

# **Digital Methods Training at Scale: Leveraging THATCamp Through a Regional System**

A Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

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## **Proposal Summary**

Making humanities scholars aware of digital methods and training them to use these new techniques in their research and scholarly communications has been an uphill battle. Graduate education remains for the most part methodologically conservative, thus creating a serious and growing gap between the technical expertise of scholars and the technological sophistication of the modern sources and products of their research. Until recently, even scholars who wished to learn about and understand how digital media and technology are affecting the process of scholarship had few places to turn.

In 2008, the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) created an informal yearly conference on digital methods in the humanities called THATCamp—The Humanities and Technology Camp. The new style of the conference, with its emphasis on communicating new methods and trying things out rather than talking formally, helped to attract a wide range of curious scholars, and it spawned numerous locally-organized regional THATCamps in 2009. This proposal intends to leverage the energy and attendance of THATCamp to train hundreds of humanities scholars in digital methods, helping to create a new generation of scholars who can maximize their use of the countless digital archives and other electronic resources that are now at their fingertips.

The proposed project will keep much of the attractive informality and entrepreneurial spirit of THATCamp, but add new supports for training in digital methods and make it vastly easier for regional THATCamps to be established and run. A regional coordinator will help inexperienced THATCamp organizers set up, run, and follow up on each conference; a compilation of open source software will help support the proceedings from registration to archiving of social media used during the camp; and a full curriculum for inexperienced scholars, BootCamp, will be created and disseminated. In addition, a fellowship program will encourage humanities scholars to attend a THATCamp near them, increasing exposure to new methods.

## **Background**

In the spring of 2008, more than sixty humanists of all ranks and specialties from around the world arrived at the Center for History and New Media (see Institutional Profile, Appendix A) at George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, for a meeting without a preset agenda. Earlier in the year, each of these scholars, many of whom possessed an inchoate interest in how digital media and technology were affecting their work but who rarely had a chance to express or

explore that interest, responded to a simple call for participation. At first, they did little more than email the organizers explaining who they were and what they hoped to take away from the experience. During the intervening weeks, accepted participants posted ideas for agenda items to a group blog, gradually precipitating topics of common interest, things they wished to learn, and areas of potential debate. By the morning of the first day of the meeting, after more than two months of conversation amongst the participants, the agenda remained unset, but was nevertheless clear. In about an hour, the group had organized two days worth of five concurrent sessions on all manner of topics related to digital humanities. THATCamp—The Humanities and Technology Camp—was born.

Structurally, THATCamp owes its inspiration the “barcamps” and “unconferences” long popular among the engineers of Silicon Valley. According to Wikipedia an unconference is “a conference where the content of the sessions is created and managed by the participants, generally day-by-day during the course of the event, rather than by one or more organizers in advance of the event.” But THATCamp’s success owes even more to the emerging culture of the digital humanities, a culture strong on peer-to-peer training, collaboration, and practical work.

THATCamp is not a spectator event. THATCamp brings together scholars not to read papers but to exchange knowledge and know-how in a weekend of intense conversation and often hands-on work. Every participant is expected to present his or her work, share his or her knowledge, and actively collaborate with fellow participants rather than simply attend. Sessions at THATCamp range from web design best practices, to sustainability brainstorming huddles, to the formulation of new metadata standards, to guerrilla software development. Campers leave THATCamp with new partnerships, new projects to work on, and most important, new skills.

### **Training at Scale**

All told, THATCamp 2008 cost a mere \$3,000, a tally that included a breakfast and lunch buffet on both days, lots of caffeinated drinks, t-shirts for everyone involved, badges, room fees, and two student travel stipends. Nearly the entire amount was recovered by passing a hat on the first day of the conference and through generous meal donations by institutional sponsors (e.g. the New York Public Library and the John Nicolas Brown Center for Public Humanities).

THATCamp 2009 was expanded to serve one hundred participants—and we had to turn away fifty more for lack of space—at a cost of less than \$5,000. Once again, our costs were nearly fully recovered through camper donations and small sponsorships.

THATCamp has generated tremendous interest, not only among campers but also among observers, as potentially providing a new model for efficient, cost-effective, results-driven scholarly communication in the digital age. The conference was covered in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and received extensive coverage on blogs and other online outlets.

More tellingly—and without any material support and only a little guidance from CHNM—a series of regional THATCamps has sprung up around the world. In the last six months there have already been THATCamps in Austin (<http://thatcampaustin.org/>) and the Pacific Northwest (<http://www.thatcampnw.org/>), and THATCamps are planned for the Great Lakes region, Columbus, OH, Southern California, Nashville, London, and Paris. In some cases these

unconferences have been connected to meetings of scholarly societies; e.g., Austin's was connected to the Society of American Archivists meeting and the London THATCamp will be associated with Digital Humanities 2010. In other cases, these events have been spontaneous, self-organized gatherings that nevertheless have been exciting enough to entice people to pay travel costs and other expenses out of their own pockets. The regional THATCamps, due to their proximity, have also excelled at attracting scholars who are merely curious about digital methods and skills rather than the already committed digital humanists who travel to Fairfax.

