



Graduate Humanities

Graduate Humanities Program
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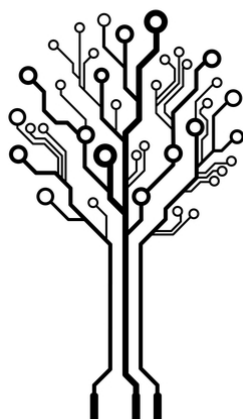
Students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds collaboratively explore interdisciplinary intersections of the arts, historical, cultural, and literary studies within an open, exploratory, and experimental graduate-level educational environment.

Volume 40 Issue 1 Spring 2017 MU Graduate Humanities Program

Everyone has a story

In 2015, Dr. Eric Lassiter, Program Director, and Dr. Lisa Heaton, Program Faculty of Literary Studies, decided it was an opportune moment for Graduate Humanities Program students to explore the concept of "Digital Humanities." As a result, Dr. Heaton designed and taught our first Digital Humanities seminar this past fall. Visiting their last class, I watched students present their final projects – a collection of webpages created around a topic of his or her choosing. This project deepened understanding of computer technology as users *and* creators: they used the technology to write and do research, and then created new webpages for others to use and explore. During this visit, I was also invited to participate in their closing seminar discussion. Within seconds it became apparent to me that Dr. Heaton's culminating question, "Is it Digital Humanities or just Humanities?" exposed a raw nerve that surely echoed discussions beyond the confines of the classroom. Their presentations, final discussion, and the subsequent research needed to pull the lead article together for this newsletter alerted me to additional complexities and beauties underway in computer technology.

And because we enjoy celebrating what our graduates "do" with a humanities degree, we asked Josh Mills ('16) to write up what he's been doing since graduating from the program. Think salt water...
— Trish Hatfield ('08)



Digital Humanities What is it and why care?

The following excerpts are from a discussion in our Digital Humanities seminar involving Dr. Lisa Heaton and graduate students Stacy Scudder and Chuck Ocheltree. It was recorded on December 7, 2016, in room GC136, Marshall University South Charleston campus.

Prelude: Is it Digital Humanities or just the Humanities?

This has not been an easy question for academics to answer. The University of Alberta in Alberta, Canada, sponsored a yearly "Day of DH" during which it invited digital humanists worldwide to keep a journal of all they do for one day (March 18) to help answer the question, "Just what do computing humanists really do?" In preparation for the Day of DH, participants were asked, "How do you define computing / digital humanities?" See <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/40> for the last published definitions (2011). This end-of-semester question that Dr. Heaton asks Stacy and Chuck probes the intersection of computer technology and the humanities.

Dr. Lisa Heaton (LH): Why should we drop the "digital" from digital humanities?

Stacy Scudder (SS): Because it's such a shenanigan. It's all still *just* humanities. You're doing the same thing. It serves the same purpose. It's just a different media.

LH: Why do so many people disagree with this? Because we've read a lot of literature stating otherwise...

SS: Because people like to get their narrow little fields and it's ruining academia as we see it. This is kinda my pet peeve.

LH: It's also the way we focus so much on specialties that are so finite in different fields without even looking at what other people are doing. I've learned a lot this semester working with humanities students and humanities literature and getting out of my technology-teacher ed box.

Chuck Ocheltree (CO): I come at it from the other side. I realize that I live in a world of humanities and that's not going to change. That's just the way it is. Everybody has their own niche and that's where they want to stay. That's where they are...I'm not saying necessarily that it should or shouldn't....But I think...No, I'll say it...I think we should have the humanities *and* digital humanities because that way we have people who could specialize in his or her own little field, whatever it may be. That way they are more comfortable and more productive.

SS: See, I disagree with "more productive." There are so many things that dovetail between the subjects.

