CHAPTER 16

An Institute-Based Approach to OER in Digital Caribbean Studies

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In May 2019, more than forty educators, scholars, and librarians came together for a week-long workshop to collaboratively explore the potential—and the limitations—of digital pedagogies within Caribbean Studies. Hosted by the University of Florida (UF) and the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC), "Migration, Mobility, Sustainability: Caribbean Studies & Digital Humanities" delved into digital projects amplifying community narratives across the Caribbean diaspora, low-barrier tools to enable student-instructor co-creation, and efforts to subvert colonialist legacies as we build and describe digital collections. This face-to-face experience offered a rich starting point for a two-year institute that fostered virtual dialogue, course development, and publication of a contextualized selection of open educational resources (OER).

With a multi-institutional, international group of participants working across the Caribbean and the United States, institute leaders took a flexible approach to topical coverage, schedule, and anticipated outcomes that invited individual perspectives and experience to shape the conversation. This approach drove the capacious framing of OER, continued in this chapter, simply as content available freely online and useful to teachers and students. Rather than attempting to

normalize vocabulary or prescriptively define what might "count" as an OER, the institute broadly encouraged knowledge-sharing around access to digital collections, technology, and models for leveraging both in the classroom. Presentations on courses and projects served as boundary objects, offering common ground where participants could explore potential next steps and opportunities for collaboration from multiple vantage points.[1]

This chapter focuses on the institute as a case study for OER development that centers relationship-building, lived experience, empathy, and flexibility as foundational principles, grounded in feminist approaches to digital pedagogy.[2] Attention to social justice permeates this work, both in amplifying Caribbean voices across the diaspora and in leveraging approaches in the digital humanities (DH) that call on students to challenge reductive or colonialist perspectives. These values mirror those embodied by participants' own research and teaching, and the following sections draw heavily on the publicly available reflections, syllabi, assignments, and other materials they contributed.[3]

Institute Overview

The goals and underlying values of the institute followed very closely those of dLOC. Indeed, dLOC's original mission and vision were twofold: making materials accessible while ensuring their preservation, which would help grow capacity and community for Caribbean Studies. As dLOC grew into a major resource for Caribbean resources, enabling new work, dLOC team members started collaborating with scholars in various areas to discuss and plan how to best support teaching and research by using materials in dLOC.

These threads came together in a roundtable discussion at the West Indian Literature Conference in 2016.[4] In response to the question "What are the next steps?", several people agreed that the community needed to have a forum for learning tools and meeting collaborators. They shared that the preferred format was a training institute for scholars, librarians, archivists, graduate students, and others from the shared community of practice. This institute would be focused on learning digital tools and collaborative practices, and the goal would be to create new teaching resources. Moreover, they emphasized that the institute could not be exclusive to the US. It must include people from the Caribbean and be designed in such a way that a lack of travel funding would not prevent people from applying and participating. Their scoping served as the basis for the Migration, Mobility, and Sustainability: Caribbean Studies Digital Humanities Institute grant, which was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2018 through the Institutes for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities program.[5]

Many people collaborated on writing the grant proposal, working closely with the official grant investigators to plan the program. The collaborators identified the optimal structure for the institute, including a project or deliverable in the form of an OER that ideally would utilize open access primary materials, in dLOC or elsewhere, to then provide the framework and context for teaching with those materials. As explained in the grant proposal, the overall goal was for participants to learn and adapt DH tools and practices, as made possible by the work of the institute, which would

> 1) introduce participants to the processes of finding and using open access materials from digital repositories to provide a foundation for teaching through, and building with, DH; 2) provide intensive training on tools and practices for analyzing, mapping, and presenting materials in relation to the themes of migration, mobility, and sustainability; and, 3) provide intensive training in DH teaching methods for incorporating these practices and themes into classrooms as part of the ongoing process for sustaining a community of practice in Caribbean Studies.[6]

Collaborators specifically designed the institute to consider how resources supported individuals and the community of practice. As such:

> The Institute's featured technologies were selected based on the following criteria for enabling a community of practice across many fields, disciplines, and geographical regions: 1) no-cost; accessible across classes and institutions (e.g., not institutional subscriptions/single-institution limited services); sufficiently accessible for students such that the technology can be taught as coupled with the subject matter for teaching and integration; 2) usable after the students and teaching team complete the class, to continue building for future courses; and, 3) ideally, usable on lower-bandwidth and without software beyond a web browser, to remove barriers to collaboration.[7]

As described further below, these criteria shaped development of the institute curriculum, including a five-day, face-to-face workshop, a series of virtual guest webinars, as well as expectations for participants to contribute back to the community by sharing their own teaching materials.

