

CTL Fellow Mid-Year Report
(5/19/2022)
“Collaborating on Collaboration”
Faculty: Karyn Zieve, History of Art and Design

Spring 2022
Project Synopsis and Perspective

Early in the spring, this project pivoted from an attempt to consider cross-disciplinary efforts to center on collaboration. One of many vehicles for cross-disciplinary work, collaboration came into focus as something worthy of closer consideration in and of itself. As we look for more inclusive and creative ways of working together as faculty, students, and administration - as individuals and communities - what can collaboration teach us or help us to teach each other? How do we distinguish collaboration from participation or teamwork? How can collaboration best be used in educational structures to develop both the individual and community?

Recognizing that the project would benefit from practice as well as research, it centers on three goals: the development of an assignment, a course and a program. Each will have a mode or structure for collaboration but the evolution of each also will depend on collaborative work. While each was in a different stage at the start of the spring, they represent contrasting ways to both engage in, develop and observe modes of collaboration. Each entails distinct kinds of risk-taking, participation, and notions of productivity and impact.

Project Questions (initial, subsequent and emerging)

- How are the needs similar and different between types of collaborations?
- How does one distinguish between participation and collaboration?
- How do we work with balance and imbalance in collaboration?
- What role does knowledge and authority play in collaboration?
- How and where do groups take risks? What helps with risk-taking?
- How do we address, evaluate and acknowledge credit, effort and product in a collaboration?
- Power and boundaries! How can collaborations shift boundaries and hierarchies in healthy ways?
- What new attitudes to relationships can come from collaboration?

Project Elements

- I. Program: Minor in Digital Humanities (held by the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences)
 - A. This project seemed the furthest from completion but in fact leaped forward and was just approved by the ICC. It entailed closest collaboration with HAD Chair, John Decker, co-designer as well as Basem Aly, Associate Director of Research and Strategic Projects, IT and Emergent Technologies Curriculum Coordinator in the School of Liberal Arts & Science. On a broader level it depended on conversations with faculty and staff in each of the SLAS departments, the School of Information (in particular, Chris Sula, the Advisor to the Digital Humanities Certificate), faculty and staff in the Digital Humanities Working Group, faculty in Communications Design, Digital Arts and Fashion and Library, and Library staff. Students (graduate and undergraduate) were also consulted in order to better gauge interest and background. Most of this occurred through conversations, meetings, emails and working on shared documents.
 - B. The proposal contains 3 syllabi, narratives, and a curricular framework (see below for Program Description). In each of the new syllabi that belong to the Core Menu, collaborative work is required.
 - C. Challenges and lingering questions:
 1. While the development of the minor relied on multiple people whether through conversations, resources and support, it was more or less driven by a few. Is this collaboration?

2. The minor can soar through cross-disciplinary and collaborative work but how can a culture of collaboration be fostered?
3. How can we ensure a conversation is collaborative?

II. Course Proposal: Exhibition Practicum

- A. This proposal is in the early stages of development. The course would offer students the opportunity to collaborate on the curation and design of an exhibition drawn from the Pratt Archives (at least initially) and displayed in the Pratt Library. Students would be able to attend to all the aspects of an exhibition from selection of them and items to writing labels to layout to website presence and programming.
- B. The exhibition practicum emerged from a similar experience at the Center for Brooklyn History (formerly Brooklyn Historical Society) as well as conversations across students and faculty, particularly in museum studies classes. The proposal was presented to the library and archive staff, and explored with faculty across departments, especially those in the History of Art and Design who teach museum studies and related topics, as well as students (graduate and undergraduate) and colleagues at other institutions. Dialogue about the logistics continue.
- C. Challenges and lingering questions:
 1. How does a group give structure to collaboration while allowing for infinite possibility?
 2. How do collaborators address conflict?
 3. How can collaboration accommodate a variety of interpretations? How much variety can successful collaboration tolerate?
 4. How is a collaboration documented?

III. Assignment: Student-Directed Assignment for a 300-level course

- A. The assignment is part of a dialogue with HAD colleague, Erica Morawski and her Inclusive pedagogies initiative; we have also met to discuss both over zoom and on a shared Milanote board. It will entail collaboration across HAD faculty that teach 300-level courses as well as their students.
- B. This student-driven assignment would be applicable across a variety of 300-level courses and might have a range of outcomes as well as structures from low-stakes to more substantial work.
- C. Challenges and lingering questions:
 1. Is collaboration inherently inclusive?
 2. How does a group maintain flexibility along with rigor?
 3. How broadly can collaboration redefine product or outcome?

IV. Surprise Element: Student Collaboration

- A. In the midst of this CTL Fellow project reorientation, students in my Curating Culture class decided to collaborate on a final project: an annotated timeline (or series of timelines) based on analysis of Pratt archival materials from the Pratt Graphic Center. The students organized the structure and division of topics and labor for the project. They shared materials, findings, and resources to varying degrees. This endeavor enabled me to be more of an observer than an active participant while recognizing the role of a professor in nurturing collaboration.
- B. In the supplementary materials below please find a snapshot of the final project and excerpted reflections.
- C. Challenges and lingering questions:
 1. How can a faculty member support balance in collaboration without inserting oneself? How do collaborators address imbalance?
 2. Does “credit” matter?
 3. How do collaborators maintain motivation and support without exerting authority?
 4. How can we rethink effective communication?

