
Decolonizing Methodologies: Recovery and Access Amidst the Ruins

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“It was as if these matters of objective and hard science provided an oasis for folks who did not want to clutter sharp, disciplined, methodical philosophy with considerations of gender, race and class-determined facts of life” (Earhart 2012, pg. 5).

“There is something truly soul-destroying in the repeated discursive erasure of vulnerable identities whether in the media, on the street, in the classroom, or in the legislative chamber” (Wright 2015, 264).

Recent instances involving the desecration of hallowed structures erected in remembrance of turbulent periods in the U.S. solidify the need for a call to action to enact historical recovery amidst the “ruins.” The ruins include the marginalization of subaltern agents within grand historical narratives,

the propensity of the academy to view historical purveyors of intellectual thought as overwhelmingly European, and the invisibility of subaltern agents in traditional and digital archives. Sites of subaltern experience drift in and out of the historical record often leaving no tangible signifiers to how these events inform the racialized, gendered, and class based systems of power which influenced many of the negotiations that subaltern agents contended with in initiating action and decision-making in an oppressive world. Historical recovery in the digital humanities play a vital role in enabling users with access to new knowledge as well as helping to shape meaning and interpretation of the cataclysmic phenomena embedded within its mediums. Anelise Shrout’s call for **history from below** is essential to creating digital content which enables accessibility and users potentiality of increased awareness of the historical underpinnings related to structural inequality- Shrout rightly declares that digital methodologies are ideally suited for these interventions (Shrout 2016).

This panel offers several approaches to historical recovery through showcasing digital projects which utilize technologies designed to foreground subaltern histories while preserving contextual integrity. We bring together three approaches- geospatial, alternate reality gaming, and online digital collections for a conversation that will highlight the methods and values involved in the digitization, visualization, user interaction and theoretical analysis of content. Our panel consists of scholars who’ve developed interdisciplinary approaches in their area of inquiry emphasizing historical recovery as a focal point of their research: Anelise Shrout’s presentation explores the Digital Almshouse Project and argues for the importance of digital humanists bringing together new archival methods with the old while critically reading archival silences as opportunities for further recovery and analysis. Christy Hyman’s presentation highlights the ways that GIS recovers subaltern experience through the struggles of enslaved runaways in antebellum eastern North Carolina using the digital narrative *The Oak of Jerusalem: Flight, Refuge, and Reconnaissance in the Great Dismal Swamp Region*. Hilary Green’s paper examines digital collections alongside pedagogical approaches that introduce students to centering historically subaltern actors using intersectional strategies and inclusive pedagogies. Kathryn Kaczmarek-Frew illuminates opportunities available with alternate reality games in building adolescent’s historical knowledge by showcasing *The Tessera*, a game inspiring teens to

take on the roles of real life scientists, programmers, and artists as they solve conceptual challenges while immersing themselves in a storyworld. Finally, Nishani Frazier discusses the conflictual relationship between the academy and the digital, the changing role of the scholar/expert, the importance of community in historical production, and the balance needed between recovery and shared authority.

In doing so, this panel promises to stimulate a lively and engaging discussion that will be informative to digital humanists of many fields. By presenting content and methods that connect subaltern humanity to recovery methods within the digital this panel helps forge the way for future work in gaining access to a more public facing scholarship that foregrounds the marginalized stories, agents, and actors into the digital humanities.

All panelists have agreed to participate.

Rehumanizing Data: Digital Methods Against Archival Violence

Anelise Shrout

Some of the most interesting historical subjects left only the faintest traces in the archive (Shrout 2016). When people of color, enslaved people, immigrants or women appear at all, it is often as commodified figures, ancillaries to those in power, or as undifferentiated masses of undesirable bodies. Scholars have recently begun to note that the archival silencing of these marginalized voices is not merely oversight, but rather, as Marisa Fuentes argues, a kind of epistemic violence. (Fuentes 2016). The absence of these subjects, these scholars note, is a feature, rather than a bug.

This presentation proposes a set of digital humanities practices that explicitly work against the structures that kept those voices silent in the first place. It uses Digital Almshouse Project, a dataset of Irish immigrant who emigrated to North America to the port of New York in the 1840s. These men and women subsequently fell ill, became destitute, or were simply seen to be incompatible with New York's public spaces. They were identified by public officials and sent (often forcibly) to New York's Bellevue Almshouse – the only public health site that offered social services to people fleeing famine. In the process they were transformed; their diseases (a category which included the social maladies “recent emigrant” and “destitute”), their children (who they would often be separated from inside the almshouse) and the spaces of confinement to which they were sent

transmuted from individual experience into bureaucratic data.