How Did Participants Engage with Existing OERs, Especially Digital Collections, as a Shared Knowledge Base?

Building Awareness of Collections

Collaborators explicitly planned the institute to utilize and promote a selection of existing digital collections. The institute's digital collections included dLOC, The Diaspora Project, the Dutch Caribbean Digital Platform, and Chronicling America. While Chronicling America is focused on US newspapers (including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), the papers include stories from and about the wider Caribbean. In addition to these, participants also shared information about other collections they were familiar with. The institute presented both these platforms and the materials they contain as OER, ready for reuse in the classroom.

Indeed, in working with our broader community of practice before the institute, we realized that many teachers identify open access primary resources as OER in and of themselves because they are foundational to creating equitable courses and assignments that may be shared back with the community. For example, one early list of OER in dLOC is the *List of Anglophone Caribbean Novels Published Before 1950* by Leah Rosenberg.[8] Rosenberg first shared this list online in dLOC in 2012 to assist the library and technical teams in locating and prioritizing the digitization of important Caribbean novels. Rosenberg then updated the list in 2014 and 2016 to reflect newly identified items and to add links to newly digitized items. This list has been a frequent starting point in discussions because access to primary resources is a critical concern for teaching Caribbean studies.[9] In fact, this list helped to spark conversations on collaborative teaching that, while enabled by technologies in the digital age, were insufficient unless shared texts could be available for all students. With access to core primary texts made possible, and promoted through Rosenberg's list of novels, new conversations emerged on collaborative teaching and on teaching with digital collections like dLOC. These conversations led to a 2013 Distributed Online Collaborative Course, Panama Silver, Asian Gold: Migration Money and the Making of the Modern Caribbean, which underwent updated iterations in 2016 and 2017.[10] These deeply collaborative courses informed development and goals for the institute.

Instructors frequently note that a core obstacle to teaching is the lack of access to such primary sources. These materials, including photographs, maps, diaries,

newspapers, etc., serve a range of purposes, from offering insight into the lives of everyday people in the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora over time to facilitating students' awareness and critique of long histories of colonialism and structural racism. While many educators readily share syllabi and teaching materials throughout their teaching communities, facilitating access to primary sources is often beyond the abilities of any single person or institution. This is why the institute was designed in a way that would enable participants to familiarize themselves and connect with digital collections, built as OER through the work of many individuals, communities, and institutions.

Our experiences leading up to the institute affirmed that we most often will not hear from people teaching with OER, whether from dLOC or other sources. As a matter of fact, we regularly need to reach out to teachers to request syllabi for review in order to evaluate the use of OER. This is due, in part, to demanding workloads for teaching, and some of this is due to communication needs, as teachers do not necessarily use the term OER. Explaining the request can therefore require a bit of translation and time. With the sudden move to remote work and teaching with the pandemic in 2020, we have heard anecdotally about the increased use of dLOC and other online resources in teaching. However, work to collect and review inclusion in syllabi remains pending.

Leveraging Free/Open Source Software for Open Pedagogy

Most participants looking to incorporate digital humanities tools in their teaching were doing so in the context of courses designed around specific topics in the history, literature, language, religion, and culture of the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora. This is distinct from courses focused on digital methods, where many weeks might be granted to scaffolding that supports students' understanding and application of specific software. Especially for undergraduate or K-12 students unfamiliar with using web-based tools in the humanities classroom, it was crucial that the institute highlight tools students could learn quickly, allowing them to focus on interpretation and storytelling. One institute participant, K. Adele Okoli, described how, following the institute, she "went on to apply these inclusive digital pedagogies in my French seminar, 'Literature and Culture of the Creole Atlantic,' for which one nontraditional student from Senegal [Aïssatou Lo] created, illustrated, and recorded her reading of a French-language digital storybook dedicated to her children featuring a transatlantic Black woman, the shapeshifting Princess Mbaïta. A high number of my students in Caribbean Studies-focused French courses are from West and Central African countries, and they often report that learning about Caribbean history, literature, and culture,

especially through digital materials and projects accessible through minimal technologies, gives them an empowering global perspective of their own sense of Black identity and Diasporic connection."[11]

Though numerous tools and platforms were mentioned at the institute, the agenda allotted significant time to showcasing and experimenting with two tools developed by the Knight Journalism Lab at Northwestern University: TimelineJS and StoryMapJS. Constraints of local IT support, web connectivity, and lack of funding for commercial products are frequently cited challenges for the dLOC community; these tools are accessible to a broad swath of educators when considering resource inequities across institutions and geographies. While open source, neither of these tools requires downloading or installation, and they make use of familiar web browser and Google spreadsheet interfaces. Beyond specific technical considerations, mapping and timeline applications are especially appealing for instructors looking to engage students in low-barrier tools that juxtapose primary and secondary sources with students' original research.

