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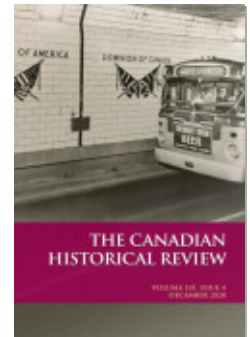
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## Clio, Rewired: Propositions for the Future of Digital History Pedagogy in Canada

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# Clio, Rewired: Propositions for the Future of Digital History Pedagogy in Canada



**Abstract:** *Courses on digital history methods are being offered at more Canadian universities than ever before, with both techniques and tools being embedded in courses on oral history, environmental history, and public history, to name a few. What is being taught in these classrooms and who is teaching it? Despite a wealth of digital, historical scholarship being undertaken by women, this article shows that the majority of these classes are taught by men and, furthermore, men have also authored the majority of texts and articles typically assigned in this field. Suggestions for rewiring the digital history classroom to be a more inclusive environment are made, including looking to projects in the related fields of oral, queer, and literary history.*

**Keywords:** digital history, pedagogy, gender, instruction

**Résumé :** *L'enseignement des méthodes en histoire numérique est offert dans plus d'universités canadiennes que jamais. Les techniques et les outils sont intégrés par exemple dans les cours d'histoire orale, d'histoire publique et d'histoire de l'environnement. Qu'enseigne-t-on dans ces salles de classe et qui enseigne? Le présent article révèle que, malgré les nombreux travaux savants à caractère numérique et historique effectués par des femmes, la majorité de ces cours sont donnés par des hommes. Qui plus est, la majorité des textes et articles généralement au programme dans ce domaine sont écrits par des hommes. L'auteure fait des suggestions visant à favoriser l'inclusivité dans la classe d'histoire numérique, notamment en abordant des projets dans des domaines connexes : l'histoire orale, l'histoire littéraire et celle des personnes queer.*

**Mots clés :** histoire numérique, pédagogie, genre, instruction

There have been many conversations about the future of the Digital Humanities (DH)<sup>1</sup>, and one main thread being that DH<sup>2</sup> will simply be

1 In 2011, Roy Rosenzweig's spouse, Deborah Kaplan, published a posthumous collection of her husband's essays on digital history, titled *Clio, Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). To say this collection and the essays therein have been instrumental to our current understanding of digital history would be an understatement. However, like many other collections of digital history, and despite Rosenzweig's focus on the web for publicizing and democratizing history, there are few mentions of women in this

incorporated into humanities work and that the digital technology that we use to create questions and develop new answers from our material will eventually become normalized methods.<sup>3</sup> The same could be said for digital history, depending on your view of what this field encompasses. From my perspective, what we now see as novel computational methods will eventually become some of the myriad ways that historians examine and expose the past. Currently, however, digital history remains elusive, with many historians still preferring to research solely in physical archives and publishing single-authored papers or monographs, instead of producing collaborative, digital outputs. Despite their own work habits remaining very much the same, one place where historians do seem to be changing is in the classroom. In my relatively small history department where I am one of two “digital” scholars, there are courses in which students are doing everything from building exhibitions in Omeka, to digitizing and transcribing diaries, to performing basic text analysis with Voyant. It is in the classroom that we have the opportunity to inspire a new generation of digital historians, and where what is taught is of the utmost importance to the future of our discipline.

I should state from the outset that I am not your traditional digital historian, if such a thing exists. I have a PhD and an MA in Library and Information Science, and an MA in History from the institution and department in which I am now an assistant professor. My PhD thesis, some of which I will reflect on here, focussed on the research habits of historians in physical and digital environments.<sup>4</sup> I attended digital history courses with Bill Turkel during my PhD, taught DH methods in a history department as a post-doc for three years before being hired by that department to continue that work and to build, with two colleagues, a new DH undergraduate degree. I am also a feminist scholar. I have spent a lot of time thinking about digital pedagogy and what works in the classroom as well as what doesn’t work, and why not.

In 2017, I taught my Exploration of DH course for the second time and I assigned, as my main textbook, *The Historian’s Macroscopic*.<sup>5</sup> Being friends with the three men who wrote the book, I also served as one of its first peer reviewers:

text. By alluding to this work in my title, I do not disagree with anything posited by Rosenzweig, but I do argue for a pedagogy in which future digital historians can see themselves in the open history web that he spoke so highly of, regardless of their gender, sexuality, or race.

- 2 For the purposes of this article, “DH” will be used to refer to digital humanities. Digital history will remain spelled out.

- 3 Jennifer L. Adams and Kevin B. Gunn., “Keeping up with... Digital Humanities,” *Association of College and Research Libraries*, n.d., [http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping\\_up\\_with/digital\\_humanities](http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/digital_humanities); “McGill - Digital Humanities,” McGill University, <https://www.mcgill.ca/digital-humanities/>.

- 4 Kim Martin, “Creating Context from Curiosity: The Role of Serendipity in the Research Process of Historians” (PhD diss, University of Western Ontario, 2016).

- 5 Shawn Graham, Ian Milligan, and Scott Weingart. *The Historian’s Macroscopic: Big Digital History*. London: Imperial College Press, 2014. <http://themacroscopic.org>.

going through the chapters in detail after they had been written in a public forum on the web, checking that the lessons they contained made sense, and providing ideas to help with clarity. I liked this book for its accessibility and its attentiveness to the novice digital historian. I still do. But mid-way through this course one of my students brought to my attention, in class, that they were surprised that I taught with it, as there were so few women and people of colour represented in its pages. This led to a great discussion in which other students, mostly women, agreed that it was hard to identify with the data used in the book. I left that class feeling somewhat embarrassed at my lack of feminist awareness and concerned about previous courses where I had used this textbook: had other students felt like this? This led me down two paths: the first was an investigation and reflection on what others were teaching in similar courses; and the second was a frank and earnest discussion with the authors of *The Historian's Macroscope* (who have since invited me to co-author the second edition with them). It is the results of the first path that I lay out for you here.

