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Digital WPI

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WPI 150: A recommendation for marking the sesquicentennial using the best insights from the digital humanities

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A recommendation for marking the sesquicentennial using the best insights from the digital humanities.

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report:
Submitted to the faculty of the
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science
By:

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Introduction

During the period of 2012 until 2020, many Universities will be celebrating their sesquicentennial anniversaries. Between the Morrill Land Grant of 1862 and the end of the Civil War in 1865, the demand for increased technological and academic progress led to a massive increase in the number of academic institutions in the United States. The Morrill land grant was designed and implemented to teach "agriculture and the mechanic arts...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life"[1]. This grant created a boom of industrious and technological learning to support the post-Civil War period of reconstruction calling for a physical, political, and economic reconstruction of the country. Due to the rapid increase in the number of Universities between 1862 and 1865, a large number of Universities will be celebrating their sesquicentennial anniversaries between 2012 and 2015. In light of this important decade, the problem that I seek to address is how to utilize the knowledge and expertise from leaders in the museum industry, digital humanities, and alumni relations along with authorities on historiography and the development of social media to build a prototype for an online historical exhibit commemorating the sesquicentennial anniversary of Worcester Polytechnic Institute. WPI's current historical sources need to be updated and maintained, and because digital media has changed the way museums, publishers, and educational institutions deliver cultural education; it is appropriate that efforts to promote WPI's history take account of the

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1 "Morill Act (1862)." Our Documents. United States Government, n.d. Web. 16 Sept. 2012. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true>.

best practices within the fields of museum and library studies and digital

humanities. I seek to have the website itself be easy to navigate, aesthetically

pleasing, marketable, able to allow people to easily submit material artifacts along

with their own personal stories, and able to gain enough popularity so that people

continue to return to the site and encourage their reconnection with the Institute.

The story of Worcester Polytechnic Institute needs to be told, and its history

desperately needs to be updated. WPI has two primary historical accounts, *The Two*

Towers and the *Tech Bible*. The first Tech Bible was published in 1897, and has been

consistently updated since, with the most recent update occurring in 2010[2]. The

Two Towers was published in 1965 and written by Mildred McClary Tymeson.

Although the WPI "Tech Bible" is also in digital form, it is a freshman handbook,

which only touches upon WPI's extensive past. The Two Towers is more of an in

depth, comprehensive history, yet it only covers history up until its publication year,

1965. Another issue with these two sources is that they can only portray text and

images, so the educational and informative importance of dialogue, audio, and video

are lost. Many institutions have learned that social media is the catalyst through in

which this updated history should be told[3].

The preservation of historical artifacts is a profound necessity in our culture.

As museum expert and historian Tim Talbott states, "Museums are built and

maintained for people to actually see items and artifacts of a past era in order to

[2] "WPI Tech Bible." WPI Tech Bible. WPI, n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2012.
<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/library/history/techbible/>.
[3] "Using Social Media to Bring Museum Exhibits to Life." Social Media, Internet
Marketing, and Fundraising for Nonprofit Organizations. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov.
2012. <http://www.npengage.com/social-media/using-social-media-bring-
museum-exhibits-life/>.

make connections and sense of the present, and even possibly speculate on the future."[4] Being in the presence of a historical artifact as opposed to just reading about it makes that history a real, tangible part of the viewers life. As Talbott also states "Museums are important because they tell us stories that we can't get as well from books or recordings, or even photographs." These stories are delivered through museums better than they would be through other mediums because despite the large amount of important knowledge that can be gained from museums, people rarely visit them. Online museum expert and consultant Nina Simon states, "The three times you will visit a museum are when you a child, when you have children, and when you have grandchildren"[5] For WPI seeking to promote historical understanding of the institution in the years leading up to its sesquicentennial, this statistic is not so much a tragedy (given that WPI lacks an actual museum) as a challenge: how can WPI bring historical study to its audience without constructing a brick and mortar museum? This is an issue I seek to remedy. History is relevant not only to the scholar, nor should it be disregarded later in one's life. It is vital to the fabric of cultures, and needs to be preserved. As the National Council on Public history states "Our work begins in the belief that historical understanding is of essential value in society."[6]

The economic turmoil of the past few years has created a fragile environment for American museums that might open possibilities for virtual museums. The

[4] "Random Thoughts on History:." Random Thoughts on History. Tim Talbott, n.d. Web. 15 Sept. 2012. <http://randomthoughtsonhistory.blogspot.com/>.
[5] Simon, Nina. "Re: WPI IQP Online Exhibit." Message to the author. 7 Sept. 2012. E-mail.
[6] "NCPH: Who We Are." National Council on Public History RSS. N.p., 2012. Web. 10 Sept. 2012.

American Association of Museums collected a multitude of data concerning the levels of museum attendance in 2011. The variances compared to previous years (2009-2011) are represented in the chart below.

Reported changes in museum attendance (2009-2011)

	2009	2010	2011
Don't know	1.2%	2.1%	1.2%
Sizable decrease (>20%)	2.9%	2.3%	2.3%
Significant decrease (5%-20%)	16.2%	15.4%	11.3%
Small decrease (<5%)	12.1%	12.3%	15.5%
No appreciable change	10.2%	18.3%	17.1%
Small increase (<5%)	16.8%	17.8%	20.1%
Significant increase (5%-20%)	26.0%	25.6%	25.9%
Sizable increase in total attendance (>20%)	14.6%	6.3%	6.7%

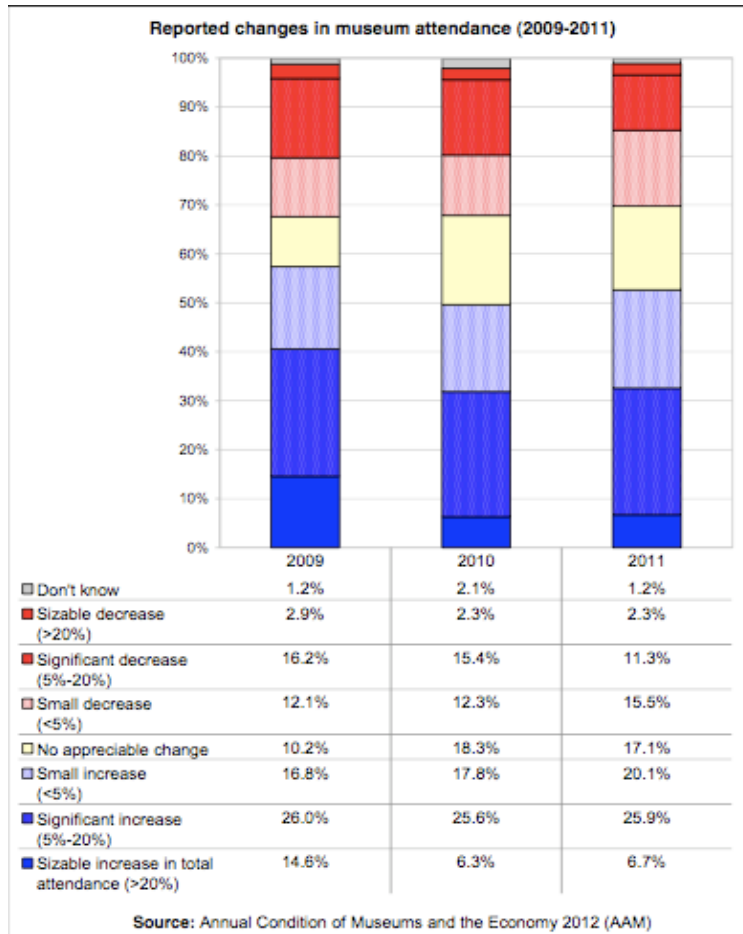**Source:** Annual Condition of Museums and the Economy 2012 (AAM)

Figure 1

As we can see, museums are not necessarily in crisis, however a sizeable percentage of museums have seen decreased attendance in the past half decade. In general, the well being of traditional museums is slightly increasing, but economic stress is a major factor. As stated by the American Association of Museums in their 2011 report "Museums and the American Economy", "In 2011, American museums reflected the overall state of the U.S. economy, with a high level of economic stress

and continued belt-tightening but also the signs of potential recovery. For the third

year in a row, a majority of museums report increased attendance but moderate to

very severe economic stress"[7]

Museums experienced financial stress in 2011

Category	Percentage
Very Severe (i.e., the very worst I have seen in at least 5 years)	12.9%
Severe (i.e., bad, but I have seen worse in the previous 5 years)	15.9%
Moderate	43.1%
Minimal	21.1%
We did not experience any financial stress in 2011	7.0%