Because of this flourishing, we believe THATCamp may be positioned to meet the goal of training humanities scholars at scale. Through the regionals, THATCamp is close to serving 500 people at very low cost. THATCamp and its regional editions demonstrate that—in the entrepreneurial spirit of the web and with the new communications tools available to them—many scholars around the world are now prepared to organize and host productive gatherings without formal institutional backing. It is our belief that with a little guidance many more would be willing to follow suit. We believe that with modest resources, we could easily double or triple the number of humanities scholars served by THATCamp. With modest funding for a more formal support structure for the regionals, including clearer instructions, some technical infrastructure, and some small subsidies and fellowships, THATCamp can establish a sustainable and scalable system of training humanities scholars in digital methods.

### **Content and Attendees**

Despite (or perhaps because of) being participant-driven, training at THATCamp has been broad and deep, covering virtually every topic from the very beginning of a digital project or research agenda to the final archiving of the results. Typical THATCamp sessions have covered topics such as text mining, digital art methodologies, digital humanities pedagogy, the semantic web, crowdsourcing, search engines, virtual worlds, hacking, scholarly games, infrastructure, sustainability, Creative Commons, maps and GIS, bibliographic and other metadata standards, oral history, mashups, interface design, international and language issues, textual visualizations, grant writing, data analytics, mobile technology, digital natives and the digital divide, publishing on the web, material culture, digital storytelling, and principles of software development. Moreover, one of the strengths of THATCamp has been its ability to incorporate brand new topics from year to year. For instance, at the Fairfax THATCamp in 2009 there was a long discussion of how librarians might preserve and historians make use of social media streams, given the Twitter activity of Iran's revolutionary sentiment last June.

Because of high demand and limited space, THATCamp has not been open to everyone who would like to attend. For the main THATCamp in Fairfax, we have only had slots for roughly two out of every three applicants. Acceptances have been based thus far on statements applicants submit about what they would like to learn, and, in turn, teach others. The acceptance committee has looked for scholars and other humanities professionals in the museum and library realms who can make contributions to the proceedings and who can benefit from the experience. This process has produced a diverse mix of campers that well reflects the range and balance of skills required to produce digital humanities scholarship. For example, the 2009 Fairfax THATCamp served 16 tenured faculty, 14 junior faculty, 9 postdocs, 18 graduate students, 30 scholars and professionals in the museum, library, archives, and technology realms, and 12 others in public

humanities, including documentary film makers, funders, and representatives of state humanities councils. To date, the acceptance policy has been only slightly less informal than the proceedings, but given this project's emphasis on training humanities scholars, we plan to update the admissions process with clearer criteria, improved guidance, and direct assistance for the regionals (see THATCamp Regional Coordinator, below).

## **Impact**

We are aware that the less formal nature of THATCamp may make it difficult to quantitatively assess the impact of the unconferences. Some outcomes are hard to measure, especially over relatively short time spans, e.g., greater use of digital methods in dissertations. (Of course, the same may be said about much humanities training, for instance in close reading, historiography, or new schools of thought.) Nevertheless, we have already seen a significant impact in terms of new projects and initiatives in follow-up reports from attendees. Some examples:

- THATCamp led directly to the founding of the Digital Humanities Caucus at the American Studies Association annual meeting in the fall of 2009.
- Jeffrey W. McClurken, Associate Professor and Chair of the History Department at the University of Mary Washington, credits two publications and seven presentations to his attendance of THATCamp.
- Jason B. Jones, Associate Professor of English at Central Connecticut State University, George H. Williams, Assistant Professor of English at the University of South Carolina Upstate, Ethan Watrall, Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Michigan State, and eight other professors and graduate students, most of whom had also attended a THATCamp, started a new group blog, ProfHacker to discuss and disseminate digital methods (<http://profhacker.com>).
- Attending THATCamp led Barbara Hui, a graduate student in Comparative Literature at UCLA to sign up to be a fellow at UVA's Scholars Lab Spatial Institute. In turn, according to the Scholar Lab's Bethany Nowviskie, Hui's involvement led to UVA's successful proposal for an NEH Institute for Enabling Geospatial Scholarship.
- Susan Smulyan, a non-tech-savvy full professor of American Studies at Brown who came to THATCamp 2009, went back to her university and immediately contacted her library's new Center for Digital Scholarship. Her involvement with the Center is reinvigorating her longstanding research into an anonymous Japanese scroll depicting Commodore Perry's landing in Japan (<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/japan/>).

Reviews of THATCamp from faculty and graduate students, moreover, have lauded the knowledge transfer and the spur to further discussions, collaborations, and work in digital humanities:

- Larry Cebula, a historian at Eastern Washington University, described THATCamp as “much better than any other conference I have attended lately. I walked away from THATCamp not only with a lot of new knowledge and ideas but with a sense of having made meaningful connections with a bunch of digital history people.” (<http://northwesthistory.blogspot.com/2009/06/what-happens-at-thatcamp.html>)

- Dave Parry, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Dallas noted in a blog post entitled *THATCamp Hopefully the Model for Future Conferences*, “if I was only able to attend one conference/gathering next year, I would probably chose THATCamp.” (<http://academhack.outsidethetext.com/home/2009/thatcamp-hopefully-the-model-for-future-conferences/>)
- Jim Groom, an influential educational technologist described his experience at THATCamp as “liberating,” going on to describe the event as “a spontaneous seminar with protean possibilities and shifting topics every hour and half or so, but framed by the over-arching question of what is this digital humanities we speak of.” (<http://bavatuesdays.com/thatcamp-kickback-and-conversate/>)

As most practicing digital humanists are self-taught in the technology, what is most important in building digital humanities expertise is providing aspiring practitioners with a level of comfort with learning new technologies and methods and access to a community of like-minded scholars with the necessary range of skills to turn to with questions. As these attendee comments demonstrate, comfort-level and community is exactly what THATCamp provides.

