look at the student’s project together. Pseudonyms are used in this article.
The first evaluative strategy utilizes rubrics and conventions from print genres to evaluate a multimodal text. Murray, Sheets, and Williams (2010) proposed that common categories in print essay rubric such as thesis/focus, organization, development, research, and format/design can be used as criteria to grade multimodal work; they are the features of effective composition across modes and genres. In the context of a digital storytelling project, Meredith Zoetewey and Julie Staggers (2003) suggested that instructors use elements of a narrative essay—chronology, structure, point of view, focus, pacing, dramatic tension, and development—as a framework to grade students’ projects.

However, Madeline Sorapure (2006) and Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004a) cautioned that an over-reliance on print conventions can cause us to “lose the chance to see new values emerging in the new medium” (Sorapure, 2006, p. 1). They urged instructors to use coherence (Yancey, 2004a) and metaphor and metonymy (Sorapure, 2006) as a framework for multimodal assessment instead.

Positing that coherence is the key feature of all effective composition, digital and print, Yancey (2004a) argued that it could be employed as a heuristic for evaluating multimodal projects. This heuristic allows us to assess four issues: “What arrangements are possible? who arranges? what is the intent? what is the fit between the intent and the effect” (Yancey, 2004a, p. 96)? Building upon Yancey’s notion of coherence, Sorapure’s approach focuses on evaluating the relationship between the different modalities in students’ work, using metaphor and metonymy as a guide. Metaphor, Sorapure contended, enables us to observe the meanings behind each mode, and metonymy helps us analyze how the modes connect to one another to cohere the overall argument. In other words, through metaphor and metonymy, one evaluates: What meanings does each modality convey, and how do the modes relate with one another to produce a coherent argument appropriate for the rhetorical situation?

Other scholars (Shipka, 2011, 2009; Odell & Katz, 2009; Borton & Huot, 2007; Ball, 2006; Penrod, 2005) argued for using rhetorically based criteria to grade students’ projects. Doing so, they claimed, can help us integrate assessment with instruction; the assessment criteria come to reinforce rhetorical concepts such as audience, context, purpose, and strategy in multimodal composing. To link instruction and assessment, Lee Odell and Susan Katz (2009) suggested the following approach: evaluate student’s ability to a) integrate given information and multiple media; b) create and fulfill expectations; c) select, use, and encode multimodal elements; and d) present a logical/perceptual relationships among the selected elements. Sonya Borton and Brian Huot (2007) advised similar standards but added that instructors should provide formative assessment (constructive feedback) throughout the students’ composing process. Also they recommended having composers maintain a journal in which they reflect on their rhetorical choices, aims, and composing progress.

Likewise, Jody Shipka (2011, 2009) emphasized the importance of self-assessment and “rhetorical sensitivity” in multimodal evaluation, but her “assessment framework” (her terminology) does not consist of specific criteria. Following the tradition of writer’s reflection (Sommers, 1989; Elbow & Belanoff, 1989; Beaven, 1977), she asks students to submit a “statement of goal and choices” (SOCG) along with their final project, which she then uses to assess their multimodal work. In their SOGC, students define the purpose, context, and audience of their work; detail and justify their rhetorical, material, methodological and technological choices; explain how their selections serve the overall rhetorical goals of the project; and evaluate how the choices made allowed them to accomplish the goals that other combinations of choices would not have (Shipka, 2011, p. 114). By using SOGC, Shipka (2009) sought to avoid “limiting the texts, tools, and practices” of multimodal composing and presented a more a flexible framework that can help us gauge a “work’s purposes, potentials, and [rhetorical] consequences” (p. W364).

Additionally, Cheryl Ball (2006) has proposed a “readerly” strategy for “re-assessing multimodal and new media rubrics” (p. 394). Believing that multimodal theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Manovich, 2002) is too focused on “the material with which a text is composed,” she urged instructors and composers to pay attention to the “rhetorical situations of design” by examining the how and why of composing: How is a text put together, and why is it constructed that way, for what purpose (pp. 393–394)? These questions, Ball affirmed, help authors and readers focus on the significance of audience, purpose, and context when evaluating or making design decisions. They add a “readerly” component to multimodal analysis that is absent from multimodal theory.

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6 Penrod’s work, Composition in Convergence, focused on large-scale assessment of writing programs in networked environment, rather than on how to assess individual writing project or modality. In it she proposed a fourfold criteria for evaluating the outcomes of writing programs: critical awareness of the audience’s sociocultural/historical context, careful usage and selections of multimodal resources, usage of technology to produce a variety of genres and forms, and possessing rhetorical and technological competence to compose in electronic spaces.
While there are a variety of methods for evaluating multimodal projects, through their survey research, Anderson et al. (2006) learned that the majority of instructors currently use some type of rhetorically based standards to grade multimodal work, often drawing upon the following criteria: an awareness of the rhetorical situation, clear and effective communication, active and thoughtful engagement with the composing process, proficiency in using new technology to communicate a message, the rhetorical impact of the message, design effectiveness, persuasiveness, and the overall effort as reflected in the final product. Some instructors also look for creativity, improvement between drafts, and thorough reflection about the composing process.

Clearly, as a field, we have a range of strategies for evaluating multimodal texts. Yet it is often unclear how a particular evaluative method impacts students’ comprehension of multimodality and multimodal composing process. In particular, there has yet to be a study in rhetoric and composition that examines the benefits of using student-generated grading criteria to grade multimodal video compositions. Scholars of feminist (Shiffman, 1997) and critical pedagogy (Shor, 1996), Expressivism, (Danielewicz & Elbow, 2009; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988), and writing assessment (Inoue, 2007; Borton & Huot, 2007; Penrod, 2005; Huot, 2002a; Leahy, 2002; Soles, 2001) have long called for instructors to involve students in grading procedures, but within the context of multimodal writing, we do not yet know how doing so affects students’ composing and learning about multiliteracies and digital rhetoric. Although we have evidence that sharing and making the evaluation criteria explicit to learners helped to improve the quality of the end product, the criteria were teacher-generated and were designed for essayistic prompt—not multimodal texts (Wyngaard & Gehrke, 1996; Lamm, 1994; Stoddard & MacArthur, 1993; Hillocks, 1986). Thus, seeking to address the gap in current composition scholarship, particularly computers and writing, my research enables us to expand and evaluate current scholarly calls and approaches for teaching and assessing new media projects. The evaluation approach I employ and the students’ perspectives I detail can help us understand how to effectively scaffold, teach, and evaluate multimodal works, as well as learn the digital multimodal composing process of first-year writers.

3. Theories and assumptions informing my pedagogy and assessment

My approach for using student-generated grading criteria to evaluate multimodal video projects is informed by scholarship in instructive evaluation (Borton & Huot, 2007; Penrod, 2005; Fink, 2003; Huot, 2002a, 2002b; White, 1994), communal assessment (Inoue, 2005; Spidell & Thelin, 2006; Leahy, 2002), feminist pedagogy (Shiffman, 1997; Royster, 1996), and inclusionary classroom practices (Shor, 1996). Several theoretical assumptions underlie my pedagogy.

First, following the tradition of “instructive evaluation,” an evaluative approach that aims to teach rather than merely test knowledge (Borton & Huot, 2007; Huot, 2002b), I believe assessment should help improve teaching, writing, and rhetorical understanding. My belief follows the CCCC position statement on assessing writing, which suggested that assessment be integrated with instruction: “Writing assessment is useful primarily as a means for improving teaching and learning. The primary purpose of any assessment should govern its design, its implementation, and the generation and dissemination of its results” (para. 4). Instructors, however, must distinguish between “educative” and “audit-ive” assessment. The former “audit[s] student learning [usually in one shot] as a basis for the grade turned in,” whereas the latter, sometimes called assessment 2.0, helps students grow as learners through introspection, self-evaluation, clear standards, and frequent constructive feedback (Fink, 2003, p. 82). It is the latter that we must seek to foster in our pedagogy.

Second, following communal assessment practices, I believe that we must engage students to become active creators/contributors of knowledge in our teaching and evaluation; we can learn from them as much as they can from us (Penrod, 2005; Shor, 1996). This belief necessitates that “we begin a discourse of assessment with our students about their writing” (Huot, 2002a, p. 170). My perspective here aligns with Asao Inoue’s (2005) “fourth generation evaluation,” an assessment method based on “hermeneutic dialectic” that invites stakeholders to offer input in the grading process and encourages negotiation and consensus making between learners and instructor, leading to more engaged learning and deeper understanding of writing (p. 222). Like contract grading, fourth generation evaluation aims to “strip away the mystification of institutional and cultural power in the everyday grades we give in our writing courses” (Danielewicz & Elbow, 2009, p. 249). Through collaborating with students, I also seek to disrupt what Ira

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7 See Elliott (2008)
Shor (1996) called the “Siberian Syndrome,” pedagogical practices that “order” and “fit” students to “lesser places” and “reenact and reconstitute their marginality” (p. 14). By involving students in the grading process, I want to help them see that their voices matter and can make a difference in their learning environment, as well as society at large.

Third, my teaching is guided by feminist principles, particularly by the works of Jacqueline Jones Royster (1996) and Betty Garrison Shiffman (1997). Royster encouraged teachers to actively listen to the voices of the Other, to use them to transform our epistemology and habits. She asked: “How can we teach, engage in research, write about, and talk across boundaries with others, instead of for, about, and around them” (p. 38)? “It seems to me that the agreement for inquiry and discovery needs to be deliberately reciprocal,” suggested Royster (p. 34). Following her call, one way to speak with rather than for others, to create a “deliberately reciprocal” relationship, is to involve learners in the evaluation process. Feminist pedagogues such as Shiffman have been urging scholars to move “toward a position of inclusionary evaluation” and “open the door for greater participation” in our grading procedures (p. 59). Shiffman called for evaluative practices that will not diminish students’ role as active collaborators of standards and contributors of knowledge. By inviting the class to co-construct the grading criteria, we can come to speak with students and use their insights to enrich our understanding about effective assessment practices. “Conversation among students and between the teacher and her students is a constant source of knowledge for both,” noted Shiffman (p. 61). Both parties mutually benefit as a result.

In sum, I work to resist teacher-centered pedagogical and evaluative approaches that posit the instructor as the sole source of knowledge and authority in the classroom. If knowledge derives from dialogism and social-epistemic interaction like Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) and James Berlin (1987) posited, then exchanging, debating, and negotiating grading criteria, and revising them accordingly can strengthen our learning and growth as writers and assessors. Teachers and students can grow from meaningful dialogues with one another through the process of co-constructing grading standards.

4. Preparing students to develop the grading criteria

4.1. Introducing rhetorical viewing

Before exploring how using student-generated grading criteria impacted students’ learning and multimodal composing, I want to first provide some context and background on my pedagogy. My teaching responds to the New London Group’s (1996), Cynthia Selfe’s (2004), Anne Wysocki’s (2004), and Stuart Selber’s (2004) calls to teach writing and composing in a variety of modalities. The five major course units at the time of this study were ethnography, rhetorical analysis, public argument, multimodal remix, and portfolio reflection. Prior to learning about multimodal remix, students spent five weeks in the public argument unit researching and writing an argumentative essay on a public issue for a specific audience of their choosing. The project had to include still images, sounds, and alphabetic texts. Actual video footage was optional. The finished product was then shown to the whole class. This remediation assignment was meant to help learners develop multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) and engage with “synaesthesia” (Kress, 2003)—to push their literacy beyond “linguistic design” (New London Group, 1996; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007; WIDE, 2005).

Preparing students to develop the grading criteria for their video projects involved several scaffolding assignments. The first was rhetorical viewing. I explained to the class that they would be watching diverse multimodal video samples on a weekly basis over five weeks. Their objective was to view each video critically and rhetorically by analyzing how images, sounds, alphabetic texts, and digital effects were used to construct and cohere—and in some instances, detract—the argument. We practiced rhetorical viewing together for a week. To guide the viewing, I provided a set of critical analysis questions that led students to pay close attention to rhetorical elements. In addition, because each sample was different, I also developed specific analytical questions for each one (See Appendix A). In one sample
video, for example, I asked students to examine things such as: Who is the audience? What is the context of the argument? How are images arranged? In what order do they appear? Is there any logic to them? What rhetorical appeals are utilized? What sounds are heard first, next, and afterward, and why are they arranged in that way? What do they like about the clip that they might try to emulate in their own work? Questions like these can help students build critical reception of how multimodal digital rhetoric operates and how it is constructed. In teaching multimodal composing, Mary Hocks (2003) recommended that we engage students in the critique of new media texts before asking them to compose their own projects. By first observing the rhetorical elements that make up a sample text, writers can “come to understand these features by analyzing the visual details” (Hocks, 2003, p. 650). Besides, Huot (2002a) noted that “. . . before students can learn to revise rhetorically, they need to first assess rhetorically” (p. 170). The analysis of sample videos can help students learn and practice rhetorical assessment. Through “informed critique,” students gradually develop “critical literacy,” which enables them to become informed audiences of arguments and rhetorical users of composing technology, characteristics of a multiliterate citizen (Selber, 2004, p. 24–25).

4.2. Bi-weekly rhetorical viewing homework

Once students became familiar with rhetorical viewing, for homework I assigned three to four multimodal clips of disparate qualities on YouTube for them to watch over a period of five weeks. This bi-weekly rhetorical viewing exercise served as the second scaffolding activity to help students construct their criteria and to learn how multimodal elements function. Students watched a range of videos in a variety of genres, some effective, some, rather spectacularly, not. Some were made by amateurs, and some were created by a professional organization such as Barackobama.com. I had students view a range of videos so that they could develop familiarity with the multimodal video genre and learn to evaluate the quality of different kinds of clips. Throughout this process, I continued to provide them with a set of analytical questions specifically designed for each video. My scaffolding followed George Hillocks’ (1995): Composing well, Hillocks maintained, involves learning and using specific inquiry skills—close observations, evaluation of materials, and interpretation of sample texts. The viewing questions I posed are meant to help students sharpen these abilities by closely observing, interpreting, and evaluating sample materials before composing.

