

Creating digital history - case study: The Dorr Rebellion Project

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ABSTRACT: Digital history, as a component of digital humanities, provides opportunities for scholars and students of history to create and contribute to the rapidly growing corpus of digital history research knowledge resources. This article describes and explicates an applied, non-theoretical, multifaceted, multimedia, fully-digital example of the creation of digital humanities by a small but broadly representative team of higher-education scholars and library staff (professional and support). The central topic and organizing principle is the 1842 North American Dorr Rebellion. The case study provides an adaptable model for other historical topics, other teams (higher-education or other researchers), including compelling reasons for this and other projects, the project's organization and evolution, and both intended and incidental benefits from such collaborative projects. As an applied model, placement in, and specific connections to, the ongoing academic debate about the value of digital humanities and digital history versus the value of more traditional humanities and history is eschewed, rather emphasizing and focusing on practical guidance for collaborative creation of digital historical research knowledge resources.

KEYWORDS: digital humanities, digital history, digital knowledge creation, library faculty, collaboration, library digital publishing, multimedia history, digital research.

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1. Introduction

Libraries and information and knowledge institutions around the globe have been undergoing exponential, at times tectonic change for almost two decades. Among the changes are the 1) inexorable evolution from the physical to the digital and 2) the focus of this paper: the more recent change in role from the physical, print-based repository of research to the role of digital knowledge creation. As part of this second

change, the change in roles, many libraries and information and knowledge institutions have become more vital, at times central, in the creation of digital humanities (DH) (Bartscherer, et al 2011; Deegan, et al 2012; Hirsch 2012; Jones 2014; Schnapp 2012) and creating digital history is an important component of DH. As the title of this paper indicates, the applied themes here are both process (creating) and product

(The Dorr Rebellion Project as digital history). In creating digital history, the Providence College library team digitizes history resources and makes them together with born-digital materials openly available in open-access-compliant, dynamically usable, manipulable collections broadly referred to as DH. Collaborative partnerships between history scholars and library professionals, such as the one presented here, provide robust, impactful mechanisms and models for creating DH resources for teaching, learning and research (TLR).

The development of the hyperlinked World Wide Web in the mid-1990's constituted the onset of a major change for academic TLR and for larger and smaller higher-education academic

libraries. Resultant to the robust development toward relatively ubiquitous scanning, digitizing, OCR-processing (optical character recognition), digital repositories, and markup (especially XML/TEI – extensible markup language / Text Encoding Initiative) tools and resources, we are now at a high watermark in digital knowledge creation, which Gregory Crane of Tufts University referred to as Digital Incunabula,¹ the cradle of digital scholarship, likening the emerging era to the dawn of grand publishing and dissemination of knowledge after December 31, 1501. What is discussed here is the applied creation of digital history, DH in an era of ongoing disruption, as described by Clayton M. Christensen,² in scholarly communication.

2. Higher education's digital disruption

Upon review of scholarship (Warwick, et al 2007; Chassanoff 2013), discussions of academic library evolution over the last 15 years and close examination of trends and themes found in numerous longitudinal studies,³ a clear image for the future and strategic directions for academia and the academic library emerges: we are in an ongoing disrupting evolution from the dominance of the physical (print-based) library to the digital/virtual (cloud-based) library, most especially in the area of research knowledge, of research collections. Academia and the academic library are evolving rapidly and constantly into the digital realm, into a time, when the digital / virtual library (resources, services and spaces) will constitute a greater percentage than the physical library. While this may seem at first unreal or unsubstantiable, consider the growth over the previous 15 years of parallel non-profit and business, for-profit entities,⁴ which have come into existence and matured since 1998 (when Google appeared), and continue to grow (see Appendices for select

Open-Web resources).

