

Dear Dr. Lorang,

It is with great pleasure that I express my interest in applying for the Digital Scholarship Incubator. As a PhD student in history and emerging scholar in the digital humanities, the Digital Scholarship Incubator opportunity is especially promising. My work 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 work seeks to reimagine space as it relates to the experiences of enslaved runaways and laborers who were exposed to the Great Dismal Swamp. I plan to argue that the proximity of the Great Dismal Swamp increased the incidence of flight in spite of 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 will shed 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, will generate new knowledge about the enslaved experience as a whole. 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 inquiry will collect and analyze the landscape's spatial dimensions. Data gathered from nineteenth-century North Carolina newspapers such as the *Cape Fear Mercury*, *Carolina Observer*, *Edenton Gazette*, and many others will provide 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, data 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, Thomas H. Jones, Harriet Jacobs, and London Ferebee will expose a more complete reality of what was at stake for an enslaved person to run away. 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. The accessibility of digital scholarship is the perfect tool for this project.

During the Digital Scholarship Incubator period, I will complete the data collection, confer with CDRH scholars and others on how to process the data, make data sources machine readable, and develop a web-based component of the project. I will consult with librarians and others to determine best practices for data gathering and storage, and I will pursue multiple strategies for collecting data, including gathering data by hand and automated extraction

techniques. Since I am in the initial stages of “design” it is not yet clear what kind of digital platform is best for the type of data I plan to use. Once the processing stage begins, I believe geospatial tools will be central to this study because of the emphasis on how enslaved people’s knowledge of the Great Dismal Swamp as a space for refuge and reconnaissance motivated their decision to flee. Since enslaved people dug the Great Dismal Swamp canal as well as performed heavy labor within, this knowledge was likely passed down through a variety of kinship channels.

This work ultimately will be part of my dissertation, and the Digital Scholarship Incubator would have an enormous impact on the progress of my academic journey and my contribution to the field of history. Because this project will serve as the digital component to my dissertation, the content will shape my approaches to its interpretative and conceptual development. The Digital Scholarship Incubator also will increase my skill level in the digital technologies thereby helping me to build my project further to completion.

In keeping with a tradition of engaging the public another aim of this project will be to collaborate and communicate usable content to stakeholders with the African American Heritage Commission in conjunction with the North Carolina Freedom Roads Underground Railroad trail development plan which I am scheduled to report my findings on June 3, 2016 in New Bern, NC. Additionally I have plans to submit to two conferences including the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) as well as the Bucknell University Digital Scholarship Conference. Both of these conferences take place in Fall 2016, potentially giving me enough time to cultivate a polished presentation. With all of the resources provided from the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities I would certainly give back by assisting with digital bootcamps, teach-in sessions and other on-campus activities that bring digital scholarship possibilities to the UNL student/faculty community.

The opportunity to learn, discover, and collaborate with CDRH professionals and fellow digital scholarship students while working on my research project is an excellent one and if selected my availability would be fairly open. There are some commitments projected June 2-5 due to my attending the Society for Civil War Historians and the meeting in North Carolina. Beyond that my availability for the DSI is extensive. I will close this letter by stating how wonderful this educational opportunity is and I am very pleased it is available here at UNL. Thank you for your time in reading this.

Kindest wishes,

Christy Hyman, History PhD student

CHRISTY HYMAN

Education

PhD student, History, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, expected graduation 2022

M.A., History, Virginia State University, Petersburg, 2013

Thesis: “With Great Zeal? The Social Context of Free Blacks Surviving the Confederacy”

B.A., Women’s and Gender Studies, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, 2008

Minor in Psychology

Teaching Experience

Adjunct Instructor, **Survey of the History of the United States to 1877**, General Education Course, Department of History, Missouri State University, Spring/Fall 2014.

This course covers the formation of the United States and its civilization from the Age of Discovery through the Reconstruction Era, with emphasis on the influence of the Frontier and the Native American, European and African heritages; the constitutional development of the federal government; the evolution of the nation's economic system, social fabric and diplomatic experiences.

Adjunct Instructor, **Introduction to Multicultural Education and Diversity**, Department of Reading, Foundations and Technology, Missouri State University, Spring/Fall 2014.

An introduction to cultural issues, diversity, and related perspectives in education. Examination of individual differences in ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic area in the context of education and society.

Digital Humanities Experience

Center for Digital Research in the Humanities

Research Assistant-“O Say Can You See: Early Washington D.C. Law and Family”

1/2016- present

Transcription, encoding and analysis of freedom petitions.

Public History Experience

National Park Service- Homestead National Monument, Beatrice, Nebraska

Park Guide 8/2015-11/30/2015

Visitor Services, grant writing, program implementation, event planning.

National Park Service- Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, Nome, Alaska

Park Ranger 5/2014 – 8/2014

Duties included researching, developing, and presenting original interpretive programs to help visitors form emotional and intellectual connections to park resources.

National Park Service- George Washington Carver National Monument, Diamond, MO

Park Ranger 6/2011 – 6/2012

Develop cultural and historical programming drawing on specified interpretive themes to enliven the visitor experience and teach the public about the life of George Washington Carver.

Paper Presentations

“With Great Zeal? The Social Context of Free Blacks Surviving the Confederacy” presented at *Mid-American Conference on History*, Fort Smith, AR, September 2014

“Cognitive Dissonance in Southern Hospitality” within panel titled *The Concept of Culture and the Construction of Cognitive Borders* presented at the Southern Anthropology Society Annual Conference, Wilmington, NC. March 2009

Awards/Fellowships

August Edgren Fellowship, University of Nebraska-Lincoln 2015/2016

National Park Service STAR Award .2012

Service

Mapping DH Facilitator, Digital Humanities Bootcamp, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 4/6/2016

Research Volunteer, History Harvest, Wilber Cultural Center, Wilber, Nebraska, 4/9/2016

History Department Representative, Graduate Student Legislative Assembly 12/2015-present