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## 58.1/2 Guest Editor's Introduction

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## Guest Editors' Introduction

ORVILLE VERNON BURTON, JOSHUA CATALANO, AND JOZEFIEN DE BOCK

The American South has been a focus of digital scholarship for decades. From the statistical analyses of the 1960s and 1970s through the era of “new media” in the 1990s, scholars have turned to technology to help document, analyze, and share their work. In late 2017, Philip Kolin, then editor of *The Southern Quarterly*, wrote to Vernon Burton asking if he would guest-edit an issue for the journal on the Digital South to highlight some of the new work in the field and reflect on the changes from the past half-century. Because Burton and Clemson University were working to establish the first doctoral degree in digital history in the United States, the chair of the history department encouraged Burton to take on the task. At that time Burton was co-teaching a graduate digital history class and visiting Fulbright Scholar Jozefien DeBock of the Netherlands was sitting in on the seminar and volunteered to work with Burton to put together this special issue. Bringing on board DeBock gave us an international perspective to the work on the Digital South. We put together announcements and calls for proposals, and we contacted individual scholars and teams of scholars who we knew were doing projects on the Digital South. In the meantime, another digital historian, Joshua Catalano, arrived at Clemson in 2018 and agreed to join as the third editor of the volume. Catalano received his Ph.D. from George Mason University, where he was trained both as a public historian and in the latest techniques in digital history. Together, we started reading the submissions, finding peer reviewers, and reaching out to digital project creators and practitioners to fill gaps in content matter.

We received so many great submissions that we decided to divide the issue into three sections: the first section consists of a series of full-length articles. In “Mapping the New Gay South: Queer Space and Southern Life 1965-1980,” Eric Gonzaba and Amanda Regan use digital mapping methods to reveal the presence of a growing and diverse LGBTQ community

fighting for civil rights and equality in the latest iteration of a “New South.” Their insights are drawn from their work on *Mapping the Gay Guides*, a project which digitized and visualized Bob Damron’s *Address Books* of LGBTQ-friendly establishments across the United States.

In another employment of digital tools and methods, Gregory P. Downs and Scott Nesbit demonstrate in “Zones of Occupation, Zones of Access: Digital History and the Spatial World of Emancipation” how analysis drawn from spatial visualization techniques used in *Mapping Occupation* and other projects contributed to ongoing discussions and lines of inquiry to advance Reconstruction historiography.

Shifting away from mapping to three-dimensional modeling, Chad Keller argues for the need of standardized digital documentation of historic architecture in order to ensure that this work is both preserved and accessible in the future. In “Toward Standardized Digital Documentation of Historic Architecture: Process, Subjectivity, and Repurposing Data using Historic Lowcountry Sites,” Keller focuses examples from the Lowcountry of Georgia and South Carolina to highlight the promises and challenges of three-dimensional methods of documentation such as terrestrial laser scanning (TLS) and the Structure from Motion (SfM) process.

The second section is a project carousel that provides an opportunity for additional scholars to highlight their important work in a shorter format. The carousel includes projects at various stages of development and provides a sampling of the range of innovative scholarship on the Digital South. We begin with projects that incorporate a spatial component to their interpretation. In “The Spatial Geographies of Skilled Black Labor” Tiffany Momon and Torren Gatson discuss the creation of the *The Black Craftspeople Digital Archive* (BCDA), which seeks to augment what we know about Black craftspeople by telling both a spatial narrative and an historically-informed story. Throughout the years, scholars and historians have worked to bring attention to the contributions of African American craftspeople; however, these works often exist separately of one another. The goal of the BCDA is to bring together what we know about African American craftspeople into a centralized publicly accessible website that not only provides biographical sketches of known craftspeople, but that also connects them to the objects they created and the landscapes in which they lived.

In “Mapping the Imagined South in Contemporary Southern Cookbooks,” Carrie Helms Tippen examines the current concept of Southern food. Working with a team of undergraduate research assistants and interns, the project collected and geolocated all of the places specifically named in ten commercially published cookbooks released between 2009 and 2015 that explicitly represent Southern cuisine in their titles or marketing. The re-

sulting maps illustrate the wide range of places that writers associated with Southern food, while density or heat-mapping also shows repetition of locations that become the centers of the cookbook's imagined Southern world.

Next we have a series of projects that seek to bring inaccessible or understudied sources to a wider audience. In "The Web, the Archive, and the Morgue," Stephen Berry meditates on the critical importance of the maturation of death records for laying bare the truth about how people die differently in the South. Focusing on the digitization and datification of coroners' records, Berry considers how librarians and historians are creating a digital seedbed for a reconsideration of the history of the South as we commonly understand it.

