

Center for History and New Media

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INTRODUCING CROWDSOURCING DOCUMENTARY TRANSCRIPTION WITH THE PAPERS OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT

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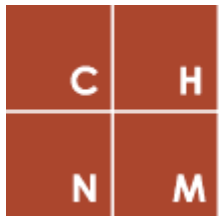
The Center for History and New Media (CHNM) <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/>> at George Mason University is pleased to announce the addition of crowdsourced documentary transcription to the *Papers of the War Department, 1874-1800* (PWD) <<http://wardepartmentpapers.org>>. With major funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Office of Digital Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, PWD is pioneering a new phase in digital documentary editing by allowing users to transcribe historical documents and contribute them to a digital archive of correspondence, speeches, accounting logs, and other documents from early American history.

Building on the models of other crowdsourcing projects like Wikipedia and Flickr Commons, PWD will benefit from the various enthusiastic communities of volunteer transcribers. Volunteers—who may include historians doing scholarly research, students and teachings, genealogists, and other interested members of the general public—will have the opportunity to transcribe any of the over 45,000 documents in the digital archive. In doing so, they will make sign that text available to the search engine, improving the ability of users to locate the materials they need. Additionally, as users select documents to transcribe the editors at the PWD project will gain significant insights into the areas of the collection that are of most interest to the wider user community.

PWD's work with community transcription is part of a larger project to make crowdsourcing possible for archivists and documentary editors with digital collections, using a slightly customized version of the Center for History and New Media's open source tool, *Scripto* <<http://scripto.org>>. *Scripto* can be plugged into any content management system through the use of some simple connection scripting. Editors interested in adding transcription to their archive can experiment with the tool in its current beta state. In the near future, CHNM will release a series of connector scripts for common content management systems. CHNM will use the feedback from this implementation to improve the *Scripto*'s functionality.

For more information about the *Papers of the War Department*'s crowdsourcing transcription project, please email <transcribe@wardepartmentpapers.org>.

For more information about *Scripto*, please email Sharon Leon <sleon@gmu.edu>.



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About the Center for History & New Media

Since 1994, the Center for History and New Media <chnm.gmu.edu> has used digital media and computer technology to democratize history—to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past. CHNM combines cutting edge digital media with the latest and best historical scholarship to promote an inclusive understanding of the past as well as broad historical literacy. CHNM maintains more than two dozen online history projects directed at diverse audiences, making them available at no cost through its website. In 2010, CHNM's websites had 400 million hits and over 15 million visitors—making it one of the busiest non-commercial history education sites on the entire World Wide Web. CHNM has been a leader both in using digital media to improve the public understanding of history and in developing innovative, easy-to-use digital tools for accessing historical content. In terms of public understanding, CHNM maintains several very popular and award-winning web-database projects, including educational projects such as History Matters, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution, and World History Matters and public history projects such as the September 11 Digital Archive, the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, and Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives. CHNM's work has been recognized with major awards and grants from the American Historical Association, the National Humanities Center, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the Department of Education, the Library of Congress, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Historic Records and Publication Commission, Atlantic Philanthropies, and the Sloan, Hewlett, Rockefeller, Gould, Delmas, and Kellogg foundations.