As the Ithaka S&R studies have demonstrated, over the last 15 years, scholars have become more comfortable and conversant with the digital realm: as digital work has become more visible and routine; as digital scholarship has migrated beyond and out of the hegemony of the traditional university; as digital technologies have enabled the birth of a digital university.⁵ Over the last 15 years, the Academy has gradually moved toward acceptance of new forms of non-traditional scholarship⁶ to include born-digital, multi-media, dynamic, hyper-linked scholarship outside the traditional containers⁷. In the last 15 years, we have witnessed convincing evidence of the gradual maturing of the digital Academy (Hayley 2012; Dougherty, et al 2013).

In this era of Digital Incunabula, the Academy and the academic library still retain all of the essential resources, services, facilities of their traditional physical, high-touch incarnations, but they add and seamlessly integrate

1 Crane, et al, 2006, introduction.

2 Christensen, 1997, introduction.

3 E.g., Ithaka Strategy & Research's / S&R Faculty Survey, 2000. onward; *The Horizon Report*, 2002. onward.

4 E.g., Google, iTunes, Amazon, eBay, EUROPEANA, the Digital Public Library of America, and numerous digital, virtual enterprises.

5 E.g., Udacity, Coursera, iTunes University, Future Learn, Open Learn, MIT Open Courseware, edX, Academic Earth, Minerva Project and others.

6 Beyond print-, Academy-, professional-society-, major-publisher-dominated-scholarship.

7 The article, the chapter, the scholarly monograph, the book, etc.

prodigious and every-increasing quantities and variations of virtual/digital resources, services and facilities/spaces. This paper documents, through the example of The Dorr Rebellion Project case study, how a history collection can

be digitized, built into a multimedia, multifaceted research resources, published in open-access-compliant repositories and promulgated as digital history for digital TLR.

3. What is digital history?

What is digital history? We offer here a working definition⁸: digital history is the process-to-product for digitized and born-digital historical data, artifacts, files, images, audio files, video files, publications, etc., which serve academics, intellectuals, scholars (novice to senior) in the work of their history TLR processes, products and collections, which help to create digital intellectual scaffoldings to enhance research and discovery (Schonfeld, et al 2012). Digital historians add to, and seamlessly integrate with, traditional print history. Digital history is first an environment, an integral format: the digital, the electronic, accessible any time, any place,

linked (hyperlinked) and enhanced / marked-up with XML/TEI, creating digital semantic tags / hooks (e.g., personal name, date, location, keyword or -phrase), which can then be manipulated, connected, integrated, transmuted, permuted, to bring multifaceted dynamism, connectedness, interconnectedness to bits of data (micro-data to macro-data), e.g., words/phrases, multimedia, sounds, shapes, colors, geo-locations, textual proximities. In developing The Dorr Rebellion Project, we at Providence College have designed, created and contributed small but integral components for the realm of digital history.

4. Model as complement to the realm of proprietary digital history

Creating digital history includes and involves both process/es and product/s. The processes are: consciously, explicitly, strategically tracking, studying, communicating with, collaborating with historians in their scholarly environments, in their work-flows: including novice/student- to senior-scholar historians; assisting in research, data collection and storage, processing-to-product, publishing (in digital repositories); collaborating to plan and put on conferences. Creating digital history results in

products (e.g., The Dorr Rebellion Project) complementary to proprietary (purchased) research knowledge products⁹ collaboratively created and published digital resources, research Websites and Web-based curricular materials. The Dorr Rebellion Project is an applied model for creating open (non-proprietary) digital history in a higher-education environment as a series of collaborations involving library professional staff and a variety of history scholars.