In this article, I examine digital history pedagogy in Canada as it stands in 2020. Having taught digital methods courses in a history department for the last four years, what follows are thoughts drawn from observations in the classroom, from textbooks on the topic, and from a thorough look at the syllabi for digital history courses that have been offered in Canada over the past eight years. Following on from a recent piece by Sharon Leon, I examine the apparent lack of gender diversity in the field of digital history and offer some critical reflection on why, how, and who we teach in digital history courses might serve to inform our practice and better the field as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

The central question of Leon's article is "Why are there so few women in the history of digital history?"<sup>7</sup> This is a great question, and one that she does justice by offering various ways of rethinking digital history (beyond the senior faculty, beyond the principal investigator, and beyond the academy). I have given quite a bit of thought to the lack of women in digital history myself, but my thoughts have mostly centred on pedagogy, rather than the origin stories of digital history.<sup>8</sup>

6 Sharon M. Leon, "Complicating a 'Great Man' Narrative of Digital History in the United States," in *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities*, eds. Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019). I wish to acknowledge the crude binary with which gender is approached in this article. I understand the breadth of genders and respect those that choose to live outside this binary. The use of the term "man" and "woman" throughout this article represent the perceived gender of the instructors and the authors of texts found on course syllabi by myself and my research assistant Rashmeet Kaur. Any errors are my own.

7 Leon, "Complicating a 'Great Man' Narrative," 346.

8 It is clear from my colleague Chad Gaffield's article in this issue that women did not play a central role in the history of digital history in Canada, either. While I think this piece is a wonderful tribute to a growing and exciting sub-field, I do believe that a history with a wider scope, encompassing the very notions put forward by Leon, is needed to know the entire picture. See Chad Gaffield, "Clio and Computers in Canada and Beyond: Contested Past, Promising Present, Uncertain Future."

## DIGITAL HISTORY IN THE CANADIAN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

One of the most noteworthy Canadian pedagogical projects to engage with the benefits of the World Wide Web was the website “Who Killed William Robinson? Race, Justice and Settling the Land” created by Ruth Sandwell and John Lutz in 1995.<sup>9</sup> This innovative website drew students’ attention to a wide variety of primary resources surrounding a series of murders that took place on Salt Spring Island in the late 1860s, and allowed students to engage with Canada’s past at four different levels: understanding primary documents, exploring social history, actively “doing” history, and being able to recognize historical work.<sup>10</sup> This single website grew to become the *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History* project, which now includes a series of thirteen different “mysteries” that all use web-based archives to encourage students to engage with historical material, and, perhaps more importantly, push conversations about race, ethnicity, and gender to the front and centre of the classroom.<sup>11</sup>

Two other Canadian-led projects that have influenced digital history pedagogy are the Network in Canadian History & Environment (NiCHE) and Active History. The former started in 2004 with a small collaboration of researchers interested in the intersection of history and environmental studies and grew, with the support of SSHRC from 2007–2015, to having over 400 (mostly Canadian) members.<sup>12</sup> The current site is noteworthy in itself as an example of web-based community building, but NiCHE also had several outcomes directly relevant to pedagogy: the most well-known of which was the Programming Historian, a site I return to towards the end of this article.<sup>13</sup> Active History has taken one of the great things about digital history (that it is often meant to involve the public) and built a community of engaged historians that can help inspire undergraduates to take their degree well beyond the classroom. The site is impressive, especially considering it is entirely volunteer-run, and its community has many diverse interests.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the most relevant to this discussion is *Beyond the Classroom*, a series of blogposts about history pedagogy, many of which are digital in nature. This series was recently followed up with an open access

9 Ruth Sandwell and John Lutz. *Who Killed William Robinson? Race, Justice and Settling the Land*. 1997–2001.

10 Ruth Sandwell, “The Great Unsolved Mysteries of Canadian History: Using a Web-based Archives to Teach History,” *Canadian Social Studies* 39, no. 2 (2005).

11 Ruth Sandwell, John Lutz, and Peter Gossage, (directors) *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History*. 1997–2020. <https://canadianmysteries.ca/>

12 “About” Network in Canadian History & Environment. <https://niche-canada.org/about/>

13 NiCHE has several pedagogy initiatives, including open-access textbooks, lessons in Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS), and a digital infrastructure projects with a series of lessons and techniques for exploring the past. See <https://niche-canada.org/research/>

14 Other notable items on Active History are blog posts that engage rapidly and carefully with current events and *History Slam* a podcast hosted and produced by Sean Graham. See <http://activehistory.ca/>

book edited by Andrea Eidinger and Krista McCracken. In addition to the digital lessons it encompasses (notably all but one of which are written by men) this series also highlights ways to reframe the teaching of Canadian survey courses to teach Indigenous perspectives and settler colonialism.<sup>15</sup> I hope to see the influence of this collection in future digital history syllabi.

From this short, and admittedly selective, sample of Canadian digital history projects it is evident that there are women doing digital history. Ruth Sandwell's influence in history pedagogy is well-documented. Environmental history, with its use of Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS), is an important field that has grown over the last few decades, with high-profile women such as Sherry Olson (on HGIS, economic and environmental history) and Jennifer Bonnell (HGIS, environmental history) and others working in this area.<sup>16</sup> Some basic GIS skills are incorporated into many introductory digital history courses through tools such as Google Maps or StoryMaps by ESRI. NICHE itself has a gender-balanced community of engaged scholars, and Active History's editorial board is much the same. The point here is that there are women doing digital, historical work, but that they are not well-represented in the digital history classroom.

