



To: Stefania deKenessey, Vice Provost

Cc: Les Gorske, Operations Coordinator for Academic Programs and University Curriculum

From: Claire Potter, Professor of History and Director of the Digital Humanities Initiative

Subject: Final report for IEF Grant, 2015-2016

Date: July 27 2016

The goals of this grant were to establish a Digital Across the Curriculum (DAC) pilot, by which individual faculty could design and implement digital assignments in collaboration with me and with student fellows. Creating a curricular infrastructure required creating a physical and digital infrastructure as well, some of which was paid for with \$6500 in extra funds from the Dean of SUS, and my own research funds. Because the Digital Humanities Initiative (DHI) could not have been established in its first year without the funds and the sense of purpose established by the DAC, and the DAC could not have been supported without the infrastructure created by the DHI, I will describe the full accomplishments of the DHI's first year.

Our Fellows

With the IEF, we were able to employ:

- Emma Becker BPATS 2016: manager, event planner and editor;
- Christopher Howard-Woods, Lang 2018: WordPress, Omeka and Social media specialist;
- Alexander Fine, Lang 2017, coder, designer, and builder
- William Enders, coder, designer and gaming

All fellows are returning for 2016-17 except for Emma Becker, who has graduated.

Major Projects

- *Collaboratory Digital Platform*. This was our largest project, brought to us by Michele Kahane (Milano) and lasting from spring 2015 through spring 2016. Digital Fellow Alexander Fine was our lead designer/builder on a prototype for the Collaboratory Digital Platform, a web home

for publicly engaged scholarship at The New School. The Collaboratory will be moving to its permanent home in 2016-17. Working with Kahane's team of two, this group evaluated needs and created a scope, designed the site architecture, and built it in a Square Space beta site for presentation to Provost Tim Marshall and Executive Dean of SPE, Mary Watson.

- *OutHistory.org*. Our ongoing partnership with OutHistory.org provides a link to an established digital archive and a place where faculty can publish student work, primarily exhibits, timelines, and blog posts. Chris Howard-Woods produced and publicized over a dozen feature articles and two historical timelines for OutHistory, and is embarked this summer on a major site revision.
- *Charles Chesnutt Digital Archive*. In spring 2015, we established a collaboration with Dean Stephanie Browner, who is moving to The New School a digital project originally hand coded in 1992 (!) by her students at Berea College. William Enders is working with Browner over the summer to launch the archive in time for 2016-2017, when Lang students will populate the project through an independent study on the first African-American novelist, a class that will also be supported by the DHI. The DHI expects to provide continuing support for the technical work on this project, and Browner will fund a portion of it out of her research budget.
- *The United States of AIDS*. Originally built by Claire Potter and three students, this site is a teaching tool that will help secondary school and college teachers access resources to teach the history of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and its activism, in United States history courses. The site is currently in beta launch. This year, in collaboration with Dan Royles of Florida International University and myself, Alexander Fine wrote a data harvesting tool in Python to create a Twitterbot that will live on the site, tweeting the name, birth and death dates, and a personal fact about someone who died of AIDS every day.

Next year we add a new external partner: [New York City Digital Humanities](#) (NYCDH), a collaborative organization The New School DHI joined that connects DH programs at Columbia, Fordham, CUNY, NYU. In the coming year, a DHI fellow will help manage their Commons in a Box web site and events calendar.

Partners in Digital Across the Curriculum

- Our partners this semester have included Professors Leah Sweet, Julia Foulkes, Gina Walker, Joseph Heathcott, and Rachel Heiman; Cohort 21 in the Bachelor's Program; and numerous hard working students and faculty who just walked in the door. DHI fellows also supported Director Claire Potter's Digital History methods course at NSSR, and the Introduction to Digital Humanities, taught online this year in BPATS. We have also extended ourselves to staff. Chris Howard-Woods and Will Enders have designed an Open Access Institutional Repository to be built in Omeka. Yvonne Garrett, administrative assistant in SUS and a student in the History doctoral program at Drew University, imagined the project, which is intended to make the scholarly and creative work of SUS public. Fellows also helped some BPATS administrators re-organize their work on Evernote.

