DIGITAL HISTORY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore digital history and community engagement. I do so by exploring intersections between public history and new media theory, distilling a set of nine best practices, and applying these to several digital history initiatives: Historical Society of Pennsylvania's *PhilaPlace,* Baltimore County's *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth,* and two projects initiated and hosted by Temple University.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I explore the theory behind and tangible components of successful digital history projects initiated by universities and institutions. My approach to this topic is informed by my dual role as Assistant Archivist at Temple University Libraries and as a graduate student in Temple's Public History program. In spring 2010, professor Dale Winling invited me to use my masters thesis to explore a digital history project he hoped to complete with Temple's Special Collections and with students enrolled in his spring 2011 course *History 8800: Public History and Digital Media.* Winling felt that my experience in the Urban Archives would help me to create a thoughtful, practitioner-driven critique and that my findings could inform future interpretive projects that include Temple's resources.

Although years of experience with digitizing and interpreting archival materials has given me an intuitive sense of what works, this thesis presents an opportunity to contextualize these impressions against best practices emerging within a larger body of literature. I begin by exploring ideas about the production and consumption of history in the non-digital realm, starting with Carl Becker's idea that individuals are constantly interacting with history on a personal and interpretive level, and that historians would benefit from finding ways to integrate their thinking into more formal projects. In the years since Becker and like-minded colleagues first advocated for new ways to interact with the public, the field of

public history has grown to embrace different methodologies and spaces by which to reach individuals.

Many of the concerns and ideas voiced by public historians during the 20th century are effectively addressed through emerging technologies. In recent decades, the Internet and mobile devices have come to comprise a new media sphere that plays a major role in people's lives. With new technological resources at their disposal, historians can create flexible, online structures that both cater to and channel the individualized histories of Becker's "Mr. Everyman." [1] The Internet in particular is a place where users are free to bring their own meanings and need for interactivity. It is a democratized space in the sense that a broader swath of the population can add to and modify cultural content and narratives. They can actively engage with new media in ways that they are unable to with older media forms and physical artifacts. Reading room hours, singular locations, and restrictive policies dictated by fragile conditions, all high on the list of traditional concerns that accompany access to cultural artifacts, are mitigated by digitization, which at the same time creates exponentially broader and more spatial accessibility.

While the label 'new media' suggests something oppositional or unrelated to traditional objects, this is not the case in practice. Older forms of media housed in museums, archives and various cultural institutions can be refashioned and brought into the new media sphere. Transmitted through this new media, collections items still reference and utilize their old properties, but are experienced under changed

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[1] Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *The American Historical Review*, 1932: 223.

conditions as they are digitized or transcoded. The largest advantage of new media over old media is the fact that new media is extremely malleable and can be recontextualized into different forms to meet multiple ends and experiences. In its new format both the content creators and consumers can often move between the two forms in a way not afforded by older media. A once-passive audience can now modify new media objects as well as generate their own. This sits in stark contrast to the traditional audience experience while visiting museum galleries, reading journals, and patronizing archives.

These advancing technologies have offered new approaches to preservation, engagement, access, and interpretation – but not without caveats. Technology cannot be viewed simply as the answer to a set of public history problems, but as an entirely new context that has the potential to alter more than just how people access historic materials. New media theorists, though not specifically concerned with public history, have offered several relevant treatises on how technology has changed society. From Walter Benjamin's politically-charged essay on the democratic possibilities created by easily reproducible media to Marshall McLuhan's iconic assertion that the medium is the message, these writers offer an interesting glimpse into the possibilities and pitfalls of new media and I include their work in my literature review because it provides a useful context for historians working with technology.

We are at an early stage of discovering how historians and archivists will ultimately utilize new media and the Web to present history. Historians, librarians, archivists and cultural workers at large are all being challenged to integrate

unfamiliar mediums into their practices. Although they are generally embracing

change as good, they also struggle with several specific new frontiers and can be

slow or reluctant to forge ahead quickly. For example, a prominent concern regards

the threat posed to the provenance or "aura" of the object,[2] which professionals fear

will be lost as it's transcoded and shared. With the click of a button, a digital object

can be modified or presented out of context. As in many public history endeavors,

traditional models of intellectual authority from academia such as peer reviewed

books and journals are challenged by digital history projects. The instantaneous

nature of exchange and the broad reach of the Internet only amplify these concerns.

At the same time, there is concern about the divide emerging between the public,

accessible Web and a growing commercial market of databases contained in

academic and institutional enclaves.

   I conclude my literature review by synthesizing all of these strains of

thinking into a set of nine best practices or criteria by which to gauge the success of

a digital project: (1) creating advisory panels and tapping into grassroots

institutions, (2) determining feasibility and relevance at the project's outset, (3)

leveraging the unique advantages of new media, delineating between raw materials,

(4) provenance and interpretive elements, creating authorial transparency, (5)

creating flexibility that allows for unique, (6) individualized user experiences, (7)

creating opportunities for user-generated content, (8) broadening access into the

"public Web", and (9) integrating new media forms with more conventional

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[2] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, 217-252 (New York, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

engagement strategies. In an effort to demonstrate how these practice look in action, I present a brief analysis of *PhilaPlace,* a local digital history initiative that uses material from local institutions in a highly interactive way.

In the second part of this thesis, I explore digital history initiatives housed within universities in preparation for a critique of digitization efforts at Temple and Winling's project in particular. I devote particular attention to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth* project because it is a well-documented initiative at a peer institution. This example develops a strong comparative foundation for my focus on Temple.

Temple's initial entry into digitization initiatives was driven primarily by the availability of a large federal grant during the late 1990s, a period when digitization caught on as an institutionalized best practice among universities. At this phase interpretation was not a goal in digitization. Benchmarks for success were primarily centered on volume of material scanned and cataloged in a database. When the grant period ended, Temple had not built sufficient infrastructure to continue the process at the same rate, and digitization slowed considerably.

By 2010, Temple University Libraries worked to establish a permanent department dedicated to digitization and digital initiatives. Simultaneously, Temple University Libraries began to introduce digitization initiatives that favored interpretation and thematic presentation over neutral presentation in an online database. These most recent digital history projects have incorporated some of the best practices I outline, including relevant subject matter, involvement from outside the Temple community, expanded authorship, and Web 2.0 features.

The first major interpretive effort was 2011's *Civil Rights in a Northern City* website. The site builds on scholarship pertaining to civil rights issues in Philadelphia through digitization and interpretation of material from Temple University Libraries Special Collections Department. A unique component of the project was the inclusion of several oral histories of community members.

Around the same time as the *Civil Rights* portal was being developed, Dr. Winling proposed his idea to include graduate students from a digital history course in the creation of a website looking at the development of both Temple University and the surrounding community. I worked with Winling to conceptualize how students would be involved in digitization of Special Collections material to be used in the project.

Both of these projects represent starting points intended for expansion. In the small amount of time they were worked on, they didn't achieve all of their stated goals but could be seen as the groundwork for a much larger, user centered or community engaged sites. As Temple University further develops it's digitization activities there is potential to include more of the recommended practices in creating community engaged history projects that I present.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the early 20th century to the present, historians have worked towards reaching the public outside of the academy. They have sought to define how the public constructs and understands history and have tried to establish a framework for more democratic and inclusive models for the construction of history while balancing the need for authoritative, factually correct information. Inclusivity, as described in the literature, can occur at two distinct points in time: as history is being written and public history projects developed, or subsequently, as a broad audience views and consumes historical resources. Writers like Carl Becker, Michael Frisch, and Corbett and Miller focus primarily on the first form of inclusivity, while others, such as Cary Carson, and Nina Simon are concerned with the latter. Inclusivity as history is written and developed might also be referred to as a community engagement process, and can include the formation of community boards, the elevation of research subjects to research participants (shared authority), and collaborative research construction processes (shared inquiry). Inclusivity as history is presented takes a somewhat different form. Here, the goal is to engage broad audiences in discussion and dialogue around material, and to give them space to develop and/or contribute their own meaning connected to the work on display. A variety of techniques might be used to achieve this heightened degree of engagement, with technology and new media paramount among them.

Including stakeholders in the construction of history

In his 1931 presidential address to the American Historical Association, Carl Becker placed a new emphasis on his belief that people create subjective versions of history. He spoke of "two histories," one defined as an "actual series of events that once occurred;" and the other, "the ideal series that we affirm and hold in memory." Becker defines history in its simplest form as "the memory of things said and done" and asserts that every person is active in the construction of their own individualized versions of history. Becker makes the case that people participate in an innate history-making process that in many ways resembles that of a professional historian. When having to reconcile personal memory of an event with what happened, they often conduct an informal research process - invoking memory, verifying facts, consulting documents, and critically analyzing evidence.

The history created by the individual is one that "Mr. Everyman," "fashions out of his individual experience, adapts to his practical or emotional needs, and adorns as well as may be to suit his aesthetic tastes." The histories that emerge from this kind of construction process sit in fundamental contrast to what were often one-sided academic and professional histories, both in scope and structure. Becker's speech is the summation of early thinking in the field that developed into public history. In the time since Becker's address, a number of historians have built on, or grappled with the issues he presented. The tension between "objective history", "living history", memory and the individualized experience are all recurring themes

in subsequent writings in the field. Those tensions exist in virtually any public history undertaking be it physical or digital.[3]

Becker's speech set the stage for the discussion of a few specific themes that would receive much continued attention in writing on public history. Starting with the premise that many cultural institutions and historians are growing out of synch with the expectations and preferences of the general public, these texts support three central tenants. The first is that each person understands history in his/her own unique, individualized way. The second is that historians should work to reach the public with the aim of uncovering these individualized meanings and channeling them into the creation of history projects. The third is that there is an acknowledged tension between maintaining historical accuracy in projects and integrating people without a professional background in history.

Over six decades later, David Thalen and Roy Rosenzweig conducted a major research effort that reinforced and added to many of Becker's assumptions. Their seminal text *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* is largely based around their 1994 survey of the public and history, which affirms individuals strong emphasis on the "personal and firsthand.[4]" In the personal realm family is a highly trusted source representing the personal realm whereas institutional sources like classrooms and mediated forms of television and film and are much lower. Museums benefit from people's trust of primary source material

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[3] Becker, 221-236.

[4] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thalen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). 12.

like museums artifacts, a trust easily transferrable to archival objects and artifacts. That trust is borne of the sense of "immediacy" and "personal participation" that comes from "interaction with primary sources that reminded respondents of independent research."[5] The visceral response to objects lead people to their own conclusions. Both the internal construction and production of original material are defined by the authors as "popular historymaking", a term that in itself acknowledges the public as more than just passive consumers.

Although Thalen and Rosenzweig's study predates the prevalence of the Internet in people's day to day lives, they see peoples production of analog original content as integral to the process of history. Some of the ways this happens is with personal collections that include journal entries, pictures and family trees. They found evidence that "activities that involved engaging and interpreting historical information constructed by others ('reading the past')" resulted in much less feedback from survey participants than "activities that required people to construct, record, or conserve their own history ('writing the past')". [6]

The Michael Frisch book, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Public and Oral History* offers a more practical view of ways the individual and non-professional historians factor into real world public history projects. A compilation of essays spanning 1975 to 1990, *A Shared Authority* draws on case studies in the field to flesh out where historians and those they interact with are situated within projects. Frisch charts his gradual evolution from a traditional urban

[5] Rosenzweig, Thalen, 105.
[6] Ibid., 26.

historian to a public historian concerned with public history's ability to "redistribute intellectual authority." Frisch believed in breaking down intellectual authority from serving as an "instrument of power and hierarchy". His work emphasizes that public and oral history projects are distinct, synthetic products crafted by authors out of historical data or raw material. Frisch endeavors to expand the concept of authorship by highlighting the ways in which hierarchal structures and intellectual ownership can be dynamic and shared between historians and a wide range of other parties. Interested stakeholders often include institutions that are publishing or underwriting a project, the subjects of oral history interviews, and the historians conducting the interviews. Like many authors that follow, Frisch attempts to reconcile the opposing poles of academic history and the impulse to overemphasize the positive aspects of grassroots, public history efforts grounded in activism.[7]

Katherine Corbett and Howard Miller explore the idea of "shared inquiry," a concept that closely relates to Frisch's shared authority.   Citing early historians such as Frederick Turner Jackson, Charles Beard and Carl Becker, Corbett and Miller argue that as the public is constantly crafting its own histories and that the "burden of engagement lay with professionals" to reach them. Even as instigators, however, they note that it is up to historians to "join in the public's ongoing conversation." Their work also explores the differences between "heritage" and "history", defining heritage as inherited and history as the larger narrative. Like Becker, they believe that heritage is more powerful to the public than history, of which public historians

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[7] Frisch, Michael. *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990.

must remain aware and account for. Corbett and Miller remind us that it's possible to create a space for both within projects despite the fact that history and heritage can seem at odds. The authors highlight projects that were successful due to engagement while also presenting cautionary tales where historians emphasis on interpretive control has alienated parties related to the history. Corbett and Miller also emphasize that shared inquiry is a context-driven process, and as such requires unique, situational skills sets not provided in formal historical training. However, they suggest that many historians are quite capable of learning these skills on the job. [8]

Each of these authors encourage incorporating new stakeholders in the construction or exploration of historical narratives. Where the aforementioned works deal primarily with construction of history projects, another set of authors focus on better engagement with audiences as they consume history. The theories these authors present apply to cultural institutions at large, but are easily transferrable to digital history projects.