We have a gender problem in digital history classrooms in Canada, which is very much reflected in the material that we teach. What we pass down to the next generation of digital historians will shape the work they do, and the work their students go on to do. In the rest of this article, I offer one solution to the gender problem in digital history: a reworking of the digital history syllabus, and with it, a careful criticism of select texts that are often taught in introductory digital history courses. Here, I am not so concerned with who *was* innovative – I'll leave origin stories to Leon and others working hard to change these perceptions – but who *is* being innovative now, in the classroom and beyond.<sup>17</sup> It is not just those folks that have time and opportunity to write textbooks, grants, papers, blogposts, etc., but those actively engaged in history on the web. With this in mind, who is using digital tools and platforms to change the perception of different marginalized groups? Who is helping them tell their stories? Who is facilitating student growth by inviting them to contribute to this work?

15 Andrea Eidinger and Krista McCracken. 2019. "Beyond the Lecture: Innovations in Teaching Canadian History." [activehistory.ca](http://activehistory.ca).

16 A complete list of women doing digital history in Canada is not possible here. These women are known practitioners in their field but there are also the graduate students, research assistants, and those who practice digital history outside of the academy to consider. Seeing those names and their related projects on digital history syllabi would be the change that both Leon (2019) and I are seeking. It is worth noting that scholars in Environmental history have concerns similar to my own about gender representation on their syllabi. See The Syllabus Project: <https://thesyllabusproject.weebly.com>

17 Leon, "Complicating a 'Great Man' Narrative of Digital History in the United States."

## WHAT IS DIGITAL HISTORY AND WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT?

As my colleague Ian Milligan notes in the title of his article in this issue, “we are all digital now.”<sup>18</sup> Though he refers to digital photography, there are so many other ways that the digital invades, dictates, and sometimes overpowers our work. As part of my PhD thesis, I asked historians responding to a survey about serendipity in the historical research process to indicate whether they describe themselves as “digital historians”. There were no parameters for answering this question, I simply wanted to know who felt they fit within this term in order to determine their comfort working in digital environments.<sup>19</sup> Of the eighty-seven people that answered this question, forty-eight percent answered yes. Historians were more comfortable with digital environments that they would come across as part of their average workday, such as search engines, word processing tools, emails, and library interfaces. As the survey was conducted online and recruitment was partially done via Twitter, it is not surprising that the participants were comfortable with social media. These same participants were less comfortable with three other digital environments: blogs, research tools like Evernote, or citation management tools such as Zotero, where fifty-eight percent, forty-two percent, and fifty-nine percent, respectively, of participants claimed to be either somewhat or very comfortable. Finally, the two digital environments where the participants claimed to be the least comfortable were writing code or software development tools, which only sixteen percent and eight percent, respectively, of respondents claimed to be comfortable doing.<sup>20</sup>

If almost half of historians consider their work to be digital in one way or another, this should surely surface in our teaching. Digital history courses are clearly growing in popularity. A 2016 blog post by Sean Kheraj noted that only fifteen universities offered such courses, while a scan conducted for the current article turned up courses at twenty-five institutions of higher education in Canada.<sup>21</sup> So what are these students learning? Whose work are they reading? What methods are being taught?

At these twenty-five institutions, a total of thirty-four courses were offered (over the past six years) but only five were listed with women as instructors, one of these was co-instructed by a woman and a man.<sup>22</sup> Of the remaining twenty-nine

18 Ian Milligan, “We Are All Digital Now: Digital Photography and the Reshaping of Historical Practice” in this issue.

19 Martin, “Creating Context from Curiosity”.

20 In addition to the ten digital environments listed here, historians who answered the survey could also indicate other digital platforms where they were comfortable. Three other environments, (databases, archives, and ancestry websites) were listed by multiple historians in this “other” category.

21 Sean Kheraj, “Who Teaches Digital History in Canada?,” *Active History*, 8 April 2016, <http://activehistory.ca/2016/04/who-teaches-digital-history-in-canada/>.

22 The courses used in my analysis are focused on introduction to digital history courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level (i.e., they are described as an introductory digital history course or an introduction to DH course in a history

courses, men were listed as instructors for twenty-two courses, and seven had no instructor affiliated with them, so there is a chance that more women are teaching digital history.<sup>23</sup> A quick Twitter query demonstrated that there were at least three other women that appeared to be teaching, or planning to teach, a digital history course. I was able to obtain syllabi for fifteen of these courses, either from the personal websites of the professors or through the university websites affiliated with their departments. My research assistant and I used these fifteen syllabi to investigate two things: the perceived gender of the authors of the assigned readings on the syllabi, and the methods that were being taught in each course.

#### GENDER ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL HISTORY SYLLABI

For the fifteen courses with available syllabi, there were 489 sources assigned (some of the sources were assigned in multiple courses and are therefore counted as many times in this list). Of the citations to these sources, a full 63.5 percent of these were written by men. Twenty-four percent of the citations were for women authors, and 8.5 percent were termed “combined” as they were co-written by authors that were perceived to be men and women. To be clear about our own inability to locate the authors of some pieces we added the category of “Gender-unknown,” which made up roughly four percent of the 489 sources. We were only able to track down three syllabi from courses taught by women (despite direct emails and querying via social media). These three courses together have women’s writing as thirty-one percent of their assigned readings, and fifteen percent are co-authored works comprising men and women authors.<sup>24</sup> Of the articles and books that are assigned in multiple courses, there are two collaboratively written textbooks by men, which are present on multiple syllabi.<sup>25</sup>

department). There are many other courses in digital methods that closely relate to history, including new media classes, HGIS courses, and DH courses offered by other departments, and history courses with a section or module on digital methods, but for the citation analysis that follows, I focused primarily on courses that presented themselves as “digital history.”