### **Program Deliverables**

With some relatively minor modifications and an expansion of the regionals program, the training impact of THATCamp could be significantly increased. In particular, we envision four changes to the program:

#### *1) THATCamp Regional Coordinator*

The THATCamp Regional Coordinator will help establish and support 25 regional THATCamps over two years, each with an average attendance of 70 scholars (a total of 1,750 scholars in all). This person will also more broadly evangelize for the program. Upon the start of the grant, the Regional Coordinator will call the directors of each member organization of the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes, centerNet (the coalition of digital humanities centers), and the American Council of Learned Societies to talk about how to start and run a regional THATCamp. In addition to this formal outreach program, the Regional Coordinator will conduct more informal outreach efforts such as maintaining a strong presence on the THATCamp blog, on Twitter and other social networks, and through occasional mailings and conference presentations.

Upon receiving interest from a person or organization willing to host a regional THATCamp, the Regional Coordinator will speak with the interested party by phone, explaining the basics of THATCamp organization and providing access to and help with a set of “THATCamp-in-a-box” software and materials (see #2, below). Where necessary or desired by the hosting institution, the Regional Coordinator will connect local organizers with a member of HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) who has the requisite technical skills and experience to provide assistance planning the camp. The Regional Coordinator will assist local organizers in planning “BootCamp” training sessions and in finding qualified instructors to lead them (see #3, below). The Regional Coordinator will also implement a micro-fellowship

program to help graduate students, young faculty, and other early-career scholars attend the camp and the BootCamp sessions in particular (see #4, below).

In addition, the Regional Coordinator will help publicize each regional THATCamp to ensure a solid base of applicants for each event. Using a new grading rubric based on a clarification of the rough criteria we have used in the past, an admissions committee consisting of the THATCamp Regional Coordinator, local organizers, and a third independent reviewer to be chosen from the international digital humanities community (honoraria of no more than \$500 per independent reviewer will be paid from the admissions committee honoraria fund; see Budget, below) will score applicants according to three criteria:

- Coherence between, and potential impact of, the applicant's plan for learning technology at the THATCamp and the scholar's independent research (50% of the total score)
- Intent to pursue further digital work and the means to pursue that work (25% of the total score)
- Potential to learn from others given common expressed interests (25% of the total score).

Though we feel the application process we have used for past camps has worked well to create a vibrant conference where everyone participates, given the addition of the new micro-fellowship program and in order to increase the exposure of university-based humanities faculty and graduate students to new media and technology, we have purposely weighted “coherence” more heavily than other criteria to ensure that scholars without significant technical experience but with well-formed ideas and clear aspirations are admitted in substantial numbers.

Finally, at the conclusion of each camp, the Regional Coordinator will work with local organizers to evaluate the event, including qualitative assessments of the planning process and THATCamp-in-a-box materials and more systematic assessments of the effectiveness of the BootCamp training sessions and the learning outcomes of micro-fellowship recipients (particulars below). Information gathered in assessment will be used to fine-tune processes, materials, and curricula for improved outcomes at later camps.

Although we expect that each local organizer will take on the bulk of the work in establishing and running their camp, our experience is that each camp has taken a month's worth of work by three staffers. Since the Regional Coordinator will be a partner in each camp and effectively take on one of these positions with time dedicated to conceptualizing, formatting, publicizing, vetting applicants, event planning, troubleshooting, and assessment, we fully expect that the Regional Coordinator position will be a full-time job for two years (as the equivalent of 25 monthly efforts). For at least one month before a THATCamp, the coordinator will stay in constant contact with the local organizer via Skype, email, and the regional website's management system.

We are very happy to report that Amanda French has tentatively agreed to serve as Regional Coordinator should the project receive full funding. We believe Dr. French to be uniquely well-qualified for the position, possessing significant practical and theoretical experience at both ends of the digital humanities spectrum—literature and history. A scholar of 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry, Dr. French trained in digital humanities at the University of Virginia under Jerome McGann, where

she spent three years training faculty in the English Department as a Teaching + Technology Support Partner and encoding texts for the Electronic Text Center and the Rossetti Archive. More recently at New York University's Archives and Public History graduate program, Dr. French created a model digital history curriculum and taught the course "Creating Digital History."

With strong qualifications and connections in both digital history and digital literary studies—as well as a natural collaborative instinct—Dr. French has emerged as a keystone of the digital humanities community. Her hands-on work with a broad range of digital humanities projects, her interdisciplinary background, her experience in teaching digital methods, and her extensive professional networks perfectly position Dr. French to coordinate a dispersed, interdisciplinary, digital humanities training network. We strongly believe that Dr. French's leadership not only will enable us to meet our stated deliverables, but will also help us keep THATCamp attendance representative, ensuring THATCamp remains a place where the full range of digital humanities methods is taught and discussed.

