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Project Update: Reimagining the Bodies and Boundaries of Prison

Overview: Status of Project

After the September workshop, we agreed to step back and re-evaluate our aims for the project. We agreed to reframe it and implement a three-stage plan:

- First, create a list of available resources that targets the general public
- Second, obtain and distribute archival materials through a digital interface
- Third, create original open-access content in collaboration with various groups (e.g., class settings, activist groups, NGOs, and prison programs)

We have opted to focus on reformatting our interface first, which is something we spent the holiday break working on and will resume during the spring break. We have also set out to make contacts with the hope of obtaining archival materials. Right now, we have only one successful “lead,” and hope to meet with administrators by the fall before the next meeting at University of Denver.

Targeted Responses

In which ways did your experience at DU support your project's research and development?

The workshop helped us at the foundational level (which we needed!). It gave us a framework to think through and get a better grasp of how our original plans would translate to the internet/digital field. As such, we have had to rethink some of our original goals. Additionally, it gave us the collective time together to begin working on the digital archives (at least those that are already publically accessible online) and resources to quickly troubleshoot our initial problems and challenges. Being able to meet and collaborate with colleagues in an inviting setting designed specifically for digital humanities research really helped us work out “kinks” in our plans—even those we didn’t know we had!

Which aspects/components of your project have you addressed or implemented since your visit?

Since September, we have focused on organizing our schedule and compiling resources for the digital archives. In doing so, we realized that the current version of the interface was not conducive to achieving our goals and have had to step back and rethink its format. Being able to talk it out over the winter break puts us back on course to work on it throughout this upcoming semester.

What do you plan to accomplish next with your project?

Our first goal is to reframe and restructure interface. We tend to be much more productive when we are together and able to talk things out, so we are looking forward to meeting again in a designated space.

Our second goal is to compile a list of organizations to approach regarding the expansion of open-access content. In obtaining these resources, we realize there are some legal and confidentiality barriers we have to consider in many cases. For instance, incarcerated people are, by definition, *state property*, which prevents them from actually giving consent in many cases. We thus need to take preventative safeguards that do not put an already vulnerable population at further risk. We also need to consider similar issues with those organizations who provide assistance and seek their advice. This will likely require face-to-face meetings with some representatives.

With regard to formerly incarcerated persons, we still need to negotiate a strategy to include their work in a way that allows them to highlight who they are or allow them to be anonymous. Plus, we need to account for terms of parole and/or probation that may render them vulnerable, even unknowingly. This will also likely require face-to-face meetings and counsel from organizations who work with this population on a regular basis.

Sample Ideas from other Websites

- Historical notes (like "today in history" snapshot): <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/page/white-new-zealand-policy-introduced>
- Counterstorytelling: <http://invisibleaustralians.org/>
 - o Here's a reflection on that project: <http://discontents.com.au/shoebox/archives-shoebox/the-real-face-of-white-australia> and a link to how they go about that: <http://invisibleaustralians.org/faces/>

Sample Organizations and People to Contact

- **Decarcerate PA:** <http://decarceratepa.info/>
- **Prison Policy Initiative:** <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/>
- **Broken on all sides documentary makers:** <http://www.usprisonculture.com/blog/2011/02/01/broken-on-all-sides-a-documentary-about-the-effects-of-mass-incarceration/>

Tentative Schedule

Feb-May 2012: Complete the first stage, including re-formatting the interface so that materials are accessible for various users.

May-Aug 2012: Meetings with organizations about obtaining archival materials for digital replication

Aug 2012: Submit abstract and materials for International Crime, Media, and Popular Culture Studies Conference. General information at: <http://www.indstate.edu/ccj/popcultureconference/>

Sept 2012: Attend International Crime, Media, and Popular Culture Studies Conference, networking with participants and creating original material (recordings, papers, interview transcripts, etc.)

Oct 2012: Begin grant application process to fund digital archiving project and negotiate hosting agreements