

Looking Backward, Linking Together, Leaping Forward: Web-Based Archival Analysis and Presentation in Writing Assignments Across Four College Campuses

Davidson College

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We will collaborate on this project with teams from three other ACS institutions. Currently, we are pursuing specific possibilities at the University of Richmond, Washington and Lee, and Spelman College. In an effort to locate collaborators, we have also contacted ACS institutions more broadly through an email both to faculty administrators and to faculty who have participated in previous ACS grants/workshops. As soon as collaborative partners have been finalized, we will add that information to the grant application.

Abstract

In this project, students from humanities and social science courses at four ACS institutions will investigate the causes and/or effects of major historic events—such as its change to co-education, its desegregation, or the impact of the Civil War—at their colleges. Their investigation will result in several collaborative web pages, all focused on one of the events in relation to each participating institution. The pages will include

- A collaborative introduction that contextualizes the event in the region;
- Links to individual student analyses of specific causes or effects at their institutions;
- Links to selected archival materials relevant to the team project;
- Links to each institution's archives.

Rationale

This project enhances student information fluency in several ways:

1. It emphasizes analysis of primary research materials. Working closely with college archivists and their class professors, students will improve their ability to evaluate source materials as part of the research process.
2. It emphasizes the benefit of multi-faceted analysis: students will learn through asynchronous conversations (using the Blackboard courseware management system) with their peers at other institutions how their local experiences compare. Analyzing the trans-institutional results of the research project will further encourage students to reflect upon their research process.
3. It emphasizes oral presentation of research materials; each student team will give a presentation on its project to the class: these presentations will be shared with students at participating institutions through video, video conferencing, or streaming.
4. The project encourages a deepened student understanding of web-based writing and accentuates how this medium differs from that offered by a traditional print-based presentation of research.

5. The project promotes strengthened electronic technical skills—notably, web page authoring and threaded collaboration—for both students and their professor, who will work closely with student assistants and instructional technologists in preparing for this project. Students will also gain experience in scanning and preparing digital documents from scanned images.

In addition, this project more broadly enhances institutional information fluency:

1. The final web pages will both improve source availability (through web posting of specified sources) and publicize each institution's archival materials to the campus community and beyond.
2. Participating in the project will enable each institution to address specific gaps—perhaps within instructional technology or archival access and use--and encourage greater pedagogic collaboration between ACS institutions.

Preliminary Description

We envision this project in three phases, all of which are described below.

Phase One: Planning and Preparation Summer 2002

Participating faculty, archivists/librarians, and IT staff will meet at Davidson to select the specific events to be investigated at each campus (this decision depends heavily on the history of and availability of archival materials at each institution). Each team will discuss its specific needs and craft a specific budget for the grant. We anticipate that needs may range from planning a site consultation with our archivist or instructional technologist to hiring student assistants, securing release time for the archivist/librarian, or purchasing hardware or software.

During this one-day meeting, Shireen Campbell, Kristen Eshleman, and Jan Blodgett will describe their pilot project in detail. Participants will review the results of that project as a springboard for discussing the logistics of and establishing evaluative procedures for the larger project.

Phase Two: Implementation

Students will complete a pre-project assessment of their information literacy and electronic literacy. The project will extend over four or five weeks of class during Spring 2003, with one class day devoted to an extensive tour of college archives, two days devoted to workshops on authoring and evaluating web pages, and several days to class analysis of strategies and problems associated with causal analysis and class discussion of evaluating and skillfully incorporating sources. Each team will spend several days in their college archives exploring and subdividing selected topics and several days collaborating with a student technical assistant on web page creation.

In addition to the pedagogical goals related to information fluency described above, the project also emphasizes the importance of effective collaboration. For example, students will meet as a class to discuss general issues of source evaluation, then work in teams with the archivist to assess specific sources related to their projects, then collaborate to decide which sources to have posted to the project web page. Asynchronous electronic

conversations with their investigative peers at other institutions will expand these collaborations beyond each campus.

