

What Have We Learned?

Final Class Activity, HIST 326, Digital History, RIT

Thursday, April 21, 2022

The Five Stages of Digital Projects: Proposal, Initiation, Planning, Execution, and Closing.

- Source: “Project Management for the Digital Humanities,” Emory Center for Digital Scholarship.

Proposal:

- Background research
 - Historical content and the digital presentation of it by other historians.
- Brainstorming topics: What do you want to investigate / add to the scholarly conversation?
- Consider possible funding sources. Apply for funding.
 - Solicit donations?
- Think about who will work on the project. How will they be compensated?
- Partners: IT considerations, library partnerships, academic departments with an interest in the subject.
- Identify project outcomes and “deliverables.”
- Timeline: Think about the scale of your project and how long you want it to last.
- Identify community stakeholders.

Initiation:

- Build a project team and delegate roles.
- Write a project charter — a high-level review of the project and participants’ general responsibilities.
- Logistics:
 - Student Employment Office
 - Human Resources
 - In-house legal staff: Sensitive records; financial oversight; community partnerships.

Planning:

- Detailed lists of responsibilities for each employee.
- Begin setting deadlines.
 - Keep a log of what employees / researchers do on the job.
- Develop an initial advertising / marketing plan.
 - Do you advertise throughout the project development, or do you wait until the website is finished?
- Create an itemized budget.

- Buying equipment and software depending on the tasks you're going to complete.

Execution:

- Pursue different digital projects:
 - GIS and digital maps
 - Text encoding and documentary editing
 - Audiovisual recording and editing
 - Scanning
 - Basic digital scanning
 - Multispectral imaging
 - Statistical analysis
 - Content management systems
 - Digital asset managers (DAMs) for longterm file preservation, including version control
 - User interface / user experience
 - Story content on the website: Essays, maps, timelines, Story Maps (hybrid timeline–maps), linear versus nonlinear structure.
 - Data visualization (Tableau, Gephi, etc.)
- Address problems as they arise and adjust the workflow.
- Launch publicity efforts if you haven't already.

Closing:

- Find a custodian and repository to take care of your files long-term, even if your website goes down.
 - Is there anyone on staff at the initial host institution to update or check on the project?
 - Open Archival Information System (OAIS): Thinking about submitting files, processing / storing files, and making files publicly accessible.
- Multiple copies of your data.
 - LOCKSS: Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe.
 - Internet Archive or similar apps (e.g., ArchiveIT, web crawler apps) to save screenshots / captures of webpages.
 - Goal: Be able to reconstruct your website in a new CMS using the existing data.
- Documentation: Having permission forms, project summaries, legal documents, etc., on file.
 - Make sure the custodian has access to the files.
- Assign credit: List everyone who contributed meaningfully to the project.
 - Include preferred names, titles, pronouns, etc.
 - Include any institutions that provide logistical and financial support.

Things we've learned about digital history, religion, oral history, community partnerships, and other topics on the Hill Cumorah Project:

- History of Mormonism / U.S. religion
- Preserving the Internet and the problem of "link rot"
- A gap in the historical record: How little about the Hill Cumorah Pageant had been saved so far.
- Coming up with good questions for oral history interviews.
- Problem of Internet latency when recording interviews over the Internet.
- Logistics of recording: Find a quiet, undisturbed space.
 - Zoom is convenient because it's free, and it's everywhere post-COVID. Most people know how to use it at this point.
- For oral histories, it's important to record what people believe, even if you disagree with it.
 - Oral history is more open-ended than journalism, which is much more focused in its questions and can be adversarial.
 - It can be difficult not to jump in and argue with an oral history interviewee when you disagree with their opinions.
- Public history projects involve working with client organizations. Sometimes, this can limit the scope of your inquiry and affect what questions you can / cannot ask.

In summary: Transferable Skills:

- Project management
- Working in a collaborative environment
 - Delegating tasks; logistics of team projects.
- Interviewing basics:
 - How to conduct an interview.
 - Basics of recording and transcribing an interview.
- Metadata for digital files and for oral history projects specifically
- File management
- Research skills (broadly defined)
- Religious literacy
 - "Lived" religion as opposed to only reading about religion.
- Stakeholder engagement
- Content management systems

Ways to learn more about digital history, digital humanities, and related fields:

- Programming Historian: <http://programminghistorian.org/>
 - Available in English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese
- DARIAH Teach: Open Educational Resources for the Digital Arts & Humanities: <https://teach.dariah.eu/>.

- Similar to Programming Historian
- Parthenos Training Modules, funded by the EU Commission:
training.parthenos-project.eu/training-modules/
 - Emphasizes project management and digital infrastructure planning
- Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification:
<https://www.pmi.org/certifications/project-management-pmp>.
 - Note: Expensive
- University “how-to” guides for digital humanities
 - Example: Carnegie Mellon's Digital Humanities Literacy Guidebook:
<https://cmu-lib.github.io/dhlg/>
- Microcredential courses from Coursera, EdX, Udemy, StackSkills, Humble Bundle, LinkedIn Learning, etc.
 - Note: Humble Bundle gives a share of its profits to charity
 - EdX offers Harvard's Introduction to Digital Humanities course:
<https://www.edx.org/course/introduction-to-digital-humanities>