After the viewing, students wrote responses to the analytical questions and shared their analyses in the discussion area of Blackboard (our university’s course management system), where they could read and comment on their classmates’ observations. At the beginning of the next class, as a warm-up exercise, I asked some students to share what they posted on Blackboard, and occasionally, I had them show an interesting video they found on YouTube, and together we analyzed it as a class. These tasks prepared the class for the next activity in the unit: building collaborative grading criteria.

4.3. Delineating and consolidating the student-generated grading criteria

For the third scaffolding activity, I asked students to design a grading criteria sheet that could be used to assess their work. I provided the following instructions: The criteria must clearly define the features of an effective multimodal digital project, address the usage of various modes (e.g., images, text, sounds) and digital effects (e.g., transitions, timing), specify elements of argument (including criteria for audience, context, use of evidence, etc.), and be thorough and thoughtful (See Appendix B). My guidelines were meant to help students think rhetorically, to take into account the relationship between modes (Odell & Katz, 2009; Sorapure, 2006), the “readerly effects” of design choices (Ball, 2006), synaesthesia (Kress, 2003), coherence (Yancey, 2004), and argument strengths (Borton & Huot, 2007). By encouraging students to think rhetorically, I tried to avoid what Sorapure found to be a common pitfall in novice’s multimodal composition: Students incorporated digital effects for the sake of “coolness” without regard to rhetorical purpose.

8 Official PETA Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIjanhKqVC4>
9 My pedagogy here is informed by Miami’s first-year writing curriculum, which stresses rhetorical analysis and close reading. Both are required units in our program.
11 Make History: <http://www.youtube.com/user/BarackObamadotcom#p/u/263/9UFzkO5OhKY>
Once students devised their criteria sheet, I had them use it to evaluate the bi-weekly videos assigned for homework, referencing the standards they have formulated. This was an important step of communal assessment pedagogy (Inoue, 2005). Students must "test" the criteria sheet they created, evaluating its soundness and feasibility and make necessary revision before submitting it to the instructor. This process, Inoue explained, allows students to refine and revise their knowledge about the make-up of an effective text, leading to a more complex understanding about writing conventions and stronger grading criteria. After each student finalized and submitted their refined criteria, I consolidated them into a comprehensive document, eliminating any duplicated criterion and grouping similar points into the same headings. I then provided a draft to the class for feedback, and in a collaborative process, we further revised, expanded, and built upon the document. Once the criteria were finalized, I asked students to use them to evaluate drafts of their own work and each other's projects.

All in all, the collaborative process I took with my students heeded Penrod's call for utilizing the "coolness of computer technology" to mediate the "direct heat of evaluation"—that is, to use technologies to generate "inclusive activities that bring together students and instructors under a common purpose": the advancement of writing competence (p. 137). Through co-constructing and negotiating the grading standards via wikis, online discussion forums and in-class discussion, my students and I turned evaluation into a mutual learning process based upon feminist principles of respect, collaboration, openness, and listening (Shiffman, 1997). Like Shor’s power sharing classroom, students’ ideas were listened to and taken seriously to derive at a democratically agreed upon grading standards. Through the scaffolding processes I took, assessment became integrated with instruction like Inoue (2005), Edward White (1994) and Huot (2002b) advocated. Students came to learn the features of an effective multimodal video by developing, testing, and using the grading criteria they designed: they “learn[ed] to compose by learning to assess” (Borton & Huot, 2007, p. 3). My criteria-generating process reflected the four processes of community-based assessment: The instructor 1) provides the structure and environment for students to learn and synthesize their understanding about good writing into a rubric, 2) revises the rubric from the class’ feedback, 3) encourages students to reflect upon the criteria and compose from the rubric, and 4) uses the collaboratively-generated standards for assessment (Inoue, 2005, p. 221). From this fourfold process, the assessment of writing became a vehicle for enhancing learning, teaching, and composing.

5. What students learned from producing the grading criteria

The three students whom I interviewed during the semester after the class was over, Amy, Brenda, and Jane, unanimously reported that they found the scaffolding exercises to be beneficial. They related that engaging in the bi-weekly rhetorical viewing homework and the analysis discussion activities during class were most helpful to their learning and understanding of multimodality.

Amy, a first-year student majoring in international studies, commented: “By watching other videos and looking at your questions [the viewing guide questions I provided], you’re able to see what you should do and don’t do, so I think this is a very good project to work on to evaluate other clips based on comparing them to each other. You see what you would want in it, what you [would] want in yours.” The rhetorical viewing exercises helped Amy learn the features of an effective multimodal clip. Similarly, seeing what other people had done in their videos allowed Brenda, an education major, to generate the benchmarks for evaluating her own project and others’. She explained: “Everyone watches YouTube videos, and then you’re like that’s dumb; why did they do that? I think the combination of seeing it [YouTube video samples], as far as seeing the annoyance, and then writing, like, don’t do that in your project made me realize how I should build my own.” Likewise, Jane, a first-year student majoring in speech pathology and audiology, shared that rhetorical viewing not only helped her understand how to compose her digital project, it also led her to become more informed about how multimodal elements work: “In making the video part of it, I think it was analyzing the video online [that was most helpful] because you asked us specific questions that made us realize how we were being affected by different things and [recognize] what was being presented, and also just being able to see visual examples of the video helped me understand what to do.”

Collectively, the students’ remarks confirmed the helpfulness of the rhetorical viewing activity and the importance of providing students with a set of critical questions to guide the viewing. Watching the videos appeared to help them become more analytical and informed viewers of digital media and enabled them to inductively develop the standards for their own video assignment. By analyzing/assessing sample projects, they gained an understanding of the functions and make-up of digital multimodal videos, which, as Hocks purported, is a crucial first step of multimodal composing.
Assessment aided invention, hereby demonstrating that assessment needs not remain discrete from teaching and writing like White, Inoue, and Borton and Huot have argued.

After extensive analysis of sample video projects, the grading criteria that students generated indicated that they understood the make-up of effective multimodal rhetoric well. Below I examine the criteria that Amy, Brenda and Jane proposed for visuals, sounds, and alphabetic texts, the three required components of the video project.

5.1. Student-generated criteria for visuals

In their proposed criteria for evaluating visuals, Jane, Amy, and Brenda demonstrated that they recognized images should not merely “decorate” the screen but that they must serve a rhetorical purpose. In her criteria, Jane wrote: “Images should serve as depictions of the argument and clearly and effectively persuade the audience. The argument comes through the picture, and the organization is effective.” Amy, who created her criteria for visuals in the form of questions, proposed the following: “Do the images correlate with the argument being portrayed in the clip? Do the images flow correctly throughout the clip? No random pictures dispersed throughout that have little relation to one another.” Likewise, Brenda shared: “Are the images of good quality? Do they support the topic and make the audience agree with your points”? Taken together, the student-generated criteria for visuals indicated that students understood how images should and could be used to support and articulate arguments. They realized that within this mode “form/content” is inseparable and “impossibly distinct” (Wysocki, 2001, p. 137). They have gained an important insight about visual rhetoric, one which Diana George (2002) called on writing instructors to stress: “Communication and composition absolutely will include the visual, not as attendant to the verbal but as complex communication intricately related to the world around [us]” (p. 32).

5.2. Student-generated criteria for sounds

Students also proposed the criteria for evaluating sounds. Jane wrote: “[Sounds are] helpful to the understanding of the argument. They are relevant to the argument and cut in a manner that makes sense with the pictures. The underlying tone and voice of the message are appropriate and affective.” Amy proposed: “Does the music, if any, match the theme of the argument? If an interview is taking place, is the music muted or softened so that the audience is able to hear the subject being interviewed? Do the sound effects, if any, match the procession of pictures throughout the clip”? Brenda noted: “Is there good sound quality? Does it serve a rhetorical purpose? Does it distract from the theme [message]. Does it help support or clarify your points”? The criteria for sound that Jane, Amy, and Brenda delineated showed that they acknowledged the affordances of sound—how sound (and silence) can affect meanings and persuasion (McKee, 2006). Jane’s and Amy’s criteria, in particular, stressed the importance of the coherence between the visual and aural modalities: how sounds and images could be combined to strengthen a claim.

5.3. Student-generated criteria for alphabetic texts

Furthermore, the participants offered criteria for effective usage of alphabetic texts. Jane proposed: “Text is used effectively in its positioning, font, style, color and content. It gives necessary information about the argument. Text should not be overused but used strategically for emphasis.” Amy suggested: “Is the text readable? Is it able to be seen on the background that is behind it? Is it relevant to the picture or video clip that came before, after, or during it”? Brenda asked: “Does the text serve a purpose? Is it necessary? If it is, is it up long enough for the viewer to read”? Both Amy’s and Brenda’s criteria focused on legibility (usability). Jane’s criteria specifically acknowledged the significance of design, how things such as font choice and alignment could affect meanings, rhetorical issues that Wysocki and Dennis Lynch (2007) and Cheryl Ball and Kristin Arola (2010) encouraged writing instructors to address. In particular, Brenda’s question—is it necessary to use alphabetic text?—evidenced her understanding of synaesthesia; she recognized that

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12 The link between assessment and invention can be traced back to the Romans. In book X of *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintillian detailed the importance of having students read—assess—sample texts as a method to help rhetors learn how to write oratories. In this sense, the assessment of sample texts is tied to invention.

13 There are more components on the consolidated criteria sheet. I chose to only focus on these three because of space limitations.
a claim can be re-mediated through several modalities. Alphabetic text is one mode of expression, but it may not be most efficacious. As a whole, the students’ criteria for alphabetic texts revealed that they comprehended multimodal affordances and the importance of strategic and careful usage of language and design for rhetorical purposes.

In sum, each student added important contributions to the grading criteria, making them more thorough and complete than what a single person might have generated. The final criteria the class produced reflected many of the rhetorically-based standards currently used in the field. Students took into account the relationships between the modes (Odell & Katz, 2009; Sorapure, 2006; Yancey, 2004a), how design choices impact meanings and audience’s reception of the text (Shipka, 2011; Ball, 2006; Anderson et al., 2006), and how the modes must work to cohere the overall message (Yancey, 2004a). Although differences in the criteria existed, showing different levels of each learner’s engagement and understanding of multimodality, what the participants generated revealed that they had learned that visuals, sounds and alphabetic texts can function rhetorically. They recognized how to combine disparate “design resources” (New London Group, 1996) to achieve a communicative purpose, important aims of contemporary multimodal pedagogy in writing studies (Shipka, 2011, 2009; Clark, 2010; Yancey, 2009; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007; WIDE, 2005; Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, & Sirc, 2004).

6. **Students’ perspectives on the advantages of using collaboratively generated grading criteria**

When asked if student-generated grading criteria should be used in the future, Amy, Jane, and Brenda unanimously replied yes. As they explained, they appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the grading process; they wanted to have a say and would like to know how they will be evaluated up front. Brenda commented:

I think at this level of education, we should have a voice in what we’re being graded on because in our whole lives we’re always told what to do; you have to do this or else, and when we come to college, we’re adults. We have ideas of our own that we wanna share, and sometimes you don’t even know how you’re gonna be graded and what the teacher wants, and they make it all so mysterious and unknown. Sometimes it’s kinda like I have to guess, a guessing game. What do they want? Am I gonna get taken off for this? I just feel like I know more and things are more fair when students can be involved in the process.

Brenda raised an important point that speaks to one of the many benefits of using student-generated criteria: It demystified the grading process. Her comment reinforced Shiffman’s (1997) argument that “when we decide together [with students]…the requirements for each grade, students are relieved of the burden of second guessing the almighty and all-powerful instructor” (p. 67). Given that students might be new to multimodal composing and that this might be the first time they work with digital media—as was the case with most of my students, including the three participants—the experience can be stressful. Collaborating on the expectations and clarifying them up front could help students understand the objectives of the project and feel more confident about how to proceed. In their study of students’ perceptions toward contract grading, Cathy Spidell and William Thelin (2006) noted that students like having the opportunity to offer input about the class. They appreciate “democracy days,” moments in which they can voice their perspectives, leading to changes in course procedures (p. 53). Brenda’s comments are consistent with this finding.

Jane also appreciated “having a say” in the evaluation process. She added that being able to offer input about grading helped her feel more ownership toward her project. She believes that people are more likely to accept and agree to something in which they have a role in developing, contending:

I feel like when students are able to make their own rubric or criteria, they are more apt to follow it because they made it, so they’re like, “well, I made this, so I should follow it because it’s my thoughts and what I did.” Our whole lives, we’ve been given rules and rubrics, so I’m not sure that we always pay attention to the minor details when a teacher gives us the rubric.

Jane’s comments suggest that inviting students to create the grading criteria may be a way to increase engagement and reduce potential apathy toward an assignment—something that Alan Singer and Michael Pezone (2003) found as a benefit of involving students in the evaluation process. They observed that when students are included, they feel “a greater stake in the satisfactory completion of assignments; and a sense of empowerment because assessment decisions are based on rules that the classroom community has helped to shape” (para. 1.29). Additionally, Amy believed that allowing students to be a part of the grading criteria affects their mentality toward the assignment. “If a teacher handed me something [the criteria],” said Amy, “I’m like okay, I have to do this. This is what she wants, but if I made it up,
then this is what works for me. In terms of mentality, it seems less like I’m being forced to do things.” Amy’s point implies that by allowing students to have a role in creating the grading criteria, we can help make the project feel less like an imposition or to use Amy’s word, a forcing.

