Dear Selection Committee of the Fall Brackrenridge Research Fellowship Program,

I am writing to you in full support of Alex Burger’s intentions to complete an original research project for the Fall Brackenridge Research Fellowship Program. As a student in my Computational Methods in the Humanities course[[1]](#footnote-1), Alex exhibited the ability to not only undertake, yet excel in completing a semester long research project. Alex, who had no prior computer programming experience, quickly grasped new technologies for the course and implementation in his own project. Furthermore, his successful completion of the project required him to effectively manage his time and work and independently seek instruction from sources outside the lectures. Being extremely confident in his abilities and character as a student, I asked him to be an instructor for the Computational Methods course for the fall of 2014, an offer that he readily accepted. It is with this confidence that I recommend Alex in the highest degree.

Alex’s proposed research project tentatively titled, “Constitutional Adjudication: The Use of the *Federalist Papers* in the Opinions of the United States Supreme Court,” will be in every sense *his* project. From his previous and continuing engagement in the study of Digital Humanities, Alex has the skills to complete the project from start to finish—a truly unique feature of student research. I only expect to provide technical assistance for the most challenging of matters and to provide general suggestions and guidance, as Alex’s work will be of an independent nature. After discussing the proposed project with Alex, I strongly believe that the project is an apt use of Digital Humanities technologies, and has the potential to provide an insightful understanding of the status of the *Federalist Papers* in the canon of American law.

As mentioned above, Alex will be an instructor for this fall’s Computational Methods in the Humanities course, allowing for several meetings a week. The computational nature of his research and the availability of web-based hosting services also make email a viable communication method. Because the nature of Alex’s research is computer-based, lacking the limitations on the research process inherent in other fields, I fully expect Alex to commit ten to twelve hours a week on his project.

The technologies Alex will be utilizing to answer his research questions have an inherent relationship with web page based languages. Due to this relationship and the benefits of Internet publication, I will ask Alex to create an HTML webpage focusing on the methodology and content of his research.

Respectfully yours,

David Birnbaum, Ph. D.

Chair of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

University of Pittsburgh

1. SLAV 1050, also cross referenced across seven other departments [↑](#footnote-ref-1)