History *Can* Be Open Source:
Democratic Dreams and the Rise of Digital History

In 2006, Roy Rosenzweig published an article in the *Journal of American History* entitled "Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past." By then Wikipedia had already become, he said, "perhaps the largest work of online historical writing, the most widely read work of digital history, and the most important free historical resource on the World Wide Web."[1] Wikipedia's anarchic editing process and uneven reliability have repelled academics. Despite studies—including Rosenzweig's—comparing it favorably to traditional encyclopedias, it's still the sour taste of "Wikipedia" that spoils much discussion of "open source" history, particularly outside of the digital humanities. But Rosenzweig wrote that "if historians believe that what is available free on the Web is low quality, then we have a responsibility to make better information sources available online." Historians could endlessly indict Wikipedia for its many shortcomings, or, he said, we could "emulate [its] great democratic triumph … its demonstration that people are eager for free and accessible information resources."[2]

Thirteen years after Rosenzweig's plea, technological innovation, institutional resources, professional norms, and shifting scholarly attitudes have converged to prove Rosenzweig right: history *can* be open source. And yet, while scores of projects have sought to fulfill Rosenzweig's call by providing free, high-quality, professionally produced, peer-reviewed materials, the historical profession has rarely stopped to take critical stock of Open Educational Resources (OER) and the broader ideological context from which it emerged.[3] This article therefore proposes to provide a critical evaluation of OER's place in the historical profession—its history, the nature of open licensing, debates over neoliberalism, the problematic emphasis on digital "access," the promise of mass collaboration, and an evaluation of major trends in contemporary digital history projects. In particular, by analyzing the founding values and short history of the digital history movement, surveying the current landscape of digital history, and identifying the possibilities of increasing professional and institutional support, it highlights the often problematic, and yet foundational, democratic aspirations at the heart of digital history and the broader digital humanities movement.

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[1] Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," *The Journal of American History* (June 2006), 117-146. 119.

[2] Ibid., 137, 145

[3] The field of digital history speakers in the "future tense," argues Cameron Blevins. Cameron Blevins, "Digital History's Perpetual Future Tense," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016,* edited by Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2016) [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016].

The dream of "democratization" fueled much of the rise of digital humanities. In 2001, information studies scholar Philip E. Agre argued that digital technologies would enable "the intellectual lives of academics to be democratized," thereby opening the "existing scholarly and library practices [that] reflect the wisdom of centuries.[4] Writing in 1999, Ed Ayers trumpeted the historical profession's recovery of forgotten voices—of women, people of color, the poor—but said," The great democratization of history over the past few decades has not been accompanied by a democratization of audience."[5] The digital humanities, it was argued, would facilitate that democratization. "In the 1990s, the animating spirit behind much of our work in the digital humanities was democratization," said William G. Thomas III, a historian at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. "Our ambitions then," he said, "were only secondarily to experiment with new forms of scholarship. They were primarily to democratize history: to transform the way history was understood by changing the way it was produced and accessed."[6]

The rhetoric of "democratization" continues to permeate the field of digital history. It lurks in project descriptions, grant applications, and in the fundamental understanding that justifies so much of a now-mature field. And invocations of democracy not only provided the rhetorical cornerstone of the field's rise to prominence, they undergird the larger promise of the digital humanities. But what does "democracy" mean in a world of ArcGIS databases, GitHub repositories, Creative Commons licenses, Python tokens, Gephi visualizations, and 3ds Max models (not to mention Twitter and all the rest)? "Democracy," John Dewey wrote in 1916, "has to be born anew every generation," and a survey of major digital projects and writings in the field reveals how digital historians have labored to realize new, refashioned notions of democracy through the life of a rising academic field. But such a survey also lays bare the unexplored tensions and contradictions of discourses that have, by and large, escaped serious academic scrutiny.[7]

Silicon Valley's prophets may preach the "theory of disruptive innovation" to eager university administrators with the promise of inevitable democratic revolutions, but disruption is not a synonym for democracy.[8] As Roy Rosenzweig put it, "neither the democratization or the commodification of higher education is inherent in technology."[9] Advocates of the digital humanities have gilded their technological innovations with the rhetoric of democracy, but few

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[4] Philip E. Agre, "Supporting the Intellectual Life of a Democratic Society," *Ethics and Information Technology,* 3 (2001), 289.

[5] Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," Virginia Center for Digital History, 1999 (http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html).

[6] William G. Thomas, "Trends in Digital Humanities: Remarks at the CIC Digital Humanities Summit," Keynote Address, CIC Digital Humanities Summit, April 19, 2012 (http://railroads.unl.edu/blog/?p=794). Cameron Blevins similarly argues that digital history began with "an overriding ideology: to democratize access to the past." Blevins, "Digital History's Perpetual Future Tense."

[7] John Dewey, "The Need of an Industrial Education in an Industrial Democracy," *Manual Training and Vocational Education* (February 1916), 410.

[8] See, for instance, Jill Lepore, "The Disruption Machine What the Gospel of Innovation Gets Wrong," *The New Yorker* (June 23, 2014); Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Eyring, *The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out* (2011), xxii.

[9] Rosenzweig, "Live Free or Die," 172.

scholars have interrogated either the nature of those discourses or their impact upon the field's development, maturation, and future direction. This article therefore confronts the omnipresence of "democracy" in the field of digital history by placing the field's rise in a historical and institutional context, confronting the complexities, ironies, and puzzles posed by its advocates, and, finally, gesturing toward a positive definition of "democracy" that moves beyond questions of technological innovation and digital access to engage more fundamental and intractable questions about inequality, community, and participatory historical inquiry.

"Democracy" is a slippery term. In his monumental 2016 exploration of "the struggle for self-rule" in the Atlantic world, *Toward Democracy*, Historian James T. Kloppenberg argued that democracy has been less a unified set of institutions and more an unattainable goal after which we must forever strive.[10] Vague, often unreflective ideas of "democracy" drove much of the development of the field of digital history. And yet, despite their penchant for definitional imprecision, digital historians have associated democracy with practices rooted in evolving understandings of structural inequalities. We therefore identify and critically analyze two major strains of democratic ideology in digital history and the digital humanities more broadly—one rooted in open access and one rooted in participation—to capture the key shifts, creative tensions, and urgent critiques of the digital humanities movement.[11]

Lured by the promises of the early internet, the first generation of digital humanists believed the digitization of analog resources would tear down barriers that held back the world's knowledge from popular demand. Navigating a rising ideological and institutional neoliberalism, they championed open access and pushed OER into the mainstream. The gains of that early movement are impossible to overstate. But a recent generation of digital humanists, reared not in an insurgent and utopian field but in a respectable and increasingly institutionalized one, learned that digitization is not enough. Instead, repelled by the decadence of Silicon Valley, frustrated with the political economy of academia, and inspired especially by the scholarship of intersectional feminists and critical race theorists, they have striven for an expanded idea of democracy, one cognizant of stubborn structural inequalities and lingering institutional barriers to full participation in the production and consumption of digital projects. Like Alexis Lothian and Amanda Phillips, they "wonder how digital practices and projects might participate in more radical processes of transformation—might rattle the poles of the big tent rather than slip seamlessly into it."[12] John Dewey argued in 1939 that "the task of democracy is forever that of

[10] James T. Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). For a sampling of recent work detailing contests over "democracy," see, for instance, Manisha Sinha and Penny Von Eschen, editors, *Contested Democracy: Freedom, Race, and Power in American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); and Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005).