Engaging audiences in the consumption of history

Where the scholars described above place an emphasis on the relationship between individual historians and the public as they seek to construct historical accounts and projects, Nina Simon and Cary Carson are more concerned with the relationship between audience and content as it is being shared with a broad public

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[8] Corbett, Katherine T., and Howard S. Miller. "A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry." *The Public Historian* 28.1 (2006): 15-38.

through institutional interfaces. They make the case that traditional presentations of history are growing obsolete as audiences' needs are changing. Both Simon and Carson stress the need for individualized, personalized experiences and more interactive, technology-based features.

In an article for *The Public Historian, The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?,* Cary Carson postulates that institutions are increasingly out of synch with the audiences they seek to draw. Carson speculates that a thirty-year decline in history and house museum attendance is evidence that the institutions are on a trajectory towards obsolescence. This is because a new set of learners have emerged who are preoccupied with the ability to organize information on their own, a trend that has been growing since the 1970s. The television has fundamentally changed not only institutions like schools and churches, but changed individuals themselves by having "catapulted the couch potato into the epicenter of world events." Carson believes that institutions should refocus their efforts on making users "feel important" through exhibit design. Additionally, new immersive and interactive institutional experiences should tie in human interest narratives and storytelling modes.[9]

Nina Simon's *The Participatory Museum* shares Carson's philosophical tilt. Simon opens *The Participatory Museum* reiterating the notion that museum attendance is dropping due to institutional stagnation in the face of changing audience trends. Simon underlines the import of placing the experience of the

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[9] Carson, Cary. "The End of Histoy Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian*, 2008: 20.

individual at the center of museum design, engaging audience members as "cultural participants, not passive consumers."[10] To do this, Simon thinks it is important to look at audience as a granular combination of many individual needs, tastes, and preferences. She cites a Forrester Research study as the basis for breaking down participator audiences into classifications as "creators, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators, and inactives."[11] She suggests developing a series of entry points that accommodate each kind of audience member and believes that institutions should focus on creating strong "scaffolding" that guides users through exhibits but still gives them room to construct their own meanings. [12]

Both Simon and Carson emphasize the possibilities presented by technology for institutions that wish to better engage audiences. Simon presents examples of websites that effectively utilize the audience classifications outlined above. Carson also suggests that the web is an especially powerful way to channel individual experiences and expressions, citing functionalities like mass curation on photo-sharing forums like Flickr. These kinds of interactive components create a dynamic, ever-evolving experience for new and returning visitors.

Carson's interest in technology spans television and the Internet, and he makes the case that new media is appealing in its economic practicality. Although there is some initial investment in a website, it's cheap to maintain after launch and

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[10] Simon, Nina. *The Participatory Museum.* Santa Cruz, California: Museum 2.0, 2010, ii.
[11] Ibid., 8.
[12] Ibid., 268.

can complement technology that visitors are bringing in the door with them. Although smaller institutions can be limited in the monetary resources they have to invest in new technology, they can capitalize on the fact that much of their audience enters the door with fairly advanced tools to experience new media. He advocates for B.Y.O.T (Bring Your Own Technology) experiences, where users can either get supplementary information from a website or generate their own.[13] Carson references Becker in defining the users technologically driven, unique experience of a site as putting a "modern twist on Becker's phrase "Everyman is his own historian."[14]

Carson proposes that sports franchises and venues could serve as a model for institutions looking to counter declining attendance by reaching audiences in new mediums. Carson points out that even though there was a decline in on-site attendance at sporting events, an even larger audience emerged that chose to watch it at home. From television advertising revenue owners made more money and in turn were able to build better facilities, luring back crowds. He argues that "off-site" presentation of history may be able to do the same for museums and historical societies. He shows that institutions can actually benefit from changing paradigms in both unintended ways and by leveraging it to their advantage. He offers an extreme example where he proposed a soap opera with tie-ins to colonial Williamsburg. The show would additionally channel B.Y.O.T. and give visitors a human interest narrative to grasp onto.

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[13] Carson, 26.
[14] Carson, 25.

As Simon and Carson's many examples of how technology can be a key resource for institutions looking to raise interactivity and engagement with the public demonstrate, there are rich intersections between public history and new media theory. For historians, the most obvious offering of new media is its ability to create new channels of access between historians, archives, and individuals. However, it would be naïve to ignore that fact that this increased access is part of a larger sea change in how people pursue, digest, and create knowledge as a result of new technologies. For example, one of the unique properties of the Internet is how it gives an individual not only access, but also the ability to reproduce, refashion and manipulate digital surrogates of cultural objects – actions that create an interesting and potent blurring between consumption and creation of historical narratives. For many years, new media scholars have explored the implications of new media for people and society. Their broad analysis provides a strong background for some of the specific issues historians typically confront when interacting with new media.

New Media Theory

By definition classifying objects as "old media" or "new media" suggests a much more oppositional relationship than what exists, a notion that many new media theorists and authors have tried to address. New media objects exist as part of a continuum, where the forms and functions of media types merge, are built on or reference one another. Despite their linkages and commonalities with older forms however, new media forms do have their own unique properties that dictate their use. These forms can be modified easily, presented in different contexts and shared.

Although a sub-set of new media is born digital material, cultural institutions at this juncture are often concerned with new media that represent or stand in for cultural objects or artifacts through digitization. Through a survey of 20th century media theorists we can pick out the properties and trends that public historians, archivists, curators and audiences need to consider.

German intellectual Walter Benjamin's essay *A Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* represents some of the earliest thinking regarding modern technological advancement and its influence on audience. Benjamin explores the political implications of the broader access to art afforded by mass reproduction. Benjamin moves through different forms of media, charting how they borrow from one another and gradually become more easily reproducible, and precise in representation. [15]

Benjamin places a particular emphasis on film primarily because it lends itself to a collective, mass experience – in contrast to the museum experience available to significantly fewer. He argues that mechanical reproduction eliminates the authenticity, provenance and uniqueness of a work of art or object, which he describes as "aura". Gone is the object's unique physical character and unique situation within time and space. People are willing to accept this loss through reproduction as it satiates their impulse to have things "'closer' spatially and humanly". Additionally, film can also document reality and make "actors" of anyone.

[15] Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, by Walter Benjamin, 217-252. New York, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.

By broadening both means of creation and means of consumption, film represents a potentially democratizing force – a positive thing, according to Benjamin. However, he also cautions that film also lends itself to nefarious political ends in the form of propaganda. With increased access comes the threat of increased mass manipulation.

Where Benjamin focused on the object and political implications brought about by changing technology, Marshall McLuhan demanded a study of mediums themselves rather than their content, a form of technological determinism popularized through his declaration that "the medium is the message". In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan explores how different mediums affect people and society at large by altering the way that we communicate. McLuhan died right before the ubiquity of personal computing and the Web, but was prescient about the nature of the medium and its effects. McLuhan generally saw electronic media as a political force that would decentralize power – or, to use a more history-relevant term, authority – placing control into the hands of many rather than the hands of very few.[16]

In his analysis of twenty-six "mediums" ranging from a light bulb to television, a central tenet of McLuhan's book is that each medium is essentially drawing on or incorporating other mediums over time. The newer forms are increasing the speed, scale and immediacy with which we can communicate. According to McLuhan, "electric media" has allowed dialogue to happen across

[16] McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1964.

broader physical, geographical and temporal planes. As the speed of communication increases, so does the desire for people to be connected and engage in dialogue.

McLuhan also offers a useful device for categorizing media, describing some media as being "hot" and "high definition" and other media as "cold" and "low definition". These labels are determined by the amount of information a particular medium allows to come through, and subsequently, the amount of "participation or completion" required by the person interacting with that medium. If a person has to expound much effort to draw conclusions and complete the information, the media is cold. If they are being provided with information in which they can passively partake, the media is hot. Although he applies these categorizations to entire media types, it is interesting to consider how hot and cold definitions might be used to distinguish between different applications of digital technology or websites themselves. For example, a website the presents a great deal of information with limited opportunity for response would likely fall under the heading of hot media, whereas a social media site that demands a high degree of interactivity would be better classed as cold media.

Bolter and Grusin echo the sentiment of many other media theorists in making the case that new forms of media are building on and incorporating older forms of media, and focus their thinking specifically on how the act of remediation is or is not made transparent to the public. In their text *Remediation: Understanding New Media* they place a special emphasis on the World Wide Web and computer graphics, demonstrating how these mediums draw on painting, photography, print, film and television. They argue that although many web producers want to create a

seamless and immersive experience by erasing all traces of mediation, "ruptures"

due to interfaces or presentation can interfere. For some producers, these ruptures

are welcome and even intentional: "in the logic of hypermediacy, the artist (or

multimedia programmer or web designer) strives to make the viewer acknowledge

the medium and to delight in that acknowledgement."[17]

In *The Language of New Media,* Lev Manovich defines and explores the

properties, structures and relationships between new media and physical artifacts.

He broadly defines new media as "anything moderated by the computer". Manovich

lays out unique properties of new media: 1) objects can be numerically represented

in coded units, 2) they are modular in that they are comprised of smaller elements,

3) they can be modified or made accessible through automated computer processes,

4) they can exist in varying forms and levels of detail; and 5) they can translate

between transcoded formats. [18]

In both his broad exploration of computer interfaces and his more focused

study of the Web, Manovich looks at the relationship between the way data is

structured and how it is presented to users. He begins by focusing on the novel

experience of the human/computer interface (HCI), emphasizing that the HCI is

increasingly pervasive in people's lives, arising within both the personal and

professional spheres. He notes that even though the HCI is digital in nature, the

design of the HCI is influenced by older forms of media and by our physical, real

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[17] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999). 41.
[18] Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001. 27.

world environment. For example, applications accessible through the HCI are meant to emulate analog counterparts we experience outside of the computer: media players that open on the screen are designed to resemble the appearance and functionality of VCR's and cassette decks, offering users an experience that is simultaneously novel and familiar.[19]

In his examination of the Web, Manovich juxtaposes the ideas of database and narrative. According to Manovich, the main form the Web assumes is that of the database. Where old forms of media such as film and novels were based around narrative structures, culture is arranged into "data structures" organized for "search and retrieval". Although the database is the prevalent way in which online materials are organized, cultural institutions and historians play a role in restructuring or purposefully selecting materials from the database to create a narrative for the user.[20]

In 2001, Manovich observed "as we shift from an industrial society to an information society, from old media to new media, the overlap between producers and users becomes significantly larger". [21]This observation has only become more pertinent over the past decade with the proliferation of Flickr, YouTube, Wikis and other databases, applications that allow users to both consume and add to content, nearly simultaneously. Although Manovich maintains that there is still a distinction between amateurs and producers, they essentially perform the "same operations" where they "copy, cut and paste, sort, search, filter, transcode and rip" new media

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[19] Ibid., 88.
[20] Ibid., 225.
[21] Ibid., 227

objects.[22] Through those actions, users create their own personalized, customized experiences, which they then share with a broad population of others.