SEE DH PAGE 4

Recent Graduate

Wes Kuemmel '16

MA in Humanities & Certificate
in Appalachian Studies

Major Emphasis: Cultural Studies

*Project Title: "Appalachia as an
Arena for Agenda"*



Setting Sail for New Opportunities: Life After Grad School by Josh Mills '16

I am not going to lie: I was scared to death. I am a born and raised hillbilly from the mountains of West Virginia and I was alone in the middle of Chesapeake Bay. Hurricane Matthew had just hit Florida and, despite being far away, was whipping up some nasty weather in the bay. I was in my sailboat, a Cape Dory 25 nostalgically named "Whippoorwill" for the little birds who ceaselessly provided a soundtrack for warm, peaceful summer nights back home. At 25 feet in length she was not big, but she was well built and seaworthy. The only difficulty was with the captain. With only a few months sailing experience, I was in over

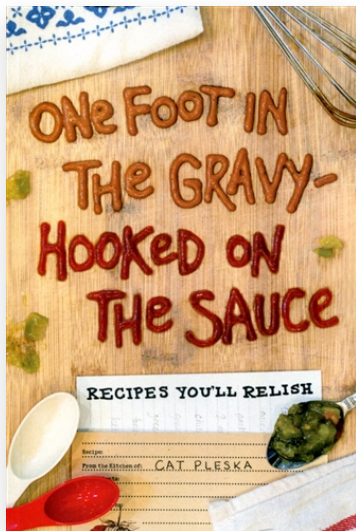
my head. Two days prior I had set sail from St. Michaels, Maryland, in my little vessel bound for the Florida Keys. Now, the waves whipped up by the wind collided with the Potomac River current producing waves large enough to cover the horizon. Waves crashing on the deck provided constant salty spray. I was soaked and felt utterly alone.

Despite my fear, I managed to navigate to safe harbor that day. After anchoring the boat and putting on dry clothes, I curled up under a blanket in the cabin. Exhausted and with my nerves completely shot, I lay there thinking as

the wind howled outside, "How did I end up here?"

Exactly one hundred and fifty days before, I was living in West Virginia, and had just graduated from the Graduate Humanities Program at Marshall University. At that time, like many people my age, I was asking myself another question, more frightening than a storm at sea, "What are you going to do now?" I believe this is a question that haunts all students who pursue degrees that do not lead directly to professions such as teachers, lawyers, nurses, and doctors. It is a favorite topic for family and friends to bring up at holiday gatherings. After proudly declaring "I am working on my Master's in Humanities," inevitably someone asked, "What can you do with that?" I provided vague answers about how I wanted to work in a museum someday or maybe teach college. I knew what my interests were and knew I enjoyed studying history, culture, art, and literature, but as far as a specific career, I had none in mind.

SEE MILLS PG 7



By Cat Pleska (Excerpt from Introduction reprinted with permission from the author.)

Comfort foods, we called them. When I take a bite of milk gravy on a biscuit that was made using bacon grease, I'm in hog heaven, to borrow an old, and oddly ironic, cliché. To my tongue—and I am a supertaster—it is a bacon and flour smoothie. It's my grandmother, my mother, a warm kitchen, bright white curtains over the sink, a pressure cooker sissing and tootling on the

stove. The clock on the kitchen wall says 2:00 in the afternoon on a Saturday, and I have nowhere else to be but in the kitchen, listening to my grandmother's and mother's commiserating woes, while the men, for the moment, are off working, mowing lawns, working on cars, or quietly sitting and smoking cigarettes, reading the newspaper....

The food we enjoyed came mostly from our family's gardens and the animals they raised....And like my English and

Irish ancestors, I enjoyed meat and potatoes, tomatoes and corn, biscuits and cornbread (a little Southern diet thrown in), and cakes and pies.

This cookbook is dedicated to that spirit, though the recipes are not limited to Appalachia, the South or anywhere in particular. I wanted to include as many people as I could in the book. These are my friends, people I admire, and I wanted them to participate in and enjoy this final result.

The recipes were to come from each person's home, from what they put on their own tables....Each recipe is accompanied by a personal note, as contributors say from whom they received the recipe (perhaps their grandmothers) or how they came to offer it to their families....

It's about fun, and good food, and friendship, and family. ...This cookbook is for people who might want to remember their own family kitchens or a particular cook, and to just eat the way American's always have: with love. ■

Cat is a Graduate Humanities Program associate faculty and will be teaching "Expository Writing for Research Seminar" in the fall. See our Fall 2017 schedule in this issue, pg. 3, for more information.

One foot in the Gravy—Hooked on the Sauce: Recipes You'll Relish (2017) can be ordered from msp1@mountainstatepress.org or amazon.com.

