

New York University History Dept.  
Spring 2008

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**G57.1023 History in the New Media**  
**Thursdays 4:55-7:35 • Bobst 737**

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

**Required Texts:**

Daniel L. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving and Presenting the Past on the Web (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)  
Available online: [<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>]

National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH), Guide to Good Practice in Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials (Washington, 2003) Available online:  
[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/>] and as PDF  
[<http://www.ninch.org/guide.pdf>]

Maxine Sitts, ed. Handbook for Digital Projects: A Management Tool for Preservation and Access (Northeast Document Conservation Center, 2000) Available online:  
[<http://www.nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/dighome.htm>] and as PDF  
[<http://nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/dman2.pdf>].

**Recommended**

Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth, eds. A Companion to Digital Humanities. (London, 2004). [<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/>]

Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg, Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice (Walnut Creek, 1997).

**Week 1 (January 24): Introduction**

What is a digital history project? This session will explore the range of historical

materials on the web, the audiences they target, the reasons we digitize documents, and the methods by which archivists and historians currently provide access to primary source materials on the web. Give basics of how to use WIKI and other resources.

### **Recommended**

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

## **Week 2 (January 31): Evaluating Historical Materials for Digital Publication**

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

### **Readings:**

Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Owning the Past?: The Digital Historian's Guide to Copyright and Intellectual Property," Digital History, Chapter 7, 189-219  
[<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/copyright/>]

"Selection and Arrangement of Documents," Stevens & Burg, Editing Historical Documents, 41-70.

Diane Vogt-O'Connor, "Selection of Materials for Scanning," in Sitts, Handbook for Digital Projects, 35-63. [<http://www.nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/iv.htm>]

"Selecting Materials: An Iterative Process" NINCH Guide to Good Practice,  
[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/III/>]

Katie Hafner, "History Digitized (and Abridged)," New York Times, Mar. 10, 2007.  
[<http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:2082/pqdweb?index=10&did=1230456751&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1185239540&clientId=9269>]

### **Recommended:**

Rights Management, NINCH Guide to Good Practice,  
<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/IV/>

## **Week 3 (February 7): Designing a Digital Project**

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

well as creating a plan for later expansion.

### **Readings:**

Stephen Chapman, "Considerations for Project Management," in Sitts, Handbook for Digital Projects, 21-34. [<http://www.nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/iii.htm>]

"Project Planning", NINCH Guide to Good Practice  
[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/II/>]

"Quality Control and Assurance," NINCH /Guide to Good Practice/  
[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/VIII/>]

Robert Townsend, "Google Books: What's Not to Like?" and discussion AHA Today, April 30, 2007.

[<http://blog.historians.org/articles/204/google-books-what-not-to-like.htm>]

### **Recommended:**

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

## **Week 4 (February 14): Designing History-Based Websites**

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

### **Readings:**

Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Getting Started: The Nature of Websites, and What You Will Need to Create Yours," [<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/starting/>] and "Designing for the History Web," Digital History, [<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/designing/>], 51-140.

Robert Shoemaker, "Digital London: Creating a searchable web of interlinked sources on eighteenth century London," in Ian Anderson, Digital Histories (Bradford, UK, 2005). p x.

[<http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:6305/lib/nyulibrary/Doc?id=10103484&ppg=10>]

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

"Best of History Web Sites," [<http://www.besthistorysites.net/>]

"Digital History," University of Houston. [<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>]

"American Memory," Library of Congress [<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>]

Reviews of websites at Public history.org [<http://www.publichistory.org/reviews/index.asp>]

[<http://www.angelfire.com/super/badwebs/>] - This is a graphic depiction of bad website design!

## Week 5 (February 21): Digitizing Text and Images

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

### Readings:

- Marilyn Deagan and Simon Tanner, "Conversion of Primary Sources," in Susan Schriebman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, eds. Companion to Digital Humanities, 488-504.  
[<http://nora.lis.uiuc.edu/xtf/view?docId=blackwell/9781405103213/9781405103213.xml&chunk.id=ss1-5-2&toc.depth=1&toc.id=ss1-5-2&brand=default>]
- Cohen & Rosenzweig, "Becoming Digital," Digital History, 80-107  
[<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/digitizing/>].
- William Y. Armes, "Text" in Digital Libraries (Boston, 2000), pp. 177-200  
[<http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:6305/lib/nyulibrary/Doc?id=2001012&ppg=177>]
- "Capture and Management of Images," NINCH Guide to Good Practice  
[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/VI/>]
- Consult several image-based projects, especially the Library of Congress' American Memory.

