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Designing Digital Projects for Your Courses

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Designing Digital Projects for Your Courses

Abstract

R.C. Miessler (Systems Librarian) and John Dettinger (Assistant Director of User Services) deliver a 30-minute workshop on how to design digital projects for your courses. They provide a model for digital project assignment design, including planning, instruction, and assessment strategies, as well as address how to successfully negotiate copyright concerns.

Keywords

digital pedagogy, digital projects, digital humanities

Disciplines

Digital Humanities | Library and Information Science

Comments

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Designing Digital Projects for your Courses

-or-
How I Learned to Stop Worrying
and Love the Digital Humanities

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Gettysburg College June Pedagogy Institute

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`bit.ly/jpi-digital`

Hello

R.C. Miessler
Systems Librarian

Coordinator of the library's
Digital Humanities initiatives

John Dettinger
Assistant Director of User Services

Chair of the library's copyright committee

Takeaways

- **There are no "digital natives,"** never assume your students know how to use technology or learn it quickly
- **Digital projects take a lot of planning**, so be ready to spend time preparing and thinking of contingencies
- **Scaffold everything** ... and be willing to adjust mid-stream
- **Process is just as valuable as product**, allow your students to experiment, fail, and reflect (and grade accordingly)
- **Copyright kills dreams**, so teach your students how to find media they can use

Why Digital Projects?

Students will …

- Develop digital literacy skills
- Negotiate creating scholarship for different audiences
- Have a public-facing piece to show off work
- Have something extensible to keep working on
- Articulate the value of process alongside product
- Value and understand copyright and intellectual property

There Are No "Digital Natives"

- Students must be taught how to write a scholarly paper, and they need to be taught how to create a scholarly digital project
- Students are competent with smartphones, Word, social media
- No hard-wired fluency or fearlessness when learning new technology
- Make no assumptions, make lots of plans

Values of the Digital Humanities

- Openness
- Collaboration
- Collegiality and Connectedness
- Diversity
- Experimentation

Sprio, Lisa. "This Is Why We Fight: Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities."

What Can We Build?

- Websites
- Maps
- Timelines
- Data visualizations
- Analysis (network, text, etc.)
- Exhibits
- Digital books

Example Design Model

- Planning
- Instruction
- Support
- Assessment

Planning

- Directly connect learning goals for the course
- Select methods and tools based on what you want students to learn
- Determine how much help you will need with technology
- Establish project management plan and library/IT partners
- Request digitization of physical materials
- What is your technology policy in the classroom?

Scaffolding - Design

Example assignment: Build a website with a map and a timeline

Module 0	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4
Introduction - What is DH? - Copyright - Attribution - Inventory	Create timeline with 5-7 events	Create map with 5-7 markers	Write 2 contextual essays	Build a website and ingest content

Scaffolding - Specifications

Module 1: Create a timeline with 5-7 events

Specification 1	Specification 2	Specification 3	Specification 4
Plan timeline to select and place 5-7 events in proper chronological order	Locate and include images from Special Collections on each event, with appropriate attribution	Write and include 50-75 words per event	Revise based on feedback and resubmit

Building Walled Gardens

- Building takes a lot of time – limiting choices focuses students
- You don't need a full-blown website for everything
- Require certain digital tools and collections for use
- Digital + analog approach
- Project management model – class as "client" and librarian + student worker as "managers"

Instruction

- Inventory of student skills, technology, interests, and fears
- Critical evaluation of tools and methods
- Use familiar tools to introduce new technology
  - Post-Its, pen+paper, whiteboards
- "Buttonology"
  - Follow the trainer or flipped model
- Experiment and troubleshoot

Critical Evaluation of Tools and Methods

- What does a digital tool or method do well? Not do well?
- Can you live with the problems and address them?
- Encourage students to poke holes in the technology, not just accept it

Affordances

Example: Black Lives Matter protests in May/June 2020

Data & Primary Sources	Timeline	Map
Links to news articles, Tweets, images, video	**Yes** - Usually easy to embed and link out to	**Yes** - Usually easy to embed and link out to
Media coverage of multiple protests in Minneapolis over a week	**Yes** - Time-based, covers progression that is not focused on spatial change	**Maybe not** – there may not be enough disparate physical locations for a map to work
Data showing police presence during a protest in Minneapolis	**Maybe not** - More spatial in nature, may not have good representation of change over time	**Yes** - Can be used to analyze spatial relationships of how police have been deployed (and not)
Interviews about how a protest in Minneapolis evolved in one 24-hour period	**Yes** - Temporal component of telling the story of events and how the protest changed over time	**Yes** – Spatial component of telling the story of how a protest engaged with the city

Performative Buttonology

- "Click here, then here ..."
- Show, then have students try with help at the ready
- Live performances can show errors, glitches – use problems as teaching moments
- Do NOT ask students to do the demo unless you let them prepare
- Consider flipped model for remote sessions – students watch tutorial, class combines critical evaluation and lab

Support

- Physical or Zoom-based workshops
- Digital project toolkits
  - Library guide with videos, walkthroughs, examples
- Peer support (Digital Scholarship Fellows)
  - Regular office hours or by appointment
- Special Collections
  - Primary sources, digitization

Remote Learning and Digital Projects

- Students may or not have reliable Internet connections or technology
  - Include available technology as part of pre-assignment inventory
- Use trained students with office hours for technology help
  - Assume they will not speak up in Zoom sessions with problems
  - Troubleshooting individual issues during group sessions is disruptive and can be embarrassing
- Web-based tools tend to work better because they generally work the same for most users

