

Digital Threads: Anti-colonial Storytelling and Community Building Through Twine

DH Unbound Roundtable Proposal, May 2022

Roundtable Participants:

- Kush Patel, Head of Studies, Postgraduate Arts Program in Technology and Change, Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Bangalore, India, kush.patel@manipal.edu
- Ashley Caranto Morford, Assistant Professor, Liberal Arts, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, USA, amorford@pobox.pafa.edu
- Arun Jacob, PhD Student, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, arun.jacob@mail.utoronto.ca
- Anna Maria Kalinowski, PhD Student, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada annamaria.kalinowski@mail.utoronto.ca
- Natalia Toronchuk, PhD Student, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, natalia.toronchuk@mail.utoronto.ca
- Zeinab Farokhi, PhD Candidate, Women and Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, zeinab.farokhi@mail.utoronto.ca

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Abstract:

Drawing on our collective work within anti-colonial digital humanities (DH) practices and our pedagogical experiences in India, Canada, and the USA, we have spent the past semester facilitating and fostering a working group focused on understanding the possibilities of Twine as a pedagogical tool for anti-oppressive, anti-colonial, anti-caste, and community-centered DH work. Our objectives with this working group have been three-fold: to widen the ambit of mainstream DH learning by building a community of anti-colonial educators, scholars, and cultural organizers (within and beyond higher education) actively using Twine — and digital storywork more broadly — in their pedagogy and praxis; to provide community organizers and educators with an accessible toolkit for ethically teaching and using Twine towards social justice and anti-colonial interventions; and to contribute to platform analysis in digital scholarship and bridge the often evoked binaries of creativity and criticality in the humanities. Throughout this work, we focused on Twine because of its accessibility and free, open-source affordances for telling interactive, nonlinear stories. Twine requires no prior knowledge of design or code, yet allows learners to further storytelling strategies combined with beginning coding skills.

In this roundtable, we will discuss the findings, successes, challenges, ongoing objectives, and ongoing commitments of the working group through taking up some of the key questions that we, the facilitators and members, sought to address: How might we approach the utility of Twine in pedagogical spaces to teach, embody, and thread anti-colonial DH praxis and its community-centered foundations, connections, and locations? How might we work with Twine to actively engage in community building, tell digital stories that refuse capitalist, colonialist rhetoric, and become more ethical, more caring teacher-learners?

Representing the fields of architecture and design studies, information studies, literary studies, game studies, museum studies, and women and gender studies, each member of this roundtable will outline their specific contributions to constructing Twine threads with an eye toward anti-colonial digital storytelling and cultural organizing work, which is at once local and transnational.

We will share and discuss a key pedagogical creation that emerged from our working group. Building with our individual experiences in teaching with Twine, as well as upon our collective learning in this working group, we co-constructed a pedagogical toolkit both on Twine¹ and as physical, shareable postcards. More specifically, drawing inspiration from the work of Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein on *Data Feminism* (2020), we produced physical postcards in English and non-English languages to complement the Twine narrative and sustain reciprocal dialogue with individuals and communities from each of the teaching environments that were part of this initiative. In this roundtable, we will reflect on each of these works not as finite outcomes, but rather as processual work that remains incomplete due to professional, personal, and pandemic contingencies in the present.

Work Cited:

D'Ignazio, Catherine, and Lauren F. Klein. *Data Feminism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2020.

¹ The work of the *Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed* collective is currently hosted on *Humanities Commons*, a nonprofit network that enables humanities scholars from around the world to deposit, archive, make available, and build materials connected to research and teaching. The online iteration of the toolkit will be housed within the *Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed's Humanities Commons* space.