5. Providence College library as model seedbed

Providence College library's Digital Publishing Services (DPS) have partnered with history scholars to create useful and usable digital history collections. This model, a sort of seedbed for creating digital knowledge, demonstrates the type and variety of opportunities, which are commonly and readily available throughout

higher education. Using institutional repository (IR) platforms (here BePress Digital Commons and Innovative Interfaces ContentPro); mid- to high-level knowledge of TEI modules, tools and elements to explicate (mark up) the original (primary) resources; and collaborative strategies, higher-education library professionals and

8 Adapted from TAPoR Lab documents and Terras, et al, Introduction, listed below.

9 E.g., *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, *Early English Books Online*, *Electronic Enlightenment*, *Early American Imprints*, *Early American Newspapers*.

history scholars can facilitate, develop, and sustain rich initiatives such as The Dorr Rebellion Project. For such initiatives to be successful, there are two important, critical preconditions in the creation of digital history: the presence of leadership providing the climate,

environment and culture of openness, collaboration and support; the flexibility of mission to embark on such projects, to accept the risks and the potential for disruptive innovation. This allows for the serendipity to seize opportunities, when they present themselves.

6. The Dorr Rebellion Project

The Dorr Rebellion of 1842 was an attempt by Thomas Wilson Dorr to bring voting rights to all men of Rhode Island and is considered an historical event of high importance in Rhode Island and in the USA.¹⁰ The Dorr Rebellion Project was initiated through discussions with a faculty member from the Providence College History Department (a Dorr scholar) to determine, how the scholar might create digital educational resources of this historical event of local significance for students at Providence College and beyond and for the broader, Open-Web scholarly

community. The project began with discussions among a core group: the Head of Digital Publishing Services, the Library Director and lead scholars to determine the „what“, „who“ and „how“ of the project. The project attracted collaborative forces, people with shared interests, institutions, and resources: three local universities (Providence College, Brown University, and the Rhode Island School of Design); the local Rhode Island Historical Society; and local, national and international scholars.

7. Inception in Digital Publishing Services

The history (Dorr Rebellion) faculty/scholar requested assistance for scanning / digitization support; he wanted to move into new digital scholarship (Chaput 2013). DPS built on earlier Special Collections projects¹¹ as a model to develop the first stage of the project: a Dorr Rebellion video documentary (see discussion below). The 20-minute video documentary required nine months to complete (December, 2010 – August, 2011); required minimal budgetary resources (minimal existing in-kind library staff

and technology resources); involved lead scholars (regional, national, international) to ensure scholarly accuracy and quality, core media images and script. The video provides a concise multimedia summary of The Dorr Rebellion, including summative narration, digitized historical geographical and primary document images and dramatic readings (by volunteer professionals and library staff) of pertinent historical communications. With this video summary, the researcher is introduced to The Dorr Rebellion

¹⁰ The Dorr Rebellion from publisher's notes to *The People's Martyr*: „In 1840s Rhode Island, the state's seventeenth-century colonial charter remained in force and restricted suffrage to property owners, effectively disenfranchising 60 percent of potential voters. Thomas Wilson Dorr's failed attempt to rectify that situation through constitutional reform ultimately led to an armed insurrection that was quickly quashed—and to a stiff sentence for Dorr himself. Nevertheless... the Dorr Rebellion stands as a critical moment of American history during the two decades of fractious sectional politics leading up to the Civil War. This uprising was the only revolutionary republican movement in the antebellum period that claimed the people's sovereignty as the basis for the right to alter or abolish a form of government. Equally important, it influenced the outcomes of important elections throughout northern states in the early 1840s and foreshadowed the breakup of the national Democratic Party in 1860...[the author] sets the rebellion in the context of national affairs—especially the abolitionist movement. While Dorr supported the rights of African Americans, a majority of delegates to the 'People's Convention' favored a whites-only clause to ensure the proposed constitution's passage, which brought abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, Parker Pillsbury, and Abby Kelley to Rhode Island to protest. Meanwhile, Dorr's ideology of the people's sovereignty sparked profound fears among Southern politicians regarding its potential to trigger slave insurrections...[reveals] issues of race and gender and carries the story forward into the 1850s to examine the transformation of Dorr's ideology into the more familiar refrain of popular sovereignty...demonstrates how the rebellion's real aims and significance were far broader than have been supposed, encompassing seemingly conflicting issues including popular sovereignty, antislavery, land reform, and states' rights.“

and to the multifaceted digital history collection linked from this Project homepage.