This presentation uses the Digital Almshouse Project to rehumanize nineteenth-century immigrants. In doing so, it illustrates the ways in which scholars can bring “big data” analysis to bear on silenced voices; can use data visualization to resurrect archival ghosts; and can deploy quantitative analysis to give weight to historical actors long since written out of history. It asks that data-driven digital humanists pay particular attention to historical actors whose bodies were quantified and commodified, and who were in the process stripped of markers of humanity. Finally, it highlights historical bureaucratic spaces in which immigrants were able to enact agency, while also laying bare the ways in which the carceral state has used data to dehumanize marginalized subjects.

The methods discussed in this presentation have roots in “history from below,” the “new social history” and cliometrics of the 1970s and 1980 (Gallman 1977, Shamma 1977, Darnton, 1984). Together, these methods sought to resurrect the stories of “people with no history,” by reconstructing their quotidian experiences. However, the subjects of these studies tended to only be relatively marginalized – they included (white, male) artisans, (white, male) voters, and (white) women property holders. There have been various resurgences and developments in these methods in the intervening four decades. These include practices of reading archives “against the grain” to get at the unstated assumptions that historical actors made about those they held power over. They also include theoretical approaches that advocate the reading of silences to understand those whose voices were intentionally obscured by official recorders and gatekeepers (Trouillot 1995, Bastian 2003, Drake 2016). This presentation argues that we must bring together new archival methods and the old cliometrics; that we must critically read archival silences while simultaneously using regression models to coerce meaning from our data; that we should think about the motives of historical data creators, while we also use dataviz to trace historical actors' pathways through hostile spaces. This presentation aims to not only theorize digital approaches to marginalized people, but to present a concrete toolkit for beginning to center the voices and experiences of those marginalized historical subjects.

GIS as a Phenomenological Bridge to Experience: Deep Mapping the Enslaved Runaways of Eastern North Carolina

Christy Hyman

My paper examines African American efforts toward cultural and political assertion in geographies of domination, specifically the Great Dismal Swamp area and adjacent communities in North Carolina during the long nineteenth century. Building on the work of archaeologists, historians, and novelists, my presentation reimagines space as it relates to the experiences of enslaved runaways and laborers who were exposed to the Great Dismal Swamp. I argue that the proximity of the Great Dismal Swamp increased the incidence of flight despite the danger and overall inhospitable nature of that landscape. In examining African Americans who navigated the landscapes of trauma inherent in the institution of slavery within the eastern North Carolina region, this study sheds light on the common values, aspirations, culture, and economic systems of a people relegated to the margins of society. This investigation into the spatial dimensions of flight within the Great Dismal Swamp, with the use of historical primary sources, generates new knowledge about the enslaved experience. This approach highlights and analyzes space itself with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it.

Focusing on enslaved runaways' proximity to waterways and the natural environment within the Great Dismal Swamp, this project uses Esri Story Maps to tell the digital narrative of *The Oak of Jerusalem: Flight Refuge and Reconnaissance in the Great Dismal Swamp Region*, a project containing maps with narrative text, images, and multimedia content. The data contained within this digital narrative was gathered from nineteenth-century North Carolina newspapers such as the *Cape Fear Mercury*, *Carolina Observer*, *Edenton Gazette*, and many others which provided information on the destinations and distributions of enslaved runaways, including frequency distribution of enslaved runaways by month of disappearance and gender specificity. In terms of the Great Dismal Swamp landscape, content will include remote sensing data, forest dynamics of the swamp, soil characteristics, and animal species such as amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Taking these physical properties of space together with the historical descriptions of enslaved runaway ads and cross-referencing this information with textual descriptions in the enslaved narratives written by

Moses Grandy and Harriet Jacobs, a complete reality of what was at stake for an enslaved person to run away emerges. Because these seemingly disparate elements of space (and the social relationships embedded within) are scattered across the archival landscape, my project brings all these things together in one setting.