7. A teacher’s perspective on the affordances and pitfalls of using student-generated grading criteria

7.1. Benefits

I found the student-generated grading criteria process to be advantageous in many ways. First, generating the criteria pushed students to formulate and synthesize their understanding of what makes an effective multimedia clip; it made explicit what is rhetorically important and what should be valued (Inoue, 2005). The grading standards, hence, became less fuzzy for students. Clarity in the evaluation criteria and grading is important, given that students have long wanted more transparency about assessment procedures (Danielewicz & Elbow, 2009; Spidell & Thelin, 2006) and that teachers, despite their best interests, do not always respond to or evaluate student work rhetorically (Huot, 2002a; Connors & Lunsford, 1993). As Brenda pointed out, collaborating on the criteria demystified the evaluation process by allowing her to see how she will be evaluated up front, a practice that Steven Zemelman and Harvey Daniels (1988) recommended: “Ask students to develop these criteria. This makes them more conscious of the important elements and demonstrates that these are not just the whims of English teachers, but aspects of language that we’ve all internalized from reading, conversation, debates, discussions.” (p. 227). Second, the criteria enabled students to evaluate and assess multimodal work using rhetorical criteria and language. Like Inoue and Huot (2002a), I found that students “are ill-equipped to make the kind of evaluative decisions about writing that our pedagogy expects and often enter college composition courses with strict, text-based notions of how to judge writing” (p. 169). They have difficulty articulating specific standards of an effective composition beyond superficial remarks like “it’s good” or “interesting.” Giving students teacher-generated benchmarks may not be the best way to resolve this concern because benchmarks are often written by/for teachers in a tone and language that may be difficult for students to grasp. The criteria sheet students delineated, however, provided them with precise rhetorical language for evaluating “texts”—one written in their own words, making the standards easier to comprehend. Third, the student-generated criteria offered an indirect method for me to assess students’ understanding of multimodality and rhetorical principles and to intervene and correct any misunderstanding that students might have about project outcomes before they began composing. A student in my class, for instance, thought it was crucial for alphabetic texts to accompany every image and screen so that his arguments would be clear. He made that a required criterion. Having read what he submitted, I was able to talk to him about synaesthesia and show him how he might capitalize upon sounds and images to convey his arguments. Fourth, the evaluation criteria could be used to guide revision and peer response. Revision, already a messy process, becomes more challenging without a shared understanding of what makes an effective multimodal text, and often with multimodal composing, peer review is initially less effective because students do not know what to look for or how to evaluate their classmates’ work, so having an evaluation criteria sheet can alleviate that concern. Fifth, allowing students to generate the criteria anew each semester prevents our standards from becoming outdated. Because technology is constantly being updated, the criteria we use to assess digital projects should be frequently revised and expanded. Our standards must be “organic” and open to revision. According to Claire Wyatt-Smith and Kay Kimber (2005),

just as multimodality comes to exist through the drawing together of several modes and their modal affordances in dynamic ways to create meaning, then assessment modes and practices should assume complementary dynamic formats. This could mean that any attempt to stabilise an organic, dynamic text in a static criteria or scoring rubrics might be counterproductive. Defining criteria or rubrics by which to evaluate student multimodal performance is, at best, an attempt to pin down a dynamic, potentially magical performance to a static moment in time (at least momentarily). (p. 87)

14 In their study on teachers’ evaluation of student writing, Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford (1993) found that some teachers focused on stylistic issues at the expense of larger rhetorical concerns.

15 The student was invited to participate in this study but did not respond.
Having each class construct the criteria with us anew each semester can help ensure that our evaluation instrument will remain dynamic, organic, and current with changes in digital media.

Finally, as a whole, the criteria that the class generated were more complex than what I would have developed on my own. In some cases, “students now come to technology-infused composition classes with far more expertise and experience in computer literacy than a number of their instructors” (Penrod, 2005, p. 50), so soliciting their feedback can help enrich our ever-evolving understanding and learning of technology and literacies.

Although building collaborative grading criteria offered many pedagogical benefits, I recognize that many viable methods for evaluating multimodal projects exist. Granted, as teachers we can create the grading standards ourselves and not involve students at all. To do so, however, would mitigate some of the benefits discussed above—particularly our ability to assess students’ understanding of multimodality, as well as the chance to correct any misunderstanding they might have before they compose their project. More importantly, as Yancey (2009, 2004b), Penrod, and Selfe acknowledged, instructors are not always the first to know and master new technologies. Often students’ self-sponsored digital composing outside the classroom allows them to gain hands-on knowledge regarding new media before we come to learn it, so unless we involve students in the assessment of digital projects, our grading standards may leave much to be desired, which is something Amy pointed out: “Sometimes I am better at using technology than some teachers. I know the tricks and moves and can teach them to my friends. There are things that I can share.” She further added: “And if your audience is a group of students like my age, then it’s good for you to make the criteria yourself because you know what your friends would like, and I don’t think adults always know that. You’re able to see coming from the perspective of the students, what works for us, what kinda things we like.” Amy’s claim echoes Selfe’s argument in “Students Who Teach Us: A Case Study of a New Media Text Designer”: “Students... are often the first to experiment with new kinds of texts, to discover new literacy values and practices. They are also the first to understand the functions new media texts fulfill in their lives” (p. 57). Therefore, I agree with Penrod’s assertion that writing assessment must now “extend beyond the instructors’ knowledge bases, because there are students who have greater knowledge in some topic areas and perhaps an even greater knowledge in technical ability” (p. 124). Indeed, as Amy astutely pointed out, we have as much to learn from students as they have from us, and through collaborating on the grading criteria, both parties could gain and learn from one another. In addition, teachers who are novices to teaching and doing multimodal digital composition may not initially have the expertise or feel comfortable creating assessment standards. This was my situation when I began this study, but through collaborating with the class, I was able to learn (and grow) alongside my students. Moreover, after studying students’ perceptions toward assessment, contract grades in particular, Spidell and Thelin arrived at the following conclusion: “Each pattern of student response seems to point to the need for further democratization of the classroom and for strategies to deal with destructive habits from students so silenced by unilateral authority...” (p. 54). I believe involving students in the grading process is one way to help address this challenge. Instructors who have done inclusive assessment practices (Inoue, 2005; Leahy, 2002; Singer & Pezone, 2003) and shared classroom authority with students (Shor, 1996) have reported better student engagement, participation, deeper thinking, and rhetorical awareness—things I also discovered with my own students and will later detail.

7.2. Challenges in using student-generated grading criteria

However, before detailing student gains, I want to acknowledge that the methods I am advocating are not without challenges. Consolidating the criteria that each student generated was time consuming. I had to read each item one-by-one and synthesize it into a comprehensive and coherent document. In doing so, I had to evaluate each benchmark to ensure it was clear, fair and well developed, and I had to clarify/add additional information to certain points. I realize that this consolidation process could be strenuous for instructors who teach multiple classes, so rather than having each student individually develop the criteria, they might consider putting students into small groups and have each group collaboratively delineate the standards instead. Alternatively, they might assign one evaluative category (e.g. arrangement, design, persuasiveness, etc.) to each group, rather than having students individually construct complete benchmarks for every category.

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16 I had students generate their criteria and post them onto the discussion area of Blackboard. To consolidate them I had to open up each individual student’s post and cut/paste each entry onto a separate Microsoft Word document, which required much labor. In the future, I am planning to have students post their ideas onto a wiki or Google Doc. This method will enable easier consolidation.
Another concern arose after I consolidated the criteria. Through the consolidation process, I combined, eliminated or altered some of the students’ contributions, and this led one person to question whether I disregarded her suggestion and whether I felt her work was satisfactory. She e-mailed to inquire why her criteria were not included in the finalized sheet, and this helped me learn one important insight: When students generate the criteria, they want their contributions to be used, and they see what I put onto the final consolidated criteria sheet as validations of and complements on their ideas. Thus, when their contributions are amended, they might feel their work was inferior or that their voice was disregarded. It is important to assure students that all of their contributions will be valued and considered—but also help them understand that, through the consolidation process, their ideas might be reworded or combined with other benchmarks. It is pivotal to make this explicit to the class. Otherwise, students might feel demoralized and mistakenly think that their contributions are not valued.

One way to prevent this potential misunderstanding is to involve the whole class in the consolidation process. The teacher could ask students to read all criteria for homework and note similarities and differences in what they and their classmates had created. As a class or in small groups, students could work together to consolidate the criteria. A draft would then be posted onto a wiki for students to comment on and provide further feedback.

Furthermore, not all students might take the criteria making process seriously, a point that Brenda raised in her interview: “If the students didn’t take the class seriously, then they’re gonna be like ‘oh, dumb criteria, another busy work,’ but I think if the student does take the class seriously and does care about their work, then they will care about what they’re putting forward.” Brenda’s comment illustrates the importance of encouraging students to see criteria building as important work and to recognize that what they offer is significant. (I provide some suggestions on how to ensure this in the conclusion.) The evaluation criteria are meaningful and complete only if students take the time to think about them. But despite some of these resolvable challenges, developing/using student-generated grading criteria provided many pedagogical benefits that outweighed the drawbacks, as I had previously demonstrated.

8. How students utilized the criteria

Once all of the criteria were finalized and distributed, students then used them to compose their video. In this section, I provide an overview of each participant’s video, and I explore how each student used the criteria to compose her video project. I distributed the consolidated criteria sheet to the class and asked them to use it to self-assess their own and their classmates’ projects during the revision stage, stressing that this was what I would employ to grade their works. Interestingly, however, students utilized the consolidated criteria differently. Some used them contrary to my expectations, but in the end, each of them gained something as a result.

8.1. Use of the consolidated criteria as a roadmap for addressing audience

Amy’s video argued that the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) is problematic for Catholic hospitals, as she believes it would require them to offer abortions to patients as a condition for receiving federal funding. She wanted to persuade her audience, Catholics, to support the Church’s fight against FOCA. In composing her video, Amy used the consolidated criteria as a guide to ensure that her arguments would be clear. She specifically focused on clarity, one of the categories of the criteria: “I remember looking at it [the consolidated criteria] and seeing being evaluated on something like is this really clear? Will people understand this? I might understand it because I made it, but did it really make sense coming from another perspective?” Thus, the consolidated criteria became a tool that helped Amy attain clarity. Analyzing clarity, in turn, led her to think about audience:

If I didn’t have this [the consolidated criteria], I would not really think about it [the audience], just kinda put the pictures together, but after I looked at this [the consolidated criteria], it was like okay, would I understand it if I didn’t know what the subject was? Would people support my arguments and get it? Can I impact them? So I used the sheet to help me strategize my message and get to the audience.

Amy’s usage of “get to the audience” is noteworthy. It indicates that she had thought about her aim and purpose in detail (to solicit support for the Catholic Church). In sum, Amy’s remarks reveal that the criteria sheet led her to think about the “readerly” (Ball, 2006) aspect of multimodal composing in which she considered how her rhetorical choices would impact her audience and purpose. It aided productive thinking about effective composing, a praxis that Huot, Borton and Huot, and Odell and Katz urged. Grading standards, they claimed, should not only serve as benchmarks
for summative evaluation but also function as a generative guide for writers (Odell & Katz, 2009). Assessment can then become linked to instruction and students’ composing process (Huot, 2002b; Borton & Huot, 2007). Through this practice, grading criteria are not an exclusive instrument of the teacher used solely for the purpose of grading but also for learning and writing as in Amy’s situation.

8.2. Use of the consolidated criteria as a heuristic

Jane’s video aimed to raise awareness about autism and the needs of autistic children. It argued that autism is neither a disability nor a tragedy and that we must work together to avoid representing it as such. Until that change of perspective can be achieved, she contended, people with autism will continue to be marginalized. In making her video, she employed the consolidated criteria to help her invent and conceptualize the content. She began her video composing process by printing out the consolidated criteria sheet and using it to help her develop the details of her project. Without it, she claimed, she would not know how to begin: “If you would just say get started, I would have been so disorganized. I feel I wouldn’t be able to rhetorically drive it [the video].” Using the consolidated criteria allowed her to simplify and organize her project into concrete steps:

I feel [in] making our own grading criteria, I honestly do feel that was really helpful because it enabled me to break down what I would do in my video before I even really organized my thoughts and that helped me organize what I was going to do. And it enabled me to better think about what I would put in place, breaking it down into images, sounds, transitions, texts.

Jane explained that the consolidated criteria sheet helped her understand how to proceed and how to meet the expectations of the assignment. It fostered invention and served as a compass that oriented and guided her video composing process. Here Jane engaged in “instructive evaluation” in which the assessment instrument helped her learn to compose in a new genre, one that was digital and multimodal (Borton & Huot, 2007, p. 2).

Originally, I intended the consolidated criteria to serve only at the revision stage as a revision checklist, but Jane had repurposed and used it as an invention tool and a planning guide—something I now realize I should have encouraged for all students, and something I will certainly do in the future. Jane’s repurposing of the consolidated criteria sheet made me realize that it could be used in more than one way—as a heuristic, a planning guide, a revision checklist, a list of standards to achieve, and a peer review sheet. It can function as a multi-purpose document that students could use throughout different stages of the multimodal composing process. According to Odell and Katz, grading criteria and standards should be “generative”; this is one of the hallmarks of effective assessment (p. W200). Thus, as instructors, we need to be flexible and encourage students to adapt the criteria in ways that would be most “generative” and helpful to them.

9. Multimodal composing and student learning about rhetoric and writing

Clearly, creating and using the evaluation criteria proved beneficial for students as they worked on their multimodal projects. But as a teacher watching and helping students as they were immersed in their composing processes, I found myself wondering whether they were actually learning the rhetoric and writing goals that I (and the program) had for them. To put it bluntly, in the end, what did students learn about rhetoric and writing, and how did the evaluation criteria aid in that learning? To answer these questions, I analyzed the quality of Jane’s and Brenda’s video projects and report their perspectives about their learning.