There were several important considerations during the project: consistent digitization procedures and standards;¹² scanning at high DPI (dots per inch) / PPI (pixels per inch) in order to create multimedia derivatives of sufficiently high quality; negotiation of low- or no-cost digital assets, preferably open-access images; ensuring adequate storage (network, secure backup); using the iMovie tool, freely available on all Apple Macintosh computers. The only human resources required were Providence College library and DPS staff; a professional actress as narratress (pro bono volunteer); and regional, national and international scholars.

The project has consistently centered on the

primary Dorr Rebellion Project in-house Website, the development of which entailed four months and the partial time of two DPS staff. It involved HTML experimentation: CSS for styling consistency; and some PHP for future server maintenance, when changing the (image and video) gallery. The premier of The Dorr Rebellion Project consisted of the public screening of the video documentary; presenting the Website's About pages; the Gallery (ingested into ContentPro digital repository tool with pertinent metadata; the Gallery involved a 3-year, ongoing renewal of image permissions); and additional research resources. All subsequent events and activities pertaining to The Dorr Rebellion Project are based on this in-house Website.

8. Project details

Ongoing project enhancements have been developed, created and added to the first components of The Dorr Rebellion Project collection:

1) A resources page of pertinent (often manipulable) scholarly resources: the resources page provides links to the Gallery (photos and video interviews), to the two competing Constitutions (originals presented separately and compared), 30+ unique Letters (originals and transcriptions marked up with TEI), Lesson Plans for secondary students (ages 13 – 17), and a general About site (Updates, References, links to Partners and Events).¹³

2) We have created a Gallery of images and videos evidencing and explicating the history and historical significance of the people, places and events.¹⁴ Some of the images are unique, provided by scholars and collectors, and found only on this site. The three 10-20-minute video interviews with scholars map to the remainder

of the resources in the project, further connecting and integrating the individual components to provide the researcher with both the opportunity for more self-guided research and a more integrated understanding of The Dorr Rebellion and its potential significances for research and ensuing historical events in the USA. The videos have also been used by the scholars to promote and advertise The Dorr Rebellion Project, the site and the their ongoing scholarly work and products.¹⁵

2a) Two competing Rhode Island Constitutions were written and voted on: one, The Law and Order Constitution, represented the landholders. The second, The People's Constitution, was put forward by Dorr to be inclusive of non-landholders as rightful voters. The originals are presented as quality digital artefacts in manipulable form (page-viewing, zooming, etc.) both individually and as side-by-side comparisons, with a scholarly document detailing

11 E.g., John Greenleaf Whittier Collection of American Literature: <http://library.providence.edu/spcol/exhibits/whittier/index.html> and related faculty video interviews

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz9YytzSUGs&list=PL1E95661321EF470D&index=1>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yxwa7Td-a4&list=PL1E95661321EF470D&index=2>

12 Standards based on National Archives & Record Administration/NARA – www.archives.gov.

13 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/index.html>

14 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/gallery.html>

15 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/video.html>

article-by-article similarities and differences.¹⁶
^{17 18 19} The Dorr scholars have presented an article-by-article comparison.

3) We have collected, transcribed and TEI-encoded 30+ select unique letters: letters on the home page²⁰ and the individual letters. The letters provide insight into Dorr Rebellion issues from several perspectives, both supportive of Dorr and critical of his views and efforts.²¹

3a) Transcriptions – the letters have been transcribed by scholars, providing the researcher with both the originals and TEI-encoded and extensively searchable and manipulable texts.²²

3b) Letter search – the letters are keyword, keyphrase and TEI semantic-hook searchable;²³ letter browse – a detailed index of the letters is provided with a range of search, save, combine and Bookbag tool data collection tools.²⁴