(n=427)
Source: Annual Condition of Museums and the Economy 2012 (AAM)
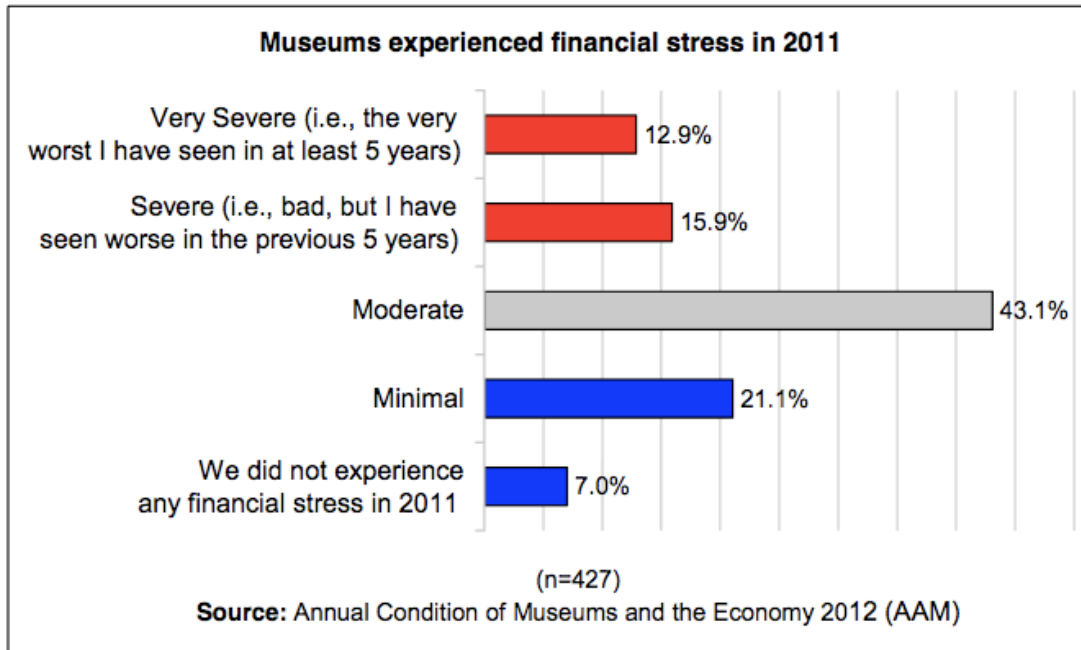
Figure 2

Economic stress of Museum owners is at an all time high, represented in

figure 2. On the other hand, an online museum is not subject to such economic stress

because it does not require so much capital. The advancement in technology

throughout the information age has led to the rise of social media, e-mail, blogs, and

instant messaging which connects people through the Internet, as well as

educational materials such as Wikipedia, online historical archives, and the ability to

virtually view historical artifacts. Social media combined with the ability to

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[7] "Museums and The American Economy in 2011." American Association of Museums, Apr. 2012. Web. <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/research/acme12-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

communicate through the Internet and the presentation of history can bring

together oral history, traditional historiography, static museum exhibits, and

interpreting historical analysis. This creates optimal circumstances which not only

make historical information more accessible than ever before, but more notably

foster interest in history in ways that traditional scholarly sources and even

museums have thus far been unable to do. Of course there are websites devoted to

the preservation of oral history[8], but many don't allow their users to post artifacts

or documents, and they essentially becomes a historical blogs. I seek to have this

site be more than just a historical blog because one of the main purposes of the site

is to have users post their own material, and be exposed to something new they

have never seen before, in that historical blogs appeal to historians, whereas this

site can appeal to a multitude of different types of people and turn them into

historians. Because WPI would like to foster and maintain interest in its history

extending beyond the sesquicentennial observation, its online site should be more

than just a historical blog: contributory history is as personally relevant as history

can be, in that reading, interpreting, and writing history all combine to create a true,

passionate, and lifelong historian. As Columbia University historian Eric Foster

states in a review of Howard Zinn's <u>A People's History of the United States</u>,

contributory/populist histories investigate "Less dramatic but more typical lives

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[8] **American Life Histories, Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940** Library of Congress, American Memory http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html
Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II Sandra Stewart Holyoak, Rutgers History Department http://fas-history.rutgers.edu/oralhistory/orlhom.htm
Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive McCain Library and Archive, University of Southern Mississippi http://www.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/

[which] receive little attention." Because these histories are affiliated so closely with the users, they create a more personal and profound experience.

The goal of this project was to develop a sesquicentennial website for WPI and offer detailed guidelines for a year's worth of postings; these guidelines take account of the best practices developed by online museums and scholars of social media. My research investigates the ways historiographers and museums have evolved to include non-traditional methods (i.e. social media) and how best to combine the benefits of traditional and non-traditional methods to create an ideal twenty-first century digital exhibit. Some of the other key topics that I have investigated are the evolution of the portrayal of history and museum exhibits in non-traditional methods, the impact of social media on education, the dissemination of oral history through an interactive, digital platform, and marketing the commemoration of significant events in a way that encourages people to contribute to the content of the page.

My goals and objectives for this project, then, were these:

Develop an interactive website to tell the story of WPI's history and offer specific guidelines for posting that take account of the most recent findings in how populations enjoy informal education.

To be successful, this site must:

A) Have relative and frequent posts from the administrator.

B) Encourage participation from visitors.

C) Foster interest in the history of WPI to commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of WPI.

The last written account of the history of WPI only includes events for the first century of the Institution's existence, and within this past half-century WPI has emerged as one of the nation's top Universities by "the national ranking scheme devised by US News and World Report. In this scheme, WPI is ranked number 53 in the category of national universities, which are those that offer the full range of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs."[9] Along with the progress WPI has made on the national level, the approach to education has changed drastically since the last written historical account. "The WPI Plan", which was implemented in 1970, is now the foundation of the WPI experience, and has thus changed the very nature of the University and its graduates. Dr. Richard F. Vaz, Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering and Dean of the Interdisciplinary & Global Studies Division at WPI describes the WPI Plan and the nature of the students it produces:" The plan framed technological education in terms of students' abilities to apply knowledge in authentic settings. The signature elements of the plan were a series of degree-required projects, two of which were focused not on science or engineering but rather on students' grappling with humanistic values and the social contexts of technology."[10] This approach to engineering education was quite radical at the time; however, most WPI professors and students today cannot imagine the University without the WPI Plan and the unusual curricular elements that contribute to the

[9] "WPI Ranking." President. Worcester Polytechnic Institute, n.d. Web. 13 Sept. 2012. <http://www.wpi.edu/offices/president/ranking.html>.

[10] "Designing the Liberally Educated Engineer." Peer Review. Assosciation of American Colleges and Universities, n.d. Web. 26 Aug. 2012. <http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-sp12/Vaz.cfm>.

education of socially conscious, imaginative problem solvers. As the WPI website states, "We don't just believe in making the world a better place though science, technology, the arts and humanities – we actually do it."[11] Both in WPI's archives, and in The Two Towers the history of Worcester Polytechnic Institute has been preserved, but the rapid development and proliferation of online media have made it easier that ever to display pictures, texts, and documents, a truly living history. A very valuable resource that is available to the public regarding the history of WPI is the historical archives in the basement of the George C. Gordon Library. However, a staff member must find you what the patron is looking for, scan the document, deliver the scan to the patron at a later date etc. Thus, there is a limit as to how often, when, where, and how this can be done. With social media, assuming an engaged administrator who takes the time to search the archival collection and select materials that will interest audiences, there is virtually no limit to how many artifacts can be posted from a large amount of sources, making the pace far more rapid. This site includes traditional museum artifacts such as newspaper clippings, video footage, photographs, and audio clips, as well as non-traditional ways of presenting historical information such as chat rooms, notes/blogs with topics and themes such as significant world events, significant events for the institution, Greek life, clubs, sports, majors, buildings, professors, research, etc. I intend to have the prototype and overall "shell" of the website completed in seven weeks. However, the upkeep and developing content of the site will increase with time, based on its interactive nature. For the same reason that High Schools and Universities devote so

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[11] "Academics." Worcester Polytechnic Institute, n.d. Web. 13 Sept. 2012.
<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Undergraduate/index.html>.

much time and so many resources to successful reunions, those reasons are applicable to the importance of having this ongoing, living historical database. The methods of portraying information are changing, and in order for this important story to be heard and constructed, we must utilize these new technologies to our advantage and for the well being of others and future generations, or else the stories and artifacts associated with our fruitful history may be forever lost.