[11] This paper largely restricts itself to processes in the United States. Ideologies surrounding the digital humanities, and particularly the rise of open access, have different contexts outside of the U.S. The United Kingdom, for example, now requires open access publishing for many recipients of state research funding. See Margot Finn, "Plan S and the History Journal Landscape: Royal Historical Society Guidance Paper," *Royal Historical Society* (October 23, 2019) [https://royalhistsoc.org/royal-historical-society-publishes-guidance-paper-on-plan-s-and-history-journals/].

[12] Alexis Lothian and Amanda Phillips, "Can Digital Humanities Mean Transformative Critique?" *Journal of e-Media Studies* 3 (2013), 4. DOI:10.1349/PS1.1938-6060.A.425.

creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute."[13] Grappling with the practice of digital humanities and analyzing its maturation as an academic field, particularly in light of its contemporary critics, therefore demands a critical engagement with the field's long quest for "democracy."

"Democracy" and "democratization," of course, drove the study of the American past long before the rise of the digital humanities. From Alexis de Tocqueville to Jane Addams to Alain Locke, positive definitions of "democracy" have fueled investigations into the nature of American life.[14] Defending American studies as a field of inquiry at Yale in 1958, Norman Holmes Pearson claimed that students "must be educated to think of democracy not in narrow or formalistic political terms, but as a germinal impulse with profound bearings upon every phase of human activity."[15] And historians have not only defined, interrogated, and deployed democracy as a focus of study in the making and unmaking of countless national narratives, they have carried that pursuit into the digital age.

Much of the early energy propelling digital humanities would take inspiration from New Left ideas of participatory democracy that swirled around universities in the 1960s. "[16] Most historically-minded computing in the 1960s and 1970s was confined to a core of "cliometric"

[13] John Dewey, "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," in *John Dewey and the Promise of America* (Columbus: American Education Press, 1939). Sara Evans and Harry Boyte, activist-historians at the University of Minnesota, argued in the 1980s that effective democratic champions must therefore create opportunities for the practice of democracy. "Democratic action," they argued, citing the specific historical experience of independent black churches, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Knights of Labor, and the Farmers' Alliance, "depends upon … free spaces, where people experience a schooling in citizenship and learn a vision of the common good in the course of struggling for change." Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte, *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986). In light of stubborn inequality, some scholars remain far more suspicious of democracy. or at least pointed to the considerable structural obstacles to its achievement. Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). See also Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2002); Seyla Benhabib, *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy, Oxford Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[14] Vernon Louis Parrington began his 1927 *Main Currents in American Thought*, often cited as the first work of American studies, by stating his ambition to interrogate democracy by identifying the "germinal ideas that have come to be reckoned traditionally American." Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York: 1927), 1. For more on Parrington, see Jaap Verheul, "The Ideological Origins of American Studies". European Contributions to American Studies," *European Contributions to American Studies* 40 (1999), 91-103.

[15] Michael Holzman, "The Ideological Origins of American Studies at Yale," *American Studies*, 40:2 (Summer 1999), 91. Alice Kessler-Harris's 1992 American Studies Association presidential address argued that "the heart of American Studies is the pursuit of what constitutes democratic culture." Alice Kessler-Harris, "Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate," *American Quarterly* 44 (Sept., 1992): 299-313.

[16] We seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims," Tom Hayden and members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) wrote in their iconic 1962 Port Huron Statement, "that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation." See especially James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

historians, but the ideals of the New Left would shape the field of digital humanities.[17] Roy Rosenzweig's pioneering work, for instance, would grow directly out of such ideals. As a former student and colleague, Elena Razlogova, explained, "Roy applied his unreconstructed 'new left' radicalism to new digital realities."[18] As protests rocked campuses across the West, computer programmers, software engineers, and "hackers" embraced—often in parallel to the competitive corporatization surrounding new hardware developments—the notion of shared knowledge and pioneered the principles that would later undergird digital history's push for "democratization."[19] Richard Stallman, for instance, a freshman at Harvard University in 1970, became active in the nearby hacker community at MIT and, believing "free software" to be a social and ethical imperative, later founded the GNU project and launched the GNU General Public License (GPL) to allow for the free use, modification, and distribution of software.[20]

But early digital humanists struggled to realize the democratic dreams of New Left activists. "Democratization" too easily lost precise meaning in the scramble to adopt new technologies. Outside of academia, where "democracy" was left particularly ambiguous, notions of world-flattening offered moral cover for the decidedly anti-democratic ends of business. Inside the academy practitioners too often confused "access" with "democracy" and lost sight of participatory possibilities. A survey of early digital projects shows how.

In 1995, *the American Studies Crossroads Project*, one of the earliest websites of any humanities organization, led English scholar Randy Bass to partner with historian Brett Eynon to lead the *Visible Knowledge Project*. Bass and his collaborators privileged pedagogical innovation and student participation over expanded access.[21] In hindsight, they appear outliers. Most of the digital humanities' would-be democratizers equated democratization with expanded accessibility. While discussing the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)—an effort to establish digital standards of textual presentation—at the 1994 meeting of the Modern Language Association, C. M. Sperberg-McQueen identified three fundamental requirements for scholarly editions of electronic text: "accessibility without needless technical barriers to use; longevity; and

[17] On the other hand, the very first digital humanities project, Roberto Busa's *Index Thomisticus,* depended upon the support of IBM, obscured the labor of the women who turned the project into reality, and drew rebukes from humanists who feared the dehumanization of quantitative-based scholarship. Melissa Terras and Julianne Nyhan, "Father Busa's Female Punch Card Operatives," in *Debates 2016,* [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016]; Meredith Hindley, "The Rise of the Machines," *Humanities*, Vol. 34, no. 4, (2013).

[18] Bonnie Goodman, "In Memory of Roy Rosenzweig," *History News Network* (January 8, 2008), http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/43739.

[19] See, for instance, Steven Levy, *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).

[20] Stallman would champion "free software" over "open source" software. Richard Stallman, "Why Open Source misses the point of Free Software," GNU, http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/open-source-misses-the-point.html, accessed 7 August 2013.

[21] Randy Bass et al, *Crossroads Project* [http://crossroads.georgetown.edu/]. For more on *Crossroads* and its innovations see John Carlos Rowe, ed. *A Concise Companion to American Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 335-336; Matthias Oppermann, *American Studies in Dialogue: Radical Reconstructions between Curriculum and Cultural Critique* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2010), 167-168; and Ann Kovalchick and Kara Dawson, eds. *Education and Technology: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004),182;

intellectual integrity."[22] Early digital humanities projects followed suit. *The Women's Writers Project*, launched in 1999, used TEI standards "to overcome the problems of inaccessibility and scarcity which had rendered women's writing invisible for so long."[23] In 1995, two Virginia scholars launched *The Walt Whitman Archive,* a collection of digital manuscript facsimiles and hypertext editions of Whitman's poems that aimed to make all of Whitman's public and private work available to all.[24] *The William Blake Archive* similarly launched free and online in 1996 to "provide unified access to major works of visual and literary art."[25]

American historians were similarly striving to expand access to scholarly work through digital presentation. In 1993, Edward Ayers and a large, rotating team at the University of Virginia launched *The Valley of the Shadow* as "an applied experiment in digital scholarship." The project was a digital archive: it allowed users to freely compare letters, newspapers, maps, official records, and a wealth of other digitized sources from two counties, Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and Augusta County, Virginia (one Union and one Confederate) before, during, and after the Civil War. It was also, wrote Michael O'Malley and Roy Rosenzweig, "probably the most sophisticated historical site on the Web."[26] Gary Kornblith wrote in *The Journal of American History* that the project "represents the logical outcome of major trends in late-twentieth-century American academic life: computerization, interdisciplinary collaboration, the postmodern complication of traditional narrative, and the democratic search for ways to recognize, even celebrate, the role of ordinary people in making history and culture."[27]

The field of "digital humanities"—a phrase not yet widely used—was busy being born. In 1994, Roy Rosenzweig, then a pioneering social historian at George Mason University, founded the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) to "incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences and encourage popular presentation in presenting and preserving the past"[28] Rosenzweig worked with the American Social History Project to produce pedagogical CD-ROMs.[29] In 1998, Edward Ayers and William Thomas formed the Virginia Center for Digital

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[22] C. M. Sperberg-McQueen, "Textual Criticism and the Text Encoding Initiative," (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Modern Language Association, San Diego, California, December 1994). Available online at: http://www.tei-c.org/Vault/XX/mla94.html. See also Susan Hockey, "The History of Humanities Computing," in Susan Scheibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth eds. *Companion to Digital Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[23] Despite significant support from various foundations, the project requires subscriptions that continue to hamper access. Only one of the two authors of this piece, for instance, has access through their university to the excellent database.

