

Week 3 Readings (1/28): What is Digital History?

These readings are all online. Please read these pieces in chronological order. You may notice the evolution of the concept "digital history" as it has been developed through time. Some things to keep in mind as you read this material and prepare your report on your survey of digital resources for historical research: What is digital history? How is it different? What are its apparent strengths and weaknesses?

Michael O'Malley and Roy Rosenzweig, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *Journal of American History* (June 1997).

<<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-8723%28199706%2984%3A1%3C132%3ABNWOBA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C>>

Carl Smith, "Can You Do Serious History on the Web?" *AHA Perspectives* (February 1998).

<<http://www.theaha.org/perspectives/issues/1998/9802/9802COM.CFM>>

Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," Virginia Center for Digital History (1999).

<<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>>

Roy Rosenzweig, "The Road to Xanadu: Public and Private Pathways on the History Web" *Journal of American History* 88, n.2 (September 2001).

<<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/88.2/rosenzweig.html>>

Also, we will have Will Thomas, the Director of the Virginia Center for Digital History and a member of the history department faculty, join us this week to discuss current trends and future possibilities in digital history scholarship.

Please examine his current project: William G. Thomas and Edward L. Ayers, "The Difference Slavery Made: A Close Analysis of Two American Communities" (in press).

<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:8090/xslt/servlet/ramanujan.XSLTServlet?xml=/vcdh/xml_docs/article_new/article_working_6.xml&xsl=/vcdh/xml_docs/article_new/article_merge.xsl§ion=text&area=intro&piece=purp_o ver&list=&item=>

Please consider the following questions for our discussion with Will:

- What is this? Is it really an "article" in the way we generally think of scholarly publications?
- It is called "digital scholarship." What is innovative about it? Conversely, what is traditional?
- In your opinion, what works? What doesn't work?
- Is this the future of scholarly publishing that Ayers wrote about in his 1999 piece that you read for this week?

To ensure a lively and informed discussion, please take the time to write down your thoughts and questions and anything else you might like to ask Will about this project. This is for your own reference in class, I will not collect these, but I would like us all to come prepared.