### Reference:

- "General Principles of Transcriptions and Proofreading," "Transcription: Types of Sources," and "Presenting the Text," Stevens & Burg, Editing Historical Documents, 71-156
- Steven Puglia, "Technical Primer," in Sitts, Handbook for Digital Projects, 83-102.  
[<http://www.nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/vi.htm>]
- Modern Language Association, "Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions," 2006  
[[http://www.mla.org/cse\\_guidelines](http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines)]
- Association for Documentary Editing, "Minimum Standards for Electronic Editions," 2002  
[[http://etext.virginia.edu/ade/committees/electronic\\_minimum\\_standards.html](http://etext.virginia.edu/ade/committees/electronic_minimum_standards.html)]

## Week 6 (February 28): Tagging

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

**Readings:**

Women writer's Project, "What is TEI,"

[<http://www.wwp.brown.edu/encoding/seminars/tei.html>]

Jerome McGann, "Marking texts of Many Dimensions," and Allen H. Renear, "Text Encoding," in Susan Schriebman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, eds.

Companion to Digital Humanities, 198-239.

[<http://nora.lis.uiuc.edu/xtf/view?docId=blackwell/9781405103213/9781405103213.xml&chunk.id=ss1-3-4&toc.depth=1&toc.id=ss1-3-4&brand=default>]

"Digitization and Encoding of Text," NINCH Guide to Good Practice

[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/V/>]

**Recommended:**

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

[<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/appendix/index.php>]

**Week 7 (March 6): Tagging Workshop**

This workshop will be held in the Studio for Digital Projects at Bobst Library. Students will bring a sample transcription from their collection and will tag it using the TEI format.

**Reference Readings:**

University of Virginia, "The Etext Center Introduction To TEI And Guide To Document Preparation" [<http://etext.virginia.edu/standards/tei/uvatei.html>]

Text Encoding Initiative, "A Gentle Guide to XML,"

[<http://www.tei-c.org/P4X/SG.html>] (2004)

Model Editions Partnership, Reference Manual: Tag Set Documentation

[<http://adh.sc.edu/meptsdv1.html>] and Markup Guidelines for Digital Editions,

[<http://adh.sc.edu/MepGuide.html>]

Charles S. Peirce Papers, "Building the Digital Representation,"

[[http://www.iupui.edu/~peirce/digital/digital\\_2.html](http://www.iupui.edu/~peirce/digital/digital_2.html)]

**Week 8 (March 13): Independent work on Projects.**

No class. Focus on creating XML-based samples and tagging guidelines.

**Week 9: Spring Recess (March 20) no class****Week 10 (March 27): Developing Content for History-Based Websites**

In this session we will explore the variety of ways historians use historical materials in

Web sites, including historical exhibits, teaching sites, textbases, companions to museum, video or television programs, documentary editions, and on-line archival collections. We will also examine directions for the next generation of websites.

### **Readings:**

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

[<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/collecting/>]

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

[<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>]

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

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

[<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0272-3422%28200224%3A1%3C119%3AHATW%3E2.O.CO%3B2-Q>]

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

[<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=7&did=1082361531&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1159888210&clientId=9269#fulltext>]

### **Cases:**

The Digital History Reader, an education site at [<http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu>]

### **Reference Readings:**

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

[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/VII/>]

## **Week 11 (April 3): Report on Projects**

Discussion of students projects and problems/solutions to date.

### **Readings:**

Paul Conway, "Overview: The Rationale for Digitization and Preservation," in Sitts, Handbook for Digital Projects, 5-20.

[<http://www.nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/ii.htm>]

"Developing Best Practices: Guidelines from Case Studies," in Sitts, Handbook of Digital Projects, 103-139.