- 23 In looking at the list of instructors and in the list of authors that are represented in the network graph, my research assistant and I followed these steps: 1. Search for author’s own website for self-applied pronouns and apply gender label; 2. Search for images of the author and select gender label based on perception; 3. Where neither 1 nor 2 was possible, we assumed gender based on the norms associated with these names by society; 4. The entire list was re-checked by the author for any mistakes. This is understandably an imperfect process, but I feel we adequately represented the perceived gender of these authors and the visualization is provided only to give an idea of the gender bias in these documents. I take full responsibility for any errors.
- 24 For transparency’s sake, one of the two woman-instructed courses was taught by the author. The course was completed well before this paper was conceived, but as a feminist scholar, I pay close attention to whom I represent on my syllabus, and therefore might lie outside the norms of instructors in this field.
- 25 Graham, Milligan, and Weingart, *The Historian’s Macroscope*, <http://themacroscope.org>; Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).



There are many blog posts and articles by well-known men in the field that are cited in multiple syllabi (Roy Rosenzweig, William J. Turkel, Kevin Kee, Shawn Graham, John Bonnett), while a few articles by women (Lisa Spiro, Lara Putnam, Franziska Heimbürger, Anne Kelly Knowles and Émilien Ruiz) are cited in two courses each. I have made both this data and an interactive graph visualization publicly available at this link: <https://www.kim-martin.ca/chrrarticle/> for those who are interested in more detail. While this is only a sample of the syllabi for classes taught over the last five years in Canada, the visualization indicates a trend toward teaching materials mainly authored by men.

#### TEACHING DIGITAL HISTORY: METHODS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Of the fifteen syllabi, students were required to experiment with code (usually in Python) in less than half of the classes.<sup>26</sup> The skills that these students learned in these were similar to the digital environments in which we saw historians themselves claim to be comfortable: blogging (ten out of fifteen), text analysis (seven out of fifteen), GIS (seven out of fifteen), and digital storytelling tools such as Twine (seven out of fifteen) were all common methods for which students were assigned either readings or a small project. Digital media tools were also a common theme: Audacity (free audio recording software) was assigned in five of the syllabi. Finally, digital tools for information seeking and organization were apparent throughout the syllabi, with Scrivener, DevonThink, Google nGrams, and Open Refine listed in two syllabi each.

Grades were most commonly awarded for small projects and student reflection. Blogging was a large portion of the grade (fifteen to thirty percent) in ten of the courses. Digital or in-class participation was used in at least ten of the courses, and final projects largely consisted of an individual digital history website, though in many cases students were allowed and encouraged to go other routes (text analysis, HGIS, a small amount of coding) with the instructor's consent. Overall, students were introduced to a variety of different methods and tools and were encouraged to follow their own interests for their final projects, with the exception of two courses, which saw students working in teams on designated topics.

As shown in the citation data above and as demonstrated by the few women actually teaching it, digital history in the Canadian classroom has a gender bias. However, I see pedagogy, both inside and outside of the classroom, as a way to encourage a new generation of scholars to ultimately do digital history themselves. Though it may not change the origin story of digital history, demonstrating the amount of work being done by women actually engaging with digital history in Canada is key to understanding the full spectrum of work being done in this area.

26 Two of the syllabi did not include a grading break-down, though many of the tools and methods students were introduced to could be gleaned from their readings. Five courses listed HTML or Basic Python as part of the course assignments.

The DH is known for being an interdisciplinary field and I would argue that some of the best digital history work also comes from working with colleagues in different disciplines. The other authors in this Historical Perspectives section, for example, work with political scientists and economists (Gaffield, Inwood, Baskerville), librarians (Milligan) and myself, most recently, on a cross-Canada linked data project with over forty humanities scholars from a wide range of disciplines.<sup>27</sup> In the rest of the article, I will emphasize this interdisciplinarity by looking to three other historical fields, oral history, queer history, and literary history, as potential guides for diversifying the digital history classroom. Today's digital historians need to carefully think through what they are representing as digital history in the classroom, in order to make it possible for all their students to see themselves in the field.

#### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ORAL HISTORY?

When I first started as a post-doctoral fellow, I was asked what I wanted to teach (outside of the Exploration to DH course that I was co-teaching at the time). As I was coming from a library and information science (LIS) background and wanted to find a good fit for my interdisciplinary skill set, I asked my department chair what was missing in the department and was told that many students had asked for an oral history course, one which might help them gain interview skills, interact with the public, and create historical collections. Oral historians, like many in other areas of the discipline, have adopted a variety of digital methods for interviewing, storing data, and making the results of their work accessible to the public.<sup>28</sup> I jumped at the opportunity to create and teach such a course, as I had long admired work such as *History Harvest* and *The History Makers*, two public-facing projects that demonstrate the power of storytelling through digital media.<sup>29</sup> As I delved more deeply into the literature, I found that many other instructors had success teaching oral history by having students create a digital archive of the stories they collected. Some of these, like the *Staring Out to Sea* project, saw students going out into their own communities and collecting stories about recent tragedies.<sup>30</sup> Others, primarily Canadian-based, involved collective memories of Indigenous

27 My most recent interdisciplinary collaboration is as the Research Board Chair for the Linked Infrastructure for Cultural Scholarship (LINC) project. See <https://lincsproject.ca/>

28 Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, "Slowing Down to Listen in the Digital Age: How New Technology Is Changing Oral History Practice," *Oral History Review* 44, no. 1 (2017): 94–112.