Phase Three: Evaluation and Dissemination

Students will evaluate and reflect upon this experience in several ways. Each group will give a presentation on its project to the class: these presentations will be shared with students at participating institutions through video, video conferencing, or streaming. Students will be given a post-project evaluation of their information fluency: they will also fill out a common project evaluation form using an online survey tool available through Davidson College. Finally, students in each class will participate in written analysis of/reflection on both the process and product of this project.

Faculty and staff will reconvene in Summer 2003 to assess the project results and to discuss how this type of trans-institutional collaboration improves information fluency at participating institutions. The group will then present its findings at the next available ACS gathering.

Plans for Evaluation

See Phase Three above.

Plans for Dissemination

The class projects themselves will be available on-line; the grant recipients will submit the project to various sites that gather links for on-line exhibits, including the Smithsonian's Library and Archival Exhibits on the Web. Notices will also be sent to appropriate listservs (Archives and Archivists, Society of North Carolina Archivists) to announce the project and resulting web pages as models for other college archives to use. During the planning phase, each institution will further clarify plans for dissemination. The Davison site, for example, will be submitted to North Carolina ECHO (Exploring Cultural Heritage Online), which gathers links for on-line exhibits. Updates on the project will be placed in the Society of North Carolina Archivists and North Carolina Library Association's publications. The Davidson Archives site is included on the UNESCO archives portal, which guarantees international exposure for this project. Finally, the Davidson team will add the project to the ACS Information Fluency database.

Preferred time of year: Summer 2002 through Summer 2003

Preliminary Budget

Although our amount requested exceeds the normal project budget parameters of between \$2,500 to \$5,000, we believe that the geographical dispersion and potential to improve information fluency for a wide variety of constituencies within ACS justifies the increased expenditure

Phase One : Travel to Davidson, NC, for one day meeting 2010.00

We are seeking grant partners from area institutions that are both within five hours proximity to Davidson (to minimize travel costs) and as diverse as possible from each other. If we wind up with participants from institutions scattered more widely across the ACS region, travel costs would be higher.

These figures assume that 3 institutions will send 3 people to Davidson for the meeting.

Room	55.00 per person	495.00
Board	45.00 per person	390.00
Mileage/flights	125.00 per person	1125.00

(Note: some participants will drive, while others may fly, so this is an estimate)

Phase Two: Implementation of the project on each campus 4, 000.00-5,000.00

Each campus will have different staffing or technical needs. Some may hire a student assistant to work with student groups on web page authoring. We estimate costs for consulting time at an average of 3 hours per student at the rate of \$10/hour: in other words, a class of 20 students will likely require a consultant to work 60 hours. At \$10/hour, the institution should plan to spend \$800. Other colleges may need to fund release time for a librarian/archivist in order to prepare for and facilitate the project.

In terms of technical expenses, institutions may need to purchase a web authoring program such as Dreamweaver (estimated cost 100.00 per institution), a high-quality scanner (estimated cost 500.00 per institution), or other hardware/software. Specific institutional needs and a more detailed budget will be developed during Summer 2002.

Phase Three: Evaluation and Dissemination 2, 010.00

Participating teams will reconvene in Summer 2003 to assess the results of this project and to discuss how this type of trans-institutional collaboration improves information fluency at participating institutions. The group will then present its findings at the next available ACS gathering.

If we met again at Davidson for assessment and discussion, then sent a delegation to the next ACS meeting (with those travel costs to be subsidized by an ACS travel fund), we can assume approximate costs comparable to those of Phase One, with the same caveat as noted under Phase One.

Room	55.00 per person	495.00
Board	45.00 per person	390.00
Mileage/flights	125.00 per person	1125.00

(Note: some participants will drive, while others may fly, so this is an estimate)

TOTAL REQUESTED BUDGET **\$ 8, 020.00-9,020.00**