

Final Performance Report for NEH Grant HT5002109
One Week | One Tool: A Digital Humanities Barn Raising
November 1, 2011

At grant's end, we are pleased to report that *One Week | One Tool* has accomplished its main objectives of teaching practical software development and deployment skills to a group of diverse group of digital humanists, while at the same time proving three broader claims about digital humanities training and tool building: 1) that learning by doing is an important and effective part of digital humanities training; 2) that the traditional NEH summer institute can be adapted to accommodate this kind of practical digital humanities pedagogy; and 3) that digital humanities tools can be built more quickly and affordably than conventional wisdom suggest. The main results reported immediately following with one week institute demonstrate these truth of these claims (see our lengthy *Interim Report*, submitted to NEH in August 2010 and republished at <http://www.foundhistory.org/2010/08/17/one-week-one-tool-interim-report/>), but three developments during the past year serve to reinforce them.

- 1) In the months following *One Week | One Tool* there emerged in the digital humanities community several similar "barn raising" or "code sprint" events. While not necessarily imitations of *One Week | One Tool*, these events surely show it was an idea whose time had come. Similarly intensive, hands-on methodologies were adopted by the Bamboo community in its CorCamp event, held in March of this year, and intended to jump start development on the Bamboo project's CorporaSpace product (<https://wiki.projectbamboo.org/display/BTECH/Corpora+Camp+March+2-4,+2011>). Barn raising events have also become a feature of regional THATCamp's over the past year, including the Great PROV Data Challenge held at THATCamp Melbourne in March (<http://www.thatcampmelbourne.org/data-challenge-day/>). The phenomenon has taken route in Britain as well in events such as Culture Hack Day (<http://culturehackday.org.uk/>). These and other similar events demonstrate that code sprint or barn raising events are increasingly viewed as a productive and effective mode of knowledge sharing, collaborative learning, and hands-on digital humanities work.
- 2) Throughout *One Week | One Tool* we stressed the importance of *use* in gauging the success of tool building projects. By this measure, one year on, *One Week | One Tool* and the *Anthologize* tool it produced are surely successful. Since it was released in August 2010, *Anthologize* has been downloaded nearly 15,000 times. Perhaps even more exciting than sheer number of downloads, we are now starting to see the products of *Anthologize*, which over the course of a year has been used to produce books in digital humanities and other disciplines, from our own *Hacking the Academy*

(<http://hackingtheacademy.org>) to science education texts (see, for example, <http://www.artofteachingscience.org/2011/09/10/write-ebooks-blog-posts/>). We continue to see interest in *Anthologize* from such prominent organizations as the New Media Consortium, which is experimenting using *Anthologize* for the publication of its *Horizon Report*.

- 3) Most importantly, the team has continued to work together and learn from one another as we intended in our original proposal. One of the key markers of success we set for the institute was the extent to which we could, in one week, build a functional team of collaborators—the extent to which we could turn our participants into functioning participants in a digital humanities open source community. Here again, we have seen great success. Since the group parted physical ways, it has managed to make several improvements to *Anthologize* and how it is managed. First, the team discovered that once it had dispersed it would need a better timeline for releases. So, instead of releasing after a major new feature or bugfix was done, the team moved to releasing a point-point release every six weeks, regardless of how many new features were present. The team also moved its issue-tracking system from the original Trac system into the github code repository—a not insignificant amount of work—to make it easier to communicate among ourselves and with users about issues and feature requests. On the code side, the team made many improvements to the PDF output, especially in how non-western characters are handled. PDF output also includes better table of contents information, new options for page breaking (which also improves memory usage). The team also added an improved RTF output, and an HTML preview. The *Anthologize* EPUB output is also much improved, adding an option for book covers and better table of contents generation to ease navigation through the book. The links within an EPUB are also now distinguished by whether they are external or internal to the publication, with internal links pointing to the page in the EPUB, rather than pointing to the original web page of the anthologized document. In an effort to make the code easier for others to contribute to, the team created a base class that serves as a model, consistent across our outputs, for others to follow if they want to change our code or create their own outputs. Similarly, the team is developing an API for others to create a new output. Finally, the team has made good progress toward implementing one of the most requested features, inclusion of comments in the output.

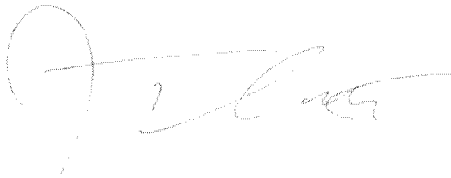
Sustaining learning outcomes after the end of the formal institute has not been without difficulty. It is impossible to emulate virtually the intense experience of working fifteen hour days together around a table. In the absence of artificial time constraints and the isolation of the institute, not all members have contributed equally to the ongoing development of *Anthologize* (although this is itself a characteristic of all successful open source communities). Many of the team members are not themselves users of the tool. Nor are any of them making

money from it—something which is true of many core members of open source communities from the corporate shareholders at Canonical who contribute the bulk of code to Ubuntu to the independent web designers and developers who contribute to popular WordPress plugins like BuddyPress—which eliminates self-interest as motivation to participate. Several participants returned to CHNM for THATCamp as planned in the original proposal. It is a measure of the power of face-to-face communication and in-person collaboration that several of the improvements described above were implemented immediately after the team reunited in Fairfax.

All in all, however, the *Anthologize* user base, the *One Week | One Tool* team, and the digital humanities community all continue to profit from our experiment. The launch of several similar “barn raising” efforts, the continued demand among users for the *Anthologize* software, and the continued cohesion of the *Anthologize* team and its progress in producing and disseminating working code is testament to the success of the *One Week | One Tool* model. We hope in the future to build on our success and extend these learning outcomes to new practitioners by bringing a new group of digital humanists together for *Another Week | Another Tool* in 2013.

We welcome further input from and discussion with the NEH staff as our work continues. Please feel free to contact me by phone or email at any time with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tom Scheinfeldt', with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Tom Scheinfeldt
Project Director
(703) 993-4213
tom@foundhistory.org