In the assessment interviews and the syllabi and assignments contributed after the institute, many participants reported incorporating these tools into their courses. For instance, Takkara Brunson assigned students in her course, African Cultural Perspectives, to develop StoryMaps that synthesized primary sources and data tied to specific locations in order to build an argument around "an issue of religious, gender, or ethnic identity; precolonial, colonial, or post-colonial society; politics, music, or the visual arts."[12] Juliet Glenn-Callender's reflection describes how she was able to develop an alternative assignment asking students to use StoryMapJS to trace the Bahamian route to independence. She notes that the "institute really brought home the concept of minimal computing… [and] highlighted resources that were either free or at minimal cost and with minimal training that could be used to capture digital data and make it accessible to users."[13]

Participants also made use of other open source platforms, such as Omeka, to engage their students in developing original, public scholarship. Graduate students in Keja Valens' course, Roots of the Commonwealth: Caribbean Provisions from the British Empire to the 21st Century, worked in small teams to curate exhibits on regional foodways. Valens noted that by showcasing dLOC as a research publication platform as well as a trove of primary sources, she "was able to present to my students a real community that they could understand as their interlocutors and where they could see their work being published. This meant that when they searched for material and reviewed other projects through dLOC, they did so with a profound interest and engagement, and as they completed their exhibits, they did so with a specific venue and audience in mind, and it was

one in which they already felt invested and engaged and also one that they felt was urgent to participate in with care and integrity."[14]

How Did the Institute Structure Facilitate Collaboration among Members of the Cohort, and How Have Participants Built Upon this Foundation to Co-create Course Materials?

To put our principles of empathy and flexibility into action, institute hosts built in many opportunities for participants to iteratively discuss and reflect in small groups, to present or report out to the larger group, and to informally chat between sessions. Especially during the week-long, in-person phase of the institute, this structure cultivated a supportive network for participants to share educational resources and to envision their humanities projects in new ways. Many participants responded positively to their hands-on experience working with digital tools during the institute and learning from a diverse set of member projects that demonstrated how others had translated courses, assignments, and research could for digital platforms. Further, participants reported an interest in DH not only to engage students and research participants in their classrooms or the field but also as a set of methods and tools that created more collaborative opportunities and greater access to learning technology among under-resourced communities and institutions. Overall, institute participants' reflections and contributions to the website demonstrate a shared interest in applying digital tools for the public humanities, with potential to co-create with one another as well as community members and students.

Multilingual Translation as Digital Pedagogy

Participant reflections also expressed that experiencing the institute as a cohort fostered a sense of community among members that encouraged further partnerships. One example of such a partnership, still in the planning phase, is co-developed by literary scholars Anita Baksh and Laëtitia Saint-Loubert.[15] This "connected classrooms" course, Transoceanic Experience of Indenture in Indo-Caribbean, Indo-Mauritian and Indo-Reunionese Writing, was designed using the Collaborative Online International Learning model (COIL) developed at the State University of New York (SUNY) to foster digital engagement between students with various linguistic backgrounds as part of global learning initiatives.

Developed about fifteen years ago, COIL has produced resources to support international, virtual collaboration between instructors and students across borders.[16] A major goal of this course will be for students to learn about indentured labor from a transoceanic perspective and to further decolonize curricula. In this case, Baksh's students will complete the course as part of a capstone at a two-year institution in the US. For Saint-Loubert, it is likely that students will come from a predominantly French-speaking linguistic background. Students will spend several weeks working with their international student partners to translate English and French twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary texts that focus on narratives of indenture.

Engaging with this literature will expose students to indentured experiences through laborer perspectives and introduce them to words and expressions from various languages, including Creoles, Hindi, and Bhojpuri. Literature analysis and interpretation will give students insights into key themes of indenture, such as culinary and cultural traditions, gendered experiences, inter-ethnic relationships, and working conditions. Translation projects will be shared with digital tools (e.g., StoryMapJS, TimelineJS, and WordPress) to contextualize historical texts through time and space and to make translations more accessible for continued annotation and feedback between students. In addition to producing projects, students will be asked to write a reflection of their experiences with digital tools, collaboration, and how international partnerships and new knowledge of indentured experiences informed their assessment of peer translations.