9.1. Rhetoric “can come in all shapes and sizes.”

Aimed to raise awareness about autism and to counteract negative perceptions of autism for an audience of mostly white Americans, Jane’s video consisted of music, visuals, video clips, and voiceovers. Her work opened with jovial and cheerful music in order to dissociate autism from somber and tragic connotations. Her music selection disrupted the notion that autism is a tragic and depressing subject. Toward the end of her video, she incorporated an uplifting song, “The Climb” by Mylie Cyrus, which sang a message of perseverance and optimism: “There’s always gonna be another mountain/ I’m always gonna wanna make it move/. The struggles I’m facing/ The chances I’m taking/ Sometimes might knock me down/ But no I’m not breaking.” This song conveyed a hopeful message, ending the video.
on a positive note. It helped articulate Jane’s vision and goal for the future of autism. The music that Jane selected reinforced the arguments she aimed to articulate: People with autism should not be stigmatized.

In addition, Jane strategically used voiceovers to communicate an important argument at the end of her clip: We should not try to make autistic children become a part of the “normal,” “able body” world but rather we should enter into theirs. To articulate this claim, she used two narrating voices: that of a man and a woman. A female voice (her own) uttered: “Because in the end, it won’t be about them becoming a part of our world,” and then a male voice spoke: “It’s about us becoming a part of theirs.” Jane’s usage of two voices evoked the notions of cooperation, unity, and solidarity, important themes that underlie her clip. Her video suggested that through cooperation, unity, and solidarity, we could defeat the stigmatization of autism.

Besides sounds, Jane also effectively used visuals to convey and support her message. She carefully chose her pictures to ensure that they would not trivialize autism or make it seem like a depressing matter. None of the images Jane incorporated depicted autistic children as “abnormal.” The children in her video appeared to be living a typical lifestyle, but when she wanted to arouse pathos and to show that social stigmatization causes autistic children to experience frustrations, depression, and alienation, Jane included pictures of lonely, devastated, and isolated children, and words describing these emotions were gradually spelled out letter by letter over each image in red (See Figure 1). Jane clarified why she made that move:

Jane: I wanted to make my points clear and to make them stand out so I put in words to reinforce the emotions so people would feel them. I think putting it over the picture have an impact. If you don’t have pictures, just words, you don’t get the same emotions. With them together, it makes people pay attention. Things are clearer.

Chanon: Why red alphabets?

Jane: I feel red is a bold color. I don’t necessarily think of it as a happy or a bad color, but it’s bold. So it made what I wanna say stick out more and kinda burn into your mind, and it makes people think about love, and that’s what I want people to feel for the children. I didn’t want it [typography] to be official because I kinda want people to see that this is about children. That’s my focus.

These comments revealed Jane’s ability to combine and capitalize upon the affordances of several modalities: visual and alphabetic texts. They also showed that Jane recognized how color and typeface can play an important rhetorical function. Her moves were well thought out and strategic.

If we were to analyze how Jane’s video matched up with the grading criteria she helped devise, it is, for the most part, successful. Some of the criteria specified that sounds should match the theme, mood, and content of the argument, enhance the thesis, and be incorporated in a manner that aligns with the images, message, and author’s objective; images should rhetorically express and strengthen the argument in a meaningful way; and texts should be used effectively in positioning, font, style, color and content. Jane’s video appeared to meet these criteria, reflecting an understanding of coherence (Yancey, 2004a), “between modes thinking” (Sorapure, 2006), and rhetorical situation (Odell & Katz, 2009; Anderson et al., 2006). Jane’s usage of the criteria early on in her composing process appeared to be beneficial for her project.
At the same time, however, certain aspects of her video needed improvement. The volume level, in particular, required adjustment. Though audible, some voiceovers were louder than others, creating disparity. Also, transitions were missing in a few places where she switched from still pictures to moving video shots; this caused certain segments of her project to appear choppy and difficult to follow. Just as a quotation should not be dropped into an essay without a signal phrase and some context, a transition before a video clip from a documentary would have made for a smoother integration into the rest of Jane’s video. The inserted clip appeared out of place and confusing to follow. These shortcomings affected the clarity of Jane’s project, something her classmates and I noted when reviewing her project with the consolidated criteria.

Overall, composing this multimodal project and developing the criteria with which to evaluate Jane’s own and others’ work expanded her understanding of rhetoric:

[From] this project, I learn it [rhetoric] can come in all shapes and sizes, that it doesn’t have to be written, that it doesn’t really have to be blatant to affect you. It can be subtle; it can be in the tone of it; it can be in the font structure; it’s just amazing how much you don’t realize that you can be affected like that, and writing, just that writing is so versatile that we turn papers into videos. We turn our thoughts into visuals. Writing’s more than just words, so writing is versatile.

Jane’s remarks reveal that composing a multimodal video enabled her to develop critical reception of texts, and it broadened her understanding of what constitutes rhetoric and writing. That she now sees that rhetoric needs not be “blatant” to be effective suggests that she had become a more critical and informed reader of “texts.” Her last remark—“writing’s more than just words”—is noteworthy. It shows that she has learned to read, compose—and think beyond alphabetic discourse. That is, she is now able to recognize and use disparate modalities as available means of persuasion, showing she has developed multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). In the end, Jane appears to understand an important lesson about new media composition, the idea that “[d]igital writing environments make it difficult to separate words from visual [and sounds] or privilege one over another. Interactive digital texts can blend words and visuals, talk and text...” (Hocks, 2003, pp. 629–630). Of note is how her work attempted to re-design “social futures” by critiquing common (mis)conceptions of disability. According to Gunther Kress (1999), critique, which occurs when existing forms and social relations are “subjected to distanced analytical scrutiny,” and design, which denotes the shaping of the futures “through deliberative deployment or representational resources in the designer’s interest” (pp. 66, 77), must go hand-in-hand in multiliteracies pedagogy. Jane’s project and reflection show her ability to do both. Jane was able to engage in what the New London Group called “critical framing” and “transform practice” (p. 35): She critically examined (mis)conception about disability in contemporary culture before using multimodal resources to foster social transformation, to negate misgivings about autistic children.

9.2. “The way people are communicating is revolutionizing what can be rhetoric.”

Targeting female college students, Brenda’s satiric video argued against sorority membership. Organized into two parts, the first section presented a glamorous, fantasy-like image of Greek life, one that would be negated in the next section, which exposed the drawbacks of sorority culture. The song “Stupid Girl” by Pink, which ridiculed the measures some women would go through to be attractive and popular, played in the background throughout the clip.17

Brenda’s video contained several strengths. Her two-part organization, fantasy/reality, made her arguments clear and easy to follow, and satire served as her principal rhetorical strategy. She created satire through careful selection and integration of music and images. As “Stupid Girl” played in the background, a series of pictures of wild Greek life parties were exhibited. The song’s lyrics continuously repeated the line “stupid girls” throughout the clip, articulating the argument that one should not join a sorority. It is an unwise decision. The song made those social activities seem pointless, superfluous, and ridiculous. Music was the principal medium that Brenda used to assert her argument. It articulated, reinforced, and cohered her message, playing a pivotal rhetorical function in the video. Brenda’s strategic music choice revealed her understanding about the rhetorical function of sounds—“sound matters” (McKee, 2006). Her usage of music in conjunction with images suggests that she comprehended the concept of “sound envelope” well, a recognition that

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17 I feel Brenda’s usage of “Stupid Girls” fell under fair use because she was repurposing it to make a critique about sorority life.
sounds is not a fixed, isolated mode, nor should it be considered in isolation. Sound and all the elements of sound play crucial roles in such important areas as setting the mood, building atmosphere, carrying the narrative, directing attention, and enveloping themes in multimodal works. (McKee, 2006, p. 352)

Further, Brenda’s video exhibited rhetorical usage of colors. In part one, in which she painted a fantasy picture of Greek life, she used white text and pink background to delineate a fun, jovial image of sorority, but in the section in which she presented the “dark side” of sorority, she switched to black. She explained why she made that move:

With the pink and the black, I was trying to show the difference between the reality of sororities compared with the perceived idea that a lot of people have, so I kinda tried to show that as far as transitioning the colors. Black is a more serious, depressing color. It worked with my message so like it went from fun feeling, fun color to seriousness, from fantasy to unpleasant reality.

Like Jane, Brenda’s usage of color was strategic. She used pink to attract attention and create a light, fun feeling for her target audience of first-year female students. Afterward, she utilized black to create emphasis and give force to her argument. According to Erik Peterson’s (2009) “Color Psychology in Logo Design,” black is often used in graphic design to convey authority. The usage of black in the latter part of the video added a sense of seriousness to Brenda’s argument. She understood an important concept in design: how colors not only add emphasis but also convey meanings and impact perceptions (Ball & Arola, 2010). As a whole, Brenda’s video capitalized upon the affordances of several modalities—visuals, texts, and sounds—using them to cohere her argument. Each modality related to one another, creating convergence: the use and combination of different media to communicate similar points and goals (Penrod, 2005). Brenda recognized that the affordance of multimedia lies not in one particular element but in the integrated use of multiple modalities to achieve a rhetorical purpose. Her project demonstrated “between mode thinking,” a careful consideration of the usage and relationship of different modalities to cohere the thesis (Sorapure, 2006). Her work articulated the central argument against sorority membership through several modalities in a coherent manner.

Brenda’s project met many of the criteria that she and her classmates co-created. The criteria for sound stated that it should be used to enhance and drive the argument, fulfill a rhetorical purpose, and flow with the content of the video. Brenda was able to achieve these goals through her careful usage of music. “Stupid Girls” fit nicely with the pictures she selected. Additionally, according to the grading criteria for images, pictures should “visually depict, clarify, and support the argument and enhance persuasion,” and they should “enrich the author’s stance.” Brenda’s work satisfied these objectives. She revealed that these criteria provided a roadmap that helped her improve the quality of her video, relating: “I was able to take these things [the consolidated criteria] and set goals for myself. They gave me a map to follow to make sure that I’ll do a good project and made me think about what kind of standards I should have for my own work and others.”
Despite the strength of Brenda’s project, her classmates and I, using the collaborative criteria, offered her a number of suggestions for revision, particular in her use of evidence to support claims. Her reasons for why women should not join sororities required additional backing to be persuasive. She claimed that sorority life leads to social exclusion but did not provide evidence to substantiate how or why. Her research paper, which she remediated into this video, contained several strong sets of evidence, but in the essay-to-video remediation process, the data, warrant, and backings, to use Toulminian terms, were omitted. As a result of class feedback, Brenda realized that, just like a traditional print-based academic essay, good multimodal arguments must contain strong lines of reasoning. Otherwise, the arguments are merely claims that remain unconvincing.

When explaining what she gained overall from the project, Brenda described learning how important rhetoric is:

> At first, when you asked what is rhetoric, I had thought about old Greek stuff, so now I realized that rhetoric is more modern than I had thought it was and also that rhetoric is changing, and *the way people are communicating is revolutionizing what can be rhetoric*, the way people speak, write, and do online stuff. It definitely helped me realize where rhetoric is now. People are communicating via YouTube and other video uploading websites, so making a video rhetoric is an important skill to learn and know. I think it’s important that English classes teach about it. It’s something we should do in all writing classes.

The realization that rhetoric can be digital and multimodal led Brenda to especially appreciate learning multimodal digital composing.

Like Jane and Brenda’s projects, all of the students’ videos had various strengths and weaknesses. Although creating and using student-generated criteria did not necessarily lead to a flawless multimodal composition, the presence of the shortcomings did not mean that students had failed to learn about rhetoric and multimodality. And I am convinced that the student projects were far stronger because of the time students spent analyzing and writing about their own and others’ videos. The students’ insightful reflections confirm Penrod’s assertion that “linking writing assessment technologies with computer-based composition can lead to some very powerful student learning about language and rhetoric” (p. 139). The criteria students generated aided in their composing of and understanding about the significance and relevance of multimodal rhetoric. The students had a moment of what Yancey (1998) called “reflection-in-action,” the public or private act of reviewing, projecting, thinking about, and revising one’s composition that lead to a deeper comprehension about writing, one’s composing experiences, and literacy practices. Using the student-generated grading criteria created a “digital mirror” that gave Jane and Brenda “an opportunity to become aware of their processes of learning and composing, to make connections between new and familiar experiences and information, to experiment and try out new ideas and approaches,” and recognize how “modality shapes [and creates] meaning” (Journet et al., 2008, para. 2).

In the end, from constructing the grading criteria and completing the videos, Jane and Brenda (and their classmates) were able to analyze the rhetorical functions of multimodal elements, and they were able to utilize the affordances of various modalities and technology to construct an argument for social change. They could use, critically analyze, and produce digital media, acquiring what Selber called functional, critical, and rhetorical literacies—but most notably, they have come to see rhetoric as relevant and important for daily life.

10. Conclusion: Implications and suggestions for teaching multimodal composition

Each day we encounter numerous types of media that attempt to influence us in some way. Teaching writing in the 21st century, therefore, requires going beyond a logocentric pedagogy so that our learners can learn to read and write through a variety of modalities and acquire multiliteracies (Clark, 2010; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007; Selber, 2004; New London Group, 1996). A multimodal digital project can help us achieve that objective, but in the end, it requires a heuristic and grading, and this provokes several pragmatic questions: What might we provide to guide students through the composing process, and what standards should be used to evaluate multimodal works? This article has offered an approach: Work with students to have them generate the evaluation criteria. Through this dialogic process, students and instructors come to grow and learn from one another as a result. Assessment must function as a part of—not apart from—teaching and composing (CCCCC, 2009; Inoue, 2005; Huot, 2002b, White, 1994). In my work as a teacher-researcher, I discovered that collaborating on the evaluation criteria with students is a way to link assessment to instruction and to students’ recursive multimodal composing processes. This approach, I learned, offered many pedagogical advantages for both the learners and the instructor. The most important one, I believe, was that in the
end, students became more informed and critical readers and authors of digital multimodal rhetoric. This is especially important because, as Selber noted, “if students are to become agents of positive change, they will need an education that is comprehensive and truly relevant to a digital age in which much of the instructional agenda seems to be little more than indoctrination into value systems of dominate computer culture” (p. 234).