Geospatial technologies are central to this study because of the ways that GIS can be a phenomenological bridge between subaltern experience and measurable qualities of the Great Dismal Swamp landscape. Using geoprocessing methods employed with ArcGis tools a cost surface was developed to investigate the ways enslaved people appropriated the landscape into areas of refuge and reconnaissance and eventual escape. A cost surface is a geospatial technique based on measuring the effort it takes to cross a landscape area. Data contained within a DEM (Digital Elevation Model) representing the Great Dismal Swamp landscape allows for this form of spatial analysis. The cost surface can thus be used to find the path between identified points along the surface with the least amount of effort. In measuring "cost" for enslaved people during the antebellum era four sets of variables were attained:

1. Cumulative distance- total distance to travel from one place to another
2. Duration or travel time- total time to travel from one place to another
3. Energetic expenditures or calories- total calories expended to travel from one place to another
4. Experiential/Cultural- abstract measures such as visibility between sites, social distance, and spheres of influence.

Through Moses Grandy and Harriet Jacob's dynamic reminiscences, the extant data on enslaved runaways near the Great Dismal Swamp, and the physical properties of space within the Great Dismal Swamp landscape the shadowy foundations of how the Great Dismal Swamp functioned as a quasi-dystopian landscape for enslaved people is recovered. Ultimately the swamp embodied the promise of freedom as a site of possible refuge, but also the horrors of the slavery regime itself.

Disrupting the Archive: Intersectionality and the Integration of the Digital Humanities in the Classroom

Hilary Green

In today's classroom, gender and race scholars strive to provide students with a breadth of scholarship that represent the social, cultural, and political experiences that define both the American and global experiences. For scholar-activists working at large southern PWIs, the politicized tensions present in society today stemming from difficult racial pasts, and potential efforts at truth and reconciliation, all compel us to reconsider what sources will most impact students' understanding of these difficult subjects. To effectively educate students, instructors do well to expose them to diverse historical documents, assignments, and approaches. Digital humanities offer new opportunities and challenges as eloquently expressed by Tara McPherson's "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White?" or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation." This conference presentation will explore how to use engaging assignments (spatial analysis projects using Carto and documentary history projects) and digital archive collections to introduce students to a variety of sources using intersectional approaches and inclusive pedagogies that are used to critically engage students from diverse backgrounds.

Digital archive collections offer scholars a valuable service by providing an online platform to publish digital archives. Managing content is no easy task and scholars as well as institutions have to find resources and time to develop their sites in a way that encourages curiosity, usability, and scholarly utility.

Colored Conventions is an excellent archival addition to the digital humanities. Colored Convention's purpose deserves quoting in full:

"This project seeks to not only learn about the lives of these mostly male delegates, the places where they met and the social networks that they created but to also account for the crucial work done by Black women in the broader social networks that made these conventions possible."

ColoredConventions.org endeavors to transform teaching and learning about this historic collective organizing effort—and about the many leaders and places involved in it—bringing them to digital life for a new generation of undergraduate and graduate students and researchers across disciplines, for high school teachers, and for community members

interested in the history of church, educational and entrepreneurial engagement" (Colored Convention, 2015).

As evidenced by Colored Convention's purpose their aims are to reach a broad audience which refers to the public humanities focus of the project. The site has teaching aids, curriculum guides, as well as the primary source documents that have been recovered from relative obscurity. What Colored Conventions does is recover an entire archive of action performed by antebellum era African Americans taking initiative to move closer to freedom.

In the context of pedagogy, intersectionality asks students to think beyond narrow binaries that overdetermine contemporary discourse on identity and power (Risam, 2016). For particularly vulnerable populations who have historically experienced economic disadvantages the disciplines under the humanities does not at first glance offer a high upward mobility. How then can the humanities compete and attract a diverse array of students as well as engage scholars toward its humanistic offerings? In engaging digital archive collections centering marginalized people's histories it becomes necessary to interrogate the archive, recover subaltern experience, and reimagine new approaches to historical interpretation. In doing these things fresh perspectives unfold as the humanities discipline as a whole is invigorated with scholarly interest. Students and scholars alike find new purpose in the humanities. These new questions coupled with the innovation in toolmaking within the digital invite a wealth of promise through intersectional approaches and inclusive pedagogies.

Casting our Lights Before: Immersion as Access in The Tessera ARG

Kathryn Kaczmarek-Frew

"They say that coming events cast their shadows before. May they not sometimes cast their lights before?" -- Ada Lovelace

Computer science and the technology industry are often regarded as the bastion of white men. However, there is a movement in popular culture to recover and make visible the contributions of women and minorities, from the major motion picture Hidden Figures to the AMC series Halt and Catch Fire. Still more active methods can be used to connect today's youth to the realities of the past and the promise of the future. Alternate reality games provide a unique

opportunity to combine historical knowledge and skill-building in a way that pervades into daily life. In my presentation, I will show how our alternate reality game *The Tessera* invites teen players to develop a more nuanced understanding of computer history while demonstrating that they already possess the computational thinking skills to make a future in the industry accessible to them.