[24] Ed Folsom and Kenneth Price, *The Walt Whitman Archive* [http://whitmanarchive.org/].

[25] Morris Eaves et al, *The William Blake Archive* [http://www.blakearchive.org/staticpage/archiveataglance].

[26] Michael O'Malley and Roy Rosenzweig, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *Journal of American History* 84 (June 1997), 135-155, 146.

[27] Gary J. Kornblith, "Venturing into the Civil War, Virtually: A Review," *The Journal of American History* 88 (June, 2001), 145-151, 146.

[28] See, for instance, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, "About," n.d. (http://chnm.gmu.edu/about/).

[29] Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, "Our Story," n.d. (http://rrchnm.org/our-story/history/).

History at the University of Virginia.[30] New projects launched. At the University of Houston, Steven Mintz and Sara McNeil pioneered a free (though not yet "open," since the ubiquity of open licensing was still to come) digital history text, *Digital History: Using New Technologies to Enhance Teaching and Research* (http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/), providing an enduring example of a practical, student-centered project that also explored—in its case, through "hyperlink history"—the new possibilities afforded by its digital platform. In 1998, the CHNM launched *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web* (http://historymatters.gmu.edu/), a vast collection of primary sources, pedagogical essays, syllabi, reference material, and other teaching tools. As these projects demonstrated, online access remained the defining feature of "democratic" digital scholarship.

Lisa Spiro, in her essay "Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities," argued that a set of core values, rather than traditional disciplinary boundaries, demarcated "digital humanities." Surveying Digital Humanities manifestoes and combing the rhetoric of the young field,[31] she proposed "openness" as the first of five values governing the field.[32] She defined openness not only in the sense of licensing and transparency, but in the "larger goal of the humanities," to, in the words of Bridget Draxler and the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance (HASTAC), "to democratize knowledge to reach out to 'publics,' share academic discoveries, and invite an array of audiences to participate in knowledge production."[33] Such statements, of course, saturate much of the rhetoric championing digital humanities and the open access movement. "Many scholars hope and anticipate that open practices," two digital humanists, George Veletsianos and Royce Kimmons, wrote, "will broaden access to education and knowledge, reduce costs, enhance the impact and reach of scholarship and education, and foster the development of more equitable, effective, efficient, and transparent scholarly and educational processes."[34]

Democratization, in other words, was integral to the definition of the digital humanities from the very beginning. Andrea Hunter, writing in the *Canadian Journal of Communication* in 2015, argued that democratization was the best answer to the field's chronic definitional question: "What is the digital humanities?" Hunter advocated reframing the field away from technology by emphasizing gains in "access and participation." Only through democratization, she argued, could the digital humanities realize its disciplinary promise.[35] To illustrate her argument, Hunter

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[30] Virginia Center for Digital History, "About," n.d., (http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/index.php?page=About).

[31] Lisa Sprio, "This Is Why We Fight: Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities," in Matthew K. Gold, editor, *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[32] Spiro also cited "collaboration," "collegiality and connectedness," "diversity," and "experimentation." Spiro, "Why We Fight."

[33] Draxler, Bridget, et al. "Democratizing Knowledge." *Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory.* September 21,2009 (http://hastac.org/forums/hastac-scholars-discussions/democratizing-knowledge-digital-humanities).

[34] George Veletsianos and Royce Kimmons, "Assumptions and Challenges of Open Scholarship," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13 (2012), 166–89, 167, cited by Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies, and the Future* (New York: Cambridge, 2014), 3.

[35] Andrea Hunter, "The Digital Humanities and Democracy," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 40 (2015), 407-423.

specifically cited projects: *The Orlando Project* (http://orlando.cambridge.org/), a self-described "new kind of electronic textbase for research and discovery" produced by the University of Alberta and the University of Guelph that revolves around "Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present"; and CHNM's Omeka (https://omeka.org/), a digital platform designed to allow users to curate and share their own historical archives. The first project was designed to bring obscure sources online and out of the archive; the second to allow users to become historians themselves. Both aimed to make the humanities accessible to a wider audience.

Such projects illustrate the common desires of digital historians and digital humanists to disseminate knowledge beyond the walls of particular colleges and universities. "The notion of the university as ivory tower no longer makes sense, if it ever did," argued the five authors of the 2012 book *Digital Humanities*. "Since the Digital Humanities studies and explicates what it means to be human in the networked information age, it expands the reach and relevance of the humanities far beyond small groups of specialists locked in hermetically sealed conversation." By connecting specialists across fields, they argued, the field will "open up the prospect of a conversation extending far beyond the walls of the ivory tower that connects universities to cultural institutions, libraries, museums, and community organizations"[36]

The open access movement grew alongside the digital humanities. As Martin Paul Eve put it in his recent survey of open access in the humanities, "the overwhelming assumption from the literature on open scholarship is that it has co-evolved with broader technological developments.[37] The digital revolution brought open licensing into the mainstream with the establishment of Creative Commons in 2001.[38] The following year, a UNESCO forum championed what they called "a universal educational resource available for the whole of humanity, to be referred to henceforth as Open Educational Resources [OER]."[39] OER—resources that are not simply freely available online but released into the pubic domain or with an open license that allows users to copy, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute them—had been born. When the Public Library of Science (PLOS) began publishing open access journals in science and medicine, open access established a foothold in the academy.[40]

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[36] Anne Burdick et al, *Digital_Humanities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 82 [https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/digitalhumanities].

[37] Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies, and the Future* (New York: Cambridge, 2014), 16.

[38]Creative Commons licenses built on the earlier work of David Wiley and his Open Publication License. In 2002, Wiley dissolved his license and formally joined Creative Commons. David Wiley, "OpenContent is officially closed. And that's just fine.," *Open Content* (June 30, 2003). Early critics however, accused Creative Commons of failing "to confront and look beyond the logic and power asymmetries of the present." See David Berry and Giles Moss, "On the "Creative Commons": a critique of the commons without commonalty," *Free Software Magazine*, Issue 5 (July 15, 2005).

[39] UNESCO, "Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries," July 1-3, 2002, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001285/128515e.pdf. See also Sally M. Johnstone, "Open Educational Resources Serve the World". *Educause Quarterly* 28: 3(2005), 15-18; and T.J. Bliss and M Smith, "A Brief History of Open Educational Resources" in: Jhangiani, R S and Biswas-Diener, R., eds., *Open: The Philosophy and Practices that are Revolutionizing Education and Science*. (London: Ubiquity Press, 2017). 9–27.

[40] For a timeline of the Public Library of Science, see https://www.plos.org/history.