- The only co-PI written into the grant who was not able to participate was Ricardo Montez, who had to take family leave in 2015-16.
- In summer 2016, we extended DAC to an external partner, Brotherhood/Sister Sol, a wrap-around youth services group in Harlem aimed at Black and Latinx youth. We hope to explore and cultivate an ongoing relationship with this organization, which is building and opening a charter school in the coming year.

Website and Outreach

- We built a DHI site on the New School Blog platform provided by Marketing (it can be found here: <http://blogs.newschool.edu/digitalhumanities/>.) The site pulled together several strands of the digital work being done in SUS, and showcased the DAC. Pages were devoted to describing DAC and informing faculty how to access it; the creation of bibliographical resources; the Digital Humanities Minor launched in 2015; a description of the DHI; and an events calendar maintained by the manager.
- The DHI blog served as a magazine where the digital fellows wrote and published original articles that helped New School students, faculty and staff find, use and evaluate the digital services, tools and apps that could support their work. Fellows also reviewed books they had read about digital culture and sites they had visited; and promoted digital events at the New School and around the city.
- Chris Howard-Woods developed a social media platform for the DHI, and established, wrote and edited a bi-monthly newsletter on Mail Chimp. While our Twitter and Facebook presence signaled to the outside world that the DHI was in business, the newsletter did important work internally at the New School by extending our reach beyond the original faculty who had agreed to sign on to DAC. We were particularly pleased about being approached for help by part-time faculty; and by staff, who brought us organizational and technical problems to be solved with digital tools. Installing and training people to use the Boomerang tool for Gmail and the Evernote organizational system were the most frequent requests; fellows also helped faculty in the immediate vicinity of our office with Canvas, and with the Lyterati system when it was implemented.
- IEF funds were also used to purchase books for the DHI library, disseminate the results of our project at the Schlesinger Library Digital Technology and Archives conference, and acquire plugs, white boards and other basic lab equipment.

Events

At many institutions, there are institutional tensions between DH and traditional humanities faculty. Outreach and collaboration through events is important, not just to disseminate digital humanities techniques, knowledge and pedagogy, but also to continually make connections and partner with departments and practitioners who might not yet see the relevance of digital methods. To that end, the DHI, with co-sponsorship from other units, managed the following events, employing digital

platforms and tools.

- In September, [we coordinated a memorial](#) for the multi-talented radical feminist, activist and scholar Naomi Weisstein. Gloria Steinem spoke, as did Heather Booth, Alix Kates Schulman, and other noted feminist activists (co-sponsors: History, Gender Studies.)
- In December, we co-hosted "[Writing and Righting History](#)," a Wikipedia Edit-A-Thon developed by New School partner and co-PI Gina Luria Walker, the director of project [Project Continua](#), to promote women's history on the web (co-sponsor: Gender Studies.)
- Throughout 2015-2016 we hosted the "[Writing History Seminar](#)" in collaboration with Adam Arenson of Manhattan College. Speakers included Nell Painter, Adam Arenson, Nathan Connolly, Edward Ball, Maria Montoya, and Bruce Dorsey. In 2016-17 it will be hosted by the History Department at New York University. (Co-sponsors: History, Capitalism Studies, Gender Studies, Race and Ethnicity Studies.)
- In May, the DHI presented [the Gay American History @40 Conference](#) at The New School, cosponsored with [CLAGS](#), the [ARCUS Foundation](#), Historical Studies and Gender Studies at The New School, and our partner project, [OutHistory.org](#). With ARCUS funding awarded to OutHistory, former DHI senior fellow and New School alum Kevin Q. Ewing (BPATS BA, '15) returned to the DHI as our conference manager. The conference featured two and a half days full of rewarding and original panels, stimulating discussions, and lots of coffee. Along with numerous academics, New York queer activist intellectuals Jim Fournatt, Amber Hollibaugh, Jonathan Ned Katz, Cheryl Clarke, Sarah Schulman, Carmen Acosta, and Carol Vance were vocal participants and presenters. We also had a significant international presence: a group of graduate students from York University in Toronto presented a new digital archive of gay publications that the DHI had helped them build; and Orla Egan of Cork, Ireland presented a community archive she is building on the web.