## 2) *THATCamp-in-a-box*

The first duty of the THATCamp Regional Coordinator will be to produce a comprehensive package of better instructions and technology resources for those interested in running a THATCamp. We expect that after six months, this would lead to a "THATCamp-in-a-box," including both instructional materials and a turnkey website package. Throughout the project, feedback from local organizers will inform iterative updates of these resources.

First, we will substantially upgrade the main THATCamp website with a robust marketing, deployment, and listing section for regionals similar to what the TED conference has done with the TEDx regionals (<http://www.ted.com/tedx>). This upgraded site will show clearly how to design, promote, host, and get sponsorship for regionals. It will include links to past camps and their schedules and a list of recommended session topics to help encourage at each event the kind of broad coverage we have seen at past THATCamps (see Content and Attendees, above). The entire range of these materials will be downloadable and printable as a single THATCamp-in-a-box PDF.

Second, and just as significantly, the CHNM web development team will produce source code and templates for regional THATCamp websites. This will be a professional, turnkey version of the system we have developed for hosting the main THATCamp website. Building on WordPress (<http://wordpress.org>)—a technology that already will be familiar to many potential regional organizers—the THATCamp-in-a-box website package will provide a set of customized plugins that will make it easier for regional camps to manage registration, scheduling, tracking, and conference archiving system (e.g., archiving the helpful links and advice contained in participants' tweets). Regionals are currently left to create this system on their own.

THATCamp-in-a-Box would include the following features:

- Easy conference registration for attendees, tied to the WordPress user database, weblog, and conference wiki.

- Profiles of attendees listing research interests, social networking identities, and conference activities.
- Simple schedule management to help gauge session interest and aid in allocating conference spaces.
- Conference badge generation with customizable design and attendee information.
- A suite of themes for WordPress designed specifically for conference sites.
- Integration with social networks and services, to share, promote, and archive conference activity and content on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, and other social networking and blogging sites.
- Close integration with Zotero as a method for sharing research, conference notes, and relevant sources for sessions.
- Pre- and post-conference evaluation surveys and other assessment materials.

Regional designers and developers working with the THATCamp-in-a-Box tools would require only general proficiencies in PHP and MySQL web application development. Specifically, developers would need some experience working with the WordPress publishing platform, including its plugin and theme APIs. As conference activity increasingly moves toward social spaces and services, it is important for conference organizers to use and store that activity effectively. Developers, then, would need experience working with the APIs of other web services that have gained increasing presence in academic work, such as Twitter, Delicious, and Zotero.

### 3) *BootCamp*

A critical function of the Regional Coordinator position will be to craft and institute a more formal digital humanities curriculum for THATCamp. To ensure a baseline of training for humanities scholars new to digital technology and methods, the Regional Coordinator will work with THATCamp leaders at CHNM and existing regionals to produce a replicable program of basic training in digital humanities called “BootCamp.” Sessions on these basics have already occurred at most THATCamps; formalization of these sessions with the BootCamp designation will allow attendees to count on THATCamp as a place to learn about specific topics germane to their work.

Each BootCamp session will start from first principles and be guided by someone with a background in the area, drawn from a variety of sources, including traditional scholars with technical experience, educational technologists who work in academia, and those on the technical side of the museum and library realms. In addition to general knowledge, we will seek out instructors with both hands-on, practical experience and teaching experience in the technologies or methods in question. More specifically, we will look for instructors that already have 1) an existing high level of activity online, including work on completed digital projects; 2) publications in their areas of expertise and in digital humanities, broadly construed; 3) prior concrete instructional experience.

The Regional Coordinator will assist local organizers to recruit qualified instructors from among his or her accepted participants. If qualified instructors cannot be identified from among the list of accepted participants, the Regional Coordinator will help local organizers identify scholars in

their region who may be able to assist. Funds will be available to regional camps for the purpose of offsetting travel expenses and paying small honoraria to instructors engaged from outside the list of already accepted participants (honoraria and travel costs of no more than \$300 per instructor and \$1000 per camp will be paid from the instructor travel and honoraria fund; see Budget, below).

One of the main responsibilities of the Regional Coordinator in the early months of his or her tenure will be working with the PIs to develop a comprehensive curriculum for BootCamp. The Center for History and New Media has extensive and diverse experience designing introductory digital methods curricula for both graduate students and early-career professionals, and we will draw on this experience in designing the BootCamp curriculum. Among the sources from which we will draw is CHNM's Alfred P. Sloan Foundation-funded, multi-city *Doing Digital History* workshop series, which served dozens of early-career scholars between 2002 and 2007. We will also draw extensively on a decade's worth of experience teaching "Clio Wired," the digital methods course required of all George Mason University History doctoral students (see <http://www.dancohen.org/clio-wired/> for the 2009 version of the course). Other sources will include *Digital History*, the practical introductory text co-authored by Dr. Cohen (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>); NYU's NHPRC-funded *Digital History Across the Curriculum* project (<http://digitalhistorycurriculum.org/>) and Digital Skills Workshop Series (<http://aphdigital.org/more/digital-skills-workshops/>); and syllabi produced by NEH's Institutes for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities, including the University of Southern California's *Vectors Summer Institute on Multimodal Scholarship*, Brown's *Advanced Topics in TEI Encoding*, the University of Virginia's *Institute for Enabling Geospatial Scholarship*, and the University of South Carolina's *Humanities Gaming Institute*.