29 William G. Thomas and Patrick D. Jones, "History Harvest," University of Nebraska-Lincoln, n.d., <https://historyharvest.unl.edu/>; Julieanna Richardson (Founder), "The History Makers: The Nation's Largest African American Video Oral History Collection," n.d., <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/>.

30 Abigail Perkiss, "Staring Out to Sea and the Transformative Power of Oral History for Undergraduate Interviewers," *Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (2016): 392–407.

communities, or understanding what it was like to be a teacher through listening to and analyzing women's own stories.<sup>31</sup> The scholars teaching these courses, and the populations they work with, are often from communities that are less commonly represented in traditional history literature, and, most importantly, are people to whom students in my class could feel connected. The reading list was designed to encourage students to think past their usual places for gathering information (the web, the library, the archives, etc.), and the class project, which involved interviewing a member of a local community, and encouraged them to go out and form a connection with a member of the public. Finally, the students had to wrap up everything they had done and put it safely on the web into a public archive. They were responsible for all aspects of this work, such as the digitizing of photographs and other materials from their participants, the uploading of their videos, detailed histories that they built out of their interviews, and the creation of metadata for each of the items that they uploaded.

Teaching oral history, then, meant that students had to critically engage with their sources, to think ethically about the questions they were asking, and to consider what it meant to put this information online, including conversations about privacy, audience, collaboration, and shared authority. In other digital courses I have taught, some of these concepts came up in individual student's final projects, but the time crunch involved with teaching so many methods over thirteen weeks often means we do not have enough time to devote to these vital conversations in an undergraduate digital history course. The hands-on digital skills that students learn in the oral history classroom are sometimes overlooked for those that are more "high tech" but understanding what it means to put material on the web in an accessible, sustainable manner is a skill that is transferable to many different roles.

Oral history can also be a way to initiate conversations about social justice in the classroom. *Digital Oral History for Reconciliation* (DOHR) is one example of a project that strives to do this work.<sup>32</sup> Focussing primarily on the inquiry surrounding the *Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children*, this project is combining oral history testimony with augmented reality to create an educational experience for the classroom. Through use of the *Oculus Rift*, students will be able to confront Nova Scotia's history of segregation and racism, meeting the history of the past with new and innovative technology for the classroom. The project team's goals are to evaluate this type of digital storytelling for teaching lessons about the past, and the project's results could change how students and other populations engage with oral history in the future.

31 Winona Wheeler, "Narrative Wisps of the Ojibwa Sipi Past: A Journey in Recovering Collective Memories," in *The Canadian Oral History Reader*, eds. Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 285; Kristina R. Llewellyn, "Productive Tensions: Feminist Readings of Women Teachers' Oral Histories," in *The Canadian Oral History Reader*, 141.

32 Kristina R. Llewellyn et al., "Digital Oral Histories for Reconciliation," 2018, <https://dohr.ca/>.

Oral history is such a strong area of research in Canada that we have multiple centres devoted to it. One of these, the *Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling* at Concordia University, is the home to many oral history projects.<sup>33</sup> This centre focuses on community and training, with over 150 affiliated researchers and a well-researched suite of digital tools for everything from transcription to video editing, their website has information for everyone thinking about oral history. On top of the tools they suggest from other developers, the centre's team has created *Stories Matter* software, which allows oral historians to keep the orality of their stories while analyzing them, no longer relying solely on transcription.<sup>34</sup> Many of the projects from this centre focus on immigrant voices, such as Liz Miller's *Mapping Memories*, which investigates the experiences of refugee youth in Montreal, or Julie-Ann Boudreau's *MapCollab*, which gathered stories from immigrant youth in the suburbs of Paris and Montreal.<sup>35</sup> These projects aim to use the participant's own words to force their audience to rethink common misperceptions associated with immigrant identities. Digital in many ways, these oral histories should be used in the digital history classroom to demonstrate to students the importance of oral histories, which are truly about putting people before data. These discussions can lead to fruitful classroom conversations about ethics, reconciliation, and ways that history can help to right the errors of the past.

#### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM QUEER HISTORY?

The growing field of queer history is sometimes tied into oral history. Much of this work has been in the collection of material, often oral histories themselves, but also so much more, related to the life stories of LGBTQ2+ people. One central figure in queer history in Canada is Ele Chenier, who has been working towards recognition and inclusion of lesbian history for decades. She is the director of the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT) project based at Simon Fraser University and founded in 2010. ALOT is a DH oral history project that collects lesbian histories in many forms (digitizing those that need it) and making them widely accessible on the web. Chenier's current work with ALOT focuses on ways to "connect online archives with the people that use them."<sup>36</sup> In exploring how best to bridge the gap between academia and

33 "Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling," 2019, <http://storytelling.concordia.ca/>.

34 Erin Jesse, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Steven High, "Stories Matter: Conceptual Challenges in the Development of Oral History Database Building Software," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011), [https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/48233/1/FQS\\_final\\_Stories\\_Matter\\_.pdf](https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/48233/1/FQS_final_Stories_Matter_.pdf).

35 Liz Miller (Director), "Mapping Memories: Experiences of Refugee Youth," n.d., <http://mappingmemories.ca/about.html>; Julie-Anne Boudreau (Dir), "MapCollab," (2019) <http://mapcollab.org/>.

36 Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (2010–2020) <https://www.alotarchives.org/bridging-the-gap>

the public, Chenier has looked to blog posts, podcasts, and currently has an open call for people to contribute to the growing number of oral histories in the ALOT collection.