The multimodal assessment method I presented in this article can be used to generate the evaluation criteria for other kinds of composition—audio, visual, etc. What I have argued have several important implications for instructors who might be interested in incorporating multimodal video composing or other types of new media assignments into their pedagogy:

1. *Frequent rhetorical viewing and analysis exercises are crucial to students’ learning and understanding of video composing.*

   Jane, Amy, and Brenda unanimously confirmed that the bi-weekly rhetorical viewing assignment was most helpful in learning how to compose a multimodal video. Rhetorically analyzing sample video projects on a weekly basis over five weeks acquainted them with the multimodal genre, trained them to become critical audiences of digital media, and helped them see examples of effective (and ineffective) multimodal arguments, enabling them to learn to compose their own projects and develop the standards that could be used to evaluate their work. The students’ confirmation reaffirms Huot’s (2002a) and Hocks’ call to involve writers in the critique of sample works before they begin composing new media projects; like Huot (2002a) explained, before students can write rhetorically, they must learn to assess rhetorically. Assessment can aid invention. Through frequent analysis of sample works, students come to better understand their composing options, as well as become rhetorically informed evaluators and audiences of multimodal arguments.

2. *Evaluation criteria need to be flexible, adaptable, and perpetually open to revision because they must frequently be updated to remain dynamic and current.*

   As a novice instructor to multimodality, when I first generated the grading criteria, I asked students to think about the following issues as they constructed their multimodal arguments: images, sounds, transitions, alphabetic texts, clarity, persuasiveness, and arrangement. I asked them to develop the benchmarks for each of these topics (categories), and at that time, I felt those were sufficient. However, what my students and I soon realized is that, depending on the class focus, more categories could be included. Instructors should add/amend the categories as they see fit, and they might also ask students to propose additional ones. Listening to students’ input and revising our grading criteria accordingly can not only help strengthen standards for the project, but as Inoue noted, also lead to new insights and learning about writing. In the future, from what I have learned from my students’ feedback and this study, I plan to add the following categories: logos, design, and fair use. Thinking about these issues would further strengthen students’ projects. Logos could help prevent logical fallacies and improve the persuasive quality of the arguments. In thinking about logos, instructors might acquaint students with Toulmin’s elements of argumentation and encourage them to use his theory as a framework to test the strength and persuasive quality of their rhetoric. Adding a category for design would force students to consider how strategic uses of artistic elements such as typography, coloration, contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity can create rhetorical effects (Ball & Arola, 2010). The category of fair use could help students avoid copyright infringement, which would allow them to circulate the videos beyond the classroom. This is especially crucial in the age of much (illegal) filesharing (DeVoss & Porter, 2006). Understanding fair use can help students learn to legally incorporate and respect other people’s labor and creativity, hereby fostering what Danielle DeVoss and James Porter (2006) called “digital ethics.” Most importantly, as Wyatt-Kimber and Smith and Penrod advised, the criteria sheet should be generated anew with each class so that they are always current with the ever-changing writing technologies and literacy practices, as well as specific to each instructional objective and context.

3. *Encourage reflection throughout the process not just in a final reflective essay accompanying the final project.*

   Hearing students’ insightful comments about what they gained from the multimodal video unit led me to recognize that I needed to ask students to extensively reflect orally and in writing about their multimodal composing process throughout the course of the project and after the submission of their final product. Reflection, Yancey (1998) argued, is a powerful mode of knowledge making. It can lead to rich insights about one’s writing and learning,
as evident in the student interviews. To encourage extensive reflection in the future, following Borton and Huot’s call, I will ask students to maintain a video composing blog in which they detail their composing process and the rhetorical decisions they made or plan to make. These blogs might be in the form a double-entry notebook (Berthoff, 1981), where on the left side students maintain a running list of things they did (or decided not to do) in the video, and on the right side they justify their reasoning and purpose. Given that digital technology can function as “digital mirrors” (Journet et al., 2008), we might allow students to maintain their reflection in a variety of medium—blogs, audio narratives, written journals, or whatever best suits their learning style. In the future, I plan to ask students to turn in their reflections on a weekly basis so that I can provide them with formative feedback and encouragement throughout the composing process.

In addition, following Shipka’s (2011) call for using SOGC, I will continue to ask students to submit a reflective essay with their final project in which they detail their “goals and choices,” specifically addressing the project’s purpose, rhetorical moves, and the strengths (and limitations). Thus, besides engaging in “reflection-in-action,” students must also engage in “reflection-in-presentation,” “the process of articulating the relationships between and among the multiple variable of writing and the writer in a specific context for a specific audience, and the associated texts” (Yancey, 1998, p. 14). Reading student reflections and blogs can help us better evaluate students’ learning and understand to the rhetorical decisions and thinking behind their projects, information that cannot be obtained from the final videos alone. More importantly, however, sustained reflection helps them gain rhetorical sensitivity (Shipka, 2011), better understand their composing process and literacy practices (Journet et al., 2008; Sommers, 1989; Elbow & Belanoff, 1989), and internalize [good] standards for writing (Katz, 1989).

4. **Motivate students to carefully consider and construct their criteria.**

As Brenda pointed out, some students might not recognize the significance of the criteria they are proposing; however, we can encourage them to do so through three measures: 1) Emphasize that what they generate will impact how they will be graded. Students should understand that they now have a say in the grading process and what they contribute does and will matter to their grade because we might incorporate their suggestions. 2) Give feedback on the criteria they proposed. Doing so will encourage students to take the assignment seriously and push them to refine their thoughts and contributions. 3) Grade the proposed criteria for clarity, thoughtfulness, and thoroughness. This could motivate learners to perceive criteria building as a high-stakes exercise that will require thoughtful engagement and careful considerations.

5. **Be flexible about how students might repurpose the criteria.**

This study has taught me several lessons. Just because students did not use the criteria in the way I intended did not mean they were negligent or off-track. Jane’s case clearly demonstrated the opposite. She repurposed the criteria and used them as an invention guide, opening up new possibilities for how the consolidated criteria sheet could be employed. I now see that student-generated criteria can function as a heuristic, as well as a revision checklist, a set of standards to achieve, or a peer review sheet. It has multi-purposes. Previously, I told students not to worry about grading standards until the revision phase because I thought that paying attention to benchmarks in the beginning might overwhelm them; however, Jane’s remarks helped me realize that providing the grading criteria to students early on in the project, a practice that Zemelman and Daniels and Richard Leahy (2002) encouraged and a point Jane noted, can help them feel more grounded and clear, as well as better understand how to approach the assignment. Just as there is not one way to write, there is no single, right way to use the criteria. According to Odell and Katz, grading criteria for multimodal projects should be generative and generalizable. That is, they should help generate thinking about effective writing in more than one way. We should not predetermine or stipulate how students might utilize them, though we might make recommendations. I will now offer the consolidated criteria early on in the unit and encourage students to use and repurpose them during any stage and in any way that might be most beneficial to them.

Teaching and learning multimodal composing are complex endeavors, but if instructors ask students to collaborate and generate the criteria for evaluating multimodal projects, the process can provide many benefits for both students and instructors. As Inoue argued: “If our purpose for assessing and evaluating student writing is to help students learn—if assessment is inherently a learning practice—then the teacher shouldn’t control all of the process” (p. 203).
By involving students in assessment, they gain a sense of ownership over their projects and become stronger evaluators and authors of multimodal composition, and instructors have more specific guidance for the challenging task of teaching and evaluating new media assignments. Through the collaborative process of generating evaluation criteria, our pedagogy becomes student-centered, and learners come to acquire multimodal literacies and rhetorical sensibility that are essential for “reading,” composing—and succeeding in the 21st century.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Heidi McKee for the relentless encouragement and guidance that she provided throughout the course of my research and writing. Thanks also to the Computers and Composition reviewer who offered immensely helpful suggestions and references that allowed me to strengthen my arguments and gain new insights about effective assessment practices. I would like to thank my former students, Jane, Brenda and Amy, for allowing me to share their thoughts and projects as well.

Appendix A. Sample Rhetorical Viewing Questions

Clip I: As you watch the clip from the Humane Society of the United States, pay attention to the following:

1. How are the images arranged? In what order do they appear? Is there any logic to them?
2. What makes the clip memorable and why?
3. What sounds do you hear first, next, and afterward? Why do you think they are put in that order?
4. How are quotations used; why?
5. How is ethos utilized?
6. What do you like about this clip that you might try to emulate in your own work?
7. Is there anything that you dislike? Identify them and provide your reasons.

Clip II: As you watch the PETA clip, pay attention to the following:

1. How does the author balance between logos and pathos? Be specific. Does s/he use interviews, factual descriptions, etc.?
2. Why do you think the clip doesn’t contain music like other ones? In other words, why is silence used?
3. Listen to the voice of the narrator. Each voice has a distinctive style, and each one provokes different reactions. How would you describe the narrator’s pitch and tone? What effects does his voice create?
4. What colors are present in the clip? What rhetorical purposes do they accomplish?
5. Is there anything missing in the clip that you might add? What might you incorporate to make it more effective, if any?

Clip III: As you watch the clip about racial discrimination, please watch it 3 times and pay attention to the following:

First round: pay attention to how the arguments are conveyed—through images, quotations, sounds? Observe how colorations are used. What are their functions? Also, read the texts that are provided. How do they enhance or detract the mood of the clip?

Second round: pay attention to the Ken Burns effects—that is, how images pan, focus, zoom from one area to another (e.g. begin in the middle and then zoom out). What effects do they create? Additionally, listen to the music provided. How does it correspond/sync (or does not) with the images? What reactions are evoked?

Third round: think about how the images are organized. Do you see any coherent theme in their ordering? What do you see first, second, third, last? How does the sequence enhance or detract the clip’s effectiveness?

Appendix B. Instructions for Creating the Grading Criteria for Your Multimodal Clip

Part I Develop the criteria that should be utilized to grade the multimedia clip you’re composing. They must be clear and specific, and they must demonstrate your rhetorical understanding of new media. Before developing them,
please review the ones I’ve used to previously evaluate your autoethnography, rhetorical analysis, and argumentative essays. Use them as models.¹⁸ Your criteria must address the following categories:

- Images
- Sounds
- Transitions (screen transitions)
- Alphabetic texts
- Clarity
- Persuasiveness
- Arrangement (sequence)

For each category, specify what needs to be met. Make a list of at least 3 things. For instance, under images, what are some of the things you would look for? Under sounds, what might be some important things we need to listen for when we grade? Please avoid vague statements such as the images are good; the clip looks nice, etc. Specify what you mean by good and nice. Do you mean the sound syncs nicely with the visuals in the clip, or they are appropriate for the mood and the argument?

Post your finished work in the discussion area of Blackboard and randomly comment on 4 of your classmates’ criteria. Depending upon the kind of feedback you receive on your criteria, you may need to further revise them. If revision is necessary, revise and re-post your work by the date on the course calendar.

You will be evaluated for specificity, thoroughness, and thoughtfulness.

**Part II** You’ll become the teacher! Watch the clips that are assigned for homework, and grade them using the criteria you developed. (If revision to your criteria is necessary, wait to do this part until you have them revised.) In a separate discussion forum on Blackboard, post the grade that you think each clip deserves. Then use your criteria to justify why it should receive that grade. Also explain where each clip falls short and what it does well.

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¹⁸ Previously, students have written three essays: autoethnography, rhetorical analysis and argumentation. They were given a separate grading criteria sheet for each project.


Interfaces and Ephemerality: 
Teaching Early Modern Ballads 

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Seventeenth-century broadside ballads are well-suited for the undergraduate classroom. The multimedia page of a printed ballad includes concentrated text, sensational content, and illustrations conducive to student research. Furthermore, ballads have received a fresh wave of attention thanks to digital archives, like the English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA) and the Bodleian Ballad Archive, that make facsimiles and text transcriptions—searchable by keyword and image—freely accessible. These surviving sheets, now preserved and reproduced digitally, offer glimpses into the popular culture of the period (Fumerton 2010, 13).

How ballads enter the classroom can take a variety of forms. Most obviously, broadsides can contextualize musical allusions in early modern drama. For instance, students encounter ballad-singing in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *The Winter’s Tale*, and viewing and listening to broadsides provide historical insights. Approaching ballads from a digitally-informed perspective on interfaces and ephemerality, however, opens readings beyond allusions, and asks students to analyze historical artifacts and consider their materiality. Indeed, studying the multimedia interfaces of ballads through modern technology is an ideal way for students to develop research skills. To decipher the content, students must look up unfamiliar vocabulary and historical phenomena. Reading ballads as interfaces—both as spaces and as a process of making—brings broadsides closer to their multivalent social function. Using twenty-first-century social media allows students to engage with early modern popular culture, while also providing insights into the continuing efforts to preserve printed ephemera.

1. Mediating interfaces: new technologies and early modern ballads

Though anachronistic, the word “interface” offers particular advantages to studies of early modern print. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists “interface” as first appearing in 1882 to refer to “[a] surface lying between two portions of matter or space, and forming their common boundary.” The figurative definition of “[a] means or place of interaction between two systems [...]
a meeting-point or common ground between two parties” emerges in the 1960s, and this definition takes on associations with computing in the same decade.\(^1\) The etymology for interface, “inter” + “face,” implies a meeting between the edifices of two entities; tracing the word further down its Latinate roots, however, we find *facio, facere*, to make, to do. Early modern definitions share this active connotation: Latin–English dictionaries define “[i]nterfacio, interfacis,” as “[t]o set hand to the worke that is in doing, to doe or worke by times or fits” (Thomas 1587, Hhiir). Interface, then, is a mediation that allows the meeting of faces, but it is also a space of intermittent working, doing, and creating.

These early definitions do not mean that the interface was something that early modern people knew. Still, it does permit a path between twenty-first-century interfaces and the *interfacio* of the seventeenth century. In terms of ballads, the multimedia interface of the printed page affects the transmission of popular songs from the period. The broadside brings consumers face-to-face with the narratives of fictional or real people. Since broadsheets were circulated among friends, hung on tavern walls, sung on street corners, and sold outside of playhouses, they were a multivalent presence (Fumerton 2018, 414; Stern 2008, 139–140). The material sheets contributed to how ballads were experienced aurally, orally, visually, and tactiley by audiences (Burke 1978; Brokaw 2016). Ballads are also interfaces in terms of *interfacio* because they invite making through adaptations of lyrics, tunes, or woodcuts in subsequent printed copies or performances.