[<http://www.nedcc.org/oldnedccsite/digital/vii.htm>]

## **Week 12 (April 10): Adding Value**

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

**Readings:**

“Principles of Annotation,” and “Forms of Annotation,” in Stevens & Burg, Editing Historical Documents, 157-198.

William Y. Arms, “Information Retrieval and Descriptive Metadata,” in Digital Libraries (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 201-220

[<http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:6305/lib/nyulibrary/Doc?id=2001012&ppg=201>]

University Publishing in a Digital Age [<http://scholarlypublishing.org/ithakareport/>]

Model Editions Partnership, “Historical Editions in the Digital Age,” 1999

[<http://mep.cla.sc.edu> ]

Digital footnote/translation samples: [[http://users.rcn.com/rtberg/try\\_me.html](http://users.rcn.com/rtberg/try_me.html)]

[<http://rrp.stanford.edu/DAnE3.html>]

Scholarship on the Web: Managing and Presenting Footnotes and Endnotes on the Web

[<http://archiva.net/footnote/index.htm>]

**Week 13 (April 17): Individual Meetings on Projects**

**Week 14 (April 24): What do Users Want?**

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

**Readings:**

Cohen & Rosenzweig, “Building an Audience,” Digital History, 141-159

[<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/audience/>].

Wendy Duff, Barbara Craig, Joan Cherry, “Historians' Use of Archival Sources:

Promises and Pitfalls of the Digital Age,” The Public Historian May 2004, Vol.

26, No. 2: 7-22 [<http://caliber.ucpress.net/doi/pdf/10.1525/tph.2004.26.2.7>]

Assessment of Projects by User Evaluation, NINCH Guide to Good Practice,

[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/XII/>]

Distribution, NINCH /Guide to Good Practice/

[<http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/X/>]

John K Lee and Brendan Calandra, “Can Embedded Annotations Help High School

Students Perform Problem Solving Tasks Using A Web-Based Historical

Document?” Journal of Research on Technology in Education, Fall 2004, 37:1,

65-85.

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=4&did=849948151&SrchMode=1&sid=6>

&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1159888765&clientId=9269

**Recommended:**

Suzanne R. Graham, "Historians and Electronic Resources: Patterns and Use," Journal of the Association of History and Computing 5:2 (Sept. 2002)  
[<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/JAHC/JACHV2/ARTICLES/graham/graham.html>]

Week 15 (May 1): Presentation of Projects

## Assignments

Students will create plans for a digital history project based on a collection of historical documents (whether already physically gathered or gathered only in digital form). Students may select this collection from their own institution or historical research focus, or may create a project based upon a collection of sources available at Bobst Library. Students must define the topic of this collection within the first two weeks of the semester, as it will become the basis for the course assignments. Students will also present a comparison of two websites at some poi

### Website Comparison projects

Students will submit and present a 5-10 pp. comparison of two to three history web sites on a similar topic, comparing the aims, audience, search tools and capabilities, the manner in which documents are displayed, and your confidence in the transcriptions/images and surrounding material. These reports will be mounted on the site and presented during one of the class sessions.

- 1) Choose a website on a topic or an issue of interest to you, so that you have the skills to evaluate both the experience of using and designing the site and the historical content offered.
- 2) Select a session and a slot and type your name and the subject of the websites and the names of the websites selected. First come, first served. Please do not duplicate a topic or site that someone else has already chosen.
- 3) Once you have drafted your analysis, create a wiki page with your text. This need not be mounted until after you conduct the class presentation.

### Semester Long Project projects

Students will design a 25-30 pp. proposal for their digital history project which will include the rationale for creating the edition, a discussion of how materials were selected for digitization, the form the digitization will take, and who will be the intended audience. It will also indicate how documents will be treated, what forms of tagging will be employed and what other aids or tools will be provided to assist the reader's understanding of the texts, Students will provide samples of documents, project website maps and additional materials to demonstrate their understanding of how the goals of the project will be handled in practice. Drafts of the various sections of the proposal will be mounted on the course's wiki site throughout the semester for comment.