Developing a Community OER
COLLECTION OF INTERVIEWS AND REFLECTIONS

A primary goal of the institute was to foster an enhanced community of practice for digital humanities and digital pedagogy specific to the needs and concerns of Caribbean studies. Critical pieces contributing to this outcome and to institute assessment have been maintaining communication with participants since the in-person meeting through interviews, the contribution of relevant teaching and research materials, and public collection of reflections on participants' experience. By documenting lessons learned and by asking participants to directly reflect on the institute in their own words, we hope to promote an institute model as a framework that others in the field may replicate and build upon.

To support program assessment, twenty-seven follow-up interviews were conducted with participants via Zoom from May to August of 2020, focused on understanding the impact of the institute on teaching and learning and on potential improvements for future iterations. Conversations highlighted the wide range of DH skills participants adopted in their research and courses

and surfaced potential OER deliverables from these projects, including syllabi, assignment samples, and reflections. Importantly, participants noted that they were able to draw on skills acquired during the institute to continue working and teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Again, frequently mentioned benefits included opportunities for institute participants to interact with one another. The institute allowed established scholars, graduate students, and instructors from institutions within and beyond the Caribbean diaspora to collaborate during and after the in-person institute, beginning new research relationships that may not have otherwise been possible. As then-doctoral candidate Nathan Dize put it, "The institute could have gone on for another two weeks and I'm not sure that I would have tired of the group of people that were brought together. Not only was it a pleasure to learn with and from the other scholars, but the selection of folks in terms of career level and path… made the experience for me as a graduate student quite formative. In this way, I felt the learning environment was reciprocal."[17]

INSTITUTE WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

As part of planned deliverables, UF OER librarian Perry Collins, graduate students Brittany Mistretta and Hannah Toombs, and designer Tracy MacKay-Ratliff developed a website to serve as a user-friendly access point for institute documentation and a thematic OER collection. This site includes presentations delivered in person and virtually as well as teaching materials and reflections contributed by participants. To address concerns about the discoverability of institute materials in a larger digital repository such as dLOC, it was determined that a separate website could contextualize materials and related resources within the institute's initiatives. This site was published in March 2021 by LibraryPress@UF, an open access imprint of the UF Libraries and UF Press, as the first in a new OER-focused series. With this goal in mind, the website was designed to work as a nexus that links institute information and products in a meaningful way to increase their accessibility and to amplify participant contributions.

Leveraging WordPress's strengths, the website's content was organized into pages and posts, with pages acting as entryways to groups of posts. Participant contributions were incorporated as posts and organized into content categories such as Projects & Courses, Tools & Topics, and Institute Reflections. The selected categories focus on various examples, resources, and experiences relevant to digital pedagogy, teaching, and the institute. Each post was also tagged with identifiers that include author names, educational resources (e.g., lesson plans, videos, presentations), resource audiences (e.g., graduate, undergraduate, K-12), and specific topics (e.g., mapping, oral history, decolonization). Tags connect posts

to individual participant pages, creating a layered network that highlights shared and related content from various participants. In this way, the website structure puts people, projects, and topics in conversation with one another and encourages a sustained dialogue beyond the institute. A virtual launch event reinforced this goal as an opportunity to share a concrete outcome constructed by many hands and to reflect on the institute's impact on participants and their students.

While we are proud of the website as a community-driven resource, we are also mindful of its limitations. Even as educators aim to promote social justice for their students by crafting and adapting freely available, more inclusive course materials, they are also impacted by inequities that hamper OER creation. Throughout the website development and OER publication process, we strived to offer flexibility that acknowledged not only time constraints but also different comfort levels with OER and potential dynamics of participants' respective labor situations (with positions varying from contingent instructors to professional staff to high school educators to tenured professors). We encouraged all participants to contribute *something* to the website that could inform others' teaching (even a short reflection or course syllabus), but we did not demand that anyone circulate full courses or other content they might not have been willing to share publicly. We also did not require or even request that all materials be made available under a Creative Commons license; while some participants chose to do so to enable downstream adaptation, we strongly felt that, as with all dLOC projects, contributors should have autonomy in licensing their work. This is a challenge that cuts across disciplines in OER, as we aim to balance respect for instructors' labor and rights to their course materials with a desire to maximize impact by sharing widely.