Background/Literature Review

Museums have been an integral part of human culture for a very long time. From the Museum at Alexandria in Ancient Greece, to the very contemporary digital online museums such as The University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, they all serve the same purpose, to " [care] for a collection of artifacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, cultural, or historical importance and [make] them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary"[12]. This basic purpose has remained the same for centuries, though the makeup of museum audiences has changed. The Museum at Alexandria was funded by the Royal family of the Ptolemies, with many areas devoted purely to study for learned men, although there was a public walk (known as a peripaton) where the public could view the exhibits.[13] In more modern times, museums are open to the public, funded by grants, endowments, private donations,

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[12] Museum. New World Encyclopedia, n.d. Web. 21 Nov. 2012.
<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Museum>.
[13] "Alexandria: The Museum." Alexandria: The Museum. University College London, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2012.
<http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/museum/museum3.html>.

and admissions fees[14] and the content within them is open to all. Within the past 30 years, modes of presentation of museum artifacts have evolved drastically with efforts to attract a larger and more diverse population. As modes of presentation have differed, so have the demographics and attitude concerning museums. Although traditional static museum exhibits remain popular, the incorporation of high resolution digital images, holograms, and virtual exhibits have become commonplace[15], as well as completely online storage of "artifacts" which one can view from home[16]. The changing presentation modes and increase of this new format (digital) is leading to a larger and more diverse "audience" [17] seeing as how computer usage and the Internet have become such a popular and universal concept over the past decade, while museum attendance has not.

Traditional "Brick & Mortar" museums have a major impact on our culture and society, although it can be argued that those who visit a museum are already interested enough in its contents, and therefore not much has changed. As an anonymous member of the British National Museum Directors Council states, "In

[14] Berman, Jillian. "Museums' Funding Sources Going Bone Dry." USA Today, n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2012. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-07-22-museumclosing_N.htm>.

[15] "Chicago Museums Use Technology to Enhance Exhibits." Nwitimes.com. N.p., 20 Feb. 2012. Web. 21 Nov. 2012. <http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/illinois/chicago/chicago-museums-use-technology-to-enhance-exhibits/article_e2ac68e6-73e2-5d39-a9a8-fcb6f918b31b.html>.

[16] McKenzie, Jamie. "VIRTUAL MUSEUMS." Virtual Museums. N.p., 1995. Web. 21 Nov. 2012. <http://www.fno.org/museum/muse.html>.

[17]

"Opportunities through Accessibility". Institute of Museums and Library Services, n.d. Web. 01 Dec. 2012. <http://www.imls.gov/about/accessibility.aspx>.

terms of actual evidence of cultural impact, there is not a lot. We have a fair amount

of evaluation which points to attitudinal changes amongst visitors/users in

response to particular pieces of programming particularly, for example, exhibitions

which add new narratives or perspectives... But it would be hard make a strong case

for this leading to cultural change as it could be argued that we are 'preaching to the

converted."[18] Although it is difficult to imagine a world where traditional museums

become obsolete. There is a multitude of and advantages to a traditional museum,

however there are also drawbacks. One benefit is that through grants, admissions,

donations, etc. traditional museums generally have a large amount of capital on

hand (although as seen above, economic turmoil can decrease funding) with which

they can consistently improve, update, hire staff, teach classes, etc.

One of the main drawbacks of a traditional museum is that, by its nature, it's

relatively static, which makes it more difficult to access frequently compared to film,

radio, online exhibits, oral history, etc. considering the latter modes can be viewed

in a viewers home, on the internet, or at a friends house, and not at a physical

location that one would have to travel to.

Within the print medium, a range of historical approaches is possible.

Whereas traditional historiography has provided the "significant" names, dates, and

interpretations of historical events, Populist history tells the story of those that are

less frequently heard, but just as significant This concept is not new, and a quite

popular form that it is expressed most famously through is A People's History of the

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[18] "Making a Difference: The Cultural Impact of Museums." Sara Selwood Assosciate, July 2010. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/cultural_impact_exec_summary.pdf>.

United States, by Howard Zinn. In this 1980 book, Zinn "present(s) American history through the eyes of the common people rather than political and economic elites".[16] Throughout his book, Zinn seeks to shed light on populations who are not typically represented in traditional history, all the while drawing ties between them and the typical historical figures. Throughout his work, Zinn tells the story of the unsung hero. In his book, Zinn states his intentions and his method of writing history, stating "If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past"[19].

A People's History of The United States draws liberally upon oral histories, a subset of populist history. Oral history is "the collection and study of historical information about individuals, families, important events, or everyday life using audiotapes, videotapes, or transcriptions of planned interviews…. Oral history also refers to information gathered in this manner and to a written work (published or unpublished) based on such data, often preserved in archives and large libraries."[20] Oral and other populist histories have certain advantages as well as certain drawbacks. A benefit of oral history is that it is a methodology of telling the untold story, which in a lot of ways is the most important portion of history. An extreme extension of populist history that has become quite prevalent in modern historical research is open source history. "Open Source" is a term that was initially purely associated with computer software, and an open source program is defined as "a

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[19] Zinn, Howard. A People's History of the United States: 1492-present. New York: HarperCollins, 2003. Print.
[20] "Oral History." TheFreeDictionary.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2012. <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/oral history>.

program in which the source code is available to the general public for use and/or modification from its original design free of charge... Open source code is typically created as a collaborative effort in which programmers improve upon the code and share the changes within the community." [21] This concept of software that can be collaboratively created and contributed to by a vast community who correct, suggest, and modify the software can be applied to historical documents, and open source history is beginning to gain some credibility.

The inaugural welcome message of the HUMANIST listserv, from May 14,1987, defines digital humanists as "people who support computing in the humanities. Those who teach, review software, answer questions, give advice, program, write documentation, or otherwise support research and teaching in this area are included."[22]. Thus, any and all who participate in a crowd source, populist history that happens to be online are digital humanists, and anyone with an Internet connection can be a writer and a historian. This is a radical concept considering two decades ago most people didn't even have Internet access.

Open source history that can be discussed, edited, and updated by a vast community is also known as crowd sourcing, and when this is done online, it becomes a form of the digital humanities. Although digital humanities is separate from the concepts of open source history and crowd sourcing, digital humanists tend to be much more egalitarian and open to the idea as opposed to traditional academics. Digital humanist Lisa Spiro elaborates upon this link in her blog, titled

[21] "Open Source." Webopedia. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Dec. 2012.
<http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/O/open_source.html>.
[22] Mattison, David. The Digital Humanities Revolution. Yale Law School, Rutgers University, May 2006. Web. 27 Sept. 2012.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/221105714>.

"Digital Scholarship in the Humanities", she states, "In retrospect, I see that my attraction to digital humanities comes not so much from a love of technology or method, but of the community and its values. It's difficult - to define the values of such a diverse community, but I would point to openness, collaboration, collegiality and connectedness, diversity and experimentation... Underlying all of these is openness, broadly defined: openness to new ideas and new participants, openness as a commitment to sharing." In this way, digital humanities and a desire to have history be open source/crowd source, are not the same thing, but an important link must be noticed between the concepts and their values.

One of the most credible authorities on populist, crowd sourced, open source histories, and more broadly the digital humanities is the late Dr. Roy Rosenzweig, In his essay "Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the future of the past" Rosenzweig analyzes the popular online contributory encyclopedia Wikipedia and its role in the future of online populist histories. Rosenzweig states, "A historical work without owners and with multiple, anonymous authors is thus almost unimaginable in our professional culture. Yet, quite remarkably, that describes the online encyclopedia known as Wikipedia, ... History is probably the category encompassing the largest number of articles. Wikipedia is entirely free. And that freedom includes not just the ability of any- one to read it ... but also more remarkably, their freedom to use it"[23]. Rosenzweig argues that open source history can be extremely useful, and is an emerging medium for historical research. The George Mason University Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media is one

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[23] Rosenzweig, Roy. "Can History Be Open Source?" Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media RSS. George Mason University, June 2006. Web. 11 Nov. 2012.

of the leading resources for those interested in the digital humanities.