A sample BootCamp curriculum may include:

- Web Dev 101 (including HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and other basic technologies of the web)
- User Experience Design (graphic design principles, information architecture, typography, usability testing, analytics, evaluation)
- Text and Search (including markup and TEI, text mining, visualization techniques, indexing and search)
- Mapping (including Google Maps/Earth and GIS)
- Scholarly Communication (new digital methods for communicating with other scholars)

BootCamp sessions will be planned in advanced by local organizers working closely with the Regional Coordinator and will be held on Day 1 of each camp, proceeding concurrently with other THATCamp sessions. Added to the THATCamp Fairfax 2009 schedule, BootCamp would have occupied the bulk of Day 1 but left participants available to take their new training to the general THATCamp sessions on Day 2:

|                    | Auditorium                                               | Atrium 1                          | Atrium 2             | Tower 1                   | Tower 2                         | Robot Room                           | BootCamp                |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>8:30–9:00</b>   | Breakfast, Registration, Session Formation               |                                   |                      |                           |                                 |                                      |                         |
| <b>9:00–10:15</b>  | Welcome, Groundrules, Schedule Setting                   |                                   |                      |                           |                                 |                                      |                         |
| <b>10:30–11:45</b> | Archiving Social Media                                   | Context and Connections           | Libraries & Web 2.0  | Crowdsourcing             | Digital Storytelling            | Mobile                               | Web Dev 101             |
| <b>12:00–1:00</b>  | Lunch - Dork Shorts (lightening talks and project demos) |                                   |                      |                           |                                 |                                      | User Experience Design  |
| <b>1:00–2:15</b>   | Digital Humanites vs. Plain Humanities                   | Annotation                        | SEASR Data Analytics | Semantic Web and Freebase | Scholarly Argument: Beyond Text | ICONCLASS                            | Text and Search         |
| <b>2:30–3:45</b>   | Text Mining                                              | Manifestos, Heresies, Revolutions | Funding              | Drupal                    | Material Culture                | Digital Natives & the Digital Divide | Mapping                 |
| <b>4:00–5:15</b>   | Time and Space - Visualizing Literature                  | Collections UI                    |                      | Teaching Online           | Publishing                      |                                      | Scholarly Communication |
| <b>5:15–5:30</b>   | Day 1 Plenary                                            |                                   |                      |                           |                                 |                                      |                         |

|                    |                                               |                               |                       |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>8:30–9:00</b>   | Breakfast, Schedule Adjustments and Additions |                               |                       |  |  |  |  |
| <b>9:00–10:15</b>  | Digital History Training                      | Standards                     | Digital Art           |  |  |  |  |
| <b>10:30–11:45</b> | University, Museum, Library Collaboration     | Visual Thinking and Mind Maps | Picking a Platform(s) |  |  |  |  |
| <b>12:00–1:00</b>  | Digital History as Public History             | Software Development          |                       |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1:00–1:30</b>   | Closing Plenary                               |                               |                       |  |  |  |  |

Every BootCamp participant will be surveyed to judge the effectiveness of the training, provide improved guidance to local organizers, tap the best instructors, and adjust the curriculum as necessary to offer the most useful and effective training experience possible. This survey will be run, analyzed, and acted upon by the THATCamp Regional Coordinator, who will create a survey instrument soon after the project begins. The survey will use Likert scale (1-5 ratings, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) questions and open boxes for additional prose comments on four areas of assessment: 1) the organization and content of each BootCamp module and the syllabus as a whole; 2) the ability of the regional BootCamp instructors to convey the material, and the methods used in instruction (e.g., hands-on vs. lecture styles); 3) the effectiveness of relating the BootCamp course with the students' own scholarship and research; 4) confidence in the skills acquired and whether there were any missing topics. The THATCamp Regional Coordinator will distill the scores and lessons from each survey of regional attendees, and relate those results to the organizer of each THATcamp. The two will then work on concrete improvement deliverables for the next cycle of the regional THATCamp, as well as lessons to be applied more generally to BootCamp and THATCamp. For instance, if surveys show that hands-on creation of websites is more effective than a lecture introduction on HTML, the course will be changed accordingly.

#### 4) *Micro-fellowships*

Using THATCamp to train humanities scholars in digital methods received significant support at the recent SCI-sponsored summit between CHCI and centerNet. Among the attendees voicing support was Steve Wheatley, Vice-President of ACLS. For the final deliverable, we will therefore work with ACLS, CHCI, and centerNet not only to conduct an extensive outreach effort to its member organizations, but also to provide small stipends directly to graduate students, young faculty, and other early-career and aspiring digital humanists.