Another central figure collecting this material in Canada is Elspeth H. Brown of the University of Toronto, whose work includes a variety of methods and forms. Among her many projects, Brown directs the *LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory*, which, together with partners including the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, Lesbians Making History, and the ALOT project, is working to provide a self-proclaimed “digital history hub” online.<sup>37</sup> There are over thirty queer oral history projects connected through this hub and digital archives that date back to 2005. The second (2.0) stage of this “collaboratory” has just received SSHRC funding, which will see this project take a more public stance and join forces with the ArQuives, Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Archives, which hold an impressive digital collection of their own.<sup>38</sup> As perceptions and understanding of gender and sexuality change, new research questions emerge about the communities in question and the cultures in which they live. Brown and her colleagues invite historians to follow along as they start to answer some of these questions, using many different materials that “resist textualization”, such as zines, art, photography, and oral testimony. A result of working with these materials is that the work of Brown’s team is often in multimedia formats, such as podcasts and videos. As such, this and other queer history projects can engage students not only on new research questions, but also in considering how to make the past public.

Another project exploring queer history in Canada is the *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada* (LGLC) project by Constance Crompton and Michelle Schwartz. This detailed work sees the co-directors and their team digitize and transform the archival work of Donald W. McLeod, who created two volumes of an annotated chronology of the Lesbian and Gay Liberation movement spanning 1964 to 1975 and 1976 to 1981. From this work, Crompton and Schwartz have created a database that allows users to search for people, places, publications, and events related to LGBT history in Canada. Biographical information has been made available for each person mentioned in this collection. As the project’s website tells us, “The stories of gay liberation ... will only live on if we, members of the generations that have followed and benefitted from gay liberation, know about the good work of the activists that have preceded us”.<sup>39</sup> Like many DH projects, LGLC is a collaboration between libraries, archives and humanities scholars, and the lessons it can contribute to the classroom are those of awareness, diversity, and the importance of preservation.

37 Elspeth Brown (Director), “LGBTQ History | Digital Collaboratory,” 2019, <http://lgbtqdigitalcollaboratory.org/>.

38 The ArQuives (2020) <https://arquives.ca/>

39 Constance Crompton and Michelle Schwartz, “Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada,” 2019, <https://lgic.ca/editorial>.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM DIGITAL LITERARY HISTORY?

The lack of references to literary history in the course outlines we examined, and the textbooks I have taught with, indicate a disregard for the digital work being done in this long-standing field, whether intentional or not. As previously mentioned, some historians have indicated to me that they feel they do not fit into the DH tent and that far too much of this tent, particularly in Canada, is made up of literary scholars. I imagine that mentions of big data projects coming from literature fields will grow in coming years.<sup>40</sup> Still, I wanted to offer a few examples of Canadian digital literary history projects as an opportunity for historians to benefit from the work being done by women in this field.

What can we learn from literary history? That data are not purely about numbers and that coding can be a language through which we interpret and display our material, not just the way we gather and analyze it. This will be highlighted in a quick look at two Canadian-led DH projects as well as a short list of other digital projects in literary history, also directed by women, to provide inspiration for future digital courses in this field.

The *Map of Early Modern London* (MOEML), directed by Janelle Jenstad, is a project twenty years in the making.<sup>41</sup> This project started out as a scanned version of the 1564 Agas Map, taped to a classroom wall, and has grown to be a fully immersive digital map, complete with details on places, people, pageants, and texts, that allows users to immerse themselves into the world of Elizabethan London. Every page that is added to this map is marked up in XML, coded by the project team and by contributors who wish to learn the ins and outs of the Text-Encoding Initiative (TEI).<sup>42</sup> Students who wish to contribute to this project must follow MOEML's generously documented process, complete with Rights and Responsibilities of Contributors, so they know what is expected of them from the start.<sup>43</sup> For Jenstad, this project has always been a way to engage students in literary history, so she and her team have been dedicated to ensuring this process is both smooth and rewarding. They list every single contributor on their site, so students and researchers alike can point to their research on the web. MOEML also created an entire Pedagogical Partnership program, that allows educators to act as liaisons between their students and MOEML, encouraging further collaboration, on a national and international scale.<sup>44</sup> So, why teach with MOEML? Those of us with a passion for the early modern have no problem using it as a place to trace what happened in the past, but any historian or literary scholar can use this project to demonstrate how many

40 Andrew Piper is the primary investigator on a large SSHRC grant Text Mining the Novel, and the resulting *Journal of Cultural Analytics* will likely make its way into digital history syllabi in years to come.

41 *Civitas Londinvm* (1562?) 2019. The Agas Map. *The Map of Early Modern London*. Janelle Jenstad, ed. (MoEML, 2012), <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/index.htm>.

42 Text Encoding Initiative. (2020) <https://tei-c.org/>

43 *Civitas Londinvm* (1562?) 2019. The Agas Map.

44 *Civitas Londinvm* (1562?) 2019. The Agas Map.

seemingly small contributions can add up to a wide-ranging and sophisticated digital project. Having a student write a short entry on a single street or person for MOEML and learning some basic TEI to encode their submission is a great way of piquing their curiosity, and Jenstad and her team have made the process foolproof.

Another pillar of digital literary history is *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present*, directed by Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy.<sup>45</sup> Begun in 1995, this electronic “text-base” offers a “new kind of history of women's writing” with detailed entries on over 1,300 women writers from the British Isles and beyond.<sup>46</sup> A project that was determined to stand out from its beginning, Orlando has its own structured mark-up with an extensive list of tags and elements.<sup>47</sup> Contributions to this project are made by researchers and by students, usually employed as research assistants due to the extensive work that has to be done to prepare each entry. Like MOEML, Orlando goes out of their way to name every single contributor, all of whom are not only trained in how to research women's literary history, but in the importance of interpretation, peer-review, and collaborative work.