Cat's other books are Fed from the Blade: Tales and Poems from the Mountains (2012) available from Woodland Press, LLC, and her memoir, Riding on Comets (2015) available from WV University Press.

Summer 2017 Seminars ♦ May 15 - August 4, 2017

See www.marshall.edu/humn for more information and seminar classroom assignments

REGISTRATION AVAILABLE March 27

HUMN 600 Introduction to Study in the Humanities (Lassiter); Summer 1: Th, 5-8 p.m. Interdisciplinary core course addresses questions/concepts central to the humanities. Texts from philosophy, history, literature, the arts and the sciences provide insights into selected historical periods.

HUMN 650 SelTP: Projects in the Humanities (Lassiter): Technology Enhanced with four live meetings on Tuesdays, May 9, 5-8 pm; June 13, 5-8 pm; July 18, 5-8 pm; and Aug 1, 5-8 pm. By permission only. This course provides students the opportunity to work on the earliest stages of design and implementation of their final project required

for the MA in Humanities or for the Appalachian Studies Certificate. Though the seminar is primarily for students new to the program, projects can be organized at any stage of development—it might include, for example, initial explorations of larger literatures or implementing the earliest stages of an applied project.

Fall 2017 Seminars ♦ August 21 - December 15, 2017

See www.marshall.edu/humn – for more information and seminar classroom assignments.

REGISTRATION AVAILABLE April 10

HUMN 603 History and Theory of the Arts, W, 7-9:50 p.m. Core course provides chronological survey of the arts, emphasizing the social, political and/or religious motives that underlie artistic production.

HUMN 650 SelTp: Stories of Climate Change (Major Scholar Seminar: with Dr. Susan Crate) Electronic/Skype meetings on Thursday, August 24, 7-9:50 pm; August 31, 7-9:50 pm; September 21, 7-9:50 pm; October 26, 7-9:50 pm; December 14, 7-9:50 pm. By permission of the Director only.

Anthropogenic climate change is an incredibly urgent issue in the 21st century that transcends any political view or position, and must be addressed to ensure the perpetuation of life as we know it on the planet. Indisputable among serious scientists, the facts speak for themselves.

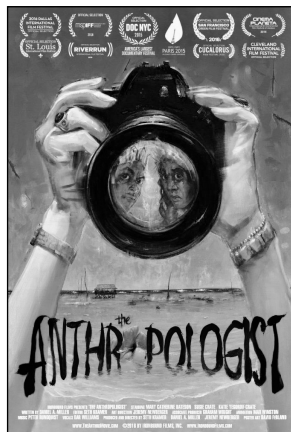
Yet little is being done to address this world-wide crisis. Among those reasons include a naive position in which people use their own experience (such as not feeling the effects of climate change in their own lives) to evaluate a world-wide problem. In an effort to increase awareness of the experience of others around the world who are already directly experiencing climate change, many scientists are turning to story to raise awareness.

This Major Scholar Seminar will explore some crucial parts of this effort, highlight the stories of people around the world struggling to adapt to rapid change, and encourage participants to understand how the power of story may be an important key to unlocking

how the world will deal with this most critical issue.

Dr. Susan Crate has been documenting the perceptions, understandings and responses of change, in its many forms, with indigenous communities in Siberia since 1988. Since 1991 she has worked with Viliui Sakha, Turkic-speaking horse and cattle breeders in arctic Siberia and in 2006 she began working with them on issues of climate change as they face an increasingly unpredictable environment.

Crate continues that work and also to document the experience of climate change in other global communities who are feeling uncontested effects.



produce a distinctive study of change and human adaptability."

Crate is Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at George Mason University.

Note: graduate course credit for this seminar is also available from MU's Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

HUMN 604 Expository Writing for Research (Pleska), M, 7 - 9:50 pm. This core writing course develops proficiency in writing for research. *Ms. Pleska earned her MFA in creative nonfiction writing at Goucher College in Baltimore and is an essayist for West Virginia Public Radio. She also is the Editor-in-Chief of Mountain State Press and book reviewer for The Charleston Gazette. Her book, Riding on Comets: A Memoir, was published by West Virginia University Press. Just out this February is her new book, One Foot in the Gravy – Hooked on the Sauce: Recipes You'll Relish, published by Mountain State Press. See excerpts from this book on page 2.*

HUMN 650 Special Topics (Independent Studies arranged between instructor and student—contact Program Director to arrange course.) For students who need to conduct independent research and/or reading in a specific topic in the humanities, the Program will offer independent studies in those topics as funds allow. Contact the Director for more information. Examples of Special Topics might include: • Film Criticism • Museum Studies • Studies in Appalachian Music • Studies in Poetry • Language and Communication.