The THATCamp micro-fellowship program will provide a \$500 honorarium, to be applied to travel and lodging costs, to graduate students, post-docs and pre-tenured faculty who have been accepted to attend a regional THATCamp. In the course of this grant we will award a total of 100 fellowships, greatly expanding the reach of THATCamp's training activities and the diversity of its participants. Up to 4 fellowships will be available for each of the 25 regional THATCamps. Any unused fellowships would go to additional THATCamps beyond the first 25. If CHNM anticipates that the demand for regional THATCamps is so high that there will be more than 25 in the two years, allocations of the fellowships will occur so that they are geographically distributed in a relatively homogeneous way (e.g., not all 25 would be on the East and West Coasts).

The fellowships would be advertised in multiple locations: On the main THATCamp site (thatcamp.org); on regional THATCamp-in-a-box sites; on the affiliated sites and newsletters and email listservs of participating institutions and centers; and on the outreach channels of ACLS, CHCI, and centerNet. Applicants would apply through each regional website (since THATCamp then uses proposals for topics in the event itself) and will be evaluated by the camp's admissions committee described above. Fellowship awards will be based on an assessment of the potential of the scholar to benefit from the camp, with preference given to those who would especially benefit from BootCamp sessions and who show promise in using what they learn in their own

humanities research. While all campers will be welcome to attend the BootCamp sessions, fellowship recipients will be required to complete the entire course, upon which they will be asked to submit a two-page report on what they learned and how they might apply this learning to subsequent projects. At the end of the two-year grant period, the Regional Coordinator will once again follow up with all fellows to assess whether they actually were able to carry out these new digital projects, or made other measurable progress in their acquisition and use of digital methods.

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We believe these four additions to the regional THATCamp experience—the Regional Coordinator, THATCamp-in-a-box, BootCamp, and the micro-fellowship program—will both broaden the reach and number of regional THATCamps and solidify THATCamp’s role as a location for quality digital humanities training at scale. While we are confident these new organizational structures will help THATCamp meet the goals spelled out in this proposal, we are also mindful of the risk increased formalization poses to the success of THATCamp. THATCamp has flourished as a collaborative, participant-driven enterprise, and we remain committed to keeping it so.

To maintain the ethos that has made THATCamp attractive in the first place, we will make sure to use a light touch in implementing the new structures. One of the reasons we believe a full-time Regional Coordinator is vital to this program is to provide hands-on management of our relationships with local organizers and to make sure tensions do not arise between individual THATCamps and the THATCamp central office. That said, our experience has been that local organizers want much more, rather than less, help from CHNM. Currently we do not have the resources to meet existing requests for assistance; to a great extent the new structures will simply allow us to do so. Finally, we understand that we cannot force these changes on anyone. Participation in the BootCamp program, the use of THATCamp-in-a-box, and the help of the Regional Coordinator will be at the discretion of local organizers. However, we will also make clear that micro-fellowships will be available only to those regional camps that participate fully in the BootCamp program and coordinate their efforts with the Regional Coordinator. In these ways, we will ensure that the new programs enhance, rather than undermine, the collaborative spirit that inspired the creation of the regional THATCamp movement, while at the same time providing the structure and quality control necessary in an effective training program.

## **Staff**

*Co-PI, Dan Cohen, Director, Center for History and New Media* has shared responsibility for program vision and implementation and particular oversight of partner relations, quality assurance, reporting, and sustainability.

*Co-PI, Tom Scheinfeldt, Managing Director, Center for History and New Media* has shared responsibility for program vision and implementation and particular oversight of staffing, budgets, and technology development and testing.

*Regional Coordinator, Amanda French, Center for History and New Media* has primary responsibility for regional THATCamp outreach, planning and publicity; relationships with regional organizers; planning resource and curriculum development and dissemination; the micro-fellowship program; and program evaluation.

*Lead Developer, Jeremy Boggs, Center for History and New Media* has primary responsibility for technology development, including programming, testing, disseminating, and providing end-user support for the THATCamp WordPress plugins. As one of the original founders of THATCamp, moreover, Boggs will work closely with the PIs and Regional Coordinator on strategic planning and regional outreach.

*Lead Designer, Chris Raymond, Center for History and New Media* has primary responsibility for both print graphic and web design, including the THATCamp-in-a-box WordPress themes, downloadable PDF packet, and BootCamp curriculum materials.

(See also, Staff Bios, Appendix B.)

## **Timeline**

*April 2010 – June 2010:* Begin direct outreach to CHCI, centerNet, and ACLS members and general program publicity, including major launch presentation at Fairfax THATCamp; draft THATCamp-in-a-box textual materials and begin THATCamp website redesign; begin THATCamp-in-a-box technology development; begin drafting BootCamp curriculum; develop survey instruments and other evaluation tools.

*July 2010 – September 2010:* Complete outreach to CHCI, centerNet, and ACLS membership; identify and work with local organizers to plan first round of regional camps, including admissions assistance and recruitment of instructors; complete THATCamp-in-a-box instructional materials and THATCamp website redesign; release beta version of THATCamp-in-a-box technologies for testing and initial deployment; complete and deploy BootCamp curriculum; extend first round of fellowships.

*October 2010 – December 2010:* Assess first round of regional camps; continue outreach and work with local organizers on next round of camps; revise THATCamp-in-a-box according to regional feedback and release version 1.0; begin assessment of BootCamp curriculum and instruction; begin assessment of fellowship program.