Harry Jenkins, a contemporary new media theorist, is most interested in understanding users and their expectations in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* According to Jenkins, we currently are part of a convergence culture built from "media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence". Jenkins asserts that understanding the expectations and needs of audiences in the new "participatory culture" is necessary with the blunt statement that "producers who fail to make their peace with the new participatory culture will face declining goodwill and diminishing returns."[23]

Jenkins' notions of the individual and their experience of the new media landscape closely correlates with many historian's ideas about individuals and history. He claims that each person pursues a unique combination of information, "constructing [his/her] own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives." For Jenkins, the "Mr. Everyman" who used pieces of personal history to navigate the early 20th century physical landscape is now doing the same in the digital realm. However, unlike earlier periods where information was more or less limited to those who constructed it, people now have a forum where they contribute information to a larger body of knowledge termed

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[22] Ibid.,199.
[23] Jenkins, Harry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* New York, New York: New York University Press, 2008, 3.

"collective intelligence,"[24] a turn of phrase Jenkins borrows from "cybertheorist" Pierre Levy. Despite offering the positive aspects of new media, Jenkins is careful not to overemphasize the democratizing aspects of new media, acknowledging a constant tension exists between grassroots media producers and corporate conglomerates.

Over the past century, as new technologies have come and, in many cases grown outdated, the new media theorists referenced above have tried to unpack the larger implications for society. Many of those global implications manifest themselves in specific ways for archivists and historians. In the next section I survey some of the works dealing with these issues.

Historians, Archivists, Authority and the Web

In the past decade archivists and historians have moved beyond asking if historians should use the Web to exploring how it should be used. The proliferation of journal articles and books targeted at practitioners is evidence of that shift. Some of the writing on digitization and digital projects are practical guides, while some grapple with theoretical issues like challenges the Web poses to provenance and intellectual authority. Two larger issues at the core of many of these texts are the less hierarchical presentation of historical narratives and the varied way that digital objects are shared and presented. In the Carson and Simon texts they endorse cultural institution's integration of technology without taking much of a hard,

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[24] Ibid., 4.

critical look at the threats technology can pose. Many archivists and historians share their enthusiasm but bring many caveats and concerns to the dialogue.

Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, both of George Mason University's widely influential Center for History and New Media, have been two early adopters of digital history. In 2005 they published *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving and Presenting the Past on the Web,* a comprehensive guide to digital history addressing both practical and theoretical concerns. Cohen and Rosenzweig were strong early advocates for digital history projects, but have tempered their enthusiasm by noting the challenges and drawbacks practitioners face. In their introduction they define the advantages of digital media and networks as "capacity, accessibility, flexibility, diversity, manipulability, interactivity and hypertextuality." The dangers relate to "quality, durability, readability, passivity and inaccessibility."[25]

In contrast, accessibility is one of the advantages the authors return to time and time again. They use Center For New Media's *September 11th Digital Archive* as an example demonstrating this point. Eight million visitors have accessed primary source material, a statistic that dwarfs the kind of access made possible by an archives reading room. They offer Library of Congress' *American Memory* site as an example of a site that reaches audiences who normally would not frequent or are restricted from reading rooms. For example high school students are restricted from

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[25] Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 3.

using the reading room of the Library of Congress but can now access millions of photographs cataloged on the site.

Cohen and Rosenzweig create a portrait of the Web where both types of engagement, productive and consumptive, can occur. Discourse between academics, the public and geographically disparate populations increases thanks to interactive environments where "every point of consumption can be a point of production". They wrote their text on the cusp of the social media explosion and in the time since interactivity has only exponentially increased. They liken people's ability to publish on the Web to everyone having their own printing press. In an earlier work, Rosenzweig asserts that "The Web takes Carl Becker's vision of 'everyman a historian' one step further- every person has become an archivist or a publisher of historical documents."[26] Cohen and Rosenzweig are also quick to caution that the downside is that professional, qualified historians now have to compete with those publishing poorly presented or erroneous historical information.

In many of their works, Cohen and Rosenzweig confront some of the complexities surrounding access, rights and use of historical material on the web. They claim that material going on the Web is often not simply democratized or more widely available. Like Jenkins, they see an emerging divide between material available on the "open web" and restricted material walled off in large commercial databases. They voice a fear that large commercial entities have more resources to digitize and secure copyright to material, therefore hindering access.

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[26] Roy Rosenweig, "The Road to Xanadu: Public and Private Pathways on the History ," *The Journal of American History*, 2001, 556.

Rosenzweig explored the issue of public and private historical resources with more depth in his earlier article, *The Road to Xanadu: Public and Private Pathways on the History Web.* He asserts that private entities are creating "a growing realm under corporate control and accessible only to paying customers." Some examples include JSTOR, Thomson Corporation and Corbis. Databases that often are not indexed and do not appear in search results, relegating them to what is called the "Dark Web" or "Hidden Web". Restrictive copyright as a result of aggressive corporate lobbying also limits which material is in the Public Domain or can be published on the Web. To counter these trends, he asserts that historians should lobby for better rights, funding for public agencies that support digital history and create content that adopts an "open source" model. He characterizes amateur historians, genealogists and H-Net as grassroots entities effectively combating this trend through creation of online content available to all.

Rosenzweig also explores the implications of digitization and access on research processes. A negative byproduct of online access is that material online becomes privileged in research. Historians are more inclined to use material readily available on the web, often at the expense of using material that only exists in analog format in libraries or archives. As a result, there is a good potential that "dark" items are pushed further into darkness from a lack of online presence. Broader online access could also diminish overall visits to archives and libraries.

Special Collections 2.0 is a hands-on guide about implementing Web 2.0 in cultural institutions. It is targeted specifically at practitioners in the field, often incorporating their thoughts and observations. Authors Beth Whittaker and Lynne

Thomas stress the need for adoption through succinct chapters that explore trends and specific technologies. They broadly define the "converging mission" of libraries, museums, archives and historical societies to "preserve cultural heritage". However, they assert that institutions must move beyond preservation and restrictive access to demonstrate their relevance and justify funding. Web 2.0 tools are presented as a powerful, cost-effective way to do so.[27]

Whittaker and Thomas find Jack Maness' definition of "Library 2.0" appropriate in defining "Special Collections 2.0". It is "the application of interactive, collaborative and multi-media web-based technologies to web-based library services and collections". The four main tenants of Library 2.0 function are: "being user-centered, providing a multi-media experience, being socially rich, and being communally innovative."[28] Libraries and archives still trying to draw the public through the doors of their institutions are out of synch with users' newer information gathering habits. In reality, their users are more likely to focus on information delivered or pushed to them.

While Whitakker and Thomas voice common concerns surrounding authenticity, authority and identity, they also put faith in practices such as crowd-sourcing supplementary information. They challenge the notion that contributions from the general public will only undermine authoritative history arguing instead that combined knowledge from users can sometimes be more extensive.

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[27] Beth M. Whittaker and Lynne M. Thomas, *Special Collections 2.0* (Santa Barbara, California: Libraries Unlimited, ABC-CLIO, 2009). Xiii.
[28] Ibid., xvi.

Whitakker and Thomas also look at how Web 2.0 alters the presence of "silos," the "disparate streams of information" resulting from partitions created by collection, repository or media type. They argue that Web 2.0 is an inexpensive and useful tool for breaking down "silos" through "mash-ups" the "melding of information." I explore how this advantage takes shape within the digital projects I analyze later.[29]

While Whittaker and Thomas look at how formal institutions adopt Web 2.0 features, Andrew Flinn is more interested in how those features have helped generate a "community archives" movement. Community-based efforts often lack traditional physical spaces to house collections, and so the web becomes the repository for artifacts. Additionally, options for user-generated content have made it possible to include relevant material from those within a given cultural community. This movement has found acceptance from members of the academy, despite concerns about authority and provenance, because there is increasing sensitivity to including the voices and views of traditionally underrepresented groups. The emergence of this type of archive has prompted theorist such as Emily Monks-Leeson to suggest new ways to think about provenance.

In *Archives on the Internet: Representing Contexts and Provenance from Repository to Website,* Monks-Leeson focuses her analysis on sites she defines as "online archives" which present historical material and self-identify as archives, but are created by entities that have no true archival grounding. She begins by stating that traditionally, archives are conceived of as neutral spaces that function as

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[29] Ibid., 77-79.

"storehouses of cultural memory". They owe this neutrality to provenance, the origin of records, which is a consistent method for organizing information. However, as post-modern theory has challenged the idea of absolute truth in many spheres, writers such as Terry Cook have suggested that archives should not be viewed as repositories of truth, but rather collections of items imbued with social codes and significances. For Monks-Leeson, this challenge to the idea of a single, correct way to present context creates the possibility that archival materials might be considered through the lens of multiple contexts simultaneously. [30]

Monks-Leeson argues that online interfaces are bringing this thinking to life. She determines that the newer form of presentation on the Web is thematic, ties together academic and non-academic resources, and presents material in different contexts. She claims that provenance does not have to be completely erased in this realm, but instead can be combined with multiple modes of organization, including those introduced by users.   She cites Kenneth Price's assertion that "while in the past an archive has referred to a collection of unedited, unannotated material objects, in a digital environment 'archive' 'has gradually come to mean a purposeful collection of surrogates....something that blends features of editing and archiving".[31]

Kate Thiemer also challenges traditional notions of archival practice in *What is the Meaning of Archives 2.0?.* Where many see Web 2.0 technologies and ideas as forces changing archival practice, she instead argues that Web 2.0 actually channels

[30] Monks-Leeson, Emily. "Archives on the Internet: Representing Contexts and Provenance from Repository to Website." *The American Archivist* 74, no. Spring/Summer (2011): 38-57.

[31] Ibid., 53.

a changing dynamic in archives' self-perception. In its broadest terms, Archives 2.0

represents archives' greater adoption of flexibility and openness in their

functioning. Archives 2.0 is similar to the user centered model Nina Simon sees

cultural institutions adopting. [32]

Archivists are shedding traditional notions of their role as neutral custodians

of cultural material by providing more interpretation and better engaging the

community. Theimer believes that this trend is the culmination of years of discourse

within the profession. She proposes that key features of Archives 2.0 are openness,

user centered systems, facilitation of user feedback, pursuing users in new spheres

and early adoption of technology.

In a 2002 article in *The Public Historian*, Cathy Stanton selects three early

history websites as case studies for an exploration of issues of accessibility,

authority and economics. Stanton is another early advocate for historians using the

web and argues that websites should be recognized for their ability to bridge the

gap between academic and popular history. She cites the *Commonplace* website's

assessment of itself as "friendlier than a scholarly journal, a bit more scholarly than

a popular magazine." Despite the support and enthusiasm for the sites, Stanton still

believes there's a divide between those who see the websites as legitimate forms of

scholarship and older tenured faculty who have not adopted that view. In the ten

years since Stanton published her article, the proliferation of digital history sites

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[32] Kate Thiemer, "What Is the Meaning of Archives 2.0," *The American Archivist* 74,
no. Spring/Summer (2011): 58-68.

with faculty involvement suggests that this is a changing trend. [33] Stanton compares

the economic benefits of the web to other forms of media. She recognizes that sites

are costly, listing the range at the time as $50,000 to $500,00 per year, but

maintains that they are one of the most cost efficient ways to present history to a

mass audience – vastly less expensive than documentary or commercial film

productions.

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[33] Stanton, Cathy. "Historians and the Web." *The Public Historian* (University of California Press) 24, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 119-125.

CHAPTER 3
BEST PRACTICES IN INTERPRETIVE DIGITAL PROJECTS

As presented throughout the literature, the broad concerns for institutions looking to create digital history initiatives include: how to engage outside communities and parties in the creation of the project, how to present a user-centered interface, how to preserve provenance, and how to maintain some level of intellectual authority/trustworthiness. The properties of new media can all be leveraged to accomplish this, but in light of concerns raised by historians, it is important to use new media in a thoughtful and responsible manner. Below, I highlight nine best practices synthesized from the literature that will later serve as the criteria I apply to several case studies. Although it's useful to consider some of what constitutes a well-structured, less interpretive large-scale digitization project, these practices specifically apply to smaller-scale projects that create and present an interpretive approach to raw transcoded material.

1) Creating advisory panels and tapping into grassroots institutions

One of the central tenets of public history is inclusion. Those constructing a digital history project can achieve this through advisory panels and partnerships. A diverse grouping of parties from both inside and outside an institution can address issues of representation, sensitivity and accuracy.