HUMN 680 Independent Research Symposium, Arranged with Program Director. A pro-seminar required of all Humanities degree students who are beginning the thesis or final project.



DH from page 1

There are so many things that dovetail between the subjects. They could build so much faster on the things they're doing if they just worked together rather than separately.

CO: I think you can still work together and still be "digital humanities."

SS: We could, but do we?

CO: Well, where I live, yeah. We do. We still butt heads quite a bit but that's going to happen regardless, we're all humans.

Interlude: Analog or Digital?

Chuck offered this brief explanation for what the terms analog and digital mean in the context of his work as a historian and photo archivist. Analog refers to material that can be read without an electronic device. Digital refers to material that requires the use of an electronic device to view it and create it, e.g. computer, e-books, websites, blogs, crowdsourcing, text messages, tweets...

LH: Chuck, you mentioned digital versus analog but is it really possible in today's world for people to just be analog and never tap into the digital?

CO: Both worlds are going to live on the fringes of each other. Your analog people are still going to have access to databases and vice versa. I know people that use their computers at work to send emails and tap into databases and that's it.

And then other people spend 8 hours a day in front of their computer. For example, someone has to build our databases, so data entry comes to mind. Scanning of documents for web use or preservation, which means that they are converting analog into digital. A few use their computer for research.

Interlude: User and/or Creator – An app named Clio

Clio, a program developed here at Marshall University by history associate professor Dr. David Trowbridge, is a website and a mobile application. You can use it to guide you to historical places from your present location and see images, videos, and hear and read about the object of your interest. Anyone who taps into *Clio* to explore history is a User. Entries are created by museum professionals, local historians, and

educators and their students. For them, *Clio* is a venue for collaborative research, interpretation, and map-building. (www.theclio.com/web/about. Accessed 7 February, 2017) *Anyone who contributes to Clio is a Creator. Therefore, you can be a user and a creator.*

LH: In the very first class, we talked a little bit about the difference between the concept of producing—using digital tools and being the database creator—versus just tapping into those tools as an end user.

CO: Right.

LH: And maybe that's part of the difference. A person going for a digital humanities degree you would want to definitely come out knowing how to be a creator, not just a user.

CO: Right. And I've worked with people that it's probably best that they are not creators. They're not comfortable doing what they're doing and the end result is just more work for the people that live the digital.

Interlude: Defining Digital Humanities in 30 Seconds

In Melissa Terras' article, "Present, Not Voting: Digital Humanities in the Panopticon," she writes of the symbiotic nature of primary sources and technology and issues of visibility and sustainability. She quotes a colleague who has been involved in a transcribing project for over 25 years: "I'd be lost without access to historical knowledge and source material, but I'd be lost without access to new, online cutting-edge technologies." Near the end of her article, Terras says that "we should be able to articulate the transferable skill set that comes with Digital Humanities research that can educate and influence a wide range of culture, heritage, creative, and even business processes..." (pp. 177 & 183).

LH: Remember how in the "Present, Not Voting" article Terras challenges us to have "at the tip of our tongue what we do and why we matter and why we should be supported and why DH makes sense." In essence, an elevator speech?

Now you, Stacy, would want to argue that we shouldn't have to explain that because it's all just humanities, but...if you had to explain now, today, what digital humanities are...Because the day

The Academic Seminar

Dr. Heaton, Stacy, and Chuck are engaging in an a method of teaching in which the student's individual contributions are considered a must. This essential characteristic of an academic seminar invites the students to actively share their knowledge and love of learning for the benefit of all participants – which encourages full participation, emotional engagement, and self-governance.

"A good seminar, based in a community of shared emotions – and in which the individual can both become part of a collective and at the same time find his or her own unique way to creative self-realization – is still a guiding academic utopia." –Karlsohn, Thomas, "The Academic Seminar as Emotional Community," *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy. Work and Life in Academia*. NordSTEP 2016, doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v2.33724 . Web. 1 February, 2017.