"Open access," however, remains a relatively new idea for many historians outside of the digital humanities.[41] In a notice appended to their 2014 open monograph, *The History Manifesto*, historians David Armitage and Jo Guldi wrote, "Even two or three years ago, most academics in the humanities, and certainly most members of the non-academic public, had not heard much if anything about the Open Access movement."[42] But already, as advocate Martin Weller put it, "openness is now such a part of everyday life that it seems unworthy of comment."[43] Creative Commons' open licenses are now ubiquitous parts not only of academics' general internet browsing but increasingly of their scholarship as well: a number of pioneering publications in the humanities are now following the sciences into open access publishing and grant money is appearing for such projects. In fact, according to Eve, "It is now more often the practicalities of achieving such a goal that are the focus of disagreement."[44] And this is where many projects have stalled—until recently.

In just a few short years, barriers to participation in digital humanities have fallen and institutional supports have risen. New publishing venues for open-source scholarship and pedagogy, streamlined digital platforms and lowered technological barriers, massive injections of public and private grant money, the institutionalization of digital humanities in research universities, the development of scholarly guidelines and best practices, and the growing acceptance of open-source scholarship and pedagogy among the academic community: all have created the conditions for a digitized history.

A wealth of funding has buoyed DH across American universities. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in particular seeded the institutional bedrocks of digital history and continue to fund many of the current initiatives reshaping the field. The NEH, for instance, whose charter declares that "the humanities belong to the people of the United States," spun off a new Office of Digital Humanities in 2008. In 2015, citing an "urgent and compelling" need to pioneer digital publishing, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded several million-dollar grants to university presses for the exploration of digital publishing models.[45] Other wealthy foundations have focused on digital publication. Yale University Library, for instance, received a $3 million grant in 2014 from The Goizueta

[41] "The term 'open access,'" according to Martin Paul Eve, refers to the removal of price and permission barriers to scholarly research." Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access*, 3.

[42] David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "Why Open Access Publication for The History Manifesto?" *Cambridge Open* (2014) [http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org/blog/2014/09/why-open-access-publication-history-manifesto#sthash.FYCNEiH9.dpuf]. "This is a new era for all of us," said Harriette Hemmasi, university librarian at Brown University, upon receiving funds to explore digital publishing. Carl Straumsheim, "Piecing Together Publishing," *Inside Higher Ed* (February 25, 2015) [https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/02/25/researchers-university-press-directors-emboldened-mellon-foundation-interest].

[43] Martin Weller, *The Battle for Open: How Openness Won and Why It Doesn't Feel Like Victory* (London: Ubiquity Press, 2014), 2.

[44] Eve, *Open Access*, 7

[45] Straumsheim, "Piecing Together," n.p.

Foundation to launch a Digital Humanities Laboratory.[46] It is just one of many new ventures that have smashed barriers to online "publication" with appeals for expanded access.

Historian Daniel Cohen, in the same year that Rosenzweig penned his plea for open source history, said "Resources that are free to use in any way, even if they are imperfect, are more valuable than those that are gated or use-restricted, even if those resources are qualitatively better."[47] And while popular suspicions about the quality of open resources continue to limit adoption, recent polls have shown that academics are not fundamentally opposed to open projects, provided they can be reassured that they are using a rigorous product.[48] But without the safety net of peer review to fall back on, how can digital humanities projects win over hesitant academics? As Martin Paul Eve writes, "any transition to open access must necessarily interact with the value systems of the academy and its publishing mechanisms."[49] Fortunately those very publishing mechanisms have begun to embrace open access, harkening a radical change in academia's prestige economy: scholars can now remain within existing academic structures even as they push the boundaries of access and audience.

University presses, libraries, and academics have spent more than a decade experimenting with and innovating new publishing platforms for open scholarship. University presses have been particularly vigorous in their experiments with open-access and open-source publications. The University of Michigan Library and the University of Michigan Press launched the digitalculturebooks imprint in 2006 with the goal of "developing open platforms that make openness part of the scholarly peer review process" and publishes work under an Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 Creative Commons (CC) License.[50] Under Mark Saunders, the University of Virginia Press received substantial institutional and Mellon grant funding in 2006 and 2007 to seed the publication of online texts under its Rotunda Imprint, bringing *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* and *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* online.

In the intervening years, university presses have continued to move forward into open access publication and several presses have launched open-access imprints. "If there ever was a time for a university press to go into open access," said Neil B. Christensen, the director of digital business development for the University of California Press, "this is the time." In 2015, the Press launched dual platforms for publishing open-access journals and monographs, *Collabra* and

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[46] Amanda Patrick, "The Goizueta Foundation supports creation of a Digital Humanities Laboratory at Yale," *Yale News* (December 11, 2014) [http://news.yale.edu/2014/12/11/goizueta-foundation-supports-creation-digital-humanities-laboratory-yale].

[47] Daniel J. Cohen, "From Babel to Knowledge: Data Mining Large Digital Collections," *D-Lib Magazine* 12 (March 2006) [http://www.dlib.org/dlib/march06/cohen/03cohen.html].

[48] Eve, *Open Access*, 3; "When presented with the concept of OER, most faculty say that they are willing to give it a try," concluded one report. I. Elaine Allen and Jef Seaman, *Opening the Curriculum: Open Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education* (Wellesley, MA: Babson Survey Research Group, 2014), 2.

[49] Eve, *Open Access*, 4

[50] Digitalculturebooks, "About Us," n.d. [http://www.digitalculture.org/about/].

Luminos.[51] (Striving for long-term sustainability, however, the venture's open-access business model revolves around authors' fees and paid reviewers, and charging authors anything at all, let alone $600-$700, is largely foreign to academic historians.) In 2012, the University of Minnesota, through the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, launched The Open Textbook Initiative, a catalog of online, open-license textbooks. In 2018, The Graduate Center's Digital Scholarship Lab at the City University of New York received a nearly one-million-dollar grant from the Mellon Foundation to develop Manifold, an open-source web-based publishing platform.[52]

Advocates of OER have also continued experimenting with alternative models of sustainable, open-source publishing. "Access to the work we produce must be opened up as a site of conversation not just among scholars but also between scholars and the broader culture," wrote Kathleen Fitzpatrick in *Planned Obsolescence*, her exploration into the future of technology and academic publishing.[53] In 2015, Caroline Edwards and Martin Paul Eve launched the Open Library of Humanities (OLH), with grant money from the Mellon Foundation and partnerships with university libraries, to provide a new, sustainable, open-access publishing platform for the humanities.[54] University libraries, meanwhile, continue to experiment with publishing models. "If making scholarly research publicly accessible on the Web could go some way toward enlightening the general public about the importance and the skill of scholarly work," Brown University's faculty dean, Kevin McLaughlin, said, "that would be fantastic."[55]

The gold standard of academic scholarship remains the university press, and, over the past years many have incorporated open publishing into their regular imprints. In 2006, *The Orlando Project* turned to a traditional press, Cambridge, to "publish" the project. Cambridge's agreement marked a turning point in academic legitimation of open source publishing. "They are the name," a producer of the project said, "they have standards."[56] Cambridge in particular has continued to experiment with open access. Their 2014 publication of *The History Manifesto*, a book-length essay by historians Jo Guldi and David Armitage, marked a new highpoint of academic respectability for open access publication in the history profession.[57]

Cambridge is not alone. As already discussed, the University of Virginia Press has long published projects online, if not necessarily with formal open access. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press has published multiple field-defining books online through both an open review and open licensing. The University of Michigan, from 2011 to 2013, oversaw the open

[51] Carl Straumsheim, "'Paying It Forward' Publishing," *Inside Higher Ed* (February 10, 2015) [https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/02/10/u-california-press-builds-open-access-publishing-model-around-paying-it-forward].

