

Anthony Wheeler & Allison Elliott

Prof. Aránzazu Borrachero

Digital Memories: Theory and Practice

20 March 2022

Digital Memory Manifold Publication (Vol. 2)

Introducing a Digital Queering Framework

In Spring 2021, in the midst of COVID-19 and remote teaching & learning, the *DHUM 78000 Digital Memories: Theory and Practice* class members put together an incredibly well-structured digital memory review project under the strong guidance of Dr. Aránzazu Borrachero and Volume I Editor Brianna Caszatt. As described by the past editor, the digital project reviews that exist on [CUNY's Manifold](#) instance are real-time examples of digital humanities graduate students learning about different tools and platforms for preserving memories, ways to repurpose them for their own research, and understanding when and how to properly critique these technologies. Caszatt left a phenomenally detailed infrastructure in place for next-gen digital memory reviewers as we begin Volume II of this work, so naturally, passing the torch to us, as editors, can feel slightly daunting.

That being said, while reading a chapter out of *The Digital Black Atlantic* (Risam and Josephs, 2021), we were particularly struck by [Angel David Nieves's \(2021\) concept of "digital queer witnessing"](#) as a messy praxis for deconstructing digital projects, or histories. In his chapter, Nieves (2021) defines digital queer witness as "encompassing the viewing of reconstructed spaces and places online, using available open-source 3D technologies that allow these sites to act as the virtual containers for testimonies, personal narratives, biographies, and other forms of life writing that have long been silenced or erased through acts of state-supported

violence.” Nieves (2021) discusses this concept in relation to fostering transparency in the construction of knowledge, and in some regard, lending more humanity to the digital by baring all aspects of the project for scrutinization. Academics, while producers of knowledge, often act as gatekeepers simultaneously. As practitioners aimed at reviewing and upholding virtual pockets of memory, it is crucial that we align ourselves theoretically in a way that shows appreciation for the existence of open educational technologies that make this work possible, the messiness involved in these memory projects, but also be mindful of the ways our work/these digital memories will exist beyond this moment.

Fostering Ongoing Collaboration

In line with the ethos of the Digital Humanities, we hope that by expanding the existing course website, hosted on the [CUNY Academic Commons](#) (an open-source WordPress platform that serves CUNY’s 25-campus), to include living (editable) documents where our reviewers can collaborate with one another by sharing their notes and presentations throughout the course, as well as keywords, questions, and links to additional useful resources as we begin deconstructing these virtual pockets of history and making space for new ones. Additionally, as we move forward, we would like to encourage the reviewers to use these buckets to compile a list of references/resources so that during their initial venture into establishing their own memory projects, we will have a community repository to call upon based on annotations, reviews, and classroom commentary for the remainder of the term. Ideally, these repositories will become digital artifacts in themselves for future digital memory reviewers to call upon as they embrace the messy.

Positionality Statements

One of the responsibilities that Nieves (2021) refers to as a guiding principle of digital queer witnessing is to question what we, as practitioners who are purely communicating information, owe the community who is impacted by these memories? In an attempt to further transparency between knowledge construction, those who participate, and those who consume it, we are going to ask that all reviewers submit a [positionality statement](#). These contributions will come in a section prior to the reviews so that readers can refer back to them as they explore the archive. While we expect these contributions to be no more than 1-2 paragraphs, having insight into the reviewers' ontological and epistemological beliefs will grant an added layer of understanding into how the reviewer's own experiences may affect their interpretation of digital artifacts. Positionality statements are simply expected to include where you come from (general background and experience) and how you entered the space of digital humanities/digital memory studies. Questions regarding writing positionality statements can be directed towards Anthony Wheeler.

The Editors' Role

Our role as editors will include providing feedback to our peers, technical support, sharing information, and creating metadata for the Manifold site. In all of these roles, we frame our work, as previously mentioned, through the lens of digital queer witnessing. It is our intention to create an accessible resource for students, teachers, researchers, makers, or anyone who is interested in learning more about digital memory projects. The feedback we give our peers will be based on the guidelines started by Volume I Editor Brianna Caszatt. The intention behind this is to have the reviews be as informative and resourceful to a wider audience as

possible, i.e checking to make sure acronyms are explained, context is given, links are working, etc. Anthony will have more technical responsibilities including teaching me (Allison) more about Manifold, giving an informational presentation to our class, and reviewing the positionality statements. Once we have received all the reviews, we'll begin to categorize them and create metadata that can be used to search the Manifold site. In the name of collaboration, we will provide our peers with a draft of categories and search terms for their feedback and approval. We will review best practices on creating accessible and intuitive search terms, with the realization that our own positionality and subjectivity will inherently influence these choices.

Timeline

- March 23rd
 - Anthony goes over new Class Site features and where to deposit information into classroom repositories.
 - We provide a general timeline and expectations around feedback/deadlines for revised reviews.
- March 30th
 - Conduct review of best practices for creating rich metadata and categorization.
 - Allison and Anthony start providing feedback on reviews. There are roughly 20-25 reviews in total. To give all feedback by April 27th, we will need to edit 5 per week.
- April 6th
 - Continue to conduct a review of best practices for creating metadata and categorization.
 - Provide 5 reviews with feedback.

- April 13th
 - Continue to conduct a review of best practices for creating metadata and categorization.
 - Provide 5 reviews with feedback.
- April 20th
 - Provide 5 reviews with feedback.
 - Create metadata and categorization. Send draft to classmates for feedback and approval.
- April 27th
 - Have all feedback finished. Allow 2 weeks for revisions.
 - Create Manifold page. Put reviews (even if they're the unedited ones, just to act as placeholders) in categories with metadata.
- May 4th
 - Final call for any edits to reviews.
 - Finalize all categories and metadata.
 - Create section for project description and positionality statements, possibly a blurb on queer digital witnessing.
- May 11th
 - Present Manifold site to class. Provide Google Form for feedback.