Enhance Meaning-Making in the Classroom with Digital Humanities

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Digital Humanities and Social Sciences (DHSS) is an umbrella of convergent practices that enhance and expand the work of Humanities and/or Social Sciences due to the explicit intersection of Humanities and Social Science research and pedagogies with digital tools and technologies.

https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/front-matter/introduction/
With the explicit use of digital tools and technologies in the classroom, we can invite our students to build and innovate, analyze and create, and become better thinkers and doers in our interdisciplinary and multiliterate world.

https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/front-matter/introduction/
Two views of DHSS

Computing

The development or augmentation of tools and technologies that can enhance data generation, collection, analysis, and publication

Meaning Making

“Harnessing computer power to facilitate, improve, expand and perhaps change” the work of Humanities and Social Sciences (Gardiner and Musto 2015, 4-5)

https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/chapter/what-is-dhss/
Our Focus is on **Meaning Making**

Doing Digital Humanities and Social Sciences in Your Classroom

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https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/
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Theory

- What is DHSS?
- DHSS in Your Classroom
- Our Project
- Pedagogical Commitments
- Helpful Resources
- Bibliography and Reading List
Practice

Step 1: Choose a DHSS assignment. Or, in other words, identify the scale of the project you want your students to engage in.

Step 2: Select appropriate materials. Ensure that the material you will have your students use is free from copyright restrictions.

Step 3: Explore examples of DHSS projects for your students to review.

Step 4: Provide clear expectations.

Step 5: Invite students to engage.

Step 6: Assess accordingly.
DHSS Assignment Guides

- Digital Archive
- Online Exhibit
- Oral History Digital Story
- Metadata Creation
- Mapping Primary Sources
- Proving/Disproving an Argument
- Transcription and Data Visualization
- Historical Image Analysis
- Public Education-Style Image Analysis

Developed based on best practices demonstrated by our students
What might this look like?

Metadata Creation/Archival Description

**Creating Metadata as a DHSS Assignment**

Featuring work from Wendy Alejandro Medina De Loera’s exhibit “The Making of a Digital Archive. By a Non-archivist.”

Metadata is “data about data.” You could also think about metadata as archival description for digital items. Metadata creation may not seem like the type of work that could replace a short essay but getting your students to thoughtfully develop metadata for digital items can be a rich, critical, and analytical task for students to think about how what is available to be accessed in digital spaces.

https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/chapter/metadata-creation/

Online Exhibit

**Creating an Exhibit as a DHSS Assignment**

Featuring work from Denise Challenger’s exhibit “Playin’ Mas. Play and Mas: A pedagogical journey of children and Caribana, 1970-1974”

When we ask students to write an essay, we’re looking for them to develop an argument and draw evidence from scholarly sources to support that argument.

Developing an online exhibit can achieve similar goals as an essay in that it can answer a research question and provide a thesis – an answer to that research question – but in an online exhibit, your students can use both primary and secondary digital material to curate and prove their thesis in a public, online forum.

https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/chapter/online-exhibit/
The word *text*, after all, derives from the Latin *textus*, meaning that which is woven, strands of different material intertwined together. Let the warp be words and the weft be something else entirely… I am moving away from asking students to write toward asking them to weave. To build, to fabricate, to design.

Benefit of DHSS assignments:

- Access
- Community engagement
- Experiential learning – “activating” their learning
- Limits of knowledge
- Rights of use and creation
- Collaboration

https://pressbooks.library.yorku.ca/dhssinstructorsguide/chapter/pedagogical-commitments/
Collaborative DHSS with Libraries and Archives

• The role of York University Libraries as a partner engaging the university community and in developing a range of new and established scholarly communication activities
• Important for faculty learning and professional development
• Pilot, iterate, operationalize DHSS support tools and programming at the Libraries to provide campus support (default of open, accessible to all students/faculty/staff regardless of affiliation)
Minding Our Rights and the Rights of Others

Starting with Our Audience

Centre Community Outreach

Connecting with Creators

Iterative Design

Scalable and Sustainable Systems

Cultivating Communities of Practice

Source: Digital Preservation Tool Kit.
Illustrator Tom Woolley
Let us try:

Metadata Creation/Archival Description

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Metadata readings


Creating an Exhibit as a DHSS Assignment

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Digital Humanities and Social Sciences Exhibit Outline

- Exhibit Title:
- Collection featured:
- Exhibit topic:
- Question your exhibit answers/addresses:
- The “answer” to this question. The thesis of your exhibit:
- What is the breakdown of your exhibit? How will the answer/addressing be shown? What are the pages in your exhibit? What materials are you using on each page? (see note below):
- Exhibit audience:
- What are considerations you have to make for those audiences (i.e., an audience of experts would require different reference points than an audience of generalists. Who is your imagined audience? How are you developing the exhibit for them?):

*Note:* I am recommending outlining your exhibit in a document form you may be more familiar with, such as Word or Powerpoint, to rough-in the content and links. This way you can develop your content while also learning the software. This may better separate the struggles (and successes!) of one from the other, as well as maximize your time in the development of the whole.
All four of our students created exhibits through this project, but Denise Challenge’s mini-exhibit “Locating Children in Caribana” was designed the most like an essay your students could replicate in a course.

Just like if she was writing an essay, Denise started her exhibit with a research question, which was: How do the photographs of Kiddies Carnival founder Kenn Shah demonstrate the different ways children “officially” participated in Caribana from 1967-1977?

Denise then engaged in a reflective and then a structured analysis of photos from her digitized archive. From these reflections, Denise developed an answer to her research question, her thesis, which was: Kenn Shah’s photographs demonstrate that children both received and transmitted Caribbean culture during Caribana in three locations:

1. On the fixed stage, as competitive performers or ceremonial ambassadors
2. On the moving stage of the main road, as masqueraders or costumed accompaniments
3. On the side road, without costumes but as spectators

As a way to exhibit her findings, Denise then created a “carousel” of primary source images that provided evidence for each of these locations.
Interested in DHSS in Your Classroom?

1. Visit our Instructor’s Guide
2. Learn about opportunities to collaborate with Library
Ways to Collaborate with the Libraries

1. Integrated lecture and teaching module in our areas of expertise

2. Primary source documentation unique to YorkU for course assignments

3. Instructional support on hosted software

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Image citations

- St.Onge, Anna. Photographs of AIF research assistants, 2018.