[52] For more on Manifold see https://manifoldapp.org/. For examples of projects built through the platform see https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/projects/all.

[53] Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 174.

[54] See, for instance, Open Library of Humanities, "About," n.d., [https://www.openlibhums.org/site/about/].

[55] Straumsheim, "Piecing Together," n.p.

[56] Hunter, "Digital Humanities and Democracy," 418.

[57] Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

peer review and eventual dual publishing of *Writing History in the Digital Age* at the same time the University of Minnesota similarly published *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Beginning in 2019, the Public Library of Science began to allow authors to participate in their version of an open review, where readers reports, editorial decisions, and author responses are all made publicly available.[58]

These developments offered prototypes for how open access platforms can extend traditional notions of "publication." And such efforts continue to multiply. The boundaries of "publication" are expanding. Stanford University Press, for instance, recently received a large Mellon Grant to bring peer review to digital-native projects. With such efforts proliferating across the university press landscape, academic credibility can hardly be considered any longer an obstacle to democratized access. And yet academic credibility is not the only remaining obstacle to the flourishing of a democratized digital humanities. In fact, the very mechanisms that triggered its expansion—grant-funding, institutional backing, easy traffic in earnest rhetoric rooted in "democratization"—have raised legitimate alarms. "Access," it seems, is not the only barrier to a more democratic humanities.

Digitization by itself did not guarantee the broad-based notion of "democracy" so ardently touted by early champions of the digital humanities. Robert Darnton, distinguished historian and librarian at Harvard University, examined Google's massive book digitization project in a 2006 issue of *The New York Review of Books* and argued that, "Yes we must digitize. But more important, we must democratize. We must open access to our cultural heritage. How? By rewriting the rules of the game, by subordinating private interests to the public good, and by taking inspiration from the early republic in order to create a Digital Republic of Learning."[59] Such language has done important work for the field, and great strides have been made in expanding access under the banner of democratization. At its worst, the Digital Humanities can seem an esoteric world, one more concerned with the code that goes into projects but not with the products that come out. New endeavors can seem designed to win grants, but not users.[60] The digital humanities have expanded rapidly over the intervening decades, and yet, William Thomas lamented in 2012, "We are in danger of losing that animating spirit, and we need to recover the democratization at the heart of the Digital Humanities movement."[61]

The collision of technology and the humanities incites hyperbole: utopians dream of technological revolutions in research and a democratized world of free learning; skeptics warn of a predatory neoliberalism and privatized, profit-driven scholarship and pedagogy that privilege shallow instruction from de-skilled educators. As early as 1999, Rosenzweig himself, writing in

[58] PLOS refers to their process as a transparent Peer Review History. For more see https://www.plos.org/faq#loc-Peer-review-history.

[59] Robert Darnton, "Google and the Future of Books," *The New York Review of Books*, (February 12, 2009).

[60] William Pannapacker, "Stop Calling It 'Digital Humanities,'" *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 18, 2013; http://chronicle.com/article/Stop-Calling-It-Digital/137325/).

[61] Thomas, "Trends," n.p.

a review essay for the *American Quarterly*, lamented the "bifurcated tendency toward visions of utopia and dystopia" in discussions surrounding digital humanities.[62]

For decades, the disruption-minded, messianic rhetoric of Silicon Valley has overlaid digital history with the moral appeal of democratized scholarship and pedagogy. Siva Vaidhyanathan, writing in the *American Quarterly* in 2006, called for digital humanists to challenge techno-fundamentalism, "the misguided faith in technology and progress."[63] Critics note that the self-important utopian rhetoric surrounding the digital humanities often mirrors the language and reflects the libertarian social values of Silicon Valley.[64] The rhetorical similarities between digital humanities and Silicon Valley are stark. A typical claim made by a commentator in 2010 is indicative: "The digital humanities should not be about the digital at all. It's all about innovation and disruption. The digital humanities is really an insurgent humanities."[65] It is a necessary criticism that much of the rhetoric justifying academic and educational "disruptions" can conceal ulterior motives.[66]

The specter of facilitating the de-skilling of education—manifested most obviously in the shrinking of the ranks of full-time faculty—and competing for the patronage of billionaire-philanthropists and endowment-bureaucracies while touting "innovation," "disruption," and "democratization" haunts the Digital Humanities.[67] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Richard Grusin, Patrick Jagoda, and Rita Raley wrote in 2016 of the "The Dark Side of the Digital Humanities," arguing that the "same neoliberal logic that informs the ongoing destruction of the mainstream humanities has encouraged" the growth of digital humanities as a field.[68]

That same summer, three academics writing in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* blamed digital humanities for abetting the neoliberalization of the American academy. "Despite the aggressive promotion of Digital Humanities as a radical insurgency," they wrote, "its institutional success

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[62] Roy Rosenzweig, "Live Free Or Die?: Death, Life, Survival, And Sobriety On The Information Superhighway," *American Quarterly* 51, (March 1999), 161.

[63] Siva Vaidhyanathan, "Introduction: Rewiring the 'Nation': The Place of Technology in American Studies," *American Quarterly* 58 (September 2006), 557.

[64] Safiya Noble identifies digital utopianism as a neoliberal ideology and credits critical theorists with complicating triumphalist DH narratives. Safiya Umoja Noble, "A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies." *Scholar & Feminist Online* 13, no. 3–14, no. 1 (2016): 1–8. Brian Greenspan, however, argues that utopian ideas are necessary for radical ends. Brian Greenspan, "Are Digital Humanists Utopian?" in *Debates 2016,* [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016]. See also Ruth Levitas, "For Utopia: The (Limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3 (2000): 25–43; Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanities Press International, 1984); and Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[65] Mark Sample, "I'm Mark, and Welcome to the Circus," HASTAC Blog, September 10, 2010 [http://hastac.org/blogs/cforster/im-chris-where-am-i-wrong].

[66] See, for instance, Pannapacker, "'Digital Humanities.'"

[67] One can perhaps think of HBO's satirical *Silicon Valley* and its fictional tech-billionaire Gavin Belson, who doesn't "want to live in a world where someone else makes the world a better place better than we do."

[68] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Richard Grusin, Patrick Jagoda, and Rita Raley, "The Dark Side of the Digital Humanities," in *Debates 2016,* [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016].

has for the most part involved the displacement of politically progressive humanities scholarship and activism in favor of the manufacture of digital tools and archives."[69] Singling out the digital humanities turn in English, they characterized digital humanists' utopian rhetoric as a self-serving veil concealing the move toward computation over interpretation, external funding over institutional support, and general administration-supported corporatism over traditional academic labor. The authors placed much of the impetus for the Digital Humanities to what they saw as a conservative core of literary scholars at the University of Virginia who crystallized the parameters of the field between 1999 and 2002.[70] Such critiques must be made and met. The Trojan Horse dangers of "disruption" can certainly overshadow the promise of a democratized history.

The issue of free labor, for instance, can taint open-access projects. In the neoliberal academy, scholars are expected to offer more and more of their labor without due compensation or recognition. But few beyond a small circle of prominent scholars receive significant compensation for writing articles, books, or textbooks. And yet, in spite of that lack of remuneration, as Stevan Harnard pointed out in his groundbreaking 1994 "subversive proposal," an early call for scholarly research papers to be archived online, open access is possible because academics—whose salaries are already paid by universities—produce what he calls "esoteric" work: work, that is, grounded in an internal economy driven by readership and impact, not profits.[71] A copyright designed to protect an author's personal profits hardly makes sense for the bulk of academics who receive no profits to protect. As Martin Paul Eve put it, "why should academics retain the economic protections of copyright if they are not dependent upon the system of remuneration that this is supposed to uphold?"[72] In a digital world in which the marginal cost of reproduction is nil, open access advocates such as John Willinsky and Creative Commons' Cable Green argue that academics have an ethical obligation as humanists to share our work and our knowledge with the public and with our students.[73] And, given the gravity of the current cost crisis in higher education, such work seems increasingly imperative.