Although Rosenzweig acknowledges online crowd sourced histories, he also finds some problems within them. He states: "Part of the problem is that such broad synthetic writing is not easily done collaboratively. Equally important, some articles do not seem to have attracted much interest from [users]… Participation in Wikipedia entries generally maps popular, rather than academic, interests in history."[24] Rosenzweig's assertions that Wikipedia (open source) maps popular as opposed to academic interest in history are a reoccurring caution delivered from scholars. Nonetheless, the concept of digital humanities has been gathering a lot of credibility and traction in the traditional scholastic world. Having multiple people consistently researching, fact checking, and discussing can lead to a more accurate and interesting delivery of information. New York University Professor and advocate of crowd sourcing Clay Shirkey states "Do not put together an interdisciplinary team from 12 departments and give them a budget of a quarter of a million dollars, and a year and a half deadline. Find five people and ask them what can you do in a month—for free. I think the results will surprise you."[25] Professor Shirkey's assertions are inspirational and exciting, however I do understand that traditional academia may be resistant to crowd sourcing, taking advantage of technology would require "doing more sharing than we're used to and then learning

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[24] "Journal Of American History, June 2006. Web. Nov. 2012. <http://ecpdata.mdsa.net/sources_secondary/rosenzweig-highres.pdf>.
[25] Parry, Marc. "The Real Revolution Is Openness, Clay Shirky Tells Tech Leaders." Wired Campus. The Chronicle Of Higher Education, 07 Nov. 2012. Web. 02 Dec. 2012. <http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/the-real-revolution-is-openness-clay-shirky-tells-tech-leaders/40894>.

to live with results."[22]

What seems to be the golden formula for modern historical portrayal is a meeting of the scholarly and the popular. This goal can be attained through mediums such as television, film and radio. Historical documentaries, The History Channel, blockbuster Hollywood films and the like have been able to bring history right into people's homes for their entertainment and knowledge. This medium is distinguished from traditional scholarly histories because the historical content has been interwoven with entertainment, and thus can deliver historical information to viewers as a form of entertainment. An example of this is the television show *Modern Marvels* on the History Channel, which received praise for its "presentation of detailed information in an entertaining format"[26]. The distinguishing factor between traditional historical mediums and historical film/television is that one of film and television's primary usages in modern society is to entertain. If it is historical or educational in nature then it will teach viewers and get them interested in the content if they are entertained. One of the main benefits to utilizing television, radio and film as a method of portraying history is that it is very easily accessible. In the United States, 96.7% of households in the United States have a television[27], so it is a medium through which a lot of historical information can be presented to a lot of people very easily.

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[26] Scott Weinberg (May 29, 2007). "Modern Marvels: Technology". DVD Talk. Retrieved August 4, 2007.

[27] Stelter, Brian. "Ownership Of TV Sets Falls in U.S." The New York Times. The New York Times, 03 May 2011. Web. 22 Sept. 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/03/business/media/03television.html?_r=0>.

The developing technologies for portraying information throughout the years have been utilized in a multitude of educational settings. A seriously underutilized technology for historical education/preservation that connects most people in the developed world is social media. An analysis of social media displays it as the primary technology that has transformed online behavior in such a way as to combine the widespread and rapid sharing of information with meaningful (if virtual) social interaction. Social media was developed in 1978 by two amateur computer hobbyists, Ward Christensen and Randy Suess, who created the Computerized Bulletin Board System (BBS) to schedule meetings, share information, and make announcements. Developed before the invention of the personal computer, the BBS was the precursor to social media, as we now know it.[28] Since the initial creation of social media online, a multitude of platforms and companies (Myspace, Friendster, Blogspot, etc.) have come and gone, By far the most successful and popular of these is Facebook. The term "social media" shines light onto its purposes and objectives, being the digital simulation of social interaction. In the 2010 film "The Social Network," the character of Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg states "I'm talking about taking the entire social experience of college and putting it online". Based upon the research that I have done into the developing world of crowd source history, I see Facebook and history intertwining within the next few years. The integration of social media and educational information is already present in the form of "blogs", however I believe

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[28] "The Brief History of Social Media." *The Brief History of Social Media*. University of North Carolina at Penbrook, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2012. <http://www.uncp.edu/home/acurtis/NewMedia/SocialMedia/SocialMediaHistory .html>.

that the popularity of Facebook and the proven success of educational blogs could

converge in an excellent combination. There exist already a large amount of

websites devoted to the convergence of social media and educational content (such

as discussion board in pedagogical platforms such as Blackboard), however these

areas are primarily used only for discussion of courses and assignments, as opposed

to Facebook which exists for virtually all forms of communication about any topic.

One valuable source of inspiration and information for anyone hoping to

develop an unconventional museum is Nina Simon, who challenges conventional

museums with her historical/alternative museum blog "Museum 2.0". Museum 2.0

was started in 2006, its purpose "to explore the ways that the philosophies of Web

2.0 can be applied in museums to make them more engaging, community-based,

vital elements of society". Simon believes "that museums have the potential to

undergo a similar (r)evolution as that on the web, to transform from static content

authorities to dynamic platforms for content generation and sharing. [She also

believes] that visitors can become users, and museums [are] central to social

interactions." These ideas coincide with the core concepts of the digital humanities,

and the acceptance of crowd sourcing as an acceptable medium. However, a

problem with crowd sourced history is that such a large portion of the population

that are viewing crowd sourced material read but don't' contribute anything. Simon

argues. "…First, exhibits that invite self-expression appeal to a tiny percentage of

museum audiences. Less than 1% of the users of most social Web platform create

original content. Would you design an interactive exhibit that only 1% of visitors

would want to use?" This concept seems to be one of the largest problems with crowd sourced history, along with potential inaccuracy of information.

On the other hand, digital media can help institutions become "catalysts of social change" (Simon). Simon argues that museums can serve this function. "But they're not there yet. Right now, they're often seen as elitist organizations serving a diminishing percentage of our population. We can change that by embracing participatory culture and opening up to the active, social ways that people engage with art, history, science, and ideas today."[29] Simon's words are an inspiration for all institutions seeking to build a participatory culture with a digital medium.

Methodology:

I have combined the best features of all traditional methods of portraying history in order to manufacture a digital museum that displays the history of WPI in honor of its sesquicentennial, all the while using the suggestions and research of digital humanists. The entertainment/popularity of historical film, T.V. and radio, the emphasis on the history of common people from populist history, the interactive style and community orientation of open source histories such as Wikipedia have all guided me to use Facebook as my medium for this digital museum.

. This goal of creating the museum includes the following objectives:

-Collect and post an interesting and diverse array of historical materials gathered

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[29] Simon, Nina. "Museum 2.0: Opening Up Museums: My TEDxSantaCruz Talk." Museum 2.0: Opening Up Museums: My TEDxSantaCruz Talk. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2012. <http://www.museumtwo.blogspot.com/2012/11/opening-up-museums-my-tedxsantacruz-talk.html>.

from the WPI archives, and other research (photos, film, audio, memories, documents, newspaper accounts)

-Organize the site in a way that encourages consistent posting; return visits, and passion concerning our history

-Add explanatory posts that help tell WPI's story, and encourage participation among users

Invite participation by encouraging visitors to

      Upload documents

      Share memories

      Ask questions

      Add comments and interpretation

      Visit site frequently

      Create and share new historical materials

Encourage widespread interest in WPI's history

      The WPI Sesquicentennial Committee and I collaboratively determined a list of topics based upon the desires and experience of people on the sesquicentennial committee and in alumni relations. There will be a minimum of 4, maximum of 8 posts per month by the administrator, with unlimited access of members to do as they please. The topics will be tried from November 11th 2014, until November 14th 2015, the span of WPI's observation of its sesquicentennial. I have begun testing the themes and prompts in preparation for the sesquicentennial. The themes and their corresponding months are attached in the appendix.

The site that I have developed has a simple goal, to portray the rich and valuable history of WPI through promising technological medium. Through this medium, I seek to engage a passionate and driven audience who are both the consumers as well as the producers of the content. In doing so, I have taken advantage of existing methods of currently portraying history such as books, museums, documentaries, etc., while eliminating the features that discourage the limitations. In order to determine the most effective combination of the mediums I am using (traditional "brick & mortar museums, social media, traditional historical narratives, oral/populist history, historical films and series, etc.), I began with a thorough investigation into the benefits and shortcomings of current media and methods.

As mentioned in the Literature Review section, social media has become very widely used, and Facebook is at the forefront of this success. As of 2012, there are 955 million registered users on Facebook, and over the past half decade, its popularity has increased dramatically.