Why teach with Orlando? Aside from the wealth of information on women writers that exists few other places, exploring the Orlando tagset can show women historians what it means to see themselves in the data. Brown, Clements, and Grundy derived their own tagging system to demonstrate what was important about women in history, recognizing early on that “it is a challenge to represent diversity in an encoding scheme.”<sup>48</sup> Included in the Cultural Formation tagset are “health”, “intimate relations”, and “sexual identity” tags, which one would not expect to see in a traditional series of encyclopedia entries. This is what makes Orlando stand out and teaching with this project (or others, such as Canada's Early Women Writers<sup>49</sup> or The Women Writer's Project<sup>50</sup>) can develop an awareness of digital diversity. Over 120 research assistants have learned from this project and many have gone on to do digital work in tangential projects in Canada and beyond. Introducing your students to projects like MOEML and Orlando can pique curiosity and provide momentum for learning digital history methods, for students of any gender.

If Early Modern London or women writers are not up your alley, there are other digital literary history projects with other foci. Deanna Reder of Simon Fraser

45 Susan Brown, Clements, Patricia, and Isobel Grundy, eds, *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present*. 1995–2019. The University of Cambridge, <http://orlando.cambridge.org>.

46 *Orlando*, Scholarly Introduction: [http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svDocumentation?formname=t&d\\_id=ABOUTTHEPROJECT](http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svDocumentation?formname=t&d_id=ABOUTTHEPROJECT)

47 Susan Brown et al., “An Introduction to the Orlando Project,” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 26, no. 1 (2007): 127–34.

48 *Orlando*, Scholarly Introduction: <http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svDocumentation/>.

49 Carole Gerson, *Canada's Early Women Writers*, <https://cwrc.ca/project/canadas-early-women-writers>.

50 *Women Writers Project*. Women Writers Project, Northeastern University, 1999–2016, <https://www.wwp.northeastern.edu>.



University is the director of *The People and the Text* project, which aims to capture “one of the most neglected literary archives in English Canada,” Indigenous writing in Canada until 1992.<sup>51</sup> Reder’s project seeks not only to collect and share these works, but to think through Indigenous research methods for analyzing this literature. Alison Muri looks at London, England in another time period – the eighteenth century – in her *Grub Street* project. Aiming “to create both a historically accurate visualization of the city’s commerce and communications, and a record of how its authors and artists portrayed it,” Muri includes a list of relevant digital editions from this time period, a series of maps of London through history, and is in the process of creating a distributed social network of people associated with Grub Street, when this space was the focal point of printing in London.<sup>52</sup> The details that these projects have collected and the care that goes into their presentation on the web is only part of what students can learn from them. If historians who prefer to teach computational methods over literary history are seeking a way of engaging broader audiences in their classes, why not consider the wealth of material in some of the projects mentioned here as a dataset on which your students could practice their newly acquired skills?<sup>53</sup> As classrooms become (hopefully) more and more inclusive, the datasets that students work with should be representative of those learning digital history. The more interested students are in the data, and therefore the more questions being asked, the better the chances of them being engaged and going on to learn more digital skills themselves.

#### PREPARING THE STUDENT

The suggestions above highlight three different areas of digital history that I believe would benefit the students of digital history courses in Canada. Diversifying our syllabi only goes part of the way towards changing the future of digital history, however. Another method of encouraging women, LGTBQ2+, and students of colour to grow the field of digital history is to show them that this work is important, and not just within the boundaries of the academy. As academic work gets harder and harder to find, it is important to teach students about other possibilities for history work and to draw attention to the important skills they acquire during their degrees that will help them get these positions. Even at the undergraduate level, it is extremely important to encourage strong students to take part in the scholarly discussions happening on the web. I am only three years into my university teaching career, and I have already seen several students create amazing digital history projects. Two women spring to mind for their exemplary digital history work: Julia Barclay, a Classics student who was tired of hearing only about men in ancient Greece

51 Deanna Reder, ed., *The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America to 1992*. 2019. <https://thepeopleandthetext.ca/>.

52 Alison Muri, ed., *The Grub Street Project*. 2019. <http://grubstreetproject.net/index.php>

53 If historians are interested in Canadian history with a view to literature but are unsure where to start, the Canadian Literature Centre (CLC) has an excellent list of resources from around the web. See <https://www.abcl.ca/projects/>



and Rome, poured hours of research into *The Medusa Archive*<sup>54</sup>, her own answer to *The Perseus Project*, which she is currently growing into a Master's project,<sup>55</sup> and Caroline Floyd's recent MA thesis on the networks of Charles Darwin, in which she delved carefully into the influence that Darwin's sisters had on his work, among other questions.<sup>56</sup> I will continue to talk about their work and follow their careers, inside or out of academia. I will work to support them as so many women in academia have supported me and my work. Importantly, highlighting their projects to my current and future students in my digital history classes lets these new students understand exactly what they can achieve.

