Building on digital projects: Developing a course infrastructure for digital humanities

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This course focused on exploring interdisciplinary perspectives on Cuisine and Society in the context of Global Asia. Its methodologies cover perspectives in the humanities and social sciences with a specific focus on collaborative digital research initiatives as motives and practices. Case Studies Librarians from the Digital Scholarship Unit (DSU) participated as co-instructors in two courses for Department of Historical and Cultural Studies on Fall 2015: Global Asia Studies and Digital History, acting as curators of student work to ensure longevity and follow best practices for long-term access. The library was brought in at the early stages of course development, from the initial planning of the curriculum to the continued maintenance of students' digital materials.

GASD71 - Global Asia Studies
This course was structured in a manner to maximize potential data for research. Students were taught and tested a number of digital tools that could be used in the course, with the focus on free and open standards. As an initial exercise students practiced analyzing open datasets to understand and create meaningful visualization components as a complement to their research.

Collection: Students conducted interviews with human subjects, translating their content into discrete data points on spreadsheets. The instructors advised students in developing common metadata fields and identifying gaps in their data, which would then be required for its visualization. Filling in these gaps meant that students had to gather more data through online research or in follow up interactions with their study participants. At the end of this process, all datasets were combined into a global map as a single reference point to access and use this data, also reflecting patterns of interaction and revealing the focus of research in distinct areas in Asia. In other words, the combined map of student data also represented the collective knowledge about Global Asia as seen through this course.

Preservation: Students were required to use the tools and formats put forward by the library. This resulted in data outputs already suitable for preservation, reducing the effort needed to prepare digital data for deposit. The students designed websites using a platform that allowed for a full export of site code and project files. These sites were deposited onto the DSU's server.

GASD71 - Digital History
This course examined methods by exploring archival materials, family histories, and oral histories to tell the story of a single individual migrant's journey in and through Toronto. Each "pathway" maps a journey through ethnographies and digital mapping practices to storytelling research skills. Students contributed to the development of a rich body of work with the aim to prepare and build upon existing material for future iterations of this course.

Planning: Assignments were structured in a manner to capitalize on data for research. Librarians were given a pre-shared key to the library website. This key allowed for a full export of site code and project files. These sites were deposited onto the DSU's server.

Pathways to Toronto

Welcome to Digital History
http://digitalscholarship.utsc.utoronto.ca/projects/dighist
Projects:
Pathways to Toronto

GASD71: Digital History
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Outcomes
• The data curation process aligns well with historical research methods, each informing the other in the classroom and online.
• Project management skills are crucial in a scholarly and workplace environments, and complex data curation initiatives foster such skills.
• Experiential learning opportunities integrated into humanities curricula can aid students in exploring new ways of working with data, supporting data and digital literacies.
• Incorporating elements of data curation into humanities courses can also contribute to larger research initiatives, as well as build and improve upon work of others rather than reinforce traditional model of isolated work. By integrating several collections of student work capturing memory, identity of student body and the university.
• Data curation projects that emphasize data use and sharing provide recognition and legitimacy to undergraduate research by ensuring accountability and motivation to publish reputable, publicly-accessible results. Such projects also support the broader learning outcomes of undergraduate research movement in postsecondary institutions today.