4) Lesson Plans for secondary school research: these three lesson plans are intended for students in grades 9 through 12 (ages 13 – 18) and address the origins of The Dorr Rebellion as well as the role of gender and race. The plans were designed by scholars to interact with The Dorr Project Website and make use of the Dorr Letters and Gallery pages; as such the lesson plans are an integral part of the Website. Throughout the plans students are directed to read selected letters and discuss their impressions and draw conclusions as well as to answer posted questions. The lesson plans also offer ways in which the topic of the plan can be further explored through a section entitled Extending the Lesson. Two additional plans will be added with the finalization of the letters and more in the future.²⁵

10. Final thoughts on the project

Where possible, it is extremely important in creating digital history as a collaboration to facilitate the involvement of both senior scholars and undergraduate (generally ages 18-24) student-scholars; to engage directly with the letters and research people, places, events mentioned in the letters; to create, through guided research, additional digital knowledge layers (context) for the researcher; and to enhance the readers' experiences. By this we mean, that users of these TEI-textual materials have and

make use of options to manipulate, interact with, and thus reform and redefine the meanings and significance of textual elements. These additional knowledge layers are either embedded within or called from another digital / TEI file at the reader's request through actions like mouse-hovering or clicking on hyperlinked text. This Dorr Rebellion Project is a Providence College contribution to the growing collection of digital knowledge.

11. In Conclusion:

While the sciences (STEM, earth, natural) have long settled into the e-science realm, history and the other humanities and the qualitative social sciences have remained skeptical of the move to digital, resisted the tide of digital

disruption and transformation, and only slowly (the first Day of Digital Humanities was celebrated in 2009) have significant numbers of historians and other humanists embraced the notion and potential of digital humanities, digital

16 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/constitutions.html>

17 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/pcon.html>

18 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/locon.html>

19 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/comparison.html>

20 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu:8080/xtf/index.xml>

21 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/letters.html>, and <http://library.providence.edu:8080/xtf/data/tei/bookreader/letter1/#page/1/mode/1up>

22 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu:8080/xtf/view?docId=tei/L0001.xml;query=&brand=default>

23 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu:8080/xtf/search>

24 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu:8080/xtf/search?browse-all=yes>

25 Cf. <http://library.providence.edu/dps/projects/dorr/lessonplans.html>

history. Early adopters in North America, the UK, Europe and elsewhere have brought Digital Humanities, digital history into the major scholarly arenas. This paper introduces the lay reader to a model for the creation of digital history and evidences readily available structures and mechanisms for creating digital history as complement to more traditional print-based history structures and to the mechanisms common to the print-dominated Academy. Digital

history both complements and integrates seamlessly with print history, resulting in enormously increased visibility and accessibility of the rich resources, both print and digital. The scholar-library partnerships at Providence College continue the stream of faculty scholarship begun at Providence College in 2006. The lessons-learned and the digital scholarship tool-kit developed for The Dorr Rebellion Project are now openly available for new digital scholarship initiatives.

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Appendices

I. Selected Digital Humanities and Digital History Research Resources

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II. Selected Digital History Open-Web Resources – these are major, international open-Web, free resources with strong digital history humanities components. Digital history humanists may find open, best-practices models, tools and knowledge collections to inform their research and guide their digital history humanities scholarship.

Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations: <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/>

Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations: <http://adho.org>

American Heritage Project: <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/amher/>

American Memory Collection: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/ndlmps.html>

American Memory Project 1935-1940: <http://rs6.loc.gov/fsowhome.html>

American Memory Project: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

Antologia della Letteratura Italiana: <http://www.crs4.it/HTML/Literature.html>

Art, Art History, Archaeology: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/artinternet.html>

ARTFL Project, French: <http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/>

Asia & Europe in Global Context: <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/>

Association for Computational Linguistics: <http://www.aclweb.org/>

Association for Computers & the Humanities: <http://www.ach.org/>

Association for Literary & Linguistic Computing: <http://www.allc.org/>

ATHENA-European Cultural Networks : <http://www.athenaeurope.org/>

Athens Dialogues E-Journal: <http://athensdialogues.chs.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/athensdialogues.woa>