Facebook - Popularity
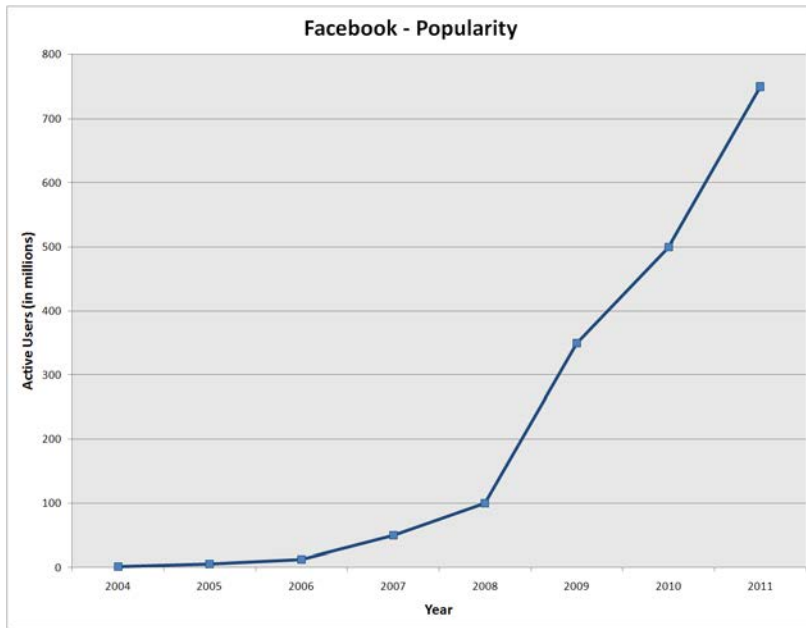
Because the delivery and study of information on all social media outlets, or its uses for more serious, educational uses, is in its infancy, I have taken care not to simply let this site run itself, but instead have carefully planned out regular posts to help moderate site activity. After consulting the research of multiple digital humanities experts, I have determined that carefully determined prompts must accompany all administrator posts. An example I have found of this method working is on Nina Simons Blog, She posted a video of her giving a "TED Talk", and then had a carefully engineered prompt that discussed how the talk was, the reaction she got, and then some more broad, conceptual discussion. This post received 13 comments and 45 "reactions"[30].

A large portion of the appeal of doing an exhibit through Facebook is that the history will be portrayed by those who lived it, or who know it through family and

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[30] Nina Simons Ted Talk and Prompt:
http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2012/11/opening-up-museums-my-tedxsantacruz-talk.html

friends rather than through some more remote, if official source. In essence, I seek

to create a populist history, or a history through which a majority of the

contributions and commentary come from those who have lived the history. I do

not seek to focus on the history of one particular demographic as Zinn did, I do

however seek to follow Zinn's lead in opening history to those who have been

"excluded" by traditional historical methods. The patchwork of stories of the

students, faculty, staff etc. of WPI throughout the years *is* the history of WPI, and this

site will attempt to convey it as it was lived by the people who lived it.

Because the site I developed draws on the strengths of various cultural

forms, let us examine each in turn, identifying its strengths and weaknesses with

respect to the goals of this project as already specified:

A) Have relative and frequent posts from the administrator.

B) Encourage participation from visitors.

C) Foster interest in the history of WPI to commemorate the sesquicentennial

anniversary of WPI.

Facebook's widespread popularity, user-friendly interface, and

customizability makes it a perfect outlet for the portrayal of an online interactive

historiography/media exhibit. An example of this is the Facebook page of the

History Channel, which has well over 11,000,000 "likes", or users affiliated, a

multitude of posts ranging from "This day in history" to seemingly random historical

posts that instigate thousands of responses. A more in depth analysis of Facebooks

popularity comes from Aardvark Webworks LLC in collaboration with leaders in the

Social Media realm. They produced these statistics about Facebook usage[31]:

Social Media Usage in America:
   -More than 66% of adults online in America are connected to one or more social media platforms.
   -67% of Americans use social media to stay in touch with their friends.
   -64% of Americans use social media to stay in touch with family.
   -50% of Americans use social media to reconnect with old friends.

Facebook:
   -Facebook has 845 million active users.
   -The average Facebook visit lasts 23 minutes.
   -46% of Facebook users are over the age of 45.
   -57% of Facebook users report having been to "some college" (24% bachelors or graduate degree).
   -47% of Facebook users report making between $50k – $99k annually (33% between $25k – $49k).

These statistics encourage my projections that Facebook is a good platform for the purposes of this site. When viewing the percentages relative to the populations, these figures are very large. In general, people are not interested in subscribing to multiple blogs, so the popularity of Facebook and the ease of connecting with a particular page once a member of Facebook makes it easy for Facebook users to find their way to the WPI150 page once someone has recommended it to them.

The easy way in which people with even a remote interest or affiliation in something can stumble upon a lot of information is one of the main reasons I decided this platform as opposed to designing a site from scratch. My main method of promoting a separate site would have been through Facebook, considering there

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[31] "2012 Social Media Demographics | Facebook." 2012 Social Media Demographics | Facebook. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Aug. 2012.

is a very large Facebook community, WPI has a well-established, Facebook

community, with well over 7,000 likes, and their page has become one of the main

promotional tools for the Institute. Taa Dixon, owner and founder of 720MEDIA, a

website design and marketing firm, collected the following data on promoting

businesses/organizations promotional methods on Facebook[32]:

"A recent poll (of social network users between 18-24), included are three reasons

for joining a brand or fan group on Facebook:

-Get news or product updates (67 percent)

- View or download music or videos (41 percent)

- Submit opinions (36 percent)

       The WPI150 satisfies the first, third, and fourth top reasons that people visit

these "fan" pages, and increased traffic will lead to increased postings, likes,

information, and eventually an archive. The "get news or product updates" relative

to the WPI150 Facebook page, would solely consist of the news portion, more

specifically updates of sesquicentennial ceremonies, as well as news concerning

WPI, as well as its history, in general.

       In order to be quasi self-sustaining, this Facebook page has to be marketable

or appealing to our target audience, and in turn be marketed to the necessary

demographics (our target audience). Obviously alumni, students, faculty, and staff

would be the ideal demographics, but WPI is such a unique school with such an

interesting history, that collegiate historians, technical enthusiasts, etc may also

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[32] Dixon, Taa. "Facebook Advertising Statistics to Consider as You Market Your
Business." TAA DIXON. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012.

visit and contribute. According to WPI's Executive Director of Alumni Relations, Peter Thomas, there are 32,000 living WPI alumni, and because of the University's uniqueness and focus on industry, comparatively the school has strong alumni relations. For the current population of alumni, the university possesses e-mail addresses for 42% of alumni and home addresses for 94% of alumni. There is a monthly communication with alumni through these outlets, and these communities could spread the word about the WPI 150 page.

Thomas elaborated on techniques that the alumni office uses to attract alumni to events, which I have used for the site in order to induce a major alumni response. Thomas suggested that alumni are interested in things that are "student run". Events that are run by the Student Alumni Society (S.A.S), Greek organizations, etc. tend to attract a lot of alumni. The WPI Alumni Facebook page created a "Campus Bracket Breakdown" where students and alumni were invited to vote for different areas of WPI life that they liked the best. Below is one of those posts where people affiliated with the site were asked to vote between "Greek Life" and "Theory

and Practice:

This competition got a lot of alumni and current students interested, and this post alone received 40 comments. Another aspect of my site that would be appealing o alumni is that it is "looking at them." People are interested in things that have to do with themselves. Being the history that people are observing is a very appealing concept to most people, and should increase the marketability and draw of the site. Thomas notes that the two situations that dramatically increase alumni attendance are when the events are revolved around an intriguing site (locational), or when the event is educational in nature. Quite obviously an online sesquicentennial museum exhibit cannot be locational, however, events that are occurring to commemorate the sesquicentennial could be advertised on the page.

Alumni attendance improves for educational events Engineering, Science,

Mathematics, are all part of WPI's history. So this site will attract people interested in any of these subjects. The recent success of the Gordon Library's physical displays of WPI industrialists, their impact on the technical world, their history, and the workings of their inventions, is a promising sign that an online exhibit will also attract interest. During homecoming, many alumni, parents, and students viewed the showcase in the basement of the library and according to the library staff; the exhibit received an excellent turnout. I have sought to incorporate technical and scientific discussion along with the general history, in order to attract the technically inclined.

I have also drawn on the advice of WPI's Manager of Integrated Media for University Advancement Scott Hadley, who currently runs the WPI Facebook page. Hadley reports that WPI alumni and students are passionate about the alumni for whom buildings are named, particularly John Boynton, Ichabod Washburn, Arthur Atwater Kent, etc. They are also interested in historical topics for debates. For example, it has been said time and time again that barbed wire was invented at WPI by a WPI alumni, however this is still very open to debate. I have organized the site to provoke discussion on topics like this to attract attention and also encourage people to do historical research on their own.

My design of the site as far as layout is concerned was predetermined for me as it is with every Facebook user, which is a drawback. However, the Facebook format is quite obviously a format that works, based on its usage statistics. In using Facebook as my medium, I sacrifice customizability and layout diversity for convenience and popularity. Hence, the fact that so many people are already on

Facebook and "like" (affiliate) with things, makes it easier to track activity and

participate as opposed to building a whole new site from the ground up

As displayed earlier with the "this day in history" post, the History Channels

Facebook page is a premier example of open source history, where normal people

can debate, respond to prompts, and even post their own historical materials. This is

the epitome of crowd source history. I have applied this concept wholeheartedly

into the design of my site, in that whoever wants to register an opinion about WPI's

history or share their artifacts will determine the content of the site. Zinn claims to

offer the voices of the forgotten, but it's still his voice that provides the narrative. In

contrast, through the site, I have provided the structure, but by the site's nature, I

allow and even encourage everyone to contribute his or her own pieces, memories,

and interpretations, with occasional prompts, artifacts, etc. provided by the admin.