Early modernists can profit from digital applications of the term “interface.” As Johanna Drucker notes, emphasis on the “graphical user interface,” or the way humans interact with technological screens, pervades discourse about web design. Focus on the graphical user interface has resulted in a demand for “user-friendly interface[s]” that require little or no instruction (Drucker 2014, 8). But she argues that the user never passively receives an interface; instead, the interface “is what we read and how we read combined through engagement” (Drucker 2014, 151; 147). Indeed, recent digital humanities scholarship has reconsidered how the mediating space of interfaces affects creativity in composition. Lori Emerson’s theory of “*reading writing*” affords a framework for analyzing interfaces by drawing attention to ubiquitous, self-enclosed screens, which in her estimation limit critical readings and creative engagement (Emerson 2014, ix, xiv). These twenty-first-century contexts

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for interfaces as combined space (what we read) and practice (how we read) provide a new entry into seventeenth-century artifacts, and, in the process, require students to slow down while using technologies that may have limitations or implications worth considering.

With a ballad broadside, I see an analogous interface that is a static space, yet always in the midst of a process of making and re-making. Ballads demanded adaptation, a result of their unique mobility in oral circulation and printed copies, with voices and sheets that traveled throughout England and song elements that changed in subsequent printings, manuscript copies, and musical renditions (Fumerton 2020). Using a more expansive view of “interface,” Drucker only gestures toward the interfaces of books as providing insights about digital interfaces (2014, 161–170). The formatting conventions of printed ballads invite interpretation of rhetorical attributes that shaped how individuals may have encountered them as social documents, where subjects—rather than users—engage with the multimedia page.

Like the interfaces of writing technologies that Emerson analyzes, the interfaces of ballads both constrained and encouraged creativity. New versions resulted from their circulation; people performed and dramatized ballads and copied them into commonplace books or incorporated them into plays. Moreover, printers and singers often altered ballads in their transmission. Historical accounts of ballad adaptations indicate that users creatively adapted songs for social and political gain. Slander court cases allude to incriminating ballads fine-tuned to include the names of neighbors (Watt 1991, 37; Gowing 1996, 57; Ingram 1984, 103). These accounts appear in literature as well, such as when Falstaff threatens Hal and Poins, “An I have not ballads made on you all and sung to filthy tunes, let a cup of sack be my poison” (Henry IV pt 1, 2.2.784–87). Sometimes performers adjusted a ballad according to individual preference, singing what they thought the words ought to be, rather than following what was printed (Fumerton 2016, 165).

This malleability in ballad culture is manifest on the page with its interchangeable printed components. Seventeenth-century ballads often followed the same formatting conventions: they included black-letter type and woodblocks printed on one side of a sheet of paper in landscape orientation. Sometimes different editions of the same ballad would feature variations in tune or woodcuts. Discussing the layout, lyrics, tunes, and figures prompts students to make arguments about the multimodal interfaces of broadsides. By lingering on how various media might appeal to audiences who ranged in
literacies, class, and gender, students can create arguments about how the components of a ballad work in concert to represent a narrative.

As part of studying early modern ballads, I asked students to analyze digital archives that make broadsides ballads available to modern audiences. Today’s encounters with ballads entail a different experience, mediated through archives; undergraduates explore their findings and reactions as they encountered ballads by creating videos of their searching experience. Then, in order to develop skills in close reading through a lens of digital preservation, students used markup language to annotate the text of a broadside of their choice in an exercise that worked toward an evidence-based research essay. My goal was to ease students into analyzing a genre, estranged by time and topicality, by thinking critically about the various interfaces they encountered and used. And the idea of ephemerality—of seventeenth-century popular media and today’s social platforms—grounded our discussions about how twenty-first-century technologies change the way we read interfaces of the past.

2. Ephemeral technologies, then and now

By focusing on ephemerality, an interface that at first seems indecipherable—such as a ballad—can be analyzed as analogous to modern digital interfaces that also construct narratives from text, sound, and image to appeal to users. Book historians often relate the changes induced by the advent of the printing press with the revolutions brought about by the Internet (Dewar and Ang 2007; Darnton 2009; Blair 2010). Although scholars still debate the extent to which the printing press changed the dissemination of knowledge (Eisenstein 1979; Johns 1998; Baron et al. 2007), the analogy can be a useful one to discuss early modern print with students who are thinking already about their digital presence, including their data security and privacy as consumers. Application downloads include lengthy policy agreements that are not necessarily transparent about their collection of users’ data. Traces of information can remain on servers and computer hardware long after they seem to be erased. As Matthew Kirschenbaum demonstrates, electronic data is “remarkably, stubbornly, perniciously stable” because information persists on the surfaces of materials even after ostensibly deleted (Kirschenbaum 2008, 27). This tenacity of the digital has become a point of concern for some Internet users, especially in regards to personal data stored on servers. Digital trails from web analytics, data collection, and online communication have heightened users’ apprehensions about unauthorized use of personal information, leading web designers to imagine programs with deletion as the premise instead of archiving (Xu et al. 2016; Bélanger and Crossler 2011).
In other words, ephemerality has its benefits—even if fantasies of complete data destruction are not true to the technological realities.

Ballad broadsides are exemplary of early modern ephemera: printers designed the page to inform and entertain but not to withstand long-term use. Printed on one side of a single sheet, broadsheets were vulnerable to disintegration or repurposing. As Tessa Watt states, “[t]here were roughly 3,000 distinct ballads published in the second half of the sixteenth century,” according to the Stationer’s Register, which means between six hundred thousand and three or four million English broadsides originally existed (1991, 11; 42). Ballads were part of a shared cultural touchstone of early modern people, and their popularity in print indicates the scope of demand for new songs. Since they were affordable, costing about a penny or halfpenny, ballads could be bought by even the poor (Fumerton 2016, 169 and Würzbach 1990, 20). The appealing woodcut illustrations made ballads desirable for decoration as well as performance. According to Fumerton, ballads “were the most socially mass-marketed form of print, reaching high and low alike” (2016, 169). Not required for their enjoyment, however, was any lasting preservation.

Although ballads were a central part of early modern daily life, only a fraction have survived to the present, mostly a result of seventeenth-century collectors who compiled albums to keep individual sheets. To preserve the ballads, owners dismantled, cut, and cropped pages, which reinforces the sheets’ susceptibility to physical alterations (Fumerton et al. 2015, 91). Now, digital archives participate in the next iteration of ballad preservation: although existing as delicate items in special collections, digital reproductions make broadsides accessible to a broader public while also protecting individual copies. In addition, online repositories use technology to reunite pages to more closely resemble their earliest printed state, such as the ballad facsimiles that digitally stitch the separated halves back together (Fumerton et al. 2015, 92; Duroselle-Melish 2017, 202). With TEI-XML markup, the text can be preserved for digital reproduction and tagged for search functionality.

The history of dismembered print is not the only indication of the ephemerality of broadsides; contemporaries recognized the vulnerability of pages. Early modern writers of print are notoriously concerned that the fate of their pages will be used as “waste paper,” with printed pages filling material needs by serving as bottle stoppers, pipe-fillers, and toilet paper (Smyth 2018, 139). Ballads were self-aware about their susceptibility to ignominious usages. For instance, Alexander Brome’s political song “BUMM-FODER OR, VVASTE-PAPER Proper to wipe the Nation’s RUMP with, or your Own” (1660) capitalizes on unwanted ballads destroyed for hygiene while also doubling-down
on the metaphor to mock the Rump Parliament (i.e., the reduced portion of Parliament that supported the execution of King Charles I in 1649). While ballads could be treasured possessions or wall decorations, their lifespan was short compared to longer pamphlets, sermons, or playbooks, which could be stab-stitched together, sometimes bound with other quartos in a *sammelband* (Farmer and Lesser 2005; Pratt 2015).

Stressing the vulnerability of broadside ballads as print designed to be enjoyed and used, and then re-used as waste paper, opens a conversation with students about current types of short-lived media. One of the most downloaded applications for mobile devices today is Snapchat, a social media platform enabling users to send transient media. Over 70 percent of college students use Snapchat to share images, text, and videos with selected recipients (Sashittal et al. 2016, 194). The distinguishing premise of Snapchat is its ephemerality. After taking a photograph or video using the front or rear camera, users can add text, emojis, bitmojis, gifs, and filters to augment their “Snapsterpiece” (to use Snapchat’s phrase), which they then transfer to selected recipients for a limited amount of time, usually between one and ten seconds. Once sent, this media constitutes a “snap.” Snapchat is a more intimate platform than other forms of social media (Jeong and Lee 2017, 275). Users select whom they want to direct a photo to, either picking individuals or posting to “My Story” to share with all friends for the next twenty-four hours. The only public option is to post to “Our Story,” which aggregates images based on the sender’s geolocation.

Not only is ephemerality the default interface, but the company also claims to abide by impermanent data storage. Snapchat states that they delete all media content from their servers once recipients view the message, and only retain timestamps of when exchanges occur. There are options, however, for the application user to download images and videos to their device, including the narratives that they create on “My Story” (see Appendix 3). By working against the ephemerality of Snapchat, students can think critically about an interface that many use daily. The narratives they record, in turn, are about surviving ballads, having likewise circumvented the ballads’ ephemerality because collectors worked against the printed interface by dismantling and storing them in albums. Now, open-access projects reproduce facsimiles and text transcriptions and use textual markup to ensure that ballads survive digitally for researchers in the future, a surprising fate for a medium that, within its own time, was perceived as susceptible to deterioration or recycling. For John Selden in *Table-talk*, however, it is precisely because a broadside was light as a “straw” that a reader could “throw it up into the Air” and
see “which way the Wind is.” Paradoxically, he believes that “[m]ore solid Things do not shew the Complexion of the times so well [...] as Ballads and Libels” (Selden 1689). Then, as now, ephemeral social media were perceived by some as a resource to understand their society.

3. The assignments

From the vantage of interfaces and ephemerality, then, I introduced my students to assignments that analyze ballads through social media and digital composition. To that end, I asked students to navigate digital archives while using modern technology to create narratives about their research experience. Students then practiced close reading strategies through a markup assignment to craft an argumentative essay about their ballad. Having taught this assignment sequence twice, I have experimented in the form of the final project: one semester, I asked students to create a conference-style presentation and accompanying visuals, and another semester the final papers were incorporated in a class-curated digital exhibition (see Appendices 1 and 2). These teaching ventures have been inspired by successful examples of incorporating archival material in the undergraduate classroom, resulting in innovative student research.\(^2\)

The assignments are designed to achieve the following learning objectives:

Students will

1. Practice close reading and analyzing early modern literary texts;
2. Develop research skills by navigating online resources, digital archives, and library databases;
3. Discuss early modern cultural and historical contexts based on interpretation of evidence;
4. Compose in a variety of media, including a narrative video and an argumentative essay;
5. Think critically about media, interfaces, and ephemerality, historically and today.

\(^2\) The collection Teaching Early Modern English Literature from the Archives, edited by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Ian Frederick Moulton (2015), is an excellent resource for incorporating digital and material archives in the classroom. See also “Undergraduate Projects” on EBBA’s website for contributions by undergraduate interns.
The class began by studying a ballad still performed in Appalachian folk music: “Barbara Allen,” known in the Renaissance as “Barbara Allen’s Cruelty.” I used this ballad to investigate the genre of broadside ballads and model the digital resources that the students would be using. Students described the visual elements of the broadside, and together created a list of characteristics about the font, title, tune, illustrations, and formatting, information that, at a glance, was emphasized on the ballad’s interface.

After analyzing the visual layout of the ballad, we then close read the text of “Barbara Allen’s Cruelty” as a class. I played the recording of the song available on EBBA as well as selections of a few modern renditions. Here, we were uniquely fortunate that the ballad has modern—and regional—afterlives. Students took notes on elements of the performances that they found interesting, and then collaboratively annotated a Google Document to highlight striking diction, imagery, tone, rhetorical elements, character development, and point of view in the lyrics (Appendix 4). After students took time to read and comment on the document, we then discussed their observations, which the class expanded and debated as we analyzed the text. I had collated the lyrics from several different copies of “Barbara Allen’s Cruelty” before class, using Juxta Commons—a free, online tool that I showed to my students to help them consider how even small word differences open different interpretations (Appendix 5).

After reading the text, we returned to the woodcut illustrations. Students developed readings about the printers’ selection of graphics and hypothesized how differing images on other copies of the same ballad might provide different commentary on the song’s lyrics. One class focused on the cartoon-like nature of the illustrations, which led to a conversation about the technology of woodblock engravings. Students developed interpretations about the effect of such vague figures, such as how this might invite audiences to fill in the characters imaginatively. Although the illustrations of “Barbara Allen’s Cruelty” seem nondescript, the students determined that the choices were

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3 Late nineteenth-century scholars such as Francis James Child and Cecil Sharp traced the connections between ballads sung in Appalachia to those from England and Scotland. As Joe Wilson notes, however, Appalachian music is more diverse than these studies indicate; he emphasizes how instruments and lyrics introduced by Native American, German, Eastern European, and African American people living in Appalachia shaped American ballad culture (Wilson 2002, 102–103). Deborah J. Thompson also observes contributions of African Americans, Native Americans, and women to vernacular music in the Appalachian Region (Thompson 2006, 67).
deliberate based on connections to the ballad’s content. Their close reading of the pictures aligns with Megan Palmer’s assessment that printers did not randomly assign images to ballads (Palmer 2016). Instead, the selected illustrations often complement the song’s lyrics, and printers “acted as something like sophisticated literary commentators, aiding their audiences in decoding the larger connotative meanings of the ballad lyrics by layering visual meaning upon textual meaning” (Palmer 2016, 242).