There are others doing this in Canada, in different ways. Jo McCutcheon at the University of Ottawa maintains an Omeka site for student projects from her various classes.<sup>57</sup> Visitors to the site can see the results of student research on subjects ranging from residential school survivors to the role of women in the Second World War. Not only does this potentially garner student work a wider audience than if only the professor read and graded it, but it allows students to point back at their work when seeking employment or further education. Shawn Graham of Carleton University has created *Epoiesen*, an online journal for "exploring creative engagement with the past."<sup>58</sup> Students are encouraged to publish in *Epoiesen*, and peer reviews of their work, done by academics in related fields, are made public as reviews on the journal site. Students who publish here have the benefits of audience as well, but they also gain the academic experience of having their work peer reviewed. More digital history courses should encourage their students to publish on the web, whether as an individual project, a collaborative work, or even a series of blog posts. Students need to learn to engage with the audience they want to attract to their work and be aware of the unintended audiences they may garner, from a very early point in their careers. For women in digital history, these forms of public engagement encourage us to take up space, and to inhabit the scholarly arenas which are currently occupied by men, as evidenced from the course syllabi described above.

#### GOING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

I often feel that the largest contribution I make to the field of history is in providing training and confidence for future digital historians. Outside of the classroom, I have done this most successfully through a training series, titled *The*

54 Gregory R. Crane, "Perseus Digital Library," Tufts University, 2019, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>.

55 Julia Barclay, "The Medusa Archive," 2018, <https://medusaarchive.omeka.net/>.

56 Caroline Floyd, "A Social Network and Text Analysis of Charles Darwin's Correspondence, 1835–1842" (University of Guelph, 2019).

57 Jo McCutcheon, "Digital History - Histoire Numérique," 2017, <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/omeka2/jmccutcheon/>.

58 Shawn Graham, "Epoiesen: A Journal for Creative Engagement in History and Archaeology," 2019, <https://epoiesen.library.carleton.ca/>.

*Programming Historian* meet-ups, and modelled after the online lessons of the same name.<sup>59</sup> *The Programming Historian* executive team has been hard at work to diversify the gender of its own authors, and by extension its readership, for some time now and they are also working wonders in terms of language: many of their lessons are now available in Spanish and French, in addition to English.<sup>60</sup> In the meet-ups, students are encouraged to bring their own computers but to work in pairs or small groups, as we go through one lesson at a time on a large screen. These meetups do not involve an instructor per se, though there are usually a couple of people around who are more knowledgeable about coding than others. The point is to get people using the lessons in a welcoming setting – and groupwork is the perfect way to check in with each other and not feel isolated.

Although, a larger group may dwindle to a smaller cohort over the course of two semesters, this allows for more specific discussions about each other's research and to carefully think through what types of questions could be answered by which methods, and what tools best suit different projects. The people in the meet-up were likely only marginally more familiar with Python, but that was not the point – they were openly engaging with digital methods for their research and teaching projects. Some of these students went on to finish their graduate degrees making use of the skills we built together: one using social network analysis, and the other linked data. Another is about to defend her PhD using Latent Semantic Analysis and word embedding.<sup>61</sup> If a *Programming Historian* Meet-Up or a similar program does not exist at your institution, consider looking for publicly available coding camps, such as Canada Learning Code, or starting up your own group for collaborative problem solving.<sup>62</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Rewiring the digital history classroom will take some serious work, and it will not happen overnight. I do think, however, that it is well within our reach to balance the gender of authors and project directors that we encourage our students to engage with. How do we change what voices are being read in the digital history classroom? There are several methods: 1. Change or supplement the textbooks. If you feel that the only textbook you can teach with is written by

59 Adam Crymble et al., *The Programming Historian*, 2nd Edition, 2016, <http://programminghistorian.org/>.

60 Adam Crymble, "Identifying and Removing Gender Barriers in Open Learning Communities: The Programming Historian," *Blended Learning in Practice* (2016): 49–60. Anna Maria Sichani, James Baker, Maria José Afanador-Llach, and Brandon Walsh, "Diversity and Inclusion in Digital Scholarship and Pedagogy: The Case of the Programming Historian," *Insights: The UKSG Journal* 32, no. 1 (2019).

61 Lisa Baer-Tsarfaty, "Word Embedding for the Historian: Employing LSI to Understand How Words were Historically Used" Presented at the Canadian Society for Digital Humanities Conference. Online. 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/n4m6-6j18>

62 <https://www.canadalearningcode.ca/>

men, then consider providing datasets that allow other students to see themselves in the work that they are doing, rather than just using examples from the textbooks/websites themselves. Better yet, if time allows, show students where and how to find these data themselves. 2. Widen your scope: teach literary, queer, or oral history as part of a digital history course. Show students that there are many ways of engaging with the past through digital methods, and that the wonderful work which is being done in these areas opens up new research questions, creates new datasets, and still has many gaps that need filling. 3. For the men already writing the digital history textbooks – invite women, and if they are too busy, invite more women. I have been invited to co-author the second edition of *The Historian's Macrocope*, which I discussed above. After receiving the invitation, I hesitated before I eventually replied to the three men (friends of mine) with a long list of changes that all revolved around the lack of women in the first edition. I expected pushback and I feared risking our relationship. I received nothing but apology, understanding, and a promise to do better. We are still working on this edition, and the next one will likely not be perfect either, but progress will have been made in the right direction. 4. For the women doing digital history – get yourselves out there. I know it seems impossible to do *more*: we are always asked to do more, on top of the service<sup>63</sup>, the mothering, etc., but the next generation of women historians need to know that there are women doing this work. They need to see themselves in the digital history projects that are out there. If you are not yet on there, get yourselves on the WomenAlsoKnowHistory website, so others can find your work.<sup>64</sup> As for myself, I will continue to reach out to historians about their digital projects, because diversifying the classroom is not something that is ever truly complete.

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63 Susan Brown, "Delivery Service: Gender and the Political Unconscious of Digital Humanities," in *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities*, eds. Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

64 "Women Also Know History," 2019, <https://womenalsoknowhistory.com/search/>.

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