This will be however the extent of control that I, or the future administrator, will

hold over the content of the site. The predetermined artifacts and posting schedule

will simply be a guide for posters, but members of the site are free to post whatever

they want, whenever they want (unless it is determined to be excessively crude or

inappropriate in which case the administrator has the authority to remove the post).

The posting of irrelevant/inappropriate information in an open source venue seems

to be the most drastic downside to online crowd sourced history. One may think

that posting false information would be the largest problem, however having a

community consistently editing the content, this does not happen as frequently as

one may imagine.

Findings/Recommendations

After researching authorities on digital humanities, social media, open source history, museums, etc. as well as extensive planning, I launched the site on July 30, 2012, to date the site has 491 likes, with the majority of affiliates being between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, and almost evenly split between men (52.1%) and women (47.3%). The list of posts to be implemented for the year leading up to the sesquicentennial is attached in the appendix, however I have used some of them to gauge how successful certain posts would be, and to test some of my initial hypotheses based on my research.

A major way to affiliate people with the site is to alert them through WPI itself. On October 25, 2012. I sent out an e-mail to the WPI undergraduate e-mail list, inviting them to join. By that evening, the total number of "likes" had increased by 193%, and "People talking about this" had increased by 10,750%. Although Facebook itself has effective internal promotional functions, I have found that going through more established WPI channels to make people aware of the site is a successful method.

People become very enthusiastic and passionate in open source venues, and concurrently teach and learn history. For example, here is a screen capture of a type of post that the History Channel Facebook page is famous for, "This Day in History". This particular post was made on September 17, 2012.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY: 1787 > The U.S. Constitution is signed. 1796 > President Washington prepares the final draft of his farewell address. 1862 > The Rebels and Yankees clash at the Battle of Antietam. 1939 > The Soviet Union invades Poland. 1970 > The PRG presents a new peace plan for Vietnam. 1976 > The Space Shuttle is unveiled. 1978 > The Camp David Accords are signed. 1983 > Vanessa Williams becomes the first black Miss America. More from this day: http://bit.ly/PAWmsq

THIS DAY IN HISTORY: SEPTEMBER 17
bit.ly

As can be seen from the picture, just this simple post was "liked" by almost 4,000 people, and generated 396 comments from users. These range from awe, interest, and amazement, to dissent and argument, to nonsense and humor. I value the posts of historical nature such as interested, inquisitive, even dissenting more than the posts that are unrelated to the topic/prompt, but having traffic of any kind on a post means that people are seeing the content, and are interested enough to weigh in no matter what that may mean, which is the exact function of traditional museums.

Throughout the creation of the site and the implementation of my research I

have confirmed the problems of crowd-sourced history that were pointed out by Dr. Roy Rosenzweig. Only six years ago Rosenzweig indicated, "A historical work without owners and with multiple, anonymous authors is thus almost unimaginable in our professional culture." Today however, crowd sourced scholarship is gaining acceptance in certain scholarly communities. As Rosenzweig states "Wikipedia is entirely free. And that freedom includes not just the ability of any- one to read it … but also more remarkably, their freedom to use it"[33]. This freedom does not always result in high quality contributions. I have noticed this problem when plotting WPI 150. For example, choosing a topic that included many different kinds of WPI alumni, I posted a photograph from WPI Spree Day circa the mid 1970s. "Spree Day" was a WPI tradition where without notice, classes would be cancelled for the day, and all students would meet on the quad and drink, party, listen to music, and play games. This tradition was eliminated when the legal drinking age was increased from 18 to 21. The photograph of Spree Day on November 6, 2012, received twenty-four "likes", fourteen comments, and two people posted the picture on their personal Facebook pages within 5 hours.

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[33] Rosenzweig, Roy. "Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past." Journal Of American History, June 2006. Web. Nov. 2012. <http://ecpdata.mdsa.net/sources_secondary/rosenzweig-highres.pdf>.

150 Years of WPI
November 6

Here, we see a picture of Spree Day circa the mid 1970s. Do you have any memories of Spree Day? Why and when was it ended? Do you think it should have ended? What is your favorite part of the picture?

Like · Comment · Share

Michelle Danger Maurice, Brenda Kelley, Lauren Gergel and 21 others like this.
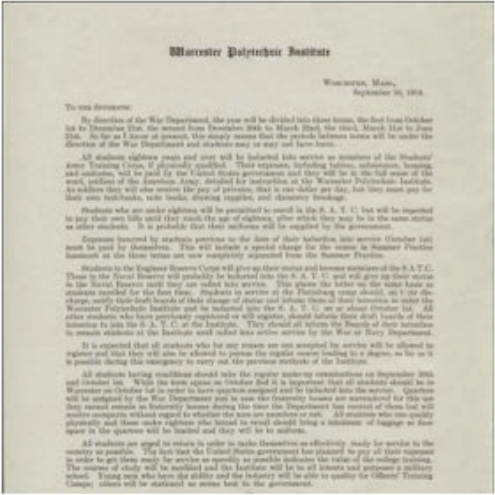
View all 14 comments

Bill Potter If you have memories of Spree Day you really didn't have much fun! :)
November 7 at 6:32am · Like

Obviously this post is historical in nature and thus appropriate for the purposes of the site, however the comments from users mainly focused around "if you have memories of Spree Day, you really didn't have much fun!" or "Bring spree day back!". Some of the comments were crude and contained expletives without any historical content, and I used my administrative privileges to delete those posts. The concept of a day with cancelled classes and partying on the quad falls under the category of more "popular" than "historic", and thus garnered misguided attention and comments from some users. After consulting my sponsor, Stephanie Pasha, she stated that it was acceptable and even encouraged for the administrator to remove content that is crude or offensive.

At the other extreme is the kind of topic that generates no controversy but also very little interest. On November 11, 2012, I posted a more traditional historical document, a letter from the President of WPI to the students in the summer of 1918 explaining to them that all eligible students over the age of eighteen were members of the Students Army Training Corps, that WPI was effectively a military school, and that the War Department would be paying for student's expenses and assigning them quarters. This post, which did also generate interest, did not generate the same amount, as a more "popular" topic such as spree day. This artifact only gathered seven likes, no comments, and no shares in 24 hours. The post is shown below:

I hypothesize that an increase in older alumni, faculty, and staff involvement on the site would increase the popularity of more academically inclined posts, as opposed to having the majority of participants being between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. I also believe that a more diverse audience would respond to a more diverse array of post, analysis, and general participation. As of November 26, 2012, the age and gender demographics of the 472 people affiliated with the site are shown below:

Gender and Age[7]

	13–17	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Female 47%	0.6%	38.5%	2.8%	1.1%	2.6%	0.9%	0.6%
Male 52.3%		43.6%	4.9%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.4%

Countries[7]   Cities[7]   Languages[7]

As was mentioned above, I believe that this issue can be countered by having more involvement from older members (i.e. alumni, faculty, and staff) who also would be more likely to posses their own historical artifacts affiliated with WPI, because they would have their own photographs, stories, videos, etc. from their time at the University.

Although one of Rosenzweig's cautions about crowd-sourced history has surfaced, the benefits of crowd-sourced history far outweigh the shortcomings. I have found through the site confirmation of the assertion that "a large amount of

amateurs can be more correct than a small amount of experts."[34] For example, I

discovered an artifact from a digital publication of WPI's history entitled *Seventy*

Years of Worcester Polytechnic Institute. It was labeled as a photograph of Institute

Park and Salisbury St. taken from "Tech Hill" circa 1880, the photograph below it

was labeled to be a picture of the intersection of Boynton St. and Institute Rd.