2) Determining feasibility and relevance at the project's outset

Some of the considerations include determining a project's overall utility, identifying an audience, and ultimately assessing the likelihood of success. One way

of ensuring that is by establishing what real world dialogues/events the project inserts itself into or what questions it attempts to answer. This step could also include a cost-benefit analysis where money, time and labor are considered in relation the anticipated reach of the project.

3) Leveraging the unique advantages of new media

Digital objects on the site should fully utilize the advantages that transcoded forms have over their original objects by being easily reproducible, shareable, flexible and malleable. It is best if the objects have a multiplicity of contexts and places to exist within the project instead of replicating "siloed" physical arrangements like institution, media type or collection. The overall framework and interactive elements of the site should be new and engaging but ultimately still familiar to visitors.

4) Delineating between raw materials, provenance and interpretive elements

Even if a site is designed to favor narrative or interpretive structure, visitors should still be able to toggle between interpretive structure and a neutral, database presentation of material. Robust linkages between the digital object and the provenance and context of the original object should be maintained in both the interpretive and database frameworks.

5) Creating authorial transparency and instituting an editorial process

There should be transparency as to who is responsible for the content in the project. There should be a strong editorial process that is selective of both authors and the

content they produce. If a project professes to be "community engaged", then it must reflect the interests of diverse parties but not at the expense of the editorial process. While authorial and audience-generated content can be equally privileged, distinctions between them should be clear.

6) Creating flexibility that allows for unique, individualized user experiences

Successful sites take into account public historians' assertions that the public most often relates to history in their own personalized, individual terms. A user should be able to structure or explore the information on the site with a great deal of agency. A project should accommodate varying types of users, ranging from those just interested in perusing the site to those interested in adding content. It's best if sites are dynamic rather than static granting users different information or different structures over time.

7) Creating opportunities for user-generated content

Another way projects should incorporate people's individualized relationship to history is by culling experiences or knowledge through comments, forums, or the ability to contribute media. The degree to which content needs to be moderated is situational and depends on the subject matter or the capacity for site administrators to review contributed material.

8) Broadening access into the "public Web"

Sites should be accessible on the broader Web and ideally extends institutional utility or is promoted in non-institutional ways. Sites should be indexed and accessible through search engines or non-institutional sources.

9) Integrating new media forms with more conventional engagement strategies

Sites should be integrated with broader real world engagement strategies and initiatives. Examples include tours, film screenings, educational programs and exhibitions.

Best Practices in Action: *PhilaPlace*

I offer *PhilaPlace* as a digital history project utilizing local resources and communities as an example of a site that effectively employs many of the best practices I presented above. *PhilaPlace* is a digital history project that fuses a variety of institutional resources with "public" material to largely interpret the history of two Philadelphia neighborhoods.

PhilaPlace is part of what Andrew Hurley cites as a relatively recent trend in museums, one grounded in the 1998 American Association of Museums Community's initiative to embrace increased community engagement and input. Robert Archibald considers this as part of the social history movement and a result of "democratizing forces sweeping across society". Both Hurley and Archibald

assert that to remain relevant in the 21st century, institutions need to present

challenging dialogues in an inclusive fashion. [34]

PhilaPlace effectively combines real world community engagement

components like advisory panels with robust Web 2.0 features that invite the public

at large to contribute to the site. Another major success of *PhilaPlace* is that it has

provided an avenue for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) to reach those

who normally would not access material through their reading room.

The project partially began as a digital manifestation of real world

community tours of two neighborhoods in the city, Southwark and Northern

Liberties/Kensington. The tours brought together scholars, local institutions and

community members to tell the history of each respective neighborhood. HSP, the

sponsoring institution, viewed the tours as an extension of the work of the Balch

Institute For Ethnic Studies, who had been absorbed by HSP a few years earlier. The

tours utilized personal artifacts and offered oral reflections on the neighborhoods

from community members. Binders with prints of both personal and institutional

photographs were another feature of the tours.[35]

An assessment of those tours revealed age-related divisions in experiences

where "younger audiences wanted to experience the neighborhoods on their own

while older audiences wanted to continue to have a guided experience."[36] The

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[34] Andew Hurley, *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* (Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 2010). 147-149.
[35] Melissa Mandell, interview by John Pettit, , *PhilaPlace Interview*, (February 2, 2012).
[36] Historical Society of Pennsylvania, *PhilaPlace- About*, http://www.philaplace.org/about/ (accessed February 16, 2012).

digital site was conceived as a surrogate of the tours, accommodating both types—those who wanted an individualized experience of the neighborhood with those interested in a more structured, guided tour. Economic factors were a secondary consideration in development of the web component. The trolley tours were costly and labor intensive, making the website a cheaper method of disseminating the same information to a wider audience. The project also fit within HSP's institutional mission to "play a key role in the historical interpretation of the region"[37]. By combining institutional and non-institutional resources, HSP intended to create a unique and inclusive interpretation of the region in the digital sphere.

The findings from the tours assessment along with a desire to incorporate more voices drove the second, centered phase of the project which centered on website development. In keeping with the spirit of the tours, the site mixes stories from community members with historical records from local institutions and archival materials from HSP. The local institutions that participated received formal recognition as partners, and included the Philadelphia Department of Records, PennDesign, the Free Library of Philadelphia, First Person Arts, Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives and the Preservation Alliance of Philadelphia. (Night Kitchen Interactive n.d.)

Three full-time staff members were responsible for developing the second phase of the project/website. Several interns contributed to research, writing, GIS mapping, and videography over the course of three years. Local design firm Night Kitchen Interactive worked with HSP to develop the interface and technical

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[37] Mandell

infrastructure. Night Kitchen, a company borne of recent trends in media, specializes in creating user-centered, interactive interfaces, most often for cultural institutions. On its website, Night Kitchen Interactive defines itself as using "interactive storytelling and participatory education to create solutions that connect organizations with their audiences."[38] Examples of projects they have worked on include: the Rosenbach Museum's website on Abraham Lincoln titled *21st Century Abe*, the Smithsonian's virtual exhibit about the Star Spangled Banner, and the College of Physicians of Philadelphia's website on *History of Vaccines*.

Through Web 2.0 features, HSP invites community members and the general public to play an active role in both engaged consumption and construction of *PhilaPlace.* Engaged construction was cultivated through a committee process. By the December 2009 launch, the stakeholders that comprised the *PhilaPlace* Advisory Committee and Partners included a broad and diverse cross section of people representing institutions and communities. Local politicians, business proprietors, scholars, religious leaders, leaders of community/neighborhood organizations and "community historians" were among the 34 members of the committee.[39] One of the primary functions of the advisory was to select the neighborhood institutions to profile on the sites. They additionally had a role in shaping the presentation of material.

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[38] Night Kitchen Interactive, *Night Kitchen Interactive*, http://www.whatscookin.com/html/company/about-us/ (accessed February 17, 2012).
[39] Historical Society of Pennsylvania, *PhilaPlace- About*, http://www.philaplace.org/about/ (accessed February 16, 2012).

Several real world social engagement components encouraged participation and promoted the *PhilaPlace* website. One staff member who I spoke with believes some of the successes in attracting users was the fact that the *PhilaPlace* project was more than just a website. Alongside the trolley tours, HSP hosted a series of popular "Share Your Own Photo Days," during which staff from *PhilaPlace,* HSP and Philadelphia's Department of Records helped community members scan up to four photos. They also gathered as much of the story and information surrounding the photographs as possible to populate the online metadata and secured permission to post the images and associated information on the site. People who brought photos benefitted in that they could keep the scans. "Share Your Own Photo Days" were a creative way to demystify some of the process of constructing digital history projects while providing a small degree of preservation. Additionally, and most importantly, they gave community members a personal stake in the site. Not only did the "Share Your Own Photo Days" promote the site through traditional means, they also promoted the site by connecting real world participants to it. *PhilaPlace* also extended its reach beyond the web through curriculum and teachers workshops at HSP, intergenerational workshops at community centers, and frequent visits and interactions with profiled locations.

Despite the success of these strategies, a former staff member who worked on the project found aspects of this process challenging. She describes how the level of real world engagement was constrained by a small staff and the significant time needed to establish and maintain the website. She also speculates how the structure of the project encouraged participation amongst some populations, but impeded it

in others.   For example, she notes that younger visitors are more media literate and can take better advantage than older visitors of some of the site's features. Additionally, she wonders if there is a correlation between the likelihood that a certain ethnic group will contribute to the site and how established they are in Philadelphia or the United States. For example, she notices that Italians are more likely to contribute, perhaps because of their longer, more established history in the neighborhood. In contrast, some of the newer immigrant populations, like Southeast Asians, are less likely to contribute, perhaps because they have fewer documents and stories relating to the history of the neighborhood. *PhilaPlace* tried to address gaps by creating new content such as video interviews that profiled some of the newer groups. [40]

Another of the best practices employed is how *PhilaPlace* channels dialogue and sentiment that existed prior to the genesis of the project. Both of the neighborhoods selected, Southwark and Northern Liberties, are historically diverse, working class neighborhoods with long established histories. Despite many of the demographic changes underway, they are still relatively diverse communities. Both neighborhoods have been gentrifying, presumably lending an urgency to express the history of the neighborhood as it is being erased or replaced. The neighborhoods are excellent places in which to explore Philadelphia's history because a broad swath of Philadelphians or past generations of family members have lived in one of the communities. These neighborhoods were intended as starting points for a larger exploration of the city. Other neighborhoods would be added over time. As of

[40] Mandell

now there is some user-generated material that branches out into other neighborhoods and a number of communities represented under the classifications "North Philadelphia," "West Philadelphia," "South Philadelphia," and "Northwest Philadelphia." As the borders of neighborhoods are commonly debated among Philadelphians, *PhilaPlace* staff were careful not to set hard boundaries for neighborhoods, instead leaving them self-defined by contributors to the site.

PhilaPlace and HSP formed partnerships between different organizations in the interest of gathering more relevant content for the site. New content is generated from oral histories, community archives, and partnering institutions like the Mural Arts Program. Despite the plethora of archives, libraries and special collections in the region, there are few online resources that tie together material from a variety of these institutions. An unintended benefit of acquiring content through partnerships is material walled off in various institutions catalogs is now tied together in a unique, impossible to physically replicate fashion. *PhilaPlace* maintains institutional provenance through credits, but it is ultimately the subject matter or thematic presentation that draws together the material.

Digital content on the site is presented in a dynamic and flexible way. There are currently over 1,800 digital objects on the site with three interface options to structure the text, digitized photographs, audio and video. The default interface when you first visit the site is the Map interface. The interface is a mash-up of new content and archival material, combining a Google map and Sanborn atlases in the interface. *PhilaPlace* relies on technology that will likely be familiar to users. By basing the map on the widely used Google interface, there is a good likelihood that

users will be comfortable navigating the site on their initial visit. The map automatically zooms into different areas to present a sample of "sites" to explore.

Authority is addressed in a simple, effective manner that avoids the common tendency to partition off community-contributed content into its own sections. Contributions to sites are sometimes pushed into silos of their own, like comments sections or forums. Different colored Google pins differentiate material contributed by HSP, partners or visitors. The pins are otherwise equally privileged in size and presentation on the interface.

Another interface is a topical list which, when selected provides a search result list for digitized material and interpretive essays. Some of the more well-populated topics include Landscape & Architecture, Public & Social Life, Immigration & Migration and Verbal & Artistic Expression. The search results can be reconfigured according to most viewed, place, author or title with the option of viewing the material on the map or linking to its entry.

Although the site was formed as a digital substitute for the real-world tours, it has quickly grown as a tool for creating customized tours. Each visitor can craft his or her own individualized virtual experience or database while creating a corresponding real world driving, biking or walking tour. By selecting graphical stars on each entry, a user can mark and save entries into a personal account. Directions between sites can then be generated on a Google map. Virtual tours of sites and neighborhoods are offered in the tour option on the bottom left of site pages. The virtual tour automatically moves you on the map between 63 sites in South Philadelphia or 49 Northern Liberties/Lower North Philadelphia sites.

Another interface is Collection, a database of the digital objects lacking any interpretive or narrative presentation. The foundation the database is built on is the open source Collective Access content management system, a free "out of box" framework for institutions. There is a gridded presentation of thumbnails representing all of the digital objects on the site. The grid can be filtered or faceted according to criteria and check boxes presented on the left side of the page. The broader neighborhood designations are broken down to smaller, more granular classifications. The same topical list from the topics category is provided, only now with the option of combining and layering multiple topics at once. Additional options for filtering include media type (Image, Audio or Video) and contributor (HSP, partners or site visitors).