Shifting the source base from coroners' reports to bills of sale, Claire Heckel and Brian Robinson present *People Not Property- Slave Deeds of North Carolina*. Led by the University Libraries of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), this collaborative project makes available for the first time thousands of digitized and transcribed slave deeds and bills of sale held by county registrars of deeds all across North Carolina.

Moving from records access to communication, David Herr, the former list editor of H-South and current H-South board member, reviews the first convergence of the internet and Southern history: H-South. In the first history of H-South, he explains that within this medium everyone was invited to contemplate all things Southern and sometimes the results went viral before "viral" was a thing.

We conclude the section with a collection of digital public humanities projects. Andrea Ringer presents *Nashville Behind Bars*, a public-facing digital exhibit built and cultivated by students. The project is a collaborative and innovative project, which allowed students to engage in hands-on histories of mass incarceration, thus enabling them to visibly see the Southern parts of a national story. It is a living exhibit, with each new class shaping its direction and adding another layer to what we know about mass incarceration and prison experiences in Nashville.

Heading from Tennessee to North Carolina, Elijah Gaddis presents *Digital Rocky Mount Mills*, which offers a site where you can explore the history of the second-oldest cotton mill in the state and witness its transformation into a mixed-use space for local residents. The site offers resources and information for those interested in the mill's history, the North Carolina textile industry, K-12 pedagogy, African American genealogy, oral history and memory, historic preservation, and economic development.

Traveling down I-85 we arrive in Greenville, South Carolina where Jozefien De Bock presents a developing project called *The Integration of the Textile Industry: A History of Discrimination, Civil Rights and Affirma-*

*tive Action*. This educational resource brings together primary and secondary sources for students to explore and learn more about equal employment opportunities and affirmative action.

Staying in Appalachia, Stefan Schoeberlein and Kristen Lillvis discuss *Movable: Narratives of Recovery and Place*, a public history and advocacy project that shares, highlights, and documents stories of recovery in Appalachia and beyond. Through writing workshops, participatory mapping sessions, and an online submission portal, *Movable* editors collect and publish written narratives, visual art, audio interviews, and video testimonies focused on the importance of place in stories of recovery. The project's goal is not only to counter the often negative coverage of the region but also to foster and preserve a community approach to recovery and its intersections with Appalachian identity.

Finally, the issue concludes with a series of retrospective essays from digital historians reflecting upon their decades of experiences. In "Digital History Memories," Vernon Burton and Simon Appleford collaborate on the history of digital techniques. Burton shares his memoir, a career in digital humanities of some fifty years. His earliest quantitative work with large databases intrigued and befuddled history departments at Princeton and at the University of Illinois, but big data was necessary to answer the broad questions Burton was asking, and the kind of questions he encouraged his students to ask. The collaborations between Burton and Appleford mirror similar relationships between Burton and other students, and with a variety of agencies. With humility and humor, they write about issues of a changing digital world in academia, both research and teaching.

With a side-by-side comparison with his 1999 predictions on the future of digital history, digital humanities guru and pioneer Ed Ayers, now emeritus President of the University of Richmond, offers a grim list of failures on the part of scholars to use then-nascent digital methodologies to advance scholarship, learning, and teaching. Ayers argues the academy failed to capitalize on the potential for knowledge sharing in the digital age, nor did humanities scholars work to defend and expand the digital humanities intellectual authority, instead stubbornly holding on to traditional practices in tenure and publishing while the commercial world seized on these opportunities in database ownership, the gaming industry's adoption of manipulated historical narratives for plotlines, and journalism's use of data visualizations. Despite the jeremiad, Ayers concludes with an uplifting overview of contemporary examples of digital history in practice, including the podcast *BackStory*, the television series *The Future of America's Past*, and the digital atlas *American Panorama*, among other teaching resources.

Mills Kelly reflects on how his career in the scholarship of teaching and learning began with a simple decision to upload his syllabi to the “World Wide Web” while serving as a contingency hire at the University of New Hampshire. After positive student evaluations towards his embrace of the internet at UNH, Kelly expanded his use of online mediums in the classroom at other institutions while simultaneously researching how instruction in the digital age influenced student learning and retention. Kelly states that while his professional career began as an historian of Eastern Europe, his career shifted. Now the director of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, he is internationally renowned for his expertise in pedagogy and for his leadership in digital history and new media.

As we started sending out articles for review, the awful COVID-19 epidemic spread across the globe. We are forever grateful to these contributors, peer-reviewers, and members of *The Southern Quarterly* staff, including editor Kate Cochran, who ensured that this issue came together despite the numerous challenges and hurdles.