For the first copy of the ballad, EBBA 33316, one student proposed that the woodcuts featuring the casket—which she interpreted as containing the body of Barbara Allen, carried by three young women—faced a separate woodcut featuring a woman in a more ornate dress, whom she believed to be Barbara Allen while alive. The student hypothesized that the illustrations reinforced the social condemnation of Barbara Allen’s rejection of her suitor. She argued that the text of “Barbara Allen,” which mentions how “her Friends cry’d amain, / Unworthy Barbara Allen,” is reiterated visually, giving faces to the female friends who condone Barbara Allen’s death because she did not conform to her assigned courtship role. After comparing this ballad copy to others that emphasized other forms of social censure, we discussed as a class what this ballad’s text and illustrations might indicate about gender and courtship expectations, which culminated in the students listing research questions that would lead to a search for primary and secondary sources to nuance their preliminary claims.

Working against the ephemeral interface: Snapchat narratives and digital archives

After being introduced to ballad interfaces with “Barbara Allen,” students entered digital archives to find a broadside for their research projects. A corresponding Snapchat assignment served as a gateway into early modern ephemera, once I described ballads as a kind of early modern social media. Creating a video provided a low-stakes way for students to first approach seventeenth-century broadsides and to learn to use tools afforded by digital archives.

Students were not required to make a Snapchat account and were given options besides the application to fulfill the assignments. Because one objective of this assignment is to think critically about modern social media—particularly its claims to ephemerality—students were asked to reflect on legal, political, economic, marketing, and privacy implications of social media software. As we went over the steps to download a Snapchat story to save a
file, we also discussed how a user could download the application’s accounts about data sharing, including what information about demographics, location, and interests may have been sold to third parties.

Given these justified security concerns about online data, and out of respect for the privacy of my students’ social media profiles, I listed other recording options, including laptop screen recordings, or photographs and videos recorded on a phone or tablet, either personally owned or checked out from the library. Students who were already using Snapchat and were comfortable recording videos with their accounts could use the social media platform to work against the ephemerality of the default settings of the application.

In addition to discussing Snapchat’s premise of ephemerality, I also wanted to cultivate a sense of curiosity and open-ended exploration for students’ first forays into archival work through modern social media. In her appeal for incorporating innovative approaches when teaching early modern texts, Danielle Clarke argues that

> Interpretive activity is a two-way street, and the kinds of tasks that we set our students to do inevitably produce texts as much as they do readings or contextualizations of those texts. [...] [C]ontemporary students of the humanities focus heavily on the experiential, the ways in which they might empathize with the text, on how it resonates or speaks to them. [...] [T]he act of reading is seen to be, in some sense, constitutive of the self, and as something that hovers uncertainly on the border between public and private: for both eras [early modern and contemporary], the text is an interface. (Clarke 2011, 42)

Here Clarke perceives the significance of an interface as a locus and as an experiential interaction, although she separates the interfaces of the Renaissance from those of today; I suggest that ballads actually bridge these two senses of interface, then and now. In designing this unit, I sought to defamiliarize modern interfaces while encouraging students to “empathize with the text [and images]” on the old interfaces of ballads. Therefore, I asked students to use video compositions to record their research process, including their incidental finds in the archives as they searched for broadsides appropriate for the final project. To provide my students with some direction, I suggested two topics for potential video narratives: either to record accidents in the digital archives or to create a tutorial instructing a novice user about features of the digital archive. For both approaches, students could annotate their videos with text, emojis, music, or other additions.
I also showed a video that I had made so that students had a sense of the potential content and lightheartedness of tone. I stressed that this assignment was our entrance into rigorous analysis of ballads, which required modes of inquiry integral to humanities research; the goal for this assignment was to explore and discuss theoretical connections between ephemeral media across centuries. The assignment resulted in students’ narratives about their experience in digital archives (Appendix 6). Students grappled with the frustrations and hilarity of exploratory research, and their processes and incidental discoveries were recorded in the video narratives they made as they navigated thousands of ballads. According to Stephen Ramsay, the overwhelming number of books leaves researchers to “understand each path through the vast archive as an important moment in the world’s duration—as an invitation to community, relationship, and play” (Ramsay 2014, 119). With the use of social media, the class bonded over their shared objective. The first assignment created a space for experimentation, with the opportunity for narratives about search failures and successes using keywords or discovering tools that made fonts and images more accessible. In the process, they interpreted content that ranged from courtship dynamics to demonic possession. These videos, often accompanied by humorous text and emoji annotations—sparked discussions about exploring digital archives and making serendipitous discoveries. They also prompted conversations about the ephemerality of ballad broadsides and the labor required to preserve them in a digital space, including the markup that made their searches possible.

Adapted XML: using markup language for close reading

Students learned about ephemerality as they created these engaging narratives. Then, once they selected a ballad, I shifted the conversation toward preservation by asking them to take an editorial perspective to the text, images, and material elements of the broadside. Editors of digital projects use extensible markup language, or XML, to make aspects of a digital artifact human-readable and machine-readable. XML allows data to be stored and processed by online applications and therefore serves a descriptive function essential to the preservation of electronic texts.

The Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) is one kind of extensible markup language; TEI-XML is the standard for representing digital texts, and many digital humanities projects use their guidelines as best practices. The process of marking up text requires attention to detail, similar to close reading. Jerome McGann lauds the fixed structure of TEI as a system that is “unambiguously delimited and identified,” and therefore exposes new truths about print and manuscript in the editorial processes of making choices based on
interpretation (McGann 2014, 95). Encoding requires slowing down and focusing, selecting descriptions based on evidence within the text. For Alan Galey, “digital text encoding, like the more traditional activities of textual criticism and editing, lead back to granular engagements with texts that resist, challenge, and instruct us” (Galey 2015, 199).

In the undergraduate classroom, the process of marking up text is conducive to lessons about close reading because students must interpret the text and select appropriate tags (Beshero-Bondar 2017). As Kristen Abbott Bennett and Janelle Jenstad show in their contribution to this volume, assigning markup provided undergraduates with an opportunity to learn about the labor that supports digital projects as well as the interpretation required to make editorial choices, even for small details like alternative spellings (see their essay in this volume). This assignment therefore guided students from “playing with technology” (Kee 2014, 13) to acting as editors for a ballad of their choice, learning firsthand how markup preserves and shapes the reception of digitized artifacts through the decisions they made.

With this goal in mind, I eased students into analyzing literary text through extensible markup language in an assignment inspired by TEI-XML. The ballads in EBBA are marked up according to TEI guidelines, which users can access from the text transcription tab of each ballad (Fumerton et al. 2015). This assignment asked students to use markup for interpretation rather than for recording bibliographic information. We developed the markup in steps: first, students highlighted a printed version of a ballad they selected when searching through digital archives. They used highlighters, pens, and symbols to mark the text on topics like nature imagery, personal pronouns, and repetition (Appendix 7). The assignment required students to annotate at least six attributes in their ballad to generate brainstorming, with the intention that the markup from this assignment would contribute toward the evidence necessary for their research project. After they brought their materially marked-up ballads to class, we discussed the purpose of TEI-XML in humanities digital projects and practiced transforming highlighting into a markup language that emulated the structure of TEI. The exercise enriched student learning about the structures that underlie digitized materials and that shape keyword search results.

Final projects: argumentative essay and online exhibit

After students completed their markup assignment, they developed their analysis with additional research into arguments about their ballads. The final project culminated in a research essay: one semester, students revised
their essays into conference-style presentations, and another semester they incorporated their analytical papers as part of a digital curation of early modern ballads on WordPress. Students brought together their spontaneous archival finds in a collection that relied on their close reading generated by textual markup and their research about the historical, cultural, and material aspects of broadside ballads. They used resources such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *English Short Title Catalogue*, scholarly monographs, and peer-reviewed articles to substantiate their claims about seventeenth-century culture and politics, as represented in their ballad. In the process, the class recognized their twenty-first-century sensibilities as readers as they analyzed the hilarious and heartrending songs of the period. By using digital tools, they reconsidered interfaces and ephemerality, old and new.

With this series of assignments, I prepared my students by being transparent about the learning outcomes; that way, I pre-emptively sought to clarify that the Snapchat videos were not just a fun way to ease into an assignment about seventeenth-century archival materials, but also a sincere investigation of the idea of ephemeral materials and digital preservation. With our conversations about the modern application, I encouraged students to reflect on their social media use and presence, particularly in regard to privacy and data trail. By explaining how each assignment built to the next, and what skills each activity was designed to practice, I aimed to mediate any confusion about what the goals of each task were.

Through this series of assignments, students developed transferable skills in digital literacy, particularly visual and text-based composition, and cultivated close reading and analytical skills to unpack an artifact that at first appears utterly alienated from today’s media. They learned how to navigate a digital archive, and to work with markup language to learn about the editorial choices that preserved the digital reproductions and affected their search results. Based on their editorial markup, students crafted research questions. As they did their preliminary research, they learned the recursive process of revising their topics in light of evidence from secondary sources. They researched early modern vocabulary, printing conventions, and historical context, gathering a variety of content-based knowledge about the seventeenth century. In the research process, students learned how to find academic resources and determined what to look for to evaluate if a source was credible and reliable. They practiced reading sophisticated scholarship as they created their own, ultimately gaining expertise in their ballad and writing analyses, many on broadsides that have not received more than passing scholarly attention.
Early modern ephemera have the potential to provide rich insights into entertainment; their length, multimedia interface, and accessibility through digital archives make broadside ballads appropriate for the undergraduate classroom. Although modern scholarship has pigeonholed ballads as being of “‘inferior’ quality,” this is due to scholarly prejudice toward a genre associated with “low- to middle-class social and literary status” (Würzbach 1990, 1). By setting up an analogy between the interfaces of early modern ballads and twenty-first-century social media, students can explore digital archives mediated by more familiar screens. Both interfaces can be challenged and analyzed, perhaps making both more and less strange, as students contemplate the ephemerality of media in the early modern period and today. And in turn, through deploying digitally-inspired assignments, different aspects of ballad broadsides emerge. The multimedia interface continues to be a space as well as a process of making and doing, as new audiences encounter and connect with early modern ephemera.

WORKS CITED


Brome, Alexander. 1660. Bumm-Foder Or, Vvaste-Paper Proper to Wipe the Nation’s Rump with, Or Your Own. London, s.n.

Interfaces and Ephemerality: Teaching Early Modern Ballads


Appendix 1: Assignment sequence and rubrics for a final project of a conference presentation

Unit 3 Humanities Researched Article
Using Digital Archives: Early Modern Ballads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Rhetorical Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conference presentation</td>
<td>To research and write a talk and accompanying display making an argument about a text from an archive</td>
<td>Researchers interested in literature</td>
<td>Literary researcher</td>
<td>As a researcher, you’d like to explore and analyze an early modern ballad and present these findings to an audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objectives
For this project, we will engage with three genres:

1) video narrative about a digital archive,
2) research proposal and annotated bibliography,
3) conference presentation making an argumentative claim with supporting evidence.

The first two are meant to be exploratory and enable you to reflect on the research process and allow you to read archival material carefully. The final project is two-fold: to write a short researched essay and practice presentation skills.

Feeder 1: Video about Digital Archives
Resources: English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA), ebba.english.ucsb.edu; recording software (Snapchat, video screen capture, video recording).
Part 1: Create a video on one of the following two topics. You can use Snapchat, a recorder on a smartphone/tablet, or video screen capture on your laptop.

1) Record the accidents in the digital archives: What ballads do you stumble across? What are some of the trials and errors of using the searching features? Random browsing? Useful tools? Think of this route as a meta-narrative about the randomness of archive finds, and the alarming, confusing, or silly materials a researcher encounters while sifting through texts. Your video should portray your search method in addition to what you find.

2) Create a tutorial instructing a first-time user about features of the digital archive. Which features are up to you? What are different ways to search? What extra tools does the archive provide? Think about this option as an informative video that can also incorporate humor/entertainment. Demonstrate features of the digital archive’s website, and give some examples of what is possible within this digital space.

Part 2: Write a 300- to 350-word reflection about the video narrative you created. Address the following prompts:

1) What did you intend to express in your video narrative about using digital archives? What were your experiences researching the archives, and why did you choose the images/photos/videos/emojis/narration that you did?

2) What have you learned about the media of ballads? If this is the social media of Shakespeare’s day, what stands out to you about its qualities and characteristics, based on content, materiality, and/or visual components?

Feeder 2: Markup and Exploratory Research
Select one ballad you find particularly interesting to analyze and research. This ballad will be your contribution to the class’s digital book.

Part 1: The Preservation of History in Digital Archives

1) Download a text copy of your ballad AND a facsimile copy; print both. Use highlighters and pens to underline and circle words, phrases, and image attributes to help you close read. You should come up with a system (color-coded, different marks) to trace patterns, modified based on your interest. There’s no limit on how much you mark or what categories you may use, but you should begin with at least six. For instance:

- natural imagery
- adverbs
interfaces and ephemerality: teaching early modern ballads

In class: Based on your highlighting, we will translate your markup to a form of extensible markup language (XML) used to describe digital objects in archives.

2) Write two paragraphs that put forward a claim about your ballad that relies on textual evidence from the lyrics or details from the illustrations. What do the patterns signify? What is an argument you could make based on doing close readings of the internal evidence?

Part 2: Exploratory Research

Your arguments will depend on what you notice about your ballad. You will have consultations with me about what direction you can go in, but you should:

1) Come up with one research question. What do you want to explore about this ballad?

   1. historical information from the period?
   2. does the same illustration appear in other ballads?
   3. is there a particular word, phrase, tune, or refrain that is striking?

2) Do some research on any number of topics that might help shed light on this question: a) are there multiple copies of this ballad? What is the earliest one? Latest? b) can you find any other ballads with this tune? What does the recording sound like (if there is one)? c) Are there any historical events happening at the same time/sociological phenomena that shed light on your ballad? Names of places or historical figures?