PhilaPlace attempts to cull the kind of individualized, personal histories and personal artifacts that Thalen and Rosenszweig discuss through the sites Add A Story tab. By selecting the ever-present tab, users are lead through a 4-step process to add a story. They are asked to add a street address or geographic area, an up to 600 word story, some form of media and a description of themselves to site administrators. As of February 15, 2012 there were a total of 54 uploaded stories to the site. The upload feature, a digital manifestation of the Share Your Story events is the most robust Web 2.0 feature of the site.

Despite some of its successes, *PhilaPlace* went through a turbulent development process and launch. Money, time and infrastructure were lost when the initial web development team went out of business before meeting any of their obligations*.* Due to a lack of funding, *PhilaPlace* lost its full-time staff approximately

four months after the sites launch. Different ways of evaluating the site would produce different findings. I am interested in how *PhilaPlace* is a digital project that successfully applies many of the shifts and current trends in the new media and public history fields. It is the embodiment of many of the principles and practices laid out in the texts I explored. HSP ambitiously created a framework that hopefully can be utilized to a much greater degree in the future.

CHAPTER 4

ROLE OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Especially since the 1960s many universities have asked themselves how they can be better citizens or serve the immediate community around them. In urban settings this impulse can be attributed to close geographical proximity to non-collegiate communities and a desire to justify public funding. Engaging the community has manifested itself in pedagogical trends like "service learning," which uses engagement and outreach as a learning tool and community engagement has even become a formal, measured component in university reviews.

Universities have a great wealth of resources, often establishing them as ideal candidates for community engaged digital history projects. They have ample human resources, robust physical and technological infrastructure and a commitment to experimentation and innovation. Additionally, unique special collections materials are featured parts of university libraries and archives. Many practitioners and academics have written about community engagement within the university setting, with some specifically focusing on digital history projects.

Some note that digital history projects are becoming a vehicle to publish scholarship. As Cathy Stanton points out, institutional support for digital history projects increasingly resembles the support previously given to academic presses. As the output of academic presses declines, digital history projects are becoming a different form of publishing. Digital history projects potentially reach a much broader audience than academic presses in a more cost effective fashion.

In *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize*, Andrew Hurley dedicates a chapter to challenges and consensus building in university-community partnerships. Hurley emphasizes that the most successful partnerships are truly collaborative and build on shared authority, although issues often arise from discrepancies in what community members and those in the academy consider history. Some of the issues that must be overcome are convincing community members of the value of their stories within broader narratives, that history cannot be only celebratory, and that more rigorous historical methodology must be applied.[41] Some of the pronounced divisions between race and class of university and community members can exasperate issues or lead to distrust. Both parties have to leave their comfort zones with academics ceding some authority but promoting more rigorous historical methods.

Hurley asserts that the responsibilities of academic teaching positions hinder serious community engagement. Community engagement is a lesser priority compared with the pressure to publish, despite the fact that publishing makes academics work available to far fewer people. Students are also limited by what they can do given the short time frame of the semester. Curriculum in history classes often emphasizes national issues rather than local ones, making community engagement less relevant in the classroom.

In *Campus-Community Partnerships: The Terms of Engagement,* Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher lay out practices universities should adopt when working

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[41] Andew Hurley, 146.

with communities. They assert that too often projects could be construed as charitable endeavors or communities viewed as labs "solely for experimentation". A key suggestion is that universities should follow the lead of communities by allowing them to initiate projects. They believe partnerships should be rooted in social justice and embrace democratic forms of development. They offer criteria that signify strong relationships between parties: "shared/clear missions, monitoring of goals and progress, advisory groups ".[42]

A university driven, community engaged digital history project which included an extensive amount of reflexive writing is University of Maryland Baltimore County's *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth* website. A variety of the project's staff members published articles reflecting on their work in *The Public Historian's* fall 2009 issue, one year after a majority of the site was developed. Each of the eight articles provides a different perspective with the potential to inform digital history projects at Temple and at large.

Just as *PhilaPlace* is a website rooted in real-world forms of engagement, so is *Baltimore 68: Riots and Rebirth*. The site is a digital manifestation of a 2008 conference at UMBC that revisited the two weeks of unrest in Baltimore following Martin Luther King's assassination. It gathered a diverse number of attendees including nationally renowned scholars, high school students, religious leaders, archivists, community members and media producers. The conference was the culmination of three years of work which produced walking and driving tours, oral

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[42] Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, "Campus-Community Partnerships," *Journal of Social Issues*, 2002: 503-516.

histories, panels, theatrical performances, teaching curriculum and visual art

exhibits. The stated goal of the *Baltimore 68: Riots and Rebirth* site is to "advance the

scholarship, encourage civil discourse and simply shed light" on the events of April

1968. One of the ways it works to do this is serving as a repository for digitized

material from both the institution and private and individual collections.

Thomas Hollowak, Associate Director for Special Collections at UMBC's

Langsdale Library, writes that the site serves the dual purposes of promoting the

three-day conference and making primary source material available to a wide

audience. Along with making the university's material more accessible, the site also

ties in private collections UMBC acquired from individuals. The personal artifacts

individuals provide makes them stakeholders in the site, offering new perspectives

on the subject matter and linking individuals to larger historical narratives.

Hollowak notes that individuals who donated pictures, stories, documents and

diaries about the riots ended up using collections in the library beyond their own.

Keeping the website dynamic remains a driving force behind the digitization of

special collections material. [43]

Chris Hart, Manager of Public Information on the conferences' steering

committee, asserts that public academic institutions like UMBC have a responsibility

to engage in projects like *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth*. In his article *In the First*

Place: Civic Dialogue and the Role of the University of Baltimore in Examining the

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[43] Hart, Chris. "Full Access In the First Place: Civic Dialogue and the Role of the University of Baltimore in Examining the 1968 Riots." *The Public Historian*, 2009: 48-53.

1968 Riots, Hart argues that public universities have an obligation to fulfill their

missions of service and education by contributing to the greater good of the

communities they are situated in. He wrote the article in 2009 at the start of the

economic downturn. He notes that since this has caused many cultural institutions

to close or reduce programming, public universities might effectively begin to fill the

gaps they leave behind. Hart says that those involved in the conference felt the

imperative to "tell [the] virtually untold story" of the riots by going beyond teaching

and scholarship and provoking civic engagement. [44]

   In *Bringing Life to Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth—A How-to Guide*, Jessica

Elfenbein, Associate Provost for University Engagement, outlines the genesis of the

project. Despite hearing personal recollections about the riots from faculty, staff

who lived in affected communities, and older students, she felt there was an absence

of scholarly dialogue surrounding the riots. Elfenbein incorporated people from the

university, surrounding institutions and the general public in the project. She

tapped into their personal connections to the riots in order to build a set of

stakeholders for the site. [45]

   Clearly one of the strongest indicators of the success of the project is the

multi-faceted way that the project grew and extended beyond its original form.

Faculty and staff created curricula based around the project. The site inspired new

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[44] Hart, Chris. "Full Access In the First Place: Civic Dialogue and the Role of the University of Baltimore in Examining the 1968 Riots." *The Public Historian*, 2009: 48-53.

[45] Elfenbein, Jessica. "Bringing to Life Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth—A How-to Guide." *The Public Historian*, 2009: 13-27.

works of art, which were exhibited or performed at city-wide arts festivals. One of the most notable extensions of the project into the community came during the YMCA's adoption of the project as part of a community dialogue, *Continuing the Conversation.*

In her final assessment, Linda Shopes, an independent scholar involved in the project, echoes Hart's belief that is the duty of the university to fill the gaps created by failing institutions and that the project was a bold endeavor that improved UMBC's profile. She makes the point that UMBC's non-traditional, commuter student body was one of the project's best assets because they provided connections that traditionally take a lot of time to develop with "outsiders."[46]

She cites the oral histories and the inclusion of university students as two of the project's notable successes. Through the oral history process, students learned about the complexities of inclusive public history projects while inviting interviewees to become stakeholders in the project. Like Frisch, Shopes sees the oral histories as "shifting the voice of authority away from the scholar and towards the citizen." She further explains: "The looter and the looted, the National Guardsman and the clergyman, the politician and the ordinary citizen—are a part of the larger story."[47] Their contributions are intermingled with UMBC's archival material. Interviewees also became involved in the art and theater projects, were featured in media coverage of the project, and were regularly at associated events. However,

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[46] Shopes, Linda. "Baltimore '68: An Assesment." *The Public Historian*, 2009: 60-66.

[47] Shopes, Linda. "Baltimore '68: An Assesment." *The Public Historian*, 2009: 62..

she questions whether there will continue to be benefits for the community in the long run.

Today, when visitors enter the site, they see eight overall divisions titled Overview, Timeline & Driving Tour, Conference, Oral Histories, Art Track, Images, Archival Resources and Links. The Overview provides a brief synopsis of the riots, conference and website; the Timeline & Driving Tour includes a chronological list of the riot's events, a downloadable podcast, and directions for a self-guided driving tour; the Conference section shares publications from the April 2008 conference; the Oral Histories section offers recordings produced by undergraduate students; Art Track is a listing of visual/performance related events; the Images section is a database of archival material; The Archival Resources section is a call for private and individual archival material; and the Links section connect users to national media coverage and educational resources. [48]

There are a number of indications that the overall project is a successful exploration of an issue through a university-community partnership. The website ties together institutional, privately held, and newly generated forms of media under a larger thematic umbrella. The 78 new oral histories are the most positive example of newly generated content for the site. The oral history interviewees ranged from the then-mayor of the city to people who were children when observing the riots. Undergraduates conducted the oral histories in collaboration with a local public radio station, creating a strong opportunity within a powerful

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[48] University of Maryland, Baltimore County, *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth*, http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/index.html?CFID=14115155&CFTOKEN=92317205 (accessed March 28, 2012).

engagement strategy. Also notable is the way these materials and scholarship are accessible to a wide audience, including those outside of the academy setting.

Despite the strong elements of community engagement and collaboration in the events and site structure, there are few Web 2.0 components to encourage interactivity. Web 2.0 features also offer the opportunity to enrich metadata and foster more dialogue online. There are a number of notable instances where UMBC fails to capitalize on the advantages of new media objects. Material is siloed by media type or collection and the site does not offer a mechanism that allows sorting theme or issue. For example, there is poor integration between the institutional collection of photos from the Baltimore New Gallery and three smaller, private collections from police officers and a national guardsman. It is additionally problematic that the photos offer little metadata other than an identified location, or in many cases only an image number. The lack of a feature allowing users to add metadata is another example of a missed opportunity to leverage the new media format.

The site also takes only limited advantage of the Web's potential for malleability. Images are presented in a fixed format, where users are not able to zoom, crop, or share the content. The original GIS maps generated for the project are also limited as they are presented as a single, 81-page downloadable pdf document which take viewers away from the site to experience the object. Reports & Documents in the Archival Resources section suffers from the same limitation of only offering downloadable pdfs. The oral histories are slightly more flexible in presentation as they can be listened to as mp3s or read as transcripts.

CHAPTER 5

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: DIGITIZATION AND DIGITAL HISTORY

Temple University Libraries has not adopted Web 2.0 features or community engagement elements to quite the degree that *PhilaPlace* and *Baltimore 68* have, but it has begun creating interpretive digital sites. Recent developments include increased interactivity with digital objects, a shift in authoritative voice, and a greater openness to collaboration. Change has also resulted from restructuring the special collections departments and forming of a Digital Initiatives department. New technologies, funding opportunities, and evolving best practices have also influenced decisions around digitization in Temple University Libraries.

Where digitization projects in the past decade have been largely neutral, assembly line digitization and data entry, Temple University Libraries is now embracing a greater role in interpreting the material. For years digitization was conducted in a linear fashion by collection and media type. Although that process and raw presentation of digital objects remains, current digital history projects are more selective and dictated by thematic focus on certain material. The digital history projects are becoming more inclusive of outside scholars and community members. Broadly, recent digital history projects have broken down silos of provenance, material type, collections and departments in the interest of thematic or narrative presentation.