Assessment

- Include reflection elements as part of final grade
- Stick to the rubric, don't make arbitrary grading decisions
- Provide visual feedback – Zoom or Screencast going through the assignment
- Allow for revisions to improve grade
- After grades are assigned, deliver a post-assignment inventory

Digital Project Rubric Example

	A (Exceeds Expectations), 9-10 Points	B (Meets Expectations), 7-8 Points	C (Needs Additional Work, 5-6 Points	D (Does Not Meet Expectations), 0-4 Points
Timeline (weighted x4)	A title slide that clearly introduces the argument your timeline is making 8-10 well-chosen chronological timeline events that form a cohesive and compelling narrative Each event anchored by media that reinforces the text and advances your argument with appropriate caption and attribution Text for each event that reinforces the text and advances your argument, around 50-75 words per event 5-7 links to outside websites that reinforces the event and advances your argument 2 essays (250-300 words) that supplement 2 of the events on your timeline and provide the reader with relevant additional information that advances the larger argument being made by the timeline	A title slide that clearly introduces the argument your timeline is making 5-7 well-chosen chronological timeline events that form a cohesive and compelling narrative Each event anchored by media that reinforces the text and advances your argument with appropriate caption and attribution Text for each event that reinforces the text and advances your argument, around 50-75 words per event 2-3 links to outside websites that reinforces the event and advances your argument 1 essay (250-300 words) that supplements 1 of the events on your timeline and provides the reader with relevant additional information that advances the larger argument being made by the timeline	Argument may not be clear Timeline events do not form a cohesive narrative Media do not reinforce the event or are not present; captions and/or attributions not provided Text for each event does not advance the argument Links to outside websites do not reinforce the event or advance the argument Essay does not advance the larger narrative/argument being made by the timeline	Unclear argument Fewer than 5 events Media and/or text not present on events No links to outside websites, or broken or non-functioning links

What About Group Work?

- Same pitfalls doing group work with digital tools as with traditional assignments
- Not all technology is collaboration friendly
- Consider organizing groups based on skills and interests
- Emphasize reflection paper and incorporate self-grading

Copyright

- Copyright can be complicated – introduce students to the basics
- Using copyrighted materials – permission vs. Fair Use
- Attribution should be part of the project assessment

Citation vs. Attribution

- Include attribution in the assessment rubric
- Citation – tracing an idea back to a source
- Attribution – incorporating someone else's work into your own and giving them credit

"panda" by Mathias Appel is licensed under CC0 1.0

CC Licenses and Public Domain

- What does a license do?
- Creative Commons license considerations
  - Reuse
  - Credit
  - Adaptation
  - Commercial gain
- Consider applying a CC license to class projects
- Items in the public domain are no longer protected by copyright

Bibliographies?

- Avoid the urge to apply a print style guide for bibliographies/endnotes/footnotes into web technologies not designed for that sort of styling (so no hanging indents, etc.)
- Link to things instead of crowding website with citations
- If you must, use MLA 8, it's simple, web-ready, inline
- Use a page on a website for sources or include in the reflection paper or essay

Challenges

- Learning curve will be steeper
- Digital projects take more time
- Balancing content-based learning outcomes with technical competency
- Students (and faculty) are doing something new
- Rubrics can make grading feel more like box-checking
- Copyright

Wins

- Students make something they can show off
- Can build on the work throughout their time as students
- Fun to see what students create
- Gain confidence with technology and build digital literacy skills

Takeaways

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Next Steps

- **Email us!**
  - rmiessle@gettysburg.edu - digital projects
  - jdetting@gettysburg.edu - copyright questions
  - **You can also schedule a consultation** over the summer with our Digital Scholarship Program assistants (Emma Lewis and Emma Poff) to discuss assignment design.
- Contact Special Collections for help with digital primary source materials.
- Get inspired by student and classroom digital projects.

Further Reading

Battershill, Claire, and Shawna Ross. *Using Digital Humanities in the Classroom* (library ebook) and "Using Digital Humanities in the Classroom" (companion website to ebook).

Brooks, Mackenzie. "Assessing Failure // Specifications Grading for Digital Pedagogy" (presentation).

Cahoon, Claire. "Planting the Seed: How to Teach Yourself Digital Tools" (presentation).

Cordell, Ryan. "How Not to Teach Digital Humanities."

MLA's *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*.

Nilson, Linda Burzotta. *Specifications Grading* (library ebook) and "Yes, Virginia, There's a Better Way to Grade."

Russell, John E. and Merinda Kaye Hensley. "Beyond Buttonology: Digital Humanities, Digital Pedagogy, and the ACRL Framework."

Spiro, Lisa. "This is Why We Fight: Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities."

Example Classroom Digital Projects

Shaping Perceptions of War: Propaganda Posters of World War II
- Tools used: StoryMapJS (image annotation), TimelineJS (timeline), Scalar (website)

Wonders of Nature and Artiface
- Tools used: WordPress (website), Pano2VR (panoramic image)

Uproar on Campus: Student Protests in the Vietnam War Era
- Tools used: WordPress (website), Omeka (metadata and images)

Music and Spectacle: A Visual Representation of Sound in the Context of War
- Tools used: Scalar (website), StoryMapJS (image annotation), TimelineJS (timeline)

Digital Cultures and Online Behavior
- Tools used: WordPress

History of East Asia to 1800
- Tools used: WordPress, TimelineJS