

NINES Summer Workshop Application
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Project Title: 19th Century Concord: A Historical and Literary Center Website

One Sentence Description:

19th Century Concord: A Historical and Literary Center website seeks to create a deep and broad interactive, interwoven, searchable database of documents (maps, broadsides, historical records, period newspaper, literature, etc.) that allows the viewer a myriad of ways to explore 19th-century Concord, Massachusetts as a historical and literary place.

Scholarly Rationale:

Fostering Research

The Concord site will make available a variety of 19th century texts including literature, interactive maps, images, architectural drawings, and primary historical documents such as property tax records, images, church records, school committee documents, and town meeting minutes, most now unavailable on-line, but necessary to provide a broad database of materials related to Concord in the 1800s. The addition of this material to the website will construct an easily accessible on-line archive for scholarly inquiry. The projected materials contained on the website are difficult to obtain, often requiring a trip to Concord, Massachusetts or work in library archives. By compiling the documents, the website provides important archival materials for researchers across the world, sparing them the expense and time of travel to holding libraries. And, the interaction with the site, the various modes of viewer-based inquiry, ask the viewer to explore different ways of joining materials, spurring different and exciting research questions and outcomes.

Fostering a Teaching/Learning Community

While the research fostered by the website remains crucial to the overall Concord project, another area of importance is the creation of a Teaching and Learning Community. The website provides materials for use in the classroom. The site seeks to make the teacher's job easier and more effective by asking students to interact with the site as well as to provide out of print materials for classroom use. Students will learn, from site interaction, to create necessary critical connections of the primary texts and historical and literary moments.

Technical and Theoretical Problems:

There are two issues that are pivotal to the progress of the Concord site that I would like to see addressed in the workshop: XML/Cold Fusion conversion and the creation of a "walkable" town map.

1. XML/Cold Fusion Conversion

While we are beginning the XML/Cold Fusion Conversion during the Spring 2005 semester, I foresee the need for expertise with a number of potential problems that we might face. It is difficult to predict how far we might be able to progress this semester, but I believe that the key to making the Concord site useful is the

creation of user specific, data driven materials. I am very interested in some of the open source tools that are being developed by NINES affiliated projects and believe that a number of these might be useful to the Concord project once we tag our materials and move them into a database. The workshop would provide a way to explore how these projects might be used in the Concord site.

2. “Walkable” Town Map

We will begin the construction of a “walkable” town map during Summer 2005. The map, which utilizes QuickTime VR technology, will allow site visitors to walk through historical homes, museums and landscapes in contemporary Concord, Massachusetts. I will film images in June 2005, and the NINES workshop will allow me to address the implementation issues at the beginning of the town map project.

Duration, Phases, Current Work:

The Concord Site is a long-term project. However, initial use should be able to occur within the year.

Phase 1

Currently the website is in Phase 1, the planning and site design stage. A preliminary site design is available at: <http://www-english.tamu.edu/concord>. This semester, the site design will be revamped and fine-tuned, and a collection of 22 documents will be added. Each document includes primary, annotated materials, such as the anti-Catholic narrative *Six months in a House of Correction*, a little-known slave narrative entitled a *Memoir of Mrs. Chloe Spear*, and children’s primers. Further, initial site conversion to interactive, database-driven content, utilizing XML and ColdFusion MX Standard scripting language with the English Department mySQL database to manage the material, is occurring Spring 2005 semester.

Phase 2

Phase 2 of the website development involves the continued collection of primary materials and expansion of the site design and format. Developing innovative strategies and programs that utilize the site’s database capabilities should prove to be a key area of research and development in Phase 2. Additionally, promotion and testing of the site by colleagues and students will be necessary.

Digital Technology Used or Needed:

I am currently using Macromedia Dreamweaver Suite to develop the site and have server space for the site. We will be using XML and Cold Fusion, and Quicktime VR/ Realviz Stitcher during our 2005 development. I have all software and hardware available.

Technical Support at Home Institution:

I have some technical support from my home institution from our fledgling Humanities Informatics group, the Digital Library project, and my newly hired technical assistant. However, the project would certainly benefit from the support and expertise of NINES affiliates.