However, the captions were accidently reversed in the source. I posted the

photograph of what I thought was Institute Park shown below:
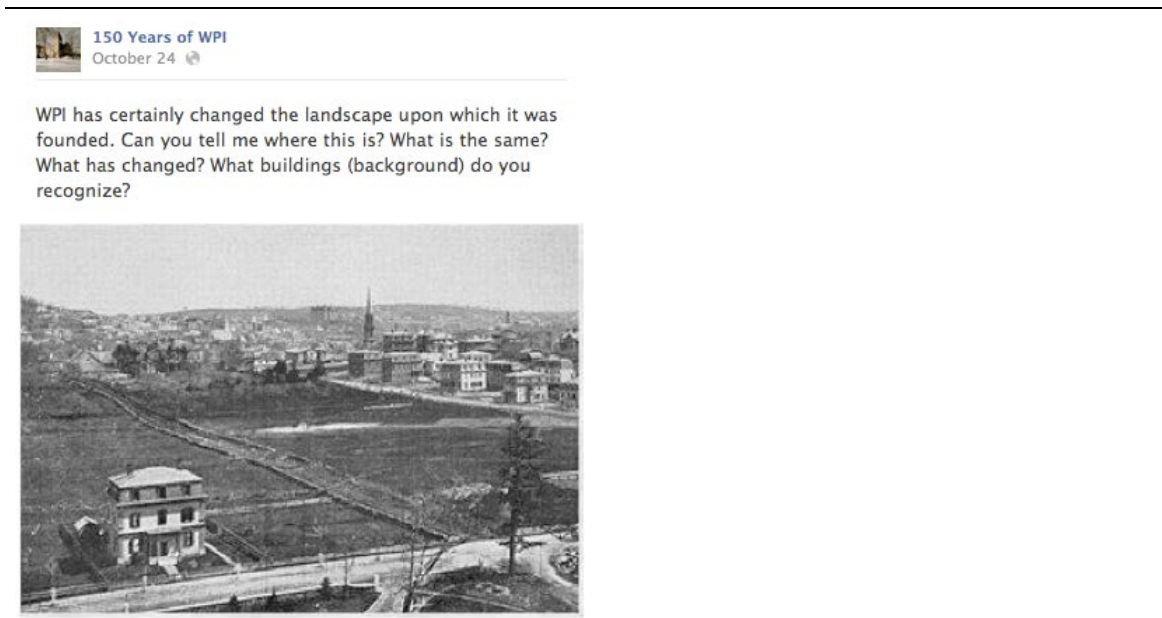
The site then got comments from two men fascinated with WPI history saying that it

was a photograph of Institute Rd. and Boynton St. (which is correct), I told them it

was not, and then a long discussion with multiple people ensued, and one of the men

actually posted this artifact himself:

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[34] Ron, David S. "Digitize This: Disruptive Textuality: Networks, Open Software, and
the 'Versioning of Literature'" 2012 Digital Humanities Symposium. Worcester
Polytechnic Institute, Worcester MA. 3 Nov. 2012. Lecture.

This is a photo that is basically the reverse view of the one you asked about. you can see the same house, rock wall on the dirt path, light spot in the field, and access road. also of interest, the house on the far left is still standing, it's 8 boynton street and houses Alpha Chi Rho

Like · Comment · Share · October 25 at 11:40am

Sharon DeCicco, Tj Watson and 2 others like this.

Write a comment...

After several posts contesting my claim and offering persuasive evidence that my information was wrong, I went back to the source and realized that the captions were accidently reversed. The passion to identify and discuss historical artifacts held by one person, combined with hundreds if not thousands on the Internet, can create an excellent example of crowd sourcing and a pinnacle in the digital humanities. This concept is one that digital humanists hope to have happen in the classroom and beyond: people learning from each other and challenging each other, rather than waiting for the authority to tell them what to believe.

Based on my research and the implementation of that research, I have discovered that crowd-sourced history through a medium such as Facebook is a successful way to compile a historical archive, and is a great way to get people more interested and involved in a history that they otherwise would not know much about. It also gives them an opportunity to view and discuss artifacts that they otherwise would probably never have seen. I have tried to reach a balance between

posting artifacts that are educational and purely historic in nature, and posting artifacts that are relatable and interesting enough to keep people affiliated with the site so that they can view the more historical artifacts, and hopefully in turn, post their own. I genuinely want people to post artifacts that they would not be able to find online, in published sources, or even in the WPI Gordon Library Archive. These inaccessible (to the public) objects are examples of artifacts that would just be lost with time, and turn the website into the only location where certain artifacts can be found.

Results Analysis & Conclusions:

While traditional museums fail to bring people back more than two or three times in their lives, social media generates large amounts of return visits (the average American spends about 14 minutes per day on Facebook). However, the majority of social media does not particularly succeed in the delivery of historical information, which museums do. Many websites (be they blogs, Facebook pages, etc.) have paved the way for this site, and their contributions must be acknowledged. I have drawn upon the beneficial factors of certain methods of portraying historical information, left some behind, and have done it through a non traditional platform that contains all the attributes to create what I believe to be a significant historiography of WPI.

Recommendations:

I recommend that Worcester Polytechnic Institute in commemorating the sesquicentennial anniversary direct alumni groups towards this website while linking it through their existing Facebook page. The goal is to increase attendance and awareness for sesquicentennial events years before they occur and to encourage alumni, students, faculty and staff to participate in the fruitful history and may increase donations, alumni relations, and build up the historical archives which already exist in Gordon Library by establishing relations with WPI alumni and friends who may have artifacts they want to share.

I also recommend that for the future, after my initial set up, that the development and alumni relations office incorporate this website into the tasks of their social media team, until it maintains enough traffic to sustain itself, but even then to be monitored and contributed to by the office. Below, the appendix contains a series of "artifact, prompt, analysis" segments, The artifact is the thing being posted, the prompt is what should be said about the artifact, and the analysis is, based on my research, why that artifact and prompt would illicit a positive response. An example post is from the month of October, during which the theme is Greek Life/ Rush Activities:

Artifact: Picture of WPI students in front of Phi Gamma Delta in 1891, the first fraternity to come to WPI.
http://www.wpi.edu/academics/library/history/techbible/Images/fraternity.jpg

Prompt: Here we can see members of the Phi Gamma Delta (FIJI) fraternity outside of their house in 1891. What is your Greek affiliation? Is there a history of Greek affiliation in your family? Any surprise encounters with brothers/sisters over the

years? Post any and all comments, questions, pictures, videos etc.

Analysis: In order to encourage response I ask all alumni what their Greek/family Greek affiliation is. People are usually very passionate about their Greek affiliations, so this should encourage a lot of artifact postings. It is a low-effort invitation for people to post their own artifacts, seeing as how Greek organizations generally keep good contact with their alumni, and Greek alumni would be likely to have old photographs.

The poster can find a link to the picture of men standing in front of WPI by clicking

the provided link, they can then post the picture with the provided prompt, and the

results in "Analysis" will come to fruition.

Appendix

September: Homecoming celebrations over the years

October: Greek life / Rush activities

November: Founder's Day celebrations and observations

December: Winters at WPI

January: Intersession Activities

February: WPI Couples/Marriages

March: Notable WPI Alumni

April: WPI Buildings

May: WPI in the media

June: Notable Inventions from WPI Alumni

July: WPI Traditions

August: Welcome back/Freshman

<u>IQP Schedule November 11th 2014- November 16th 2015</u>

September: Homecoming celebrations over the years

Artifact: Picture of whoever receives the Goats head award in 2013

Prompt: There are a countless number of men and women that have made an everlasting impression on our University, and have some of them are recognized at homecoming with the Goats Head Trophy. Who received it while you were an undergrad? What do you think about X?

Analysis: This will encourage people to talk about, think about, and post about the history of some of WPI's most important people throughout the years, which is exactly what should be happening

Artifact: Old photograph of PSK float (Personal Archive)

Prompt: The parade has always been an integral part of our homecoming celebrations. Here we see the brothers of Phi Sigma Kappa on their homecoming float during the mid 1960s. Post your photos, memories and videos of being on a homecoming float. Were there any floats in particular you can remember as being particularly excellent?

Analysis: There is always a multitude of people taking pictures at homecoming. This means that most people on the site, if they have any affiliation with WPI or a fraternity/sorority will have a picture, video, or at least a story from homecoming. This is broad, relatable, and early on, which should encourage more postings in later months.

Artifact: Photographs of all of the men for whom homecoming awards are named
Washburn: alexbean/desktop/picture5.png
Taylor: alexbean/desktop/picture6.png
Boynton: alexbean/desktop/picture7.png

Prompt: As homecoming is just around the corner! As with every year, there are three additional awards other than the goats head award that are going to be handed out: The Ichabod Washburn Young Alumni Award for Professional Achievement, the Herbert F. Taylor Award for Distinguished Service to WPI, and the John Boynton Young Alumni Award for Service to WPI. Attached are pictures and a synopsis of the men behind these awards. Has anyone out there won any of these awards? Do you remember someone particular receiving it?

Analysis: This may be a good way to connect with people that are truly very

passionate about WPI; hence, they may post more content than the average viewer. It also gives yet another good opportunity for posts about distinguished alumni, founders, and their history.

