

## Reflective Narrative

I did not think much about the digital world when I came to Michigan State University. I had a personal website that I was proud of, and I knew I was interested in photogrammetry as a tool to document archaeological finds. When I first moved to Michigan in 2020, I began working in the Michigan State University Bioarchaeology Lab; during this time, I learned and fine-tuned my photography and photogrammetry skills, a method that I had no experience with. I was very nervous learning photogrammetry as I did not see myself as a person who could work in the digital realm - I thought that only people with computer science degrees could do that work. However, I now use these skills for research and public outreach. My first experience teaching digital methods occurred during the summer of 2022 when my labmate and I co-hosted two artifact photography workshops at the Belize Institute of Archaeology. This was a turning point for me; not only did I have the confidence to teach this information, but it propelled me forward in my journey toward becoming an educator.

After teaching at the Institute of Archaeology, I continued my photogrammetry work with Drs. Ethan Watrall and Stacey Camp on the Internment Archaeology Digital Archive (IADA) project funded by the National Parks Service during the 2022-2023 academic year. But even though I had a lot of digital experience for research use and preservation, I had not heard about the Digital Humanities Graduate Certificate; I did not know about this certificate until my fourth year of graduate school when I was working in the Lab for the Education and Advancement in Digital Research (LEADR) and was a Cultural Heritage Informatics (CHI) Fellow. While there, I met other graduate students who had completed the certificate. They highly, *highly* suggested that I sign up for the certificate as I was already two-thirds of the way through the requirements.

Now I am thankful that they did because the different portions of this certificate have benefited me and my research in ways I could not have expected.

### ***DH 865: Digital Humanities Seminar***

I took DH 865: Digital Humanities Seminar during the Spring 2024 semester with Dr. Jesse Draper. In this class, we learned about the importance of our digital presence and created a professional digital portfolio from it. On this website, we had weekly blogs that required us to reflect on the week's materials. The weekly reflections allowed me to think critically about the digital methods and tools discussed that week and helped me work through questions that I asked during the readings. We had guest speakers come to class to discuss a digital method or tool, which I enjoyed because I am a hands-on learner. Having the space to learn and productively fail helped me better understand the types of questions that can be asked with particular kinds of digital methods. Additionally, because I am further along in my graduate career than the other students and had a semester's worth of LEADR and CHI knowledge, I was able to share some new information with students and help with some questions, especially those regarding GitHub.

The portion of the class that was most helpful for me and my future work was the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) mock grant proposal and associated lightning talk. I was writing my dissertation proposal at the same time; the NEH mock grant helped me solidify and form a plan for one of my dissertation proposal projects. Then I had to solidify the ideas even more during my lightning talk. I used what I learned in class in my dissertation proposal and will be using these ideas in future grants applications. I have already benefited from this project as I have received seed funding to start this project (discussed in my conclusion).

### ***Digital Humanities Pedagogy***

For the digital humanities pedagogy portion, I worked as a teaching assistant for the Lab for the Education and Advancement and Digital Research (LEADR) during the 2023-2024 academic year. In this position, I worked with eight classes. Some courses were one-off courses that involved teaching students the difference between digital projects and databases, and how to use both in their research. Other courses were more time-intensive and spread across the entire semester. For example, the spring semester involved teaching GitHub and Visual Studio Code so that students could share their research on a long-standing collaborative website focused on indigenous community issues from around the world. Having both types of classes forced me to think about how to present information to the classes, and in what order. I had a similar experience relating to the size of the classes; some classes were only twenty students, while others were around 200. This factor has to be considered when teaching digital methods, and I got a behind-the-scenes look at understanding what types of tools can be used for big classes versus what can be used for small classes. In the future, I will use the skills I've gained through LEADR to teach digital methods to my students, as these types of skills make students more marketable after graduation and provide a creative outlet for students to share their coursework.

### ***Digital Humanities Research***

For the research portion of the certificate, I participated in the Cultural Heritage Informatics (CHI) Fellowship during the 2023-2024 academic year. In this fellowship, we learn about different types of heritage, how digital cultural heritage fits into this picture, how digital projects are formed and maintained, and the skills to create a digital project of our own. Of course, this is only a condensed list of the things we learn in CHI - this year-long fellowship teaches us so much more. We learn the minutiae of working on digital projects with our cohort

members. Co-working with cohort members was one of my favorite parts of CHI because I had the chance to learn from them and see how their projects improved over time.

My final CHI project was titled *Trade Routes to Ambergris Caye*. This place-based mobile website was created as a digital cultural heritage experience used to engage tourists and local communities in ongoing research occurring on Ambergris Caye, Belize. There is an emphasis on the largest archaeological site on the caye, called Marco Gonzalez. Excavations have indicated that Marco Gonzalez was a trading hub throughout the Classic and Postclassic. This website will share ongoing excavation findings with the public, including artifacts found, where the artifacts were found, and where the artifacts travel from. I help supervise a field school at Marco Gonzalez each year and this project has allowed me to share what we find with the public, an important step that archaeologists sometimes overlook.

### ***Conclusion***

Overall, the DH Graduate Certificate and its components have benefited me and my research. Not only do I have the skills to create public-facing digital projects, but I have the knowledge and tools to teach these skills to students. I know how to integrate digital projects into coursework, from single-class visits to semester-long projects. Additionally, I know how to apply for grants that involve large digital components. This is evident not only through the final mock grant proposal assigned for DH 865 but also through receiving the DH Seed Funding Grant for the summer of 2024. The project that I will start because of this grant will be a part of my dissertation, which will involve 1) documenting the published microbotanicals in the Mesoamerican region and 2) filling the gap of medicinal microbotanicals in the region. This summer will focus on the former, creating a database with Omeka Classic and uploading the information collected by the end of the summer. This project will continue throughout the

remainder of my academic career and beyond. The long-term goal is to create an open-access database for researchers in the region to utilize for research. My experiences in the DH Graduate Certificate have prepared me to initiate this project and teach DH to my future students, and I will be forever grateful.