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[69] Daniel Allington et al, "Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities," *The L.A. Review of Books* (May 1, 2016) [https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/neoliberal-tools-archives-political-history-digital-humanities/]. For one of many rejoinders, see Juliana Spahr, Richard So, and Andrew Piper, "Beyond Resistance: Towards a Future History of Digital Humanities," *The L.A. Review of Books* (May 11, 2016) [https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/beyond-resistance-towards-future-history-digital-humanities/].

[70] We could here also address the MOOC frenzy, but that bubble has begun to pop and the passion has calmed, whether or not the pernicious logic behind its "disruption"-minded indictment of education remains.

[71] Stevan Harnad, "Overture: A Subversive Proposal," in *Scholarly Journals at the Crossroads: A Subversive Proposal for Electronic Publishing*, ed. Shumelda Okerson and James J. O'Donnell (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1995), 11–12.

[72] Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies, and the Future* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 18; see also Peter Suber, *Open Access* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 9-15.

[73] John Willinsky, *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009). As Cable Green, Creative Commons' Director of Global Learning, put it, "When the marginal cost of sharing is $0, educators have an ethical obligation to share." Cable Green, "Open Education: The Moral, Business & Policy Case for OER," Keynote Address, Affordable Learning Georgia Conference (December 11, 2014) [http://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Cable_EveningPlenaryKeynote.pdf].

And yet, despite the proliferation of digital history and positive shifts in professional norms, was William Thomas right to argue in 2012 that "we are in danger of losing that animating spirit" of democratization?[74] Certainly the field's massive grants and vast institutional backing should be for naught if the digital humanities drifted further from its democratic promise. Digital history betrays its core principles if it fails to engage users by privileging professional advancement, grant-winning, and innovation-for-innovation's-sake over the pursuit of readership, ease of use, and pedagogical utility.

Rather than some manifestation of a nefarious neoliberal plot, perhaps the engines of digital history are simply by their nature self-destructive and the very hunger for innovation which spawned the field must inevitably condemn it to irrelevance. Perhaps democratization must be sacrificed to the gods of "disruption." In 1992, Richard Jensen, a historian at the University of Illinois at Chicago, founded H-Net as an electronic means to link historians around the world. By 2012, its various lists claimed 10,000 subscribers.[75] But, built for an earlier iteration of electronic communication, the old listserv platform needed updating. After a vigorous fund-raising effort, H-Net relaunched as H-Net Commons in 2018, a new platform capable of hosting blogs, moderated discussions, customized user home pages, and curated content collections. It met every requirement of the new "web 2.0": it was customizable, iterative, and connective. But it collapsed H-Net's communities and the project shed thousands of users. A bloated interface, clunky navigability, and an overall confusing experience propelled the very migration to platforms such as Twitter that the Commons was meant to staunch.

And yet the idea of the Commons reinforced the conception that, despite much of the early rhetoric in the field, digitization does not mean "democracy." In their pursuit of new projects and new grants, for instance, scholars have long been content to dump information online and call it "democracy."[76] Instead, as historian Patricia Limerick noted in 1997, "we are in much greater need of methods and strategies for filtering, sorting, managing, synthesizing" than simply finding new ways to access information that will never really be consumed.[77] Little has changed in two decades.

The lack of sophisticated, professionally curated textbooks—a major impetus of Rosenzweig's call for open source history--testifies to the many blind spots of democratized knowledge. Traditional rather than disruptive, pedagogical rather than research-based, eye-glazing rather than grant-winning, textbooks are nevertheless the most widely used tool in humanities classrooms. Mintz and McNeil recognized this as early as the 1990s with their *Digital History*

[74] Thomas, "Trends," n.p.

[75] Matthew Gilmore, "H-Net: Digital Discussion for Historians," *Perspectives: The Newsletter of the American Historical Association*, 45 (May 2007); Richard Jensen, "Internet's Republic of Letters: H-Net for Scholars," (1997) [http://members.aol.com/dann01/whatis.html].

[76] Online access, of course, does not even necessarily guarantee greater access. See David Parry, "Be Online or Be Irrelevant," AcademHack, January 11, 2010 [http://academhack.outsidethetext.com/home/2010/be-online-or-be-irrelevant/].

[77] Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Insiders and Outsiders: The Borders of the USA and the Limits of the ASA: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association," *American Quarterly* 49.3 (1997) 449-469, 453.

survey text, but few academics followed them.[78] Textbooks should have been ripe targets for the open access movement.[79] Nowhere else are current costs and potential savings quite so clear and many outside of academia have long recognized the democratic and cost-annihilating potential of open texts. A closer look at textbooks in history and literature is revealing. For decades, scholars have allowed responsibility for textbook creation to fall upon for-profit education companies, unwieldy non-profit bureaucracies, under-resourced lone wolves, and unregulated open wikis. Perhaps Wikipedia, despite Rosenzweig's plea, poisoned historians' attitudes toward open texts. A 2014 "Textbooks and Teaching" roundtable in the *Journal of American History* cited only the unreliability of open texts, rather than their promise.[80] For years, the construction of an open-licensed, collaborative textbook fell to the educational industrial complex and its network of funder-disrupters.

In 2014, we proposed a new model for history textbooks. After a year-long collaboration, over 350 historians produced the first edition of *The American Yawp* (www.americanyawp.com), an open American history textbook project. We launched the project as a radical experiment in mass collaboration and institution-free pedagogy—an experiment that hundreds of thousands of users now benefit from each year. But the *Yawp* was only a logical extension of the democratic promise inherent not just in the rise of the digital humanities as an identifiable academic field, but in a moment when technological innovation, institutional resources, professional norms, and shifting scholarly attitudes have converged to prove Rosenzweig right: history *can* be open source.

Ours is not the only project to emphasize the democratic possibilities of massive collaboration. According to Roy Rosenzweig's 2006 plea for open source history in the *Journal of American History*, Wikipedia is democratic in two senses: it is a free, widely accessible resource, and it is a massively participatory project.[81] Applying the principles of democracy to classrooms increasingly means involving students in the production of knowledge. With the support of a five-year, $50 million digital media and learning initiative, Henry Jenkins explored the impacts of participatory culture, specifically the opportunity for digital technology to enable the popular production rather than simply the consumption of culture. Jenkins and his fellow travelers work to transform education around technological opportunities to develop cultural competencies and encourage student involvement in not just consuming, but also producing and disseminating knowledge. The democratizing tactics of these educators include student blogging, video-making, podcasting, and even gaming or social networking. According to Jenkins, academics, educators, and policy makers need to "shift the focus of the conversation about the digital divide from questions of technological access to those of opportunities to participate and to develop the

[78] Mintz and McNeil, *Digital History* (http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/),

[79] Weller, *Battle*, 76. For evidence that OER improves learning outcomes, see Lane Fischer, John Hilton III, T. Jared Robinson, and David A. Wiley, "A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students," *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* Vol 27 No 3 (December 2015), 159-172.

[80] Scott E. Casper ed., "Textbooks Today and Tomorrow: A Conversation about History, Pedagogy, and Economic," *Journal of American History* Vol. 100, No 4 (March 2014), 1139-1169.