AWOL-Ancient World Online: <http://ancientworldonline.blogspot.com/>

Bamboo Project – Digital Humanities: <http://www.projectbamboo.org/>

Bardbox-Shakespeare & Online Video: <http://bardbox.wordpress.com/>

Blake's 1808 Paradise Lost: <http://www.pitt.edu/~ulin/Paradise/Blake1808.htm>

Blogging Shakespeare: <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/>

Brown University Women Writers Project: <http://www.wwp.brown.edu/>

Busk – Fresh Lit from Fresh Minds: original works of short fiction and poetry: <http://busklit.org/>

Cambridge Collections Online: http://cco.cambridge.org/public_home

Center for Digital Research in the Humanities: http://cdrh.unl.edu/projects/pages/interoperability_metadata.php

Center for Hellenic Studies - CHS: <http://chs.harvard.edu/wb/wa/default>

Center for History & New Media – George Mason Univ.: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/>

CenterNet Network of Digital Humanities: <http://digitalhumanities.org/centernet/>

ChronoZoom: <http://www.chronozoomproject.org/#/t55>

CHS Links: <http://chs.harvard.edu/wa/pageR?tn=ArticleWrapper&bdc=12&mn=1200>

CHS Publication: <http://chs.harvard.edu/wa/pageR?tn=ArticleWrapper&bdc=12&mn=1166>

Computing in the Humanities Working Papers: <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/chwp/>

Dante Gabriel Rossetti Archive: <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/>

DID Affiliate Repositories: <http://www.diggingintodata.org/Home/Repositories/tabid/167/Default.aspx>

Digging Into Data - DID: <http://www.diggingintodata.org/>

Digital Cultures Project: <http://dc-mrg.english.ucsb.edu/>

Digital Document Quarterly: <http://home.pacbell.net/hgladney/ddq.htm>

Digital History: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>

Digital Humanities – Undergraduate Symposium: <http://news.haverford.edu/blogs/rehumanities/>

Digital Humanities Now: <http://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/>

Digital Humanities Quarterly: <http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/>

Digital Library Federation Aquifer: <http://www.diglib.org/aquifer/>

Digital Library Federation Digital Collections Registry: <http://dlf.grainger.uiuc.edu/DLFCollectionsRegistry/browse/>

Digital Soweto: <http://www.soweto76archive.org/>

Documenting the American South: <http://docsouth.unc.edu>

Early Americas Digital Archive: <http://www.mith2.umd.edu/eada/>

Einstein Archives: <http://www.alberteinstein.info/>

Electronic Shakespeare: <http://www.wfu.edu/~tedforrl/shakespeare/>

Electronic Text Center at UVA: <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/digitalcuration/etext.html>

Electronic Text Centre, University of New Brunswick: <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/>

Emily Dickinson Electronic Archives: <http://www.emilydickinson.org/>

English Short Title Catalog: advanced research in the humanities indexes works published in the British Isles and North America between 1473 and 1800 <http://estc.bl.uk/>

European Commission Portal: http://ec.europa.eu/atoz_en.htm

Europeana Portal: <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/>

Europeana Project: <http://version1.europeana.eu/web/europeana-project/>

Exploring & Collecting History Online – ECHO: <http://echo.gmu.edu/>

Finding Shakespeare: <http://findingshakespeare.co.uk/>

Five Colleges Project for Women's History & Education: <http://clio.fivecolleges.edu/>

Florida Heritage Collection: <http://susdl.fcla.edu/fh/>

Folger Shakespeare Library: <http://www.folger.edu/>

Global Shakespeare: <http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/projects/global-shakespeare/>

Grand Text Auto: <http://grandtextauto.org/>

Heritage West: http://www.bcr.org/dps/cdp/hw_search.html

History & New Media: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/essays-on-history-new-media/essays/>

History Cooperative: <http://www.historycooperative.org/>

History Matters: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>

Homer Multitext: <http://www.homermultitext.org/>

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