*January 2011 – March 2011:* Continue regional outreach, planning, and assessment; follow-up with past local organizers regarding repeat events in 2011, revise BootCamp curriculum according to results of assessment; draft interim report.

*April 2011 – June 2011:* Renew contacts with CHCI, centerNet, and ACLS members; continue regional outreach, planning, and assessment.

*July 2011 – September 2011:* Continue regional outreach, planning, and assessment.

*October 2011 – December 2011:* Continue regional outreach, planning, and assessment.

*January 2012 – March 2012:* Final regional outreach, planning, and assessment push; follow-up with past local organizers regarding repeat events in 2012; final revisions of THATCamp-in-a-box materials and technology and BootCamp curriculum; draft final report.

## **Intellectual Property**

Any and all technology developed as part of this project, in particular the THATCamp-in-a-box WordPress plugins, will be released as open source software under the GPL (General Public License, see <http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>), the same license as WordPress itself. Each will be distributed freely on the THATCamp website and via the central WordPress plugins directory, where they should attract a wide user base, not only among scholars, but among any group seeking light-weight, flexible, and open conference management tools. Furthermore, any and all instructional materials created as part of the THATCamp-in-a-box package and BootCamp curriculum will be released as open access under a Creative Commons *Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike* license (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>).

## **Reporting**

Narrative and financial reports will be submitted jointly by Dr. Cohen and Dr. Scheinfeldt and George Mason University's Office of Sponsored Programs half-way through the period of performance in April 2011 and at project's end in April 2012. Key performance metrics will be numbers of regional camps launched, numbers of scholars served, quantitative and qualitative assessments of BootCamp curricula and instruction, and learning outcomes of micro-fellowship recipients. Narrative reports will also include comments on the project's actual expenses as compared to those in the original budget.

## **Budget and Sustainability**

The total request for *Digital Methods Training at Scale: Leveraging THATCamp Through a Regional System* is \$263,683, comprising \$144,822 to support program personnel, \$50,000 for the micro-fellowship program, and \$40,000 to offset regional BootCamp instructor and admissions committee costs. The remainder of the budget is fringe costs and minor expenses. In addition, CHNM will cost share \$17,146 in effort donated by Dr. Cohen and Dr. Scheinfeldt. This modest request will fully cover the four deliverables described above, including all personnel, program development, web design and programming, and fellowship costs.

Furthermore, we believe these funds will be sufficient to sustain and even expand the program activities beyond the two-year period of performance. We have already shown THATCamp to be both scalable and sustainable. Scalable because other groups have reproduced the model at similarly low costs and with similarly good results. Sustainable because each camp is already internally sustainable; we have not, for instance, included any funding for CHNM's Fairfax camp in this request. We expect the expansion of the THATCamp regional system enabled by this request to result in a permanent global network of digital humanities training institutes.

## Appendix A, Institutional Profile

Since its inception in 1994, the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University has used digital media and technology to advance historical education and understanding, preserve and present history online, and transform scholarship across the humanities. CHNM boasts a staff of nearly 50 people (a dozen of them with doctoral degrees) and more than three-dozen active projects. It has conducted over \$20 million of grant-funded research, and has freely given away all of the educational materials, archives, and software it has created. Its websites and software are among the most popular in academia—and outside of it. Each year CHNM's many project websites, staff blogs, podcasts, and open access publications receive more than 16 million visitors, and over a million people rely on its digital tools to teach, learn, and conduct research. 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, the Department of Education, the Library of Congress, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Historic Publications and Records Commission, and the Mellon, Sloan, Hewlett, Kress, Rockefeller, and Kellogg foundations.

As both a scholarly and public humanities center, CHNM's work addresses multiple audiences—scholars, students and teachers, as well as the general public. Although it is somewhat artificial to separate these audiences—indeed, new media blurs historical audiences and genres—they nevertheless help define CHNM's three main areas of work and its main administrative branches: the Division of Education, which provides free access to primary sources, builds high quality online teaching modules, and offers instruction on critical thinking skills through award winning projects like *History Matters* ([historymatters.gmu.edu](http://historymatters.gmu.edu)) and the *National History Education Clearinghouse* ([teachinghistory.org](http://teachinghistory.org)); the Division of Public Projects, which brings history to audiences worldwide by collecting born-digital records of the present, archiving documents of the past, and presenting historical exhibits through landmark projects such as the *September 11 Digital Archive* ([911digitalarchive.org](http://911digitalarchive.org)) and *Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives* ([gulaghistory.org](http://gulaghistory.org)); and the Division of Research, where the proposed program would be located.

CHNM's Division of Research plays a leading role in advancing and defining digital humanities scholarship. It does so in two major ways, both of them vital to the success of this project.

First, CHNM's Division of Research has been a key location for exploring the ways in which digital technologies will reshape humanities. Through the work of the Division of Research, CHNM has established itself as a focal point for collaboration and communication within the emerging discipline of digital humanities. A decade of organizing colloquia, workshops, and instructional events such as the bi-annual *Rosenzweig Forum for Technology and Humanities* has taught us the importance of practical training in the digital humanities. Our 2003-2007 series of *Doing Digital History* workshops in Washington, New York and Chicago, reinforced the lesson that to remain engaged with technical details for extended periods, aspiring digital humanists need to put that technology to use for themselves and see it in action. Finally, of course, our more recent experience with THATCamp has demonstrated CHNM's ability to attract participation and provide effective training opportunities for many people at low cost.