Since 2003, I have had an active role in digitization and the evolving development of digital initiatives at Temple. I began as a student employee who primarily scanned photographs. Since 2005, I have worked in a professional capacity as Assistant Archivist in the Urban Archives, where my role has grown to include supervision and conceptualization of digitization projects. Over the years I have become more interested in the implications for archival objects as they are transcoded. I am also interested in the larger interpretive frameworks through which digital objects can be presented. In the following section I provide a brief history of digitization at Temple University Libraries and chart its progression from mass digitization projects to current interpretive ones. My account is gleaned from my own firsthand experiences, internal library documents, and informal interviews with colleagues.

In 1999, Temple University Libraries made a major leap in its online presence when it acquired its first "client-server based integrated library system." The online library catalog made a large quantity of Temple University Libraries' holdings accessible to anyone on the World Wide Web and created a more robust technological and networking infrastructure for the library [49]. A short time after this system's implementation, Temple University was able to use that same infrastructure to provide broader access to its special collections material.

Digitization of material began in April 2000 after University Librarian, Maureen Pastine secured congressional funding to "digitize, index, catalog and

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[49] Article states that "all" holdings were listed online. A great deal of Special Collections material was not, and still is not included in this.

preserve valuable and unique images housed in library collections" under the management of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). That criteria made special collections material the best candidate for digitization.[50] Temple believed that digitization would enhance academic pursuits, provide access to rare and fragile material, and create distance-learning opportunities. Internally, the grant provided support for staff training, digital infrastructure, and development of best practices. Workflows were established through collaboration between special collections, the cataloging department, library administration and the systems department.

Curators and library administrators made the bulk of the decisions about what materials to digitize with some input from faculty members. Their criteria included perceived need, ownership of intellectual copyright, and promotion of hidden material. Materials were selected from the Urban Archives, Special Collections department and Ambler library. The Urban Archives is a repository dedicated to primary source material pertaining to the history of Philadelphia from the mid-19th century to the present. The libraries' Special Collections department includes material pertaining to the history of Temple University, alternative presses, science fiction literature as well as rare books and manuscripts. The Ambler Library is the library of a Temple satellite campus that offers a number of classes in landscape architecture and planning. Staff from each of these respective collections selected subsets of photographs, ephemera, and negatives. Urban Archives staff

[50] Margaret Jerrido, Linda Cotilla and Thomas Whitehead, "Digitizing Collections: A Meshing of Minds, Methods and Materials," *Collection Management*, 2001: 4.

concentrated efforts on selecting photographs from the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* photo archives, to which they own the copyright, prioritizing frequently requested images. Special Collections staff selected a collection of posters pertaining to the first and second World Wars, partially because they are in the public domain and partially because staff believed the posters would have broad cross-departmental appeal. Intellectual access to the posters was previously limited by narrow indexing in the card catalog. Finally, Ambler staff selected a set of horticulture slides created by a Temple professor in order to provide a different form of access for classes already using the slides.[51]

Digitized content was presented in *Digital Diamond,* a parallel catalog to the library's main one, *Diamond*. Both were built on Innovative Interfaces Incorporated's *Millennium* interface, the basis of the libraries' new integrated system. The presentation was in database format with neutral entry of information provided with the associated objects. Standards for cataloging images in *Digital Diamond* adopted similar standards to the books in *Diamond*. Item-level records were created as Machine Readable Catalog Records (MARC records) and adhered to *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition* (AACR2) conventions and used Library of Congress Authorities for controlled vocabulary. Production workflows were conducted in an assembly line fashion across different departments with some elements requiring specialized staff. The complicated structure ultimately hindered the total output of digitized and cataloged images.

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[51] Margaret Jerrido, Linda Cotilla and Thomas Whitehead, "Digitizing Collections: A Meshing of Minds, Methods and Materials," *Collection Management*, 2001: 3-13.

The library used grant funds to hire a manager to supervise a team of students and temporary employees. Scanning, metadata, preservation of the physical objects and creation of digital derivatives were all divided amongst different workers. Undergraduate student workers created high and low resolution digital surrogates of the posters, slides and prints. Students and temporary workers also entered the simple, data entry like elements of metadata, leaving professional staff in the Cataloging department to assign more intellectually intensive metadata elements like subject headings. The basic description and verbatim entry of information accompanying a photo into the database bore a closer resemblance to data entry than any kind of interpretive historical work.

During the first few years, the emphasis was on transferring as much information as possible from analog to digital form with volume serving as the main measurement of success. The complicated workflow structure, technical challenges and the novelty of the process limited production. According to staff each image took as many as 22 minutes to scan, preserve and catalog. A staff member characterized one of the overall challenges as "unreasonable expectations" with regard to volume[52] In evidence of this characterization, an initial grant promise to digitize 150,000 images was scaled back to 35,000 images.[53]

By the conclusion of phase one over 42,000 items were scanned, more than half from the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.* Temple University Libraries applied for

[52] Philip D'Andrea and Kevin Martin, "Careful Considerations: Planning and Managing Digitization Projects," *Collection Management*, 2002: 17
[53] Maureen Pastine, "Letter to Joyce Ray, Director of the Office of Library Services, IMLS" (April 4, 2001).

and received another grant to implement a second phase of digitization, which

would expand *Digital Diamond*. Digitization and cataloging resumed on phase one

collections with the addition of photographs from housing reform organizations,

photos from both World Wars, lithography manuals and even boutique online

exhibits. Over 25,000 items were scanned as part of the second phase. Between the

two grants, approximately 67,000 were scanned and as of May 2004, 38,862 items

were in the *Digital Diamond* catalog. [54]

Once the images were available, several issues with the presentation and

access became evident. In order to discourage use without permission and maintain

provenance, library staff either added an embossed, transparent Temple University

Libraries logo and/or provided only extremely low-resolution derivatives. The

majority of these issues stemmed from concerns around use of the *Philadelphia*

Evening Bulletin collection for which Temple had inherited the intellectual

copyright.[55] As a result of these policies, users were challenged by the inflexibility of

the digital object's obscured content.

In the instance of the horticulture slides, user access was also challenged by

excessive loading times. Students accessing images on campus through a then fast

T1 line were able to load images with relative speed, but those accessing images off

campus via a modem and telephone line were hindered by 10 to 20 minute load

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[54] Temple University Libraries, *Temple University Libraries: Institute of Museum and Library Services Grants*, 05 14, 2004,
http://diamond.temple.edu:81/screens/imls.html (accessed 03 12, 2012).
[55] Philip D'Andrea and Kevin Martin, "Careful Considerations: Planning and Managing Digitization Projects," *Collection Management*, 2002: 15-28.

times. Therefore, despite efforts to create public accessibility, the images were still somewhat limited to the campus.

Transition to Digital Initiatives/New Library Partnerships

After the completion of the second IMLS grant in 2004, digitization continued to a much smaller degree. It was relegated to full-time staff within special collections units and the Systems and Technology department. Between 2004 and 2009 an average of 500-1,000 new records were created for photographs per year.[56] Many items were digitized based on requests by Urban Archives patrons, but little was done in the interest of mass accessibility or interpretation of the digitized content.

Digitization positions in the library shifted from being grant funded to becoming full-time positions in a permanent Digital Library Initiatives department. The first hire in the newly formed department was a Digital Library Initiatives Manager (DLIM) in 2010 followed shortly thereafter with the addition of a Bibliographic Assistant in 2011. The DLIM supervises a department of four full-time staff and student assistants in digitization of various formats of library materials. Additionally the DLIM develops digital repository systems to manage content, and establishes best practices in digitization, metadata and intellectual control of content.

Since 2009, the library has embraced larger trends in the digitization community that did not exist in 2001. One of the larger changes was the purchase of

[56] Urban Archives, Temple University Libraries, "Urban Archives Annual Report," Annual (2004-2009).

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a license for *ContentDM*, a widely used content management system designed

expressly for storage and display of digital objects. This system has been adopted by

a variety of archives, libraries and historical societies. In *ContentDM,* digitized

content is presented in a more flexible fashion. For example, where digital images

presented in *Digital Diamond* were watermarked jpegs with small, fixed dimensions,

digital objects in *ContentDM* are modifiable JPEG2000 files. A site visitor can zoom

around the object and download cropped derivatives.

Despite the fact that *ContentDM* is at its core a database somewhat similar in

structure to *Digital Diamond*, the latest release, *ContentDM 6* has integrated many

more Web 2.0 features. Incorporating these features is a clear response to the

notion that "increasingly, users expect the websites for archives, special collections

and historical societies to function like the other websites they use."[57] New

presentation features like facets and relevancy ranking mimic commercial sites like

Amazon and Ebay. There is an "enhanced image viewer" for zooming and panning

around the image and several new features that increase shareability through e-

mail, bookmarking, and social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.[58]

The added features, which allow the content to move quickly between users

and systems, lessen the degree to which items remain siloed in the database and can

potentially be pushed out to the broader Web. *Content DM's* Web 2.0 features

increase the likelihood that content will reach more non-academic users as the

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[57] Theimer, Web 2.0, 3.
[58] OCLC, *OCLC Newsletter*,
http://www.oclc.org/nextspace/018/productsandservices.htm (accessed February
18, 2012).

aforementioned social media sites have a much broader user base than an academic

library catalog. An increased presence in social media and on search engines

creates the potential to engage a broader public.

In my capacity in the Urban Archives, I have taken a special interest in

integrating archival material with social media applications. In April 2009, I created

an institutional Facebook site that served as Temple University Libraries' first direct

foray into the social media realm. Although it was originally created to promote an

Urban Archives event, I quickly realized its potential for publishing digitized content

to a new, broad audience. I created a series called "Friday Photos" in which I make

weekly additions of digitized photos that relate to current events or work underway

in the archives. The site has been popular with 2,290 fans (who subscribe to

content) as of February, 2012. Through the "Friday Photos" feature, I have

published over 278 photos to the site, most of which are linked back to the library

catalog. Users can add comments or share the photos with each other.   I have used

the comments feature to successfully crowdsource identification of unidentified

photographs. The information provided is vetted and checked against other sources

and when correct, is changed in the catalog. The Facebook site continues to gain

followers and I continue to add content. In recognition of the growing popularity of

institutional social media use, the library has formed a Social Media Committee to

add more sites and formalize efforts in that sphere. [59]

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[59] *Urban Archives (Paley Library, Temple University)*,
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Urban-Archives-Paley-Library-Temple-
University/83447331003 (accessed April 04, 2012).

Over the last few years, Temple University Libraries has taken initial steps to adopt digitization technologies, systems, and online engagement strategies. Although these platforms are not ideal for community engagement, they have adopted some of its principles and laid the foundation for more interpretive projects. I explore two projects that represent the new direction in the next section.

Civil Rights in a Northern City

In May of 2010, Temple University embarked on its first digital history project after securing a Library Services & Technology (LSTA) grant to create an interpretive Web portal dedicated to the Civil Rights struggle in Philadelphia. The grant was to digitize material, create metadata, and interpretive text and conduct oral histories pertaining to two key events, the desegregation of Girard College and the Columbia Avenue Riots. Along with being the first digital history project, it was also the first implementation of *Drupal, a* newer flexible, modular open-source content management system for creating and maintaining websites that has been adopted both by the libraries' Digital Initiatives Department and Temple University at-large. The platform makes it easy to create websites without specialized web development and customization skills, making it possible for faculty, students and administrators to take on a much larger role in creating a dynamic, flexible presentation of material.

Money from the LSTA grant paid for a graduate from a local Public History program to supervise the project for nine months. This individual was responsible

for conceptualizing the site, selecting material for digitization, cataloging material, writing interpretive text and managing student employees. Material was primarily drawn from the Urban Archives with additional material drawn from the Special Collections Department and the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection. Media types selected for digitization included newspaper clippings, 16mm news footage, manuscripts, pamphlets, photographs and negatives. New content took two forms: eight original oral histories with community members conducted and recorded by the Curator of the Blockson Collection and new photos that revisit's sites documented in the collections.

Interns from Temple University's School of Education developed Lesson 'Plans' and a 'Tips and Tricks' page for using primary source material and the site. This collaboration between the library and the School of Education provided better access to archival material for teachers and students working on National History Day and familiarized the undergraduate interns with National History Day. [60]

Matthew Countryman, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Michigan worked as consulting historian on the project. Dr. Countryman's publications include *'From Protest to Politics': Community Control and the Emergence of Independent Black Politics in Philadelphia, 1965-1971,* in the *Journal of Urban History* and the book *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*. For both works, Countryman's research relied heavily on material in the Urban Archives. Dr. Countryman was selected to assist with the project due to his intimate familiarity

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[60] Special Collections Research Center, *Classroom Resources*, http://northerncity.library.temple.edu/classroom (accessed April 1, 2012).

with Civil Rights related material in the Urban Archives. Dr. Countryman wrote interpretive content, suggested material for digitization and fact-checked parts of the website.