[81] Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source?," 117-146.

cultural competencies and social skills."[82] For some, the expansions in participatory culture promise to shatter nearly all hierarchies and replace them with egalitarian, collaborative relationships.[83]

Still, even while digital humanities practitioners frequently use "democracy" as shorthand for expanded digital access, even a broader emphasis on participation can elide structural inequalities. Issues of gender, racial, and sexual representation, for instance, dominate humanistic inquiry but continue to plague the practice and production of the digital humanities. Miriam Posner argued in 2016 that the field must confront these questions, but "to truly engage in this kind of critical work …. would require dismantling and rebuilding much of the organizing logic that underlies our work."[84] Similar essays by Tara McPherson—"Why Are the Digital Humanities So White?"—Bethany Nowviskie—"What Do Girls Dig?"—and host of other critics hint at problems that are foundational and cannot be solved through modest organizational statements or more equitable faculty appointments and grant disbursements.[85]

According to Sharon Leon, the very act of defining the discipline of digital history reinforces inequality. Leon, for instance, argues that women, especially women of color, have been especially eager to connect digital work to community needs and that an overemphasis on the production of research as the foundation of DH thereby privileges male imperatives.[86] An uncritically engaged practice of the digital humanities, critics therefore rightfully argue, belies decades of "democratic" longings and will continue to weigh upon the field as its enters its maturity.[87] As digital humanists institutionalize themselves further into the landscape of higher education, they must conceive of themselves less as underdogs and revolutionaries than as gatekeepers.[88]

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[82] Henry Jenkins, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century" [https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF].

[83] See, for example, Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

[84] Miriam Posner, "What's Next: The Radical, Unrealized Potential of Digital Humanities," *Debates 2016*, [http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/54].

[85] Tara McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation" *Debates* 2012, [http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/29].; Bethany Nowviskie, "What Do Girls Dig?" [http://nowviskie.org/2011/what-do-girls-dig/].

[86] See especially 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*, edited by Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

[87] See also Henry Jenkins, "Bringing Critical Perspectives to the Digital Humanities: An Interview with Tara McPherson" *Confessions of an ACA-Fan* (March 20, 2015); David Kim, "Archives, Models, and Methods for Critical Approaches to Identities: Representing Race and Ethnicity in the Digital Humanities" (PhD dissertation, UCLA, 2015.)

[88] Oral historians Julianne Nyhan and Andrew Flinn identified "revolutionary" and "underdog" as the recurring motifs in how the fields and its practitioners understood themselves: the underdog and the revolutionary. Julianne Nyhan and Andrew Flinn, *Computation and the Humanities: Towards an Oral History of Digital Humanities* (London: Springer, 2016). https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319201696.

The digital humanities, of course, do not have a monopoly on democracy discourse. In fact, some of the most active practitioners operate outside of the digital humanities. The *Democratizing Knowledge Project* at Syracuse University, for example, draws from an impressively interdisciplinary core faculty and eschews digital practice in favor of analog forms of scholarship and activism. Through an annual summer institute, campus forums, creative pedagogy, and connections beyond the walls of the academy, the project pursues its goal of "confronting white privilege, hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and colonial heritages."[89] The field of public history, for instance, has long emphasized public participation.[90]

Arguments for a participatory digital history have likewise become increasingly visible. Laurenellen McCann has argued publicly that digital projects must work *with* communities, not *for* them.[91] By annihilating the distance between the production and consumption of knowledge, the authors of *Digital_Humanities* argue, digital humanists "are able to revitalize the cultural record in ways that involve citizens in the academic enterprise and bring the academy into the expanded public sphere."[92] Sharon Leon, for instance, in her presentation of "digital public history" work, has emphasized the idea of a digital "user-centered history."[93] Digital humanities projects have therefore at times taken seriously a participatory form of democratization.[94] The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project is one such example. After providing a host of maps and other material on "the dispossession and resistance by San Francisco Bay area residents," the project included a link for users to "Help Stop Evictions" by donating to the "not-for-profit collective," reporting illegal vacation rentals, supporting local unions, avoiding calling police on neighbors, and pledging to abstain from renting from anyone who has unscrupulous landlords.[95]

Projects like the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project show that technology cannot be the only defining feature of digital history or of the broader digital humanities. Miriam Posner, for instance, has warned against the fetishization of code among digital humanists, arguing that, for instance, calls to encourage women and persons of color to learn to code fail to confront longstanding structural inequalities.[96] And even code, critics argue, is not valueless. "There is no

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[89] Carol Fadda et al, *Democratizing Knowledge Project* [http://democratizingknowledge.syr.edu/index.html].

[90] "Public history is not only history for a large audience," Thomas Cauvin explains, "but involves public participation as well." Thomas Cauvin, *Public History: A Textbook of Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 179.

[91] Laurenellen McCann, "Building Technology With, Not For Communities: An Engagement Guide for Civic Tech," *Medium.com*, March 30, 2015. https://medium.com/@elle_mccann/building-technology-with-not-for-communities-an-engagement-guide-for-civic-tech-b8880982e65a. See also Wendy F. Hsu, "Lessons on Public Humanities from the Civic Sphere," in *Debates 2016*.

[92] Anne Burdick et al, *Digital_Humanities*, 93.

[93] See Sharon Leon, "About," in *User-Centered Digital History*, https://digitalpublichistory.org/about.

[94] As the American Studies Association's Digital Humanities Caucus put it in 2016, American studies has been "a welcoming home for innovative, critical, boundary-pushing, justice-based, and experimental work." "DH Caucus Advisory Committee Statement on AQ's Digital Projects Review," *American Studies Association* (April 6, 2016) [https://www.theasa.net/about/news-events/announcements/dh-caucus-advisory-committee-statement-aq%E2%80%99s-digital-projects-review].

[95] *The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project* [http://www.antievictionmap.com/].

[96] Miriam Posner, "Some things to think about before you exhort everyone to code," *Miriam Posner's Blog: Digital Humanities, Data, Labor, and Information* (February 29, 2012), https://miriamposner.com/blog/some-things-to-think-about-before-you-exhort-everyone-to-code/. Safiya Noble likewise has identified the push to get black girls to

such thing as a 'merely technical' design decision," wrote Julia Flanders. "Our technical systems are meaning systems and ideological systems."[97] Safiya Noble, likewise, argues that "the political, social and economic dimensions of technologies" are all "co-constituted in racialized and gendered ways that involve power and often foster and maintain systematic discrimination and oppression."[98] Kim Gallon calls for "a technology of recovery, characterized by efforts to bring forth the full humanity of marginalized peoples through the use of digital platforms and tools." Digital historians, such calls suggest, must work to recover not just lost voices but paradigms of imagination occluded by longstanding power inequalities. Gallon champions the "black digitial humanities," which, she argues, "troubles the very core of what we have come to know as the humanities by recovering alternate constructions of humanity that have been historically excluded from that concept."[99]Fiona Barnett, Zach Blas, micha cárdenas, Jacob Gaboury, Jessica Marie Johnson, and Margaret Rhee, drawing on the work of queer theorist Kara Keeling, created QueerOS to confront the inequalities embedded in our digital tools.[100]

Critical race and gender studies, as such comments show, have offered the most pointed criticisms of DH and reminds practitioners that democratization demands a reckoning with deeper, structural inequalities.[101] Lisa Nakamura, for instance, argues that race and racism suffuse our digital lives.[102] Whiteness, critics argue, suffuses the field.[103] Coding has been

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code as "an individualized, privatized approach to thinking about Black women's empowerment, in neoliberal fashion." Safiya Umoja Noble, "A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies." *Scholar & Feminist Online* 13, no. 3–14, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

[97] Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont, eds., *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and Digital Humanities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), xvii. For the relationship of DH's digital tools and broader values, see Natalia Cecire, "Introduction: Theory and the Virtues of Digital Humanities." *Journal of Digital Humanities* (2011), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/introduction-theory-and-the-virtues-of-digital-humanities-by-natalia-cecire/; Stephen Ramsay, "On Building." *Stephen Ramsay Blog*, January 11, 2011. http://stephenramsay.us/text/2011/01/11/on-building/; and Tom Scheinfeldt, ""Where's the Beef? Does Digital Humanities Have to Answer Questions?" In *Debates 2012*), http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/18.; and Roopika Risam, "Navigating the Global Digital Humanities: Insights from Black Feminism," *Debates 2016*,; Siva Vaidhyanathan, "Afterword: Critical Information Studies," *Cultural Studies* Volume 20, No 2-3 (2006), 292-315.