The traditions on which the seminar is founded have their roots in the Socratic Method, but its modern form was developed in English and German universities in the 1700s.

we read the Terras article early in the semester, you were like, "Um, I don't know..." all over the place...what would you say now?

Pause.

CO: It's used for a number of different things. To tell stories, to verify authorship of text analysis, text mining for the same purpose....it's a tool...that's the way I see it..."

SS: Ding. [Stacy roll-plays riding an elevator.] Elevator door opens. Third floor...I just ride the elevator all day, ask anybody, telling people what digital humanities is...(Laughter) I do! I do! So, it's a tool, that's it! The digital part is another tool for the Humanities.

So, yeah, I guess you could look at it as a separate sort of thing, kind of like masonry is not exactly construction, but it is. It's just all humanities. OK, take my math background. It's telling students a different way to work a problem. You don't need all the extra descriptors.

LH: But if you're going to name a class, building on that line of thinking, and you just have a class, what's it going to be all about? ▶ NEXT PAGE

SS: Well, it depends. If you're going to have a class on literature, you could do critical theory and expository writing...so yeah, you would call a class "digital" humanities, but it's still just a part of the humanities all the same.

LH: What you just said about integrating other strategies is actually a good concept to think about. For example, if it's a writing course focused in the humanities, then you could explore digital tools that are appropriate for facilitating writing, analyzing writing, doing text analysis.

And a literature course could have similar types of tools. So you could easily do all of that integration you're talking about and not call any of the courses "digital" humanities. You explore the digital tools that are available based on what that course is about.

SS: You could teach textual analysis, you could teach them how to scan pictures to put together in a historical website...

LH: So if you're in a history class you're going to look at a lot of digital history projects, web sites, and digital storytelling to capture histories of events and so forth. You could explore the History Pin website where they have hosted projects and they also provide the potential of building your own project. Or use the Timeline website for keeping track of the events in sequence like Chuck's project on the Kanawha County Book Crisis.

The Timeline website also might be something students could use for projects in a literature class if they are exploring the author and the works that they made and in what order the works were created.

Some tools would cut across [the

curriculum], but the class wouldn't necessarily be about *teaching* the tool, it's about teaching the history or the writing or the literature and the tool just happens to be a means for students to represent what they know and are able to do with that content.

To *digitize* a class would mean that the student would [also] learn about the tools. Hopefully people would already know word processing but there are elements in word processing that help you analyze the readability of your text.

You all learned about different website projects and media so not only did you learn about tools, but you used them to create your own projects. You can include these in a portfolio. All of this will be beneficial after graduation.

There are also so many ways that we can share and create these days so it's not just about word processing, it's also about blogging, tweeting, crowdsourcing, and other ways that we can produce and share our work...there are so many different mediums available to create, publish, and present and share our stuff with the world, for better or worse. ■

Stacy Scudder is finishing her MA in humanities this semester. At Marshall University on the Huntington campus, she teaches mathematics and first year seminar, both of which terrify her students—the former because of the subject and the latter because she uses literary monsters to teach about prejudices. She was born in Pikeville, Kentucky, and after moving around quite a bit, came back to her hometown. She has three daughters and three grandchildren who keep her on her toes.

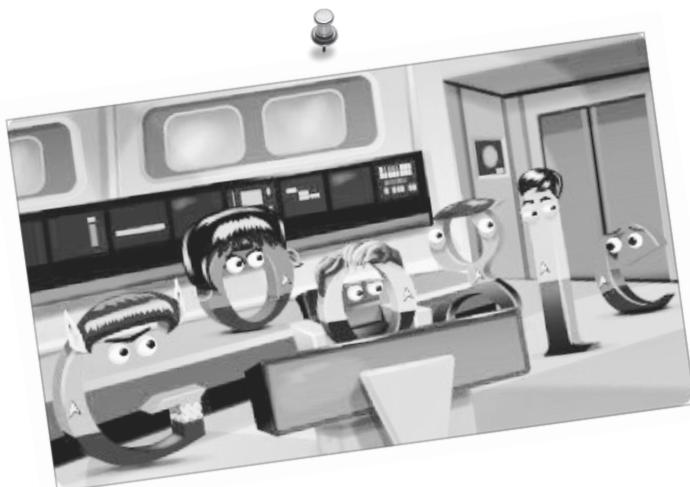
Chuck Ocheltree is in his second semester in the MA Humanities program. He is the Photo

Archivist for the West Virginia State Archives and History, located in the Culture Center on the State Capitol grounds. He returned to college after having spent almost twenty years doing backbreaking manual labor in warehouses. Chuck has lived his entire life in the Kanawha Valley, and focuses his graduate humanities studies on the history and culture of Appalachia. He is looking forward to expanding his knowledge of the great state and region he calls home.