Developed as a collaboration between the University of Maryland, Brigham Young University, and the Computer History Museum under a grant from the National Science Foundation, *The Tessera ARG* uses the genre of Victorian gothic realism and the trope of haunting to think about the influence of the past on the present. The narrative focuses on the ghost of Ada Lovelace recruiting teenage players, particularly those from demographics underrepresented in STEM disciplines, to join her secret society known as *The Tessera* in their fight against an even more mysterious destructive force known as *S*. Racing against time, players complete a series of collaborative puzzles emphasizing computational thinking skills such as pattern recognition, decomposition (breaking down a problem into smaller steps), algorithmic design, and data representation. By emphasizing the STEAM values of innovation and creativity as the key to progress, *The Tessera* helps players recognize that they already do computational thinking and that they can have a future in the technology industry.

Like many ARGs, *The Tessera* distributes its narrative across several media, presenting different opportunities for immersion. *The Tessera: Ghostly Tracks* is a real-life experience in the Computer History Museum, where classes will divide into groups to use digital clues and physical artifacts in the *Revolution* exhibit to solve computational thinking puzzles and discover which famous figures from computer history are haunting the museum. Players will experience a highly embodied sense of immersion as they move around the exhibit and manipulate props to solve the puzzles, such as decoding the message etched on the top of a chessboard or using a code to open the six padlocks on an “enchanted” crate, releasing the ghosts from the museum. In contrast, *The Tessera: Light in the Shadows* is an online game in which Ada guides players through the ruins of a decaying Victorian pub into the *Tessera* stronghold of *Horsley Towers* to create new innovations inspired by key inventions from history (such as the telegraph, the metric system, and Wi-Fi) to thwart *S*'s destruction. The online game requires imaginative recentering to

immerse the player within the storyworld, aided by the use of first person perspective, tension-inducing time limits, and the invitation to write themselves into the narrative through the public-facing wiki (Ryan 1992). While the goal is for players' personal investment in the *Tessera*'s struggle to translate into learning, I'm interested in studying how the different avenues of immersion in the two experiences influence players, not only in their interest in the game content but also their self-perception of their computational thinking skills. This research will allow future game designers to think about how different kinds of simulations (physical, digital, augmented, and virtual) can be used for historical reconstruction to help players best access the realities of buried pasts.

Power to the People: Recovery and Shared Authority in Civil Right Movement Digital Work

Nishani Frazier

African American Studies, public history, and oral history methodologies play central roles in the recovery of fairly unknown aspects of civil rights movement history. However, this merger also required a philosophical embrace of community engagement, power sharing, and open access during historical production. Though these ideals may fit within digital humanities, historical practice among academics is at odds with this approach. This talk discusses the conflictual relationship between the academic and digital, the changing role of the scholar/expert, the importance of community in historical production, and the balance needed between recovery and shared authority.

Theorizing African American Public History Through the Digital Humanities

Expanding public understanding about the history of the Congress on Racial Equality community organization and economic development through access to primary sources, teacher resources, and mapping is the resource cornerstone within this project. It acts to recover a little known aspect about CORE and its relationship to racial uplift and economic development while providing access for future scholars and other interested persons. This process is a model for intersecting African American scholarship and digital humanities.

The digital representation *Harambee City* illustrates this philosophy through:

1. Broad accessibility

2. Providing a second layer of learning through open access to primary sources and teacher lesson plans
3. Knowledge sharing - commentary/exchange on the website
4. Community organization training

The aim of this project is to promulgate further inquiry within historical study of the Civil Rights Movement as well as contemporary interventions concerning social justice issues (Frazier 2016). Following on Jessica Marie Johnson's call to action regarding the urgent need for the digital humanities to engage with society's "marginalized or discriminated against" this project endeavors to fulfill historical as well as justice imperatives needed within the digital humanities by examining civil rights movement history not commonly centered (Dinsman 2016).

Notes

1. The Old Ashburn School, an historic African American schoolhouse in Loudoun County, Virginia was vandalized with swastikas on October 1, 2016, another incident occurred in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi where the memorial sign of murdered African American teenager Emmett Till was found riddled with bullets on October 15, 2016. As far as the Pacific Northwest in Portland, Oregon in September of 2016 the statue of Vera Katz, a progressive politician and former mayor of the city was sprayed hateful epithets. Katz is of Jewish Menshevik origin and her family fled Nazi controlled Germany in 1933.

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