

One Week, One Tool: A Digital Humanities Barn Raising

National Endowment for the Humanities

Institutes for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities

Statement of Work

For one week in June 2010, the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University will bring together a group of twelve digital humanists of diverse disciplinary backgrounds and practical experience to build a useful and useable software tool for digital humanities research. A short course of training in principles of open source software development will be followed by an intense five days of brainstorming and development. Following the workshop will be a year of continued development, testing and evaluation. The group members will be comprised of designers and programmers as well as project managers and outreach specialists. The group will conceive a tool, outline a roadmap, develop and disseminate a prototype, lay the ground work for building an open source community, and make first steps toward securing sustainable funding for the project.

One Week, One Tool is inspired by both longstanding and cutting edge models of rapid community development. For centuries rural communities throughout the United States have come together for "barn raisings" when one of their number required the diverse set of skills and enormous effort required to build a barn--skills and effort no one member of the community alone could possess. In recent years, Internet entrepreneurs have likewise joined forces for crash "startup" or "blitz weekends" that bring diverse groups of developers, designers, marketers, and financiers together to launch a new technology company in the span of just two days. See, for example, <http://blitzweekend.com/> and <http://www.startupweekend.com/> *One Week, One Tool* will build on these old and new traditions of community development and the natural collaborative strengths of the digital humanities community to produce a useful and useable software tool for digital humanities research and to help reset the balance between learning and doing in digital humanities training.