As Institute Participants Navigate Long-Term Crises, How Have They Engaged and Supported Students through Digital or Open Pedagogies?

Two recent disasters, the COVID-19 global pandemic and Hurricane Dorian, took a major toll on the personal and professional lives of institute participants and their students over the course of our two-year project. The impacts of each have persisted long-term, demanding adaptation to new modes of teaching and exacerbating historical inequities in students' access to technology. Participant reflections report course delays and challenges for students in completing coursework. Of course, we cannot know the full extent of personal trauma and grief among the community of institute participants as they have carried on in teaching and leadership roles over the past several years.

Dorian especially affected participants living in the Caribbean, particularly those based at the University of the Bahamas-North. Here, much of the campus, including a substantial portion of the library's collection, was destroyed by the hurricane. Participants Juliet Glenn-Callender and Sally Everson were unable to undertake the course project they had originally planned; however, both were able to implement alternative assignments that engaged students in co-creating digital, public humanities resources. Both contributed to Everson's online course, Climate and Inequality, where students created a Zotero digital library and undertook community-based research to document stories incorporated into an exhibit developed in partnership with the Rutgers Humanities Action Lab.[18]

Of course, hurricanes and attendant issues such as climate change have long affected the Greater Caribbean, reinforcing a damaging legacy of colonialism and requiring institutions to account for disaster as a recurring reality.[19] One institute guest expert, Schuyler Esprit, described the impact of both Tropical Storm Erika and Hurricane Maria in just three years following the founding of Create Caribbean.[20] This program, which takes a "for students, by students" approach, invites interns at Dominica State College to teach technology workshops for K-12 students and to develop digital scholarship research. One major project, Carisealand, engages students in developing "regional resources that actively support or raise awareness about sustainable development in the era of climate change disaster."[21] The damage Maria caused to Dominica and to the Create Caribbean space forced a period of rebuilding and compounded existing access barriers; however, Esprit and her students have moved forward with support from local and global networks. In a later keynote at the 2020 Digital Humanities annual conference, Esprit described the work of Create Caribbean in "moving students closer to a sense of shared responsibility for the political, economic, and cultural future of their Caribbean home."[22]

These examples reflect how recent disasters have made the development of OER and digital pedagogical models both more challenging and more immediately urgent. Crucially, they also describe local responses by instructors best positioned to understand what students and communities have lost, their specific needs, and the possibilities for digital and open pedagogies in engaging students with immediate issues of climate and social justice. Complementing and supporting these local endeavors, dLOC offers shared community infrastructure not only to digitally preserve materials potentially vulnerable to disaster but also to advocate for partner needs and additional capacity, including for OER development. In a 2020 podcast on disaster research and cultural memory, Haitian studies scholar and institute co-organizer Crystal Felima noted that "dLOC is a really great example of looking at how social justice and the library works, where

you have different partners collaborate [and] share resources.… You have this working relationship where institutions are in conversation with each other, whether they're in Haiti or Puerto Rico."[23]

Increasingly, these relationships include knowledge exchange around teaching resources and the need to document and preserve course modules, lesson plans, lecture videos, etc., alongside digitized collections. Even within a supportive community, the burden often falls on individuals to create course materials, sometimes with limited resources or institutional support. As described throughout this chapter, an emphasis on collaboration and co-creation—with other educators, with students, and across institutions—surfaces again and again as a response to community educational need throughout ongoing crises. This need has also motivated a more ambitious vision for the public institute website, which complements teaching resources available through dLOC. While many institute participants were able to contribute materials to the community website, we know the gaps in this collection reflect the obstacles of COVID in particular, with materials collected during a pandemic peak from mid-2020 to early 2021. With a commitment to sustaining the website long-term, we hope to continue building on this project to assess the OER needs of a wider Caribbean studies network and to implement effective and ethical ways of sharing.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of Interest

Collins worked concurrently as an employee of the NEH and UF during part of the award period but was not involved in the funding or administration of the grant or compensated by grant funds.

Endnotes

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3. Because the chapter draws heavily on the discussion, presentations, course materials, and reflections contributed, participants were invited via the institute email list to communicate if they wished to be listed as co-authors. This approach supports the overarching principles of the institute and adapts more inclusive authorship models increasingly implemented in other scholarly publishing contexts (e.g., the CRediT taxonomy, which has defined a series of contributor roles for scientific research).

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