Dr. Lisa A. Heaton has degrees in Instructional Technology (Ph.D.), Social Foundations of Education (M.Ed.), and Secondary Education with emphases in English and Mathematics (B.S.). She worked as a middle school math and language arts teacher before coming to Marshall University, where she has taught for more than 15 years. She currently serves as Professor and Program Director of Elementary and Secondary Education in the College of Education and Professional Development. She occasionally teaches courses for the Graduate Humanities Program, including "Shakespeare: Time, Place, and Space" and "Digital Humanities." Dr. Heaton is a fan of science fiction, with anything Star Trek topping her list because of its embedded humanist themes and interesting technological gadgetry. Atop her office bookshelf, Star Trek: The Original Series action figures stand by.

The font used for the title of this article is "OCR A." OCR stands for Optical Character Recognition or Optical Character Reader. It was developed in 1966 to convert (digitalize) typed, handwritten, or printed texts so they could be read by computers. www.linotype.com/1283/ocr-b-family.html

"OCR is a field of pattern recognition, artificial intelligence and computer vision." en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_character_recognition



Google Doodle: 46th Anniversary of Star Trek's 1st Broadcast

www.google.com/doodles/46th-anniversary-of-star-treks-1st-broadcast
posted September 8, 2012
[In color and interactive online]

Crowdsourcing

Civil Rights Issue

"The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development recently found that adults with no tech experience reported a 15% lower labor participation rate and received 6% lower salaries than adults who had at least some experience.

"Keith Krueger, chief executive officer of the Consortium for School Networking, a technology advocacy group, calls the digital divide in the US 'the civil rights issue' of our time. Perhaps more worrisome, the gap doesn't seem to be narrowing.

"In a 2016 survey, the consortium discovered that nearly 20 percent of school leaders identified something as simple as reliable Wi-Fi service as still an issue for their institutions."

Spencer, Kyle. "Powering Up: One town's quest to join the school tech revolution – and what it says about digital equality in the US," *The Christian Science Monitor Weekly*, 23, January, 2017, page 31.

Crowdsourcing

"The practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers." Merriam-Webster. Web. 21 February 2017.

Crowdsourcing Storytelling

"It really felt like the Internet at its best in that I put a message out to the world saying, 'Hey. Here's a fun creative idea I want to try' and literally every continent in the world took part." – Ninian Doff, Director. Check out his music video, "What'll it Take" embedded in this website. mashable.com/2015/08/21/innovative-crowd-sourced-storytelling/. Web. 21 February 2017.

CONSIDER
THESE

Connecting with Kids

"We must do everything we can to connect kids with books. Print books, ebooks, library books, bookstores—let's have it all. Let's give children access to books whenever and wherever, whether it's a paperback in the backpack, or a phone in the back pocket." –Dan Cohen, Executive Director of the Digital Public Library of America www.dancohen.org Web. 2.9.17.

Envoy to Google, Apple, Microsoft

"Denmark might become the first country to appoint a special ambassador to represent Denmark's interests to the world's largest technology companies. According to *Politiken*, the "digital ambassador" would deal with multinational technology giants like Google, Apple, and Microsoft. These corporations are now so large in terms of economic strength and influence that they surpass many of the countries where Denmark has traditional ambassadors."

Bitcoin.com. 4 February 2017. Web. 20 February 2017.

Bitcoin

"A type of digital currency in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank..." Oxford Dictionaries. Web. 20 February 2017.