The front page of the *Civil Rights in a Northern City* website contains a link to an essay from Dr. Countryman, *Why Philadelphia?* The essay contextualizes and explains the importance of the Civil Rights struggle in Philadelphia and is illustrated by photographs that link to the digitized objects in the *ContentDM* database. Two links lead to pages listing content pertaining to the histories of the desegregation of Girard College and the Columbia Avenue Riots. The fourth link, Search/Browse All Collections leads to a gridded view of all the digitized material. Presentation and functionality of the grid is practically identical to the *PhilaPlace* collections grid. While topical arrangement dominates how items are presented, provenance is maintained. Originally, items in the *Drupal* web site were supposed to be harvested from the *ContentDM* database for presentation on the site, but technical limitations prevented that from happening. Instead they were narrowed by selecting an item in the grid that generates a page with an identical record to the one in the *ContentDM* catalog. In the future, direct linkages will be maintained between items presented in *Drupal* and their surrogate in the *ContentDM* database. [61]

Each of the topical pages (Girard College and Columbia Ave.) contains links to interpretive essays commissioned as part of the project, timelines of key events, oral histories, 'Then and Now' photographs, and database presentations of material by

[61] Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center, *Home: Civil Rights in a Northern City: Philadelphia*, http://northerncity.library.temple.edu (accessed April 01, 2012).

both topic and material type. The top banner of the site has links to an About page explaining the project and staff involved, a Historical Perspective page with links to essays and bibliographies, a Search All Collections page which presents the digital objects in database form, a Maps page, a Timeline page, a People and Places page containing hyperlinks to essays on various subjects, and a Classroom Material page where educational guides live.

Civil Rights in a Northern City is a groundbreaking endeavor for Temple University Libraries because it incorporates additional university departments, it merges older and newer digital content, and it include non-academic voices in crafting history. Although there was no explicit community engagement component to the project, the curriculum, National History Day involvement and outreach to local high school students serves the function of generating community interaction with the completed site.

Incidental exposure to a much broader audience occurred through a Newsworks story aired about the website in honor of Martin Luther King Day. The piece explored Martin Luther King's 1965 visit to the city and promoted the site. The reporter interviewed the director of the Special Collections Research Center, Margery Sly and played clips of Karen Jordan's oral history and archival footage of demonstrators at Girard College.[62] The story provided a much broader exposure to original archival content than any previous digitization effort. The selection of the

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[62] Stephanie Marudas, *Temple's new online database archives civil rights movement in philadelphia*, January 16, 2012, http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/item/32688-temples-new-online-database-archives-civil-rights-movement-in-philadelphia (accessed January 18, 2012).

website for coverage by a well-reputed broadcast media outlet is evidence that the site taps into an existing interest and dialogue outside the academic sphere.

Civil Rights in a Northern City also represents the breakdown of silos. Ideas and conceptualization extended beyond Temple itself with the inclusion of Matthew Countryman's voice. The merging of materials online reflected a larger, departmental merging of discrete Special Collections units into a single Special Collections Research Center (SCRC). Where there are silos by media type in *Digital Diamond* and *ContentDM*, the interpretive format integrates different types of archival materials, including film, photographs, manuscripts, and pamphlets.

Temple University-Community History Project

At the same time that Temple University Libraries has been furthering its commitment to digitization initiatives through improved staffing and infrastructure, Temple University's Center For Public History has also been growing its capacity for digitization projects through new curricula and staff. At the start of the 2010-2011 school year, the Center For Public History hired Dale Winling, a historian with a particular interest in digital history projects and a research background in university-community relations. As I have witnessed both the library and public history department grow firsthand, I have also seen their potential for intersection.

Many of the collections in Temple's *SCRC* are ideal for public history projects because they come from community organizations and/or concern themselves with minority issues. Because it contains material from the mid-19th century to the present, the SCRC is in the fortunate position of appealing to the contemporary

experience of Philadelphians. Patrons can use material to navigate and make sense of their immediate experiences and surroundings. The diversity of the holdings appeals to a broad cross section of the local population. There is clearly the potential for digital history projects that hold benefit the Center For Public History, Temple University Libraries and the local community.

Like many urban universities, Temple has had a complicated relationship with the surrounding community. During expansion in the 1960s university-community relations were brought to the fore during conflict around the University's plans for the neighborhood. Although this process created an increased self-awareness on the part of the University and its students, tensions remained in the decades that followed. Vestiges of the 1960s era conflict are apparent in the language and terms of Temple's latest push for expansion through the current *20/20 Plan.*

Many departments have well-established histories serving the immediate local community. The law school, hospital, social work and journalism schools are among the many university programs that address the needs of the local community and public at large. Temple University Libraries serves the community by providing physical access to resources within the library, and the departments that now comprise the SCRC have engaged local residents in many ways over the past several decades. Lately, those efforts have included assisting high school students in research for National History Day projects, scanning images for community groups participating in Scribe Video Center's *Precious Places Oral History Project,* and providing daily remote and on-site reference for members of the general public.

In the summer of 2010 talks began about initiating a collaboration between

Temple University's Center For Public History, Temple University Libraries and

outside community organizations to create a web portal dedicated to the

development of Temple University with regard to its surrounding community. Dr.

Winling believed a digital portal would be a useful way for students in the Public

History department to create a holistic overview of North Philadelphia by

conducting original research on university-community relations.

The initial digitization work was carried out by students in the *History 8800:*

Public History and Digital Media class offered in the spring semester of 2011. The

Center for Public History took ownership of the process of developing interpretive

content, but digitization and cataloging adhered to library standards for inclusion in

the *ContentDM* database. As outline in the course syllabus, the project was intended

as both an exploration of use of new media in public history and an attempt to

create a unique, community engaged web portal:

> This course is an introduction to the role of media in presenting
> history. It will focus both on the ways that emerging media have
> affected our historical understanding in the past and on developing
> basic skills in emerging media in our contemporary times. With this
> dual focus on precedent as well as the present, the course will help
> develop an understanding of the variety of possible media that have
> been, are, and may in the future be at the disposal of public historians.
> Class members will partner with the Temple University Paley Library
> Special Collections to help conceptualize and create a web portal on
> the growth of Temple University and its relationship to the North
> Philadelphia neighborhood. Students will work in groups to develop a
> web site (both design and write text), to digitize (scan and create
> metadata) materials from the Special Collections for the library's
> digital repository, and create digital content that interprets that
> relationship.

The bulk of pertinent resources for the project are part of the *Conwellana-Templana* collection within the SCRC, a collection dedicated to material pertaining to the history of Temple University. There is also a significant amount of relevant material in the Urban Archives*.* Many photos, pamphlets, newspaper clippings and manuscripts concern areas around and abutting the campus. Throughout the research process, staff discovered even more material than expected pertaining to Temple University. Material on the same small geographic area or concerning the same issues exist across several physically separate collections and with disparate levels of intellectual access. The Temple History Project was an opportunity to better integrate the resources contained with the two collections through a new interpretive framework.

The community surrounding Temple presents many avenues for community engagement. Since Temple's inception, the surrounding community has had an incredibly dynamic history and is rich with longstanding institutions, including the Norris Square Apartments, Wagner Free Institute of Science, Church of the Advocate, Uptown Theater and Bright Hope Baptist Church. The development of the Yorktown neighborhood, Progress Plaza, the Columbia Avenue Riots, and urban renewal efforts are all landmarks and events in both North Philadelphia and Philadelphia history at large. Community members who are affiliated with these institutions, events or landmarks represent an untapped voice that would be a valuable addition to larger narratives on the city's history. Additionally, many of these institutions and community members have archival material that could be digitized and presented alongside Temple's institutional material.

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During the spring 2011 semester the class concentrated their efforts on digitization of Temple University Libraries' material. In January of 2011 the class visited for an overview of our general holdings, digitization within the department and traditional modes of access. I conducted an initial group training on digitization using Adobe Photoshop CS4, and led a discussion on metadata and the *ContentDM* Project Client interface. I later provided further training in metadata during one-on-one visits, which gave me an opportunity to address specific examples, issues and questions. Dr. Winling attended weekly meetings with staff from the SCRC and Digital Library Initiatives to address issues and track progress on goals.

Weekly meetings of Temple University Libraries' Digitization Working Group also addressed with issues and created standards for the project. Best practices in digitization and metadata were already in place for *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* and *Housing Association of the Delaware Valley* photographs. Standards for *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* clippings and Templana photographs needed refinement.

Winling identified photographs within the Picture File of the Templana collection and worked with me to identify material within *Urban Archives* that fit within the scope of the project. The seven students from the class dedicated approximately ten hours each to digitization and metadata creation for the identified resources. Digitization began in the first week of February and continued until completion in the first week in March.

The selected materials were ultimately comprised of a mix of material published by Temple University, documents published by the City of Philadelphia

and housing reform and news organizations. Students scanned approximately 50 photographic prints and negatives from the Templana Picture File and seven pamphlets totaling 189 pages from within the Urban Archives' Pamphlet Collection, 40 photographs dealing with neighboring Columbia (now Cecil B. Moore) Avenue, the Norris Apartments and Yorktown from the Urban Archives' *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* collection, and 63 clippings from the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. Several previously cataloged *Housing Association of the Delaware Valley* photographs of the surrounding 19122 zip code area were incorporated into the project as well.

Students were assigned various research topics that focused on specific aspects of Temple University and community development. The topics included early North Philadelphia history, the development of the university, urban renewal and North Philadelphia, and surrounding religious institutions. Students did primary research in the *Special Collections Research Center* along with secondary sources to explore the issues.

The main page on the *Temple University-Community History Project* website pairs an aerial photo of the campus and the surrounding community with two paragraphs contextualizing the site:

> Since the founding of the institution in 1884, Temple University has been inextricably linked with the community of North Philadelphia. Russell Conwell's effort to educate future ministers at Grace Baptist Temple night classes came from a commitment to the local community, a theme he returned to again and again in his oft-delivered speech, "Acres of Diamonds." North Philadelphia was a mix of dense neighborhoods housing industrial workers and grand, palatial estates of the city's most affluent families. It was into that setting of economic disparity and with a responsibility to community development that Temple College, the precursor to Temple University, was born.

On this site graduate students from Temple University's Public History program present their research and interpret the relationship between the university and the neighborhood over the last 125 years. Explore the menu on the right to learn about this interaction and to read stories, hear audio, and look at maps and videos about the interaction of these two communities. This site is also the basis for a graduate student's further research on digital history and community engagement. Please send comments to lwinling[AT]gmail.com.

The site has a uniform structure throughout. Content is divided into five themes which are listed in a navigation bar on the right- North Philadelphia Before Temple, Temple's Early Years, Campus Expansion, Education On Campus and Off, Religion in North Philadelphia, and Urban Renewal in North Philadelphia. Once a link is followed, pages of most sections then have an average of two paragraphs introducing the topic with four to five links to pages that offer a deeper exploration of the topic. There are also graphic elements such as maps and photos to illustrate the main ideas. [63]

An example is the Urban Renewal in North Philadelphia page which has an essay on urban renewal, two photographs of North Philadelphia, an illustration of Burgess' Concentric Zone Model as it pertains to Philadelphia and a scan of manuscript material demonstrating housing discrimination. Links to delve deeper into the topics are listed below- White Flight and Urban Riots, Yorktown: Urban Renewal Success?, Public Housing: Norris Homes and The Central Urban Renewal Area. Each topic contains an approximately 800-word essay written by students that draws on primary and secondary sources. Accompanying each essay is newly generated including maps, graphs, audio files and illustrations along with archival

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[63] Center For Public History, *Temple University and North Philadelphia: 125 of Linked History*, http://www.urbanoasis.org/temple/ (accessed April 01, 2012).

material from institutions ranging from the Free Library of Philadelphia to University of Texas Austin.