Second, the Division of Research builds digital tools to facilitate the research, organization, and dissemination of scholarship. CHNM currently leads two major open source software development projects. The first of these, *Zotero* (<http://zotero.org>), is a free, open source, easy-to-use research tool that helps researchers gather and organize resources, and then annotate, organize, and share the results of their research. *Zotero* includes the best parts of older reference manager software—the ability to store full reference information in author, title, and publication fields and to export it as formatted references—and the best parts of modern software such as del.icio.us or iTunes, such as the ability to sort, tag, and search in advanced ways. *Zotero* is currently used by more than 1.5 million researchers in over 100 countries, in languages ranging from Arabic to Vietnamese. The second, *Omeka* (<http://omeka.org>), is a free and open source web publishing tool oriented toward the needs of humanities scholars and cultural heritage institutions, especially those who want to incorporate interactive features in their websites but lack the technical staff to do so. *Omeka* offers low installation and maintenance costs, promotes compliance with accessibility guidelines (e.g. Section 508) and prevailing metadata standards (e.g. Dublin Core), and brings Web 2.0 technologies and approaches to cultural heritage websites. Eighteen months after its public launch, *Omeka* has already seen tremendous success and counts the New York Public Library, the Newberry Library, the Ohio Humanities Council, and the University of California, Berkeley among its hundreds of early adopters. The experience of working on these popular, complementary software projects perfectly positions CHNM to build and disseminate the tools and resources we propose for the THATCamp-in-a-box portion of the project.

## Appendix B, Staff Bios

*Dan Cohen* is Associate Professor in the Department of History and Art History at George Mason University and the Director of the Center for History and New Media. He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton, his master's from Harvard, and his doctorate from Yale. His primary historical interests are in European and American intellectual history, the history of science (particularly mathematics), and the intersection of history and computing. Dan is co-author of *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), author of *Equations from God: Pure Mathematics and Victorian Faith* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), and has published articles and book chapters on the history of mathematics and religion, the teaching of history, and the future of history in a digital age in journals such as the *Journal of American History*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Rethinking History*. He is an inaugural recipient of the American Council of Learned Societies' Digital Innovation Fellowship. Dan co-directs several digital projects at CHNM including the *September 11 Digital Archive*, *Echo*, and *Zotero*.

*Tom Scheinfeldt* is Managing Director of the Center for History and New Media and Research Assistant Professor of History in the Department of History and Art History at George Mason University. Tom received his bachelor's degree from Harvard and his master's and doctoral degrees from Oxford, where his doctoral thesis examined inter-war interest in science and its history in diverse cultural contexts, including museums, universities, and World's Fairs. A research associate at the Smithsonian Institution Archives and a fellow of the Science Museum, London, Tom has lectured and written extensively on the history of popular science and the history of museums, most recently two chapters in the forthcoming *A Science Museum Centenary* (Palgrave, 2010), and has worked on traditional exhibitions and digital projects at the Colorado Historical Society and the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford. In addition to managing general operations at the Center for History and New Media, Tom directs several of its projects, including *Omeka*, the *September 11 Digital Archive*, the *Hurricane Digital Memory Bank*, the *Papers of the War Department, 1784-1800*, and *Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives*.

*Amanda French* was most recently an Assistant Research Scholar in the Archives and Public History graduate program at New York University, where she created a model digital curriculum as part of the "Digital History Across the Curriculum" project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and created and taught the course "Creating Digital History." During her time as a Council on Library and Information Resources Postdoctoral Fellow at North Carolina State University Libraries, she co-developed and co-taught a course for Honors undergraduates on academic research skills and issues for the digital age as well as managing the North Carolina Sociolinguistic Archive and Analysis Project and conducting extensive web usability studies. At the University of Virginia, while earning her doctorate in English, Amanda spent three years as a Teaching + Technology Support Partner training faculty in the English Department to use technology in their teaching and research. Also at the University of Virginia, she studied with Jerome McGann and encoded texts for the Electronic Text Center and the Rossetti Archive. Her 2004 dissertation is a literary history of the villanelle, the poetic form of Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art." Named by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in April 2009 as one of "10 High Fliers on Twitter," Amanda is currently at work on a book about the poetics of Twitter.

*Jeremy Boggs* is Creative Lead at the Center for History and New Media, and a PhD student in the Department of History and Art History at George Mason University. Boggs received his Master's degree in history from Virginia Tech. His doctoral dissertation focuses on the historical development of Cascading Style Sheets as a design language for the Web. His other research interests include the history of technology, the history of design, and cultural history. In addition to designing and developing numerous web projects at CHNM, Boggs is the project manager for *Omeka*.

*Chris Raymond* is manager of the web design team at CHNM. Raymond has diverse experience creating effective, award-winning visual communications as a graphic designer, web designer, science museum exhibit researcher/writer, science journalist, and publications director for an association of hands-on science museums. She has a PhD in sociology from Cornell University with emphasis in mass media and sociology of science. Raymond formally studied graphic design at Virginia Commonwealth University, and specializes in typography, color, integrating imagery and text, and information architecture.