WISCONSIN
HUMANITIES

DIGITAL PROJECT DESIGN
INCLUDING FILMS, PODCASTS, WEBSITES and GAMES

Wisconsin Humanities funds digital humanities projects such as short videos, full-length film documentaries, websites, video games, podcasts, and other audio projects. Digital projects may also be part of a larger project such as an exhibit, or the cumulative effort of a larger humanities-based program. A digital humanities project should not be strictly archival. Instead, it must engage the public and be publicly accessible.

Projects that can be described as "digital humanities" may prompt special project and budget considerations. For example, Wisconsin Humanities considers requests for computer hardware and software as part of a digital humanities project. Their intended use must, however, be clearly described for the project period and beyond and must be demonstrably vital to delivering humanities content.

Digital humanities projects such as online exhibits can expand traditional definitions of audience, public, and community engagement. Applicants should thoughtfully consider and clearly describe the audiences for the project, as well as the nature and duration of the proposed public engagement. For example, if your proposed project is a website, you must describe your plans to maintain it.

Applicants should also clearly describe the project personnel--their roles and qualifications--and submit Project Personnel Forms for key team members, including everyone for whom Wisconsin Humanities funds are requested.

If the project you seek funds for is primarily to develop a website, digital game, film or podcast you should answer the digital humanities question on the application. This question asks you to address the following:

- Provide a preview of the subject matter you will be sharing with participants. Help us understand the ideas your project explores.
- What are two or three of the key questions that your project addresses?
- Provide a treatment that describes the structure, theme, style, format, voice and point of view of your project.
- When available provide a script/scenario.
- Please include a justification for this format and the distribution plan for this project.
- Use the supporting materials section to provide a link to sample work.

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TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

While most projects will have a technical expert designing the digital humanities component, we know that many of our applicants are new to the use of these technologies. Thus, we offer some of these questions to help you work with your technical expert as you think through your visioning process.

<u>For games:</u>

Be sure you choose a **flexible platform** and consider whether the game can be accessed for free.

- Is your game design intended to be played on a computer or a smart phone?
- Is your audience a group that might have differing abilities to access the needed hardware?
- E.g. a school group where some students don't have smart phones and can't participate?

Games should be **appropriate to the humanities content**.

- How is the player intersecting with the game and the humanities content?
- How does the "educational/informational" element of discovery come in and the "game" element of reward play out?
- How does exploration in the game lead to knowledge? How does it build community or lead to discussion?
- How does the game lead to real world interaction?

Be sure your game designer **understands your audiences**.

- Are there lengthy instructions that a young child might be unable to read?
- Does the game require "game-playing" knowledge that some groups of people may not have?
- Do the game modules or steps require a task to be accomplished before moving on? If so, could this linear structure inhibit locational and temporal relationships to the humanities content? E.g. If the tour has moved on to a new location, would players be unable to access the content on the new location until the old location has been successfully unlocked?

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For websites:

While there are many options for web platforms, many of which are free and include extensive tutorials (e.g. WordPress), there are a number of considerations that need to go into a web design for a humanities project.

Make the underlying **language and content** universal across formats and designed for changing technology and research purposes. Make sure your product is scalable and test it on multiple operating systems and browsers.

- Does your web design meet international standards so that it will line up with software and hardware upgrades?
- What kind of coding language is your designer using? The different design languages have varying applicability across international platforms which may matter when considering archival aspects of your project or its sustainability across platforms.
- Are you using non-proprietary data file formats and open-source database and web publishing framework?
- Will images be stored and displayed in widely compatible formats? Uncompressed TIFF is considered a preferred storage format while JPGs are the most universally readable for browser display.
- How will you store the metadata for your images? Scanning data for images? Locations of originals and video shooting formats?
- Have you dated your website and provided contact information and organizational attribution?
- Is it designed to be scalable for smart phones and tablets?

Strive for **clean organization and easy readability**. You want people to be able to navigate your site intuitively.

- Have you designed for Google keyword searches and for multimedia applications?
- Is navigation within your site consistent?
- Have you used space as part of your design to make it easy to read and follow?
- Have you kept it simple and considered the reading and comprehension level of your audience?
- Have you considered where appropriate hyperlinks and interactive elements would improve comprehension vs. where too much is too busy?
- Are you using the key design features of repetition, contrast, proximity, and alignment to help your viewers comprehend the content?
- Have you minimized the number of "clicks" needed to reach your content?

Use easy-to-read **color schemes**. Consider whether branding is complementary to or clashing with the design. Aim for consistency across web pages.

- Is the design attractive and free of typography errors?
- Has the top of the page pulled your audience in with compelling information?
- Does your page open fast and not overwhelm data streams with auto-loading videos and graphics?
- Does the narrative of your page tell a compelling story and employ humanities content?
- Does it encourage engagement?
- Does it avoid busy GIFs and "loud" color schemes?
- Do photos and videos have explanatory captions?
- Does it avoid difficult-to-read color and common pitfalls of special needs accessibility?