October: Greek life / Rush activities

Artifact: Picture of WPI students in front of Phi Gamma Delta in 1891, the first fraternity to come to WPI.
http://www.wpi.edu/academics/library/history/techbible/Images/fraternity.jpg

Prompt: Here we can see members of the Phi Gamma Delta (FIJI) fraternity outside of their house in 1891. What is your Greek affiliation? Is there a history of Greek affiliation in your family? Any surprise encounters with brothers/sisters over the years? Post any and all comments, questions, pictures, videos etc.

Analysis: In order to encourage response I ask all alumni what their Greek/family Greek affiliation is. People are usually very passionate about their Greek affiliations, so this should encourage a lot of artifact postings.

Artifact: Development of Phi Sigma Kappa's local history at WPI (Theta Chi from 1902 to 1909, Kappa Xi Alpha from 1909 to 1915, Phi Sigma Kappa from 1915 until Present.
OX: http://www.phisigkap.org/graphics/tc.jpg
Kappa Xi Alpha: http://www.phisigkap.org/graphics/kxa.jpg
Phi Sigma Kappa: http://farm6.staticflickr.com/5300/5589963293_9fc6fb3d46.jpg

Prompt: WPI has a long and rich history of Greek life. My own fraternity, Phi Sigma Kappa, operated under three different names at its time at WPI! What do you find most interesting about your own fraternities/sororities history? The WPI Greek system in general?

Analysis: By posting about my own fraternity and their history, people are going to want to get their fraternity involved and have its history known, however ending with a more open ended analysis question will get people to continue talking.

November: Founder's Day celebrations and observations

Artifact: Picture of the two founders of WPI John Boynton and Ichabod Washburn
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/7f/WPI_Founders.jpg

Prompt: WPI was founded on and still maintains the two schools of thought of these two men, John Boynton (left) and Ichabod Washburn (right) who founded WPI in 1865 to promote theory and practice. How in your major have you seen this

balance? Has it been maintained?

Analysis: People love to talk about "lehr und kunst" and our balance of theory and practice, this should entice viewers to post about their major at WPI, line of work afterwards, graduate school, etc. and talk about how the balance of theory and practice is noticeable in your life after WPI.

Artifact: Picture of the two goats on the fountain
http://users.wpi.edu/~sas/images/goats.jpg

Prompt: What is your favorite founders day tradition? I personally have always loved seeing this pair of goats on my way to class!

Analysis: This prompt will make people talk about the different activities of founders day, their history, etc. and should also make current students/faculty/admin post about new founders day activities/information about when, where, etc. this years founders day activities are taking place

December: Winters at WPI

Artifact:
Photograph of a snow covered Alumni Bridge
http://towers.wpi.edu/artimages/issues/2011-01-25/640/DSCN9790.JPG

Prompt: It comes with the territory I suppose, we here at WPI are used to brutal winters, along with the fun and majesty of this season. How are you planning to spend your winter break? What is the "worst" WPI winter you can remember? What was the most fun you had in a snowy WPI winter?

Analysis: Relating to people through commonality i.e. the fun and annoyance of winter will prompt people to post their memories, or at least like the post, which in turn will be visible to their friends. Most undergraduate students at this point will be longing for winter break so giving them a place to talk about it intermingled with the history of other peoples WPI winter memories will be ideal.

*Letters

January: Intersession Activities

Artifact:
Photograph of 3D figure drawing during intersession, circa 1970s
Personal Collection, retrieved from WPI Archive

Prompt:
WPI has long had a population of students form around the country and around the world! Some students prefer to stay at the institute over winter break. Here, we see

an "intersession" class of students learning how to 3D figure draw (circa mid 1980's). Did you ever participate or know anyone who participated in intersession activities? Do you think they are a good idea?

Analysis:
This photograph shows a portion of WPI history that is not known by many students/more recent alumni. It shows a portion of their history that they do not know, and should hopefully incite discussion/ future postings about the concept of intersession activities

Artifact:
Photograph of 3D figure drawing during intersession, 1987
Personal Collection, retrieved from WPI Archive

Prompt:
Continuing the discussion on WPI intersession activities, here we see a group of students in 1987 during their intersession activities after a sand castle building class!

Analysis:
This photograph is more of a continuation of the previous post, getting people used to the intersession theme of the month.

Artifact:
Photograph of baking class during intersession, circa mid 1980s
Personal Collection, retrieved from WPI Archive

Prompt:
There is nothing quite like baking during the holidays! Here, we see some WPI students hard at work baking during the winter break. If WPI had intersession activities again, would you participate?

Analysis:
This photograph is more of a continuation of the previous post, getting people used to the intersession theme of the month. It also incites some discussion about the possibility of bringing intersession activities back.

February: Notable Inventions from WPI Alumni
February 11th Thomas Edison's birthday
Spencer Miller-Connected with Edison

Artifact:

List of top Twelve inventions that changed the world... and the WPI Graduates behind them
http://www.wpi.edu/about/history/profiles.html

Prompt:
WPI has long been educating technically minded, socially conscious men and women who do amazing things in the world. Here is a link from WPI's website discussing "Twelve Inventions that Changed the World... And the WPI Graduates Behind Them". What did you find most interesting about this article? What didn't you know? Do you agree with their findings?

Analysis:
This article will instill pride and a sense of involvement/affiliation with those who read it. The more personalized questions will incite responses and potentially debate.

Artifact: A picture of Robert Goddard next to his first liquid fueled rocket in 1926
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Goddard_and_Rocket.jpg

Prompt: Arguably, no WPI alumnus has achieved the same recognition as Robert H. Goddard, the father of modern rocketry. Here, we see his standing next to what would be his first successfully launched liquid fueled rocket on March 16, 1926 in Auburn MA. Be sure to look at Gordon Library's exhibit on Dr. Goddard, where you can actually see some of his rockets and designs up close!

Analysis: As above, people feel a sense of pride being affiliated with such an iconic figure. This should get historical talk/postings, but also entice people to go down to the basement of the library and look in the glass cases about WPI inventions, and then, perhaps they may find more artifacts that they would like to post.

March: Women at WPI

Artifact: Photograph of Lesley Small and Jayne Rosetti
alexbean/desktop/picture8.jpg

Prompt: Here, we see the first two women to ever enroll in WPI, Lesley Small and Jayne Rosetti, both mathematics majors who began during the fall of 1968. WPI has certainly come far since then, and has many female students and alumni. //don't really know what to ask

Analysis:

April: WPI Buildings

Artifact:

Photograph of Salisbury St. and Institute Park/Pond circa 1880
Personal photograph: Desktop/Picture 4.png

Prompt:
WPI has certainly changed the landscape upon which it was founded. Can you tell me where this is? Can you post a picture of this area now? What is the same? What has changed?

Analysis:
This picture would hopefully incite debate as to the location of the photograph as well as prompt people to post pictures as to its origin as well as post their own pictures that they find interesting of the WPI landscape.

May: WPI in the media

June: Flip a Coin/World Environment/Gay Pride/Fresh Veggies chartwells
June 29th-camera day-submit your old photos
Artifact:
N/A just a prompt

Prompt:
We know that every day is a great day to submit your old WPI photos, but today is a national holiday…. Camera day! Today of all days, go deep into that shoebox, photo album, or wherever and show us all your favorite picture that you took at WPI, of you at WPI, etc.!

Analysis:
People may think it's funny that national camera day actually exists, and in light of describing how to submit one of your pictures to the site, it makes it sound as easy as it is and would hopefully show people how fun and easy it is to deliver your memories to everyone else.

Fathers day- WPI's fathers
Artifact:
Personal photograph of my Grandfather (WPI CHE '58) My Dad (WPI ME '82) and myself (WPI MGE '13)

Prompt:

Happy Fathers day! Above is a photograph of my father, his father, and me... and we are ALL WPI men! Do we have any other "legacies" out there? What are your plans for Fathers day? As always, share your stories, pictures, or anything else!

Analysis:
Relating this post to a holiday more than just pure postings may encourage a good posting response. People also seem to be fascinated with the concept of WPI legacies, so this would be a great place to talk about them

July: WPI Traditions

August: Welcome back/Freshman

Random:

Artifact: Photograph of Spree Day festivities circa 1970s

Prompt:
Here, we see a picture of Spree Day circa the mid 1970s. Do you have any memories of Spree Day? Why and when was it ended? Do you think it should have ended? What is your favorite part of the picture?

Analysis:
Spree Day is a very talked about concept by current students. This post is aimed to get older alumni to post their memories of spree day but also is just a random post to give some entertainment to the users.

-Months will be recycled until end date

-Minimum of 4 posts a month, maximum of 8 from admin.

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