You should include the citations of your preliminary research. All citations should use MLA formatting.

Unit Project: Conference Presentation

Your presentation will include images of your text, a description of your text and its content, and analysis of the text to make a claim about what your text may reveal about this window of time. Your conference paper will be
1300–1600 words, resulting in a 10–12-minute presentation, and will include research about your text. You must use **at least 5 sources** (this includes OED, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, historical information).

**Research resources: We will talk about these sources more as we move through the unit.**

- **English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC): estc.bl.uk/**
  Use to find more foundational information about your text: author attribution, probable print date, reprints, etc.

- **Oxford English Dictionary (OED)**
  This resource provides the historical usage of words. Look up familiar and unfamiliar terms in this dictionary to learn more about how vocabulary unique to your ballad was used in the 1600s.

- **Lexicons of Early Modern England (LEME): leme.library.utoronto.ca/**

- **Oxford Dictionary of National Biography**
  Research names of historical figures

- **Map of Early Modern London (MoEML): mapoflondon.uvic.ca/**
  Resource for place names, streets, churches, or other landmarks.

- **Online archives that contain ballads:**
  - **Early English Books Online (EEBO): eebo.chadwyck.com/**
  - **English Broadside Ballad Archive: ebba.english.ucsb.edu/**
  - **Bodleian Library’s Broadside Ballads Online: ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/**

**Feeder 3.1 Video Narrative and Rationale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Created a video narrative about using a digital archive; used at least 10 images (if slideshow) or tutorial/video lasts at least 1.5–2 minutes.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrote a reflection about the video narrative and suggestions for researchers (350 words).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative is clear and explains video choices.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video reflects thought and consideration of the research process.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Feeder 3.2 Close Reading and Exploratory Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlights the ballad on at least 6 topics of analysis (imagery, themes, diction, repetition)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates 3 questions for further research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lists avenues for pursuing answers to these questions</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes a bibliography of potential sources</td>
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<td>1</td>
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Rubric for Unit 3 Project: Ballad Article Presentation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery and Language:</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The presentation incorporates engaging and appropriate language (for an academic audience) to illustrate and analyze the ballad; the presentation uses quotes and close reading for evidence and support; the presentation is understandable throughout.</td>
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<th>Organization and Content:</th>
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<tr>
<td>The presentation is organized with: an introduction, images, information about the ballad, close reading of the content, research (definitions, historical information, biographical information), and conclusion. Each element of the presentation provides clear information about the ballad chosen, explaining why this ballad is being highlighted, and offering insights into its interpretation.</td>
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<th>Visual Aids:</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Images included facilitate understanding of the content of the presentation. Text is readable and not distracting.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary Analysis and Argumentation:</strong></td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The analysis of the ballad is specific and clear, with examples that illustrate and clearly explain the historical context/formal features/central themes. The presentation is argumentative and uses the close reading for support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Intro and Conclusion:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The introduction and conclusion are engaging and creative, providing a hook and a take-away point or suggestion for future research for the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Timeliness and Professionalism:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student’s presentation timed to be around 10–12 minutes without going significantly over or under. Student presented in a scholarly and professional manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 2

Example assignment sequence and grading rubrics for teaching a topic-specific unit about early modern ballads. This unit focused on the theme of apocalypse since it was the 350th anniversary of 1666, and the final project culminated in a digital exhibition in WordPress of ballads printed around that decade.
## Digital Exhibition: Searching for Apocalypse in the Archives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Rhetorical Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital exhibition</td>
<td>To research and publish an argumentative article about a ballad from a digital archive. The exhibition will explore the extent that ballads printed around 1666</td>
<td>Academic audience interested in early modern history and culture.</td>
<td>Literature researcher</td>
<td>As a researcher, you’d like to explore and analyze a text printed around the year 1666 to commemorate the 350th anniversary of this momentous year in history.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Unit Project: Researched Article and Digital Exhibition

Your researched article will include an image of your text, a description of your broadside and its content, and analysis of the lyrics/illustrations to **make a claim** about what your text may reveal about this window of time which, in retrospect, seems characterized by upheaval and apocalyptic mayhem. Your article should be at least 1,500 words and will include research about your text. You must use at least five sources.

You will share your post in a password-protected class website. This will be where our online exhibition will live: searchingforapocalypse.web.unc.edu/.

You should be prepared to informally present your text to the class on the last day of the semester.

**Wordpress was used for this assignment, and so the exhibition was more analogous to a collection of blog posts. I could see this assignment adjusted for Omeka, with students writing concise researched descriptions of their ballads rather than argumentative essays. Scalar would be another possibility for students to collaboratively write a book, contributing pages about their ballad and annotating media.**
## Rubric for Unit 3 Project: Digital Exhibition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery and Language:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The context page and article incorporates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engaging and appropriate language (for</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an academic audience) to illustrate and</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyze each ballad within its section;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>includes quotes and close reading for</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence and support; the post consists</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>of a clear narrative and is understandable</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>throughout.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization and Content:</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The article is organized with an introduc-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tion, an image (or images), information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about the ballad, close reading of the</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content, research (definitions, historical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>information, biographical information),</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>and conclusion. Each element of the article</td>
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<tr>
<td>provides clear details on the ballad</td>
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<tr>
<td>chosen, explaining why this ballad is being</td>
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<tr>
<td>highlighted, and offering insights into its</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretation.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual Aids:</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images included facilitate understanding</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the content of the article. Text included</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is readable and not distracting; layout as-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sists understanding.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary Analysis and Argumentation:</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The analysis of the ballad is specific and</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear, with examples that illustrate and</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain the historical context/formal</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>features/central themes. The essay is</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>argumentative and uses the close reading</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>for support about this argument.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Directions on how to download a Snapchat story for a video file.

To create a private Custom Story [can use to organize your snaps for this project and prevent all of your friends from viewing; you can skip these steps]:

1. Within the Snapchat application, click on your icon in the top left corner (the icon will be your Bitmoji image if you have it set up).
2. Click “+ Custom Story” to create a private story; you can select who can also view your video. To move on, you need to choose at least one person.
3. Name your private story (example: Ballad assignment).
4. Click on the tab, and you’re ready to record a series of snaps and videos for your assignment. To continue adding snaps, click the dots on the right of the bar and select “Add to Story.”

To download your Snapchat story:

5. Open the Snapchat application.
6. Click on your story icon in the upper left corner (should appear as a small circle).
7. Next to the “My Story” tab where you can view who has watched your story, click the downward arrow (👇); this button will save the video to your “Memories.”
8. Return to the camera screen and click the two rectangles under the shoot button. This will take you to your “Memories” collection.
9. Hold down your finger on the story, and then click “Export Story.” You will then be able to text, AirDrop, or email your video to your laptop.
To delete a Snapchat photo from your story:

1. Swipe left on the camera screen. This will open your Stories page.
2. Tap ⋮ (three dots). It’s in the top right corner of the screen, to the right of My Story.
3. Tap a snap you wish to delete. Doing so will open the snap.
4. Tap the garbage can icon.
5. Tap Delete.

Appendix 4

Appendix 5

Demonstration of Juxta Commons and collation as a close reading tool. To explore this example, see juxtacommons.org/shares/aYtt4S. Anyone can make a free account with Juxta Commons, and I encouraged my students to compare copies of their ballads to check for textual variances.
Note: Juxta Commons also has a collation tool called “Edition Starter” that enables users to download one of their base texts with the variances included in textual notes. Viewing the text file can help see the differences among several text files, and is particularly useful when comparing more than two sets of lyrics.

Appendix 6

Sample student video narratives can be found in the following Google Drive folder: bit.ly/2LUqwLa.

Appendix 7

Student example of a highlighted ballad, using material “markup” through color-coding. Also included is an example of class markup with highlighting in a shared Google document that was then adapted to TEI-inspired digital markup language. Additional student examples can be found in this Google Drive folder: bit.ly/2tiWCZG.

London mourning in A[s]hes;
OR,
Lamentable Narrative lively expressing the Ruine of that Royal City by fire which began in Pudding-lane on September the second, 1666, at one of the clock in the morning being Sunday, and continuing until Thursday night following, being the sixth day, with the great care the King, and the Duke of York took in their own Persons, day and night to quench it.

The Tune, In sad and ashy weeds.

OF <fireHeat>Fire, Fire, Fire</fireHeat> <firstPerson>I</firstPerson> sing,
that have more cause to <waterSad>cry</waterSad>,
In the Great Chamber of the King, (a City mounted High;)
Old London that,
Hath stood in State,
above six hundred years,
In six days space,
Woe and alas!

is burn’d and drown’d in tears.

The second of September in
the middle time of night,
In Pudding-lane it did begin,
to burn and blaze out right;
Where all that gaz’d,
Were so amaz’d,
at such a furious flame,

They knew not how,
Or what to do
that might expel the same.

It swallow’d Fishstreet hill, & straight

it lick’d up Lombard-street,
Down Canon-street in blazing State

it flew with flaming feet;
Down to the Thames
Whose shrinking streams.

began to ebb away,
As thinking that,
The power of Fate
had brought the latter day.

Eurus the God of Eastern Gales
was Vulcan’s Bellows now,
And did so fill the flagrant says,
that High-built Churches bow;
The Leads they bear,
Drop’s many a Tear,
To see their Fabricks burn;
The sins of Men,
Made Churches then,
in Dust and Ashes mourn.
The second part to the same Tune.
With hand & feet, in every street,
they pack up Goods and fly,
Pitch, Tarr, and Oyl, increase the spoyl
old Fishstreet 'gins to frye;'
The Fire doth range,
Up to the Change,
and every King commands,
But in despight,
Of all its might,
the stout old Founder stands.

Out of the Shops the Goods are tane,
and hall’d from every shelf,
(As in a Shipwrack) every man
doth seek to save himself;
The Fire doth range,
A strength hath got,
No water can prevail;
An hundred Tun
Would prove but like a Pail.

The Crackling flames do roar,
as Billows do retyre,
The City, (though upon the shoar)
doth seem a sea of fire;
Where Steeple Spires,
Shew in the Fires like Vessels sinking down.
The open fields,
More safety yields,
and thither fly the Town.
Up to the head of aged <london>Pauls</london>
   the <fireHeat>flame</fireHeat> doth fluttering flye,
Above a hunred thousand souls
   upon the ground do lye;
<alliteration>Sick souls</alliteration> and lame,
All flie the <fireHeat>flame.</fireHeat>
   women with Child we know,
Are forc’d to run,
The <fireHeat>fire</fireHeat> to shun,
   have not a day to goe.

Cradles were rock’d in every field,
   and Food was all their <waterSad>cry,</waterSad>
Till the Kings bowels bread did yield
   and sent <thirdPerson>them</thirdPerson> a supply;
A Father He,
Of his Countrey,
   <thirdPerson>Himself</thirdPerson> did sweetly shew,
Both day and night,
With all His might,
   he sought to ease our woe.

The King Himself in Person there,
   was, and the Duke of York,
And likewise many a Noble Peer,
   assisted in the Work;
To quell the ire,
Of this Wild fire,
   whose Army was so high,
And did invade,
So that <thirdPerson>it</thirdPerson> made,
   ten hundred thousand fly.

From Sunday morn, till Thursday at night,
   it roar’d about the Town,
There was no way to quell its might
   but to pull Houses down;
And so <thirdPerson>they</thirdPerson> did,
As <thirdPerson>they</thirdPerson> were bid
   By <london>Charles</london>, His Great Command;
The Duke of York,
Some say did work,
   with Bucket in his hand.

At <london>Temple-Church</london> and <london>Holborn-bridge</london>, and <london>Piecorner</london> ‘tis stench’d,
The <waterSad>Water</waterSad> did the <fireHeat>Fire</fireHeat> besiege, at <london>Aldersgate</london> it <waterSad>quench’d</waterSad>;
   The <waterSad>Water</waterSad> did the <fireHeat>Fire</fireHeat> besiege,
   at <london>Aldersgate</london> it <waterSad>quench’d</waterSad>.

At Criplegate
(Though very late)
   And eke at <london>Coleman-street</london>, At <london>Basing-hall</london>
The <fireHeat>Fire</fireHeat> did fall,
   we all were joy’d to see’t.

<london>Bishopsgate-street</london> to Cornhill end,
   And <london>Leaden-hall’s</london> secure,
It to the <london>Postern</london> did extend,
   Fanchurch doth still endure
<london>Clothworkers-Hall</london>, Did (ruin’d) fall,
   yet stop’d the <fireHeat>fires</fireHeat> haste;
<london>Mark-lane</london>, <london>Tower-dock</london>, <london>Leaden-hall’s</london>, secure,
   Did stand the shock,
   And all is <waterSad>quench’d</waterSad> at last.

Many of French and Dutch were stop’d
   and also are confin’d,
‘Tis said that they their <fireHeat>Fire-balls</fireHeat> drop’d
   and this Plot was design’d,
By <thirdPerson>Them</thirdPerson> and Those
   That are our Foes,
   yet some think nothing so;
But that our God,
   With his <fireHeat>flaming</fireHeat> Rod,
   for Sin sends all this woe.

Although the <fireHeat>Fire</fireHeat> be fully quench’d
   yet if our sins remain,
And that in <thirdPerson>them</thirdPerson> <firstPerson>we</firstPerson> stil are drench’d,
   the <fireHeat>Fire</fireHeat> will <fireHeat>rage</fireHeat> again;
Or what is worse,
A heavier Curse,
in Famine will appear;
Where shall we tread,
When want of Bread,
and Hunger draweth near.
If this do not reform our lives,
A worse thing will succeed,
Our kindred, children, and our wives,
will dye for want of Bread;
When Famine comes,
‘Tis not our Drums,
our Ships our Horse or Foot,
That can defend,
But if we mend,
never shall come to’t.

London, Printed by E. Crowch, for F. Coles, T. Vere, and J. Wright.