In the next section I provide an evaluation of the site. I use the best practices identified in an earlier chapter as the basis for my analysis, and additionally support my critique with quotes culled from surveys I collected from a variety of sources. In September of 2011, I approached a combination of 14 people and organizations both within Temple University and from the outside community about evaluating the *Temple-Community History* website. I hoped to discover dominant trends in perception of the site or recommendations for next steps. Despite a considerable amount of follow-up, I only received four completed surveys – three from Temple University employees and one from a librarian at a nearby institution. I partially attribute low community response to the class' decision not to include community stakeholders in the development of the project. Nevertheless, the four responses provide valuable insights that substantiate arguments I make. At the request of my participants, the four responses have been included with anonymous attribution.

Temple-Community History- Evaluation

> *Many academic public history programs engage students in local*
> *history work, yet cultivating community relationships—without which*
> *no project can move forward—takes considerable time and often*
> *cannot be accommodated within a single semester. –Linda Shopes*

The *Temple University-Community History Project* did not fully realize all of its stated goals, but nevertheless provides some benefit to Temple University Libraries and the Center for Public History. Despite the fact that a relatively small amount of

material was digitized overall, the *Temple University-Community History Project* helped initiate the process of digitization of *Conwellana-Templana* material. The project required library staff to develop metadata templates and digitization standards for digitization of new collections and forms of media.

Where the *Conwellana-Templana* collection previously had little digital presence, enough material was online to populate 'Temple History in Photos' and make it a publicly accessible *ContentDM* collection. All of the digitized content was added to the Temple University Libraries' *ContentDM* database and will have long-term value within the database. Student employees, interns, classes and library staff members now have the infrastructure, standards and precedent in place to further digitize and interpret *Conwellana-Templana* material. The *Temple University-Community History Project* is the second interpretive project using a significant amount of SCRC materials. As with other digital history projects, it ties together material that otherwise would be siloed by media type, repository or collection. It successfully integrates Temple's material with material from institutions like the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia City Archives, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, New York Public Library, University of Texas Austin and the Wagner Free Institute of Science.

As a newly developed course, Dr. Winling's class produced unexpected challenges for both the students and instructor. Winling found that many of the students were concerned that the combination of a seminar-like research process and experimentation with digital media was too overwhelming for one semester. In the next iteration of the course, he plans to explore dividing it into two more

compartmentalized courses.[64] Nevertheless I believe students in the *Center for Public History* benefitted from experiencing the amount of time, process and intellectual work that goes into the construction of a digital history project. Additionally, familiarity with metadata standards will make them more astute researchers when dealing with online resources from archives, museums, historical societies and libraries.

A rather simple improvement to the site that would better align it with the best practices I offer above is increased authorial transparency and a stronger editorial process. There is a brief explanation on the site that research was part of a class project, but little clarity as to which parties were responsible for specific information or clarity as to how the information was vetted. Dr. Countryman's involvement in fact checking and approval of interpretive content on *Civil Rights in a Northern City's* content assures a certain level of accountability absent from the *Temple History* site. Even students at the graduate level can make errors in the haste of project creation. The respondent who works at a nearby institution that is featured on the site characterizes the writing and factual accuracy as uneven and based on a very narrow set of sources. The other three respondents comment on these issues as well. For example, one of the Temple respondents writes, "I wondered periodically about the accuracy and trustworthiness of some of the content." Another notes, "The site has a lot of potential, but more work would have to be done to review the content, give it some kind of scholarly 'seal of approval,'

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[64] Dale Winling, *Urban Oasis*, September 17, 2011, http://www.urbanoasis.org/?paged=3 (accessed January 26, 2012).

and find ways to explain to the user that yes, they can trust the site as a reliable source of information."

A central editorial voice would also better tie together the different themes and help create more concise and digestible content. The site is currently very text heavy and more akin to journal articles than dynamic websites, or as one Temple administrator states in her survey "it has the feel of a partially published, semi-illustrated scholarly monograph." This respondent wonders who the intended audience is, and if the community can relate to the academic presentation.

The presentation of digital objects on the site could be improved as well. Some pages fall prey to historians' worst fears regarding provenance or modification of images. All four respondents express varying levels of concern about these issues. Digital objects on the *Temple History* site acquire new context at the expense of the original context and provenance. Numerous images are presented without institutional credit or, if they are from Temple's collections, are not linked to their *ContentDM* records. The respondent from the community institution notes that images from her institution were used without permission or proper attribution. Where administrators of the other sites featured in this thesis provide the option to toggle between moderated, interpretive presentation or a raw database form, *Temple History* only provides the interpretive one.

Additionally, digital objects on the *Temple History* site do not leverage the flexibility or dynamism afforded by their conversion from analog to digital format. Presentation on the *Drupal* site is limited to a fixed size that is sometimes a significant degradation of the original. This is most apparent is in the case of maps,

where text on the map has been rendered too small to read, a point affirmed by one of the survey respondents, who writes, "…The animated map graphic on the 'North Philadelphia before Temple' page never stops or slows enough that you can read it and some of the historic maps do not enlarge enough to be able to read them." In some cases, images were not resized with the proper proportions. The ability to zoom and enlarge, and move around an image not only maintains clarity, but also gives the user an interactive and unique experience of the object. The *Temple History* project offers only one way for users to experience the objects.

The site also fails to integrate objects together in a way that could contribute to broader meaning. This is typically a pronounced benefit of new media, as demonstrated by *PhilaPlace's* use of an online map as a starting point for exploring various themes and issues across the city.   The Temple History site offers an animated map showing stages in North Philadelphia's development, but fails integrate to integrate objects in a way that could contribute to larger meanings. Additionally, the pre-set rate that it moves in detracts from the experience. The map could be made more engaging through the addition of photos of campus buildings, clippings on scenes of events, and additional land use maps of the community surrounding the university. Most importantly, the user should be given the ability to navigate the map in whatever fashion he/she prefers.

Aside from maps, there is a multiplicity of ways to combine digital objects for new meanings. As an oral history or podcast plays, users could watch silent film footage or a slideshow of related images. An even more engaging, individualized

variant of that presentation is one that allows the user to play audio as he/she peruses photos in an online gallery.

Many of these technical functions are time-consuming to create and somewhat advanced to implement. They certainly represent a level of design that would exceed the capacity of a semester-long class already requiring intensive research and basic media skills. In reality, the fact that students acquired the skills in a single semester required to create the *Temple History* portal is an achievement in and of itself. Even so, this condition reduced the potential of the project to grow into a truly exemplary site.

The most unfortunate shortcoming of the project is the way that community engagement components never took root. As of now, the site relies solely on materials and authors from Temple to tell the story of the university and the community. That being said, the dialogue offered by history students offers a much more critical perspective on the issues than a public relations or outreach department would provide. The site fits the definition of public history in the sense that it broadens the exposure of analog material on the public web, but as of April of 2012, more needs to be done to make it a truly community engaged project.

All of the respondents believe that the site has great potential to involve community voices through co-authorship, comments, or forums, but currently is lacking in engagement elements. However, there is an interesting divide between the critique from the community representative and the critiques from Temple staff members. The community respondent strongly expresses concerns that the material is not accurate or reflective of diverse perspectives, especially with regard

to the institution she works at. Conversely, the Temple administrator is "impressed by its overall accuracy." This division is likely representative of the fact that The Temple administrator was involved in the creation of the site by supplying sources and resources to the students, while the community respondent notes that she was never consulted. She writes, "The [institution] was unaware that this was happening and could have provided much better content had the students actually conversed with staff about this project."

A short-term, less labor-intensive way to foster community inclusion would be through Web 2.0 features. For example, the site's administrator could add a comments feature for those who find their way to the site. In the long-term, the project would benefit from increased community input as the site is developed further. In the future, the role of students could shift from construction of interpretive content to outreach for and vetting of material supplied by non-Temple affiliated parties.

Undoubtedly, many institutions and individuals in the surrounding community have generated and stored archival material that could augment Temple's material on the neighborhood. A digital history class or other classes in the Public History department could unearth individuals' hidden collections or assist institutions in arranging, preserving and digitizing material. In the absence of tangible archival material, students could conduct oral histories that would capture community members' observations and reflections, following the model created by both the *Baltimore 68* and *PhilaPlace* projects.

Another possible future direction for the project would be for students to support non-Temple institutions and community groups as they craft their own history projects. They could guide participants through the construction of their own sites, and aid with the research process. If Temple pursues this model, it will be especially essential to maintain authorial transparency since the content would reflect a larger range of voices. Participating groups and institutions could choose whether to create the site as a new web presence or use it to augment an existing web presence.

One of the ultimate challenges in any community engagement project is establishing meaningful relationships between all parties involved. The amount of time needed to do this is an oft cited challenge. Even with a development phase that lasted for few years, *PhilaPlace* staff felt unable to build and maintain all of the relationships they felt necessary for the project's success. In the context of a university, faculty and staff are the best candidates to lead engagement, given the fleeting presence of students. Understandably, Dr. Winling was not able to establish bonds with the outside community within his one year of employment at Temple.

Despite these many challenges, the site succeeds in creating a basic, expandable forum for interrelated histories of both Temple and North Philadelphia. The site begins to flesh out narratives of material that never could be conveyed solely through database presentation, and has great potential for growth.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This paper charts the evolution of new media and public history fields over the last century, suggests a set of best practices aggregated from different scholars and practitioners, and offers an analysis of several recent digital history projects, including two housed at Temple University. When I first started my work on this project, I found the fields of public history and new media to be theoretically divergent. However, as I explored each field's evolution, broad points of intersection emerged. Both have grown to favor interactivity, two-way dialogue, and increasing emphasis on the audience/user.

It is imperative that public historians and employees in cultural institutions embrace and experiment with new technologies. In the last two decades, the World Wide Web has emerged as an unavoidable public sphere that historians and cultural workers must be a part of. However, even while it opens new doors, the Web simultaneously amplifies the standard complications affecting public history, including authority, provenance, representation, and inclusiveness. Public historians must rise above the general noise, erroneous information and competing agendas pervasive in the digital sphere. By adopting technology in a progressive and engaging fashion, they can take advantage of new media's benefits without falling prey to its downsides.

I was originally drawn to digital history projects in connection to my work in the Urban Archives. In my nine years there, I have worked in a range of capacities, witnessing trends in both Temple University Libraries and the field as a whole. I

have been fortunate enough to gain perspectives as both a student transcoding material and an administrator conceptualizing projects. My roles in the library have been greatly informed by my time in the Public History department. At the broadest level, my employment history and interests are centered on technology, media, social justice and history, all prominent components of digital history projects. It was only natural that this would become the subject of my research.

This research will inform my work at Temple University and beyond and I believe it adds to the scholarship surrounding digital history projects and community engagement. In particular, I hope that the nine best practices I identify are helpful to practitioners developing or building on digital history projects. Although I had an intuitive sense of some of these practices when I began my research, it only was it after surveys of related literature and assessments of both digital history projects and digitization efforts at TUL that I was able to distill them. Despite the fact that there are a multitude of factors that shape community-engaged digital history projects and determine the degree to which they are successful, I believe embracing these best practices at the outset of a digital history project is crucial.

Given my role as an archivist within an academic institution, I focused the latter half of this thesis on digital history project related to universities. I was especially interested in exploring the responsibilities of an academic institution in it's relationship to the surrounding community. Universities, particularly public ones, have a responsibility to engage with nearby communities, whether it be to ameliorate past wrongs, produce work that justifies their public subsidization, or to

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simply be good neighbors. Universities are well-poised to do so given their resources, missions and experimentation. Declining funding, increasing privatization and lack of adequate staffing at non-profit cultural or educational institutions has made this more of a priority in recent years.   Universities are also situated in a complex position with regard to the public and private web. Even as they are responsible for a lot of the content on the public Web, they are also the largest entities creating the market for historical information hidden behind paywalls.

Ultimately, my research is confined to an analysis of how sites are implementing the best practices I identify. I do not address what constitutes a wholly successful digital history project or why projects that are exemplary in process and construction are not always entirely successful by traditional metrics of success - Web hits, a loyal user base, increases in funding, anecdotal feedback, utilization of Web 2.0 features, and public awareness are among others.   I can speculate on some of the reasons for this disconnect between best practices and broader success (funding mishaps, political factors, and technology failures, for example), but a more thorough analysis would be a fascinating topic for further study. In the end, each could be viewed as a success in getting through the initiation phase. The frameworks established can now be improved upon and added to.

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