Grants

In addition to our New School funding, the work of the DHI has been supported by:

- Rockefeller Foundation funds from the Collaboratory project;
- The Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation (OutHistory);
- The ARCUS Foundation (OutHistory);
- Our submission to the NEH [Enduring Questions](#) program, a grant researched by 2014-15 DHI fellow Atiba Rougier (NSSR Anthropology MA, '15) and written by Claire Potter was accepted. The grant will fund a course that seeks an answer to the question: "What is the Purpose of Incarceration?" Led by DHI fellow William Enders (Parsons BFA, '18), students will research and build a replica of the Greenwich Village Women's House of Detention in virtual space, and play a game where players will "meet" famous political prisoners like Grace Paley, Andrea Dworkin, and Angela Davis, as well as lesser known women who were incarcerated there from the Great Depression through the 1970s.

Conclusion

We want to thank the Provost's office for renewing our Innovations in Education grant, which will give us partial funding for Phase II development of our [Digital Across the Curriculum](#) program in 2016-17. We also want to thank Deans Mary Watson, Laura Auricchio, and Michele Kahane for their unflagging financial support; and the Executive Committee of the School of Undergraduate Studies for the lab space in room 910, 66 West 12th Street we now call home. In addition, administrative support from Juana Kennedy, Yvonne Garrett, Kemi Soyeju, and Brett Silvers has been critical to our success, as was the support on events from Brandon M. Fischer, who left The New School in late April. Robert Gutierrez and Bernadica Sculac-Stern provided critical support on the NEH funding; and Dirk Van Stee and Dansha Cai have provided crucial budget support.

We have done more with our Fall/Spring budget than we could possibly dream, have established excellent relationships with external and internal projects/partners, and have established our own projects. The DHI offers real potential to support undergraduate and graduate students financially, which is a university priority. We can provide paid work that advances the education of any student, regardless of where they are located in the university.

In the coming year, we plan to move forward with:

- Model teaching assignments keyed to ongoing projects;
- Creating the NEH-funded gaming environment as another New School project;
- Working with the New School Digital Archives to work out the terms for permanent storage of digital projects at The New School;
- Search for external funding;
- Build the Institutional Repository;
- Continue to extend Digital Across the Curriculum;
- Organize other digital culture scholars at Lang, Media Studies and Parsons to play central and ancillary roles in the project;
- Work with Dean Melissa Friedling to re-think and re-launch the Digital Humanities minor, probably in collaboration with Parsons, Media Studies and Lang.
- I am in conversation with Julia Ott, the new chair of the History Department at Lang/NSSR about how to integrate the work of the DHI into the graduate and undergraduate programs.
- I have had informal conversations with Will Milberg, Dean of NSSR, and Jeffrey Goldfarb, sociology, about the possibilities of extending DHI fellowships to graduate students, possibly as part of my new role at *Public Seminar*.

A final piece of good news is that the Digital Humanities Initiative Office has gelled as a real community at The New School: fellows, students, and faculty drop in and out, and it has been said more than once that our office (which will now also serve as my office, as well as a lab space) is a

happy place. Although we did not intend that our work be an experiment in community building, it has been. We are currently in conversation about how to expand the DHI's potential for being an intellectual hub, and how that might be an opportunity for funding and growth.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Potter
Professor of History
Director, Digital Humanities Initiative