Fall 2022 Plans

- Course design (discussions with library staff and faculty, drafting, editing, curriculum review process)
- Inclusive assignment design (research, discussions, drafting, editing)
- Possible use of smaller collaboration exercises in a course, followed by reflections
- Continued research and building of bibliography on collaboration (pedagogy, theory, interpretation, art/design/fiction).
- Further interviews, reflections and feedback.
- Broaden discussion with community.

Supplemental Materials

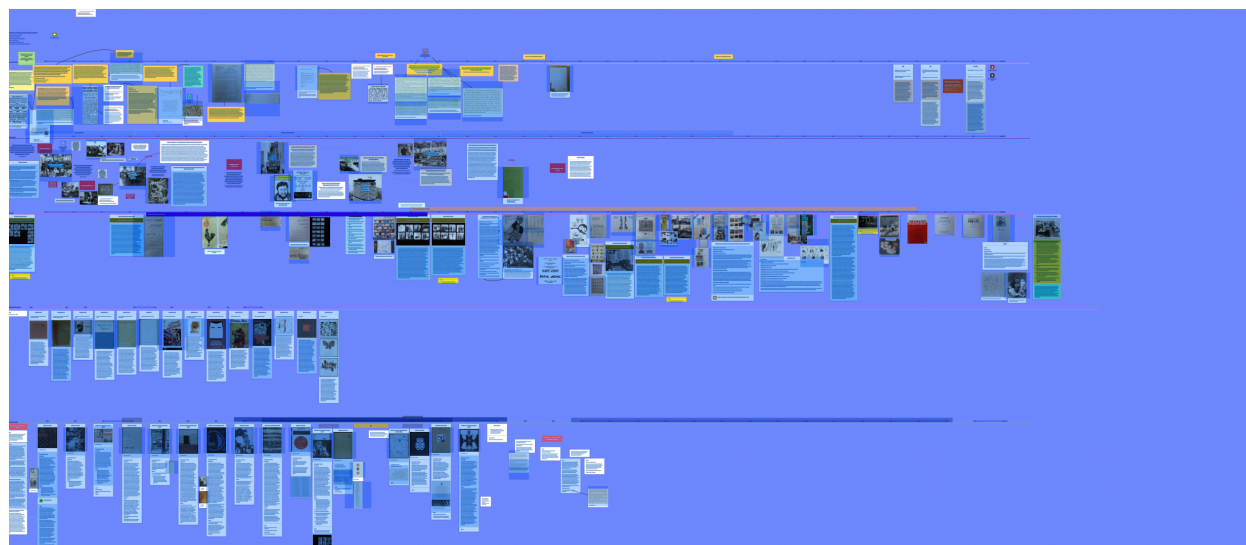
I. Digital Humanities Narrative Description (*the full proposal and curricular framework is available for those interested; just reach out*)

A Digital Humanities (DH) Minor enables students to gain greater fluency in the use of digital tools and procedures to probe topics in the humanities, arts, and cultural heritage and to deepen their understanding of the field's history and theory. Whether through data and computation, mapping or visualization, DH opens up avenues for analysis, communication and interpretation, provides tools to carry out multi-level investigations and expands potential for interdisciplinary projects and civic engagement.

Digital tools employed in DH are applicable to a variety of fields and situations and enable students to think about areas of humanities research in more expansive, creative and productive ways. Students, for example, can employ text analysis, data mining, visualization, modeling and simulation, geospatial analysis and mapping, multimedia storytelling, information design, and network analysis to dig deeply into research questions in the humanities, social sciences, arts, and design fields. Consequently, they will become better at forming questions, solutions and applications.

As mentioned, interdisciplinarity is a key component of the DH minor. Not only does the minor program better equip students to make connections and apply what they know across areas of study and practice but also to more effectively participate in team-based projects. Thus, while the DH minor sits in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, by its nature, it invites relationships with all of the art and design departments.

II. Snapshot of Class collaborative timeline (original on Milanote) and Reflections



Excerpts from student reflections:

“...watching how other people interacted with the archives or looked for information was really useful in teaching me how to look at the material in different ways.”

“Projects can be so big and seem impossible to cover all the necessary ground. It requires so much labor. We cut the piece into sections and then seeing the full picture (for the most part) was amazing.”

“...doing research is always a difficult task to me, and by working with my colleagues I gain some crucial research skills.”

“...communication should be especially important.”

“Initially, it had seemed like everyone was really excited to jump and everyone was throwing out really ambitious but exciting ideas, but everyone’s schedules...seemed to be more strained than usual and we just had to accept that the end product wasn’t going to be what we initially envisioned.”

“it was still great to see a final product that wasn’t just my own. I loved being able to discuss topics and the material as a team and go through primary documents with my peers. Everyone approached the material so differently, so it was great to see how that came through on the board.”

III. Inclusive Pedagogies Milanote Board (under construction).