[98] Safiya Umoja Noble, "Toward a Critical Black Digital Humanities," in *Debates 2019*. See also Noble, "A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies," *Scholar & Feminist Online* 13, no. 3–14, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

[99] Kim Gallon, "Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities," in *Debates 2016,* [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016].

[100] Fiona Barnett, Zach Blas, Micha Cárdenas, Jacob Gaboury, Jessica Marie Johnson, and Margaret Rhee, "QueerOS: A User's Manual," in *Debates 2016,* [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016].

[101] See, for instance. Jessie Daniels, "Race and Racism in Internet Studies: A Review and Critique," *New Media and Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): 695–719.

[102] Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Legal scholar Jerry Kang was among the earliest to consider how race and representation function on the web. Jerry Kang, "Cyber-Race," *Harvard Law Review* 113, no. 5 (2002): 1130–1208. See also Jessica Marie Johnson and Mark Anthony Neal, "Introduction: Wild Seed in the Machine," *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research* Vol 47, No 3 (2017).

[103] See, for instance, Moya Z. Bailey, "All the Digital Humanists Are White, All the Nerds Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave," *Journal Of Digital Humanities* (Winter 2011); and Tara McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation," in *Debates 2012*.

thoroughly gendered.[104] Black feminists such as Safiya Umoja Noble—who urges digital humanities to "consider the degree to which our very reliance on digital tools … exacerbates existing patterns of exploitation and at times even creates new ones"—continue to shine a light on patterns of marginalization that lurk in supposedly value-neutral digital worlds.[105]

Pedagogically minded digital humanities projects have especially taken these criticisms to heart. William Thomas and Elizabeth Lorang, for instance, advocated "an alternative modality of engagement with the digital on our campuses—one built around reciprocity, openness, local community, and particularity."[106] Amy E. Earhart of Texas A&M, a large public land-grant university, and Toniesha L. Taylor of Prairie View A&M, a nearby historically black land-grant university, turned these ideas into practice. Their *White Violence, Black Resistance Project* sought not only to "bring to light timely historical documents" but also, employing students from both institutions, to "expose power differentials in our own institutional settings."[107] Such projects remind us that, however well-funded and well-defined it becomes as an academic field, the digital humanities betrays its founding principles if it remains confined to an esoteric community of coders and tech-utopians. It must be practiced with fundamental ends in mind. It must be designed to be used. It must privilege accessibility. It must seek out readers and reach actual users. And it must draw upon the insights of humanities scholarship to push the boundaries of what democracy means by exposing and confronting the inequalities that suffuse our objects of study as well as our professional structures.

Digital history is certainly capable of refashioning professional paradigms. Its much-touted emphasis on collaboration, for instance, cannot be underestimated. In 2011, AHA president Anthony Grafton urged historians to reject the myth of the solitary scholar. Arguing against Wilhelm von Humboldt's idealization of "loneliness and freedom" as the hallmarks of academic life, Grafton wrote, "there is much to be gained by recognizing, and promoting, collaboration … and, with it, the elements of joy and creative fantasy that can too easily be lost as we go about our traditionally lonely craft."[108] If academic historians typically toil under a professional

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[104] Janet Abbate chronicled how the representation of coding evolved from a feminine activity in the mid-twentieth century to a masculine one at the dawn of the twenty-first. Janet Abbate, *Recoding Gender: Women's Changing Participation in Computing* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012). For gender and DH, see also Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in Simians, *Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991); Deb Verhoeven, "Has Anyone Seen a Woman?" Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations Speech, (2015), debverhoeven.com/anyone-seen-a-woman. On intersectionality, see especially Roopika Risam, "Beyond the Margins: Intersectionality and the Digital Humanities," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9 (2015); and Safiya Umoja Noble and Brendesha M. Tynes, editors, *The Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class, and Culture Online* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016).

[105] Safiya Umoja Noble, "A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies." *Scholar & Feminist Online* 13, no. 3–14, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

[106] "William G. Thomas III, and Elizabeth Lorang. "The Other End of the Scale: Rethinking the Digital Experience in Higher Education," *Educause Review* (September 15, 2014).

[107] Amy E. Earhart and Toniesha L. Taylor, "Pedagogies of Race: Digital Humanities in the Age of Ferguson," in *Debates 2016*, [https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities-2016].

[108] Anthony Grafton, "Loneliness and Freedom," *Perspectives: The Newsletter of the American Historical Association*, 49 (March 2011) [https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2011/loneliness-and-freedom].

paradigm designed for the isolated scholar, the so-called "digital turn" and the rise of digital history have generated new collaborative energy that spills across traditional research opportunities: new technologies and emerging paradigms are facilitating academic collaboration. And it need not even be institutionalized. Andrew Torget, reflecting on his early work at the University of Virginia and arguing that "digital projects by necessity require collaboration," nevertheless believed collaboration could be flexible and informal. "I see," he said, "a movement towards collaborative teams built around projects and problems that will last for as long as the project or problem does. You may have a home department, but you will also have collaborative teams that form and dissolve over time depending on what you're working on."[109] But is collaboration enough?

A democratized history still beckons. Over two decades of work in digital history and digital humanities has opened access to resources. Universities and grant-giving institutions have provided homes for practitioners. University presses are embracing open scholarship and professional norms have shifted accordingly. In the meantime, digital humanities scholars have built proper platforms for new projects: vast worlds of knowledge are within reach of any average web user. Building a textbook is as easy as signing up for Wordpress. Inviting mass collaboration is as easy as installing a CommentPress plug-in. Encouraging students to communicate with a text—and with each other—is as easy as a one-click Hypothes.is install. A personally curated exhibit is as easy as a visit to a digital humanities librarian and an installation of the Omeka platform. But democratization isn't something that just happens on its own, and democracy isn't some fortunate byproduct of technological advancement.

If much early work in digital history was grounded in the radical democratic vision of the 1960s and 1970s, much of the contemporary push for digitization of scholarship and pedagogy borrows equally from neoliberal mania for "disruption" and libertarian notions of techno-futurism. By spanning the rise and maturation of digital history and the digital humanities, invocations of "democratization" have transcended their original context and threaten to become just another tool for digital humanists to carve out greater and greater academic space for their work and for themselves. But such invocations have also allowed practitioners to challenge traditional academic boundaries surrounding the production of distribution of knowledge. "Democracy" is, and always has been, at root a discourse about power: about agency and access and equality, and "democratization," therefore, cannot rely on institutions, philanthropy, or even technology alone, but must emerge consciously alongside critical self-reflection in the conception and execution of the work that will continue to push digital history forward.

[109] Scott Nesbit et al, "A Conversation with Digital Historians," *Southern Spaces* (January 31, 2012) [https://southernspaces.org/2012/conversation-digital-historians].