

## Digital History Project Reviews and Review Essays

All questions regarding review proposals, submissions, editing, and publication should be directed to the Assistant Reviews Editor at [publhistory@history.ucsb.edu](mailto:publhistory@history.ucsb.edu).

### BACKGROUND

The digital history project review section of *The Public Historian* was established to report on and evaluate current digital history projects, including digital exhibits, online archives, digital scholarship, online teaching resources, and apps, with the goal of recognizing excellence in this important new format for scholarship and public engagement and creating critical dialogue among public historians about the uses of technology in our work. We encourage our reviewers and other interested historians to suggest projects for review. Review essays can compare two or more projects, treating the relevant subject matter in more depth than would be possible in a short review. Reviews will be assigned to reviewers by *TPH* staff.

### CONTENT

In reviewing digital history projects, it is especially important that reviewers understand the intended purposes and audience of the work and the context in which it was produced (e.g., large or limited budget, time constraints). Digital history projects are quite diverse, and projects should be evaluated on their own terms. *The Public Historian* recognizes the following categories of digital resources:

- **Online Archive:** A website that provides access, whether free or otherwise, to a body of primary source documents.
- **Digital Scholarship:** An online monograph, essay, or journal aimed at disseminating history scholarship to either fellow practitioners or the general public.
- **Digital Exhibit:** A digital exhibit aimed at presenting historical topics and/or knowledge to the general public.
- **Teaching Resource:** A website that provides online syllabi, assignments, teaching tools, and other resources specifically geared toward using the Web for pedagogical purposes.
- **Apps:** Software for a mobile device that either is an extension of a public history website or project or that stands alone, facilitating activities such as digital storytelling, tours, and location-based experiences.

As with reviews of history in other forms, digital history project reviewers should briefly report on the subject matter and main themes presented in addition to evaluating the work itself. Evaluation should take into consideration accuracy of content and effectiveness of presentation (design, navigation, etc.). Reviewers should evaluate both a project's content and its form.

#### Content:

Reviewers should emphasize the digital resource's significance to public historians. Please consider such questions as:

- Who is the intended audience of the work (a client, the general public, professionals in the same field, in other fields)?

- What was the purpose of the work?
- Was the work produced under special conditions (under contract, in the course of public agency employment, as part of an educational program)?
- Does it fit within a body of scholarship? If so, how?
- In what ways are the developer's sources, methods, analysis, and interpretations remarkable and especially instructive for public historians?

**Form:**

As with the organizational logics of monographs and journal articles, digital resources ought to be organized in an intuitive, easy-to-navigate manner. Reviewers should ask the following questions:

- Is the digital resource easy to navigate?
- Does it function effectively, or are aspects of its functionality cumbersome or confusing?
- Does it have a clear, effective, and/or original design?
- Does the digital resource's organization and structure further or hinder its declared objectives with respect to its service to either practitioners or the general public?
- Does it make effective use of new media and new technologies? Does it provide new functionalities that traditional media, such as print/exhibition, cannot?

Please avoid passive-voice constructions, overly complex sentences, jargon, and redundancies. We may return for revision any review in need of severe editing, and we reserve the right to reject any review submitted for publication.

All reviews are edited to conform to *TPH* house style and standard literary usage to achieve greater economy of space and clarity of meaning. Please consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* for guidance.

**NUTS AND BOLTS**

1. Please submit your review as an MS WORD document, and please use 12-pt. font and double space the review.
2. Unless otherwise agreed upon between reviewer and editor, reviews should be 750–900 words long. We will shorten, or return for revision, any review of excessive length. Length restrictions vary in the case of review essays, to which we apply the standards of articles.
3. Provide the following information in your introductory heading: title of project; name of creator/s; sponsor/publisher; URL; year of creation; access date, and any further information that would help to identify or credit responsible parties.

**Heading examples:**

*Civil War Governors of Kentucky Digital Documentary Edition*. Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort, KY. Patrick A. Lewis, Project Director; Anthony P. Curtis, Whitney R. Smith, and Matthew C.

Hulbert, Editorial Staff; Anneliese Dehner and Jeff Dycus, Web Development Team.  
<http://discovery.civilwargovernors.org/>. Created 2011; Accessed XXX.

National Park Service's Official Smartphone Applications. *National Park Service*, Creator. Available for iPhone, iPad, <https://itunes.apple.com>, and Android, <https://play.google.com>. Created 2012–16; Accessed July 10, 2016.

4. Illustrations, such as screenshots, are strongly encouraged, and will be included whenever possible. Please supply images as electronic tiff files sized at 4" wide, with a minimum 300 dpi. Place large files in a Dropbox folder and invite the assistant reviews editor to share. All images must be accompanied by captions, credits, and a letter (or e-mail message) of permission from the holder of the copyright.
5. Your name and institutional affiliation should appear on separate lines at the end of your review.
6. *The Public Historian* uses the footnote style, spelling, and punctuation format of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The American Heritage Dictionary*.
7. Email your completed manuscript as an MS WORD document to [publichistory@history.ucsb.edu](mailto:publichistory@history.ucsb.edu).
8. Once your manuscript has been submitted, you will receive an acknowledgement, then later a copy-edited version of the review and/or galley proofs. Please promptly approve or request changes in the typescript and/or galleys. You will receive one copy of the journal issue containing the review; authors of review essays will also receive 25 free offprints.

**NOTE: Please keep *TPH* informed of any changes of address so that edited reviews and future requests may reach you promptly.**

**Thank you for your contribution to *The Public Historian*.**

**SAMPLE REVIEWS:**

Sharon M. Leon, [Review of National Park Service's Official Smartphone Applications](#), November 2016

Cathy Stanton, [Review of \*This Land is Your Land: Parks and Public Spaces\*](#), November 2016