Transformative

"...[Digital Humanities] is at its best when it embraces the digital not simply as a means to the traditional ends of scholarship, but when it transforms the nature of what humanists do. The digital allows scholars, librarians, archivists, and curators to engage much more directly with each other and the public. Further, it allows them not simply to write for each other, but to build things for everyone." –Trevor Owens, Library of Congress, United States. Gold, Matthew K., editor. *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. University of Minnesota Press, 2012, page 70.

e-WV Encyclopedia

"West Virginia has produced two great apples, the first of which was the Grimes Golden,...supposedly from a seed planted by Johnny Appleseed. Considered by some to be the best frying apple ever, the Grimes Golden was commonly grown in home and commercial orchards until the early 1940s, when the Golden Delicious largely displaced it." Arnold, Amy Donaldson "Grimes Golden." e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia. 13 February 2012. Web. 20 February 2017. e-WV, a comprehensive reference source with thousands of article on West Virginia's people, places, history, arts, science and culture can be found at www.wvencyclopedia.org.

Mills from page 2

So with graduation looming, I began searching for jobs. I had two criteria: work at a museum and move east near the coast. I sent out dozens of resumes to museums from Maryland to South Carolina. I only landed one interview which did not lead to a job. Devastated from the lack of response, I returned to scouring the internet for job listings. All the interesting jobs required years of experience. I was losing hope rapidly. Grad school was coming to an end and my current job as a substitute school teacher would also be ending, leaving me unemployed come summertime. Ironically, despite having college degrees, even summer jobs were difficult to come by. It's hard times for college-educated twenty-somethings. One day I stumbled across a job listing at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, Maryland. It was "Seasonal Boat Donation Program Assistant," also known as "chief boat washer." The Museum sells donated boats, from canoes to sixty-plus-foot motor and sailing yachts, to fund its educational programs. Although it had

It was the passion for learning about other cultures, places, and history that lead me to undertake a solo voyage of 1,318 nautical miles.

nothing to do with my studies, I decided to apply for the job. I had recently taken an interest in sailing after building a small sailboat with my grandfather and I thought, if nothing else, I could pursue that interest and, at the same time, gain experience working for a museum. Although relieved that I found a job, I moved to Maryland with much uncertainty about my future.

In his short story "Head and Shoulders," F. Scott Fitzgerald writes, "...when you open your door at the rap of life you let in many things." This is true. When a degree in the humanities knocked at my door, I opened it and in turn it opened my life to experiences and opportunities I had only dreamed of. As part of my "chief boat washer job," I sailed a 41 foot catamaran from Maine to Maryland. This, in turn, sparked a desire to buy a boat, sail south to the Florida Keys and officially have sailed the entire eastern seaboard of the United States. Forty-four days after facing the edge of hurricane Matthew in the bay, I was anchored off Butternut Key, Florida, in crystal clear turquoise water.

Thoroughly amazed and with a smile, I thought more about the question, "How did I end up here?"

I use my education in the humanities daily, both in my work and life in general. It was the passion for learning about other cultures, places, and history that lead me to undertake a solo voyage of 1,318 nautical miles. I am now a full time employee of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. I am still working with the boat donation program at the museum, but I no longer wash boats. I do boat deliveries, meet with donors, and do paperwork. I live in a cottage by the bay where I see the sun set over the water from my bedroom window.

But this is still only the beginning for me. I will never stop learning and pursuing my interests in the humanities. I plan to continue working and gaining experience in museums and eventually settle into a career geared specifically towards my interests in history and culture.

It is a long road after graduation, but it's not a bad one. It really is about the journey and not the destination. My journey began with a degree in the humanities and I have no idea where it will end, but with my education the possibilities are as endless as the song of a whippoorwill. ■

We dump humanities education at our own peril

By Dan Foster (Excerpt reprinted with permission of the Charleston Gazette-Mail from a Commentary published Oct. 4, 2016)

"...liberal arts requirements in American colleges are being diminished and the proportion of bachelor's degrees in humanities disciplines has fallen to 6% nationwide, the lowest since reliable records began almost 70 years ago.

"So, it seems surprising that the United States Military Academy, home of the first engineering school in the country, has thriving humanities departments and is one of the few institutions of higher education that is actually increasing

liberal arts requirements. Recognizing this anomaly, Harvard President Drew Faust...noted, 'The humanities are resources that build self-awareness, character and perspective, and enable leaders to compel and connect with others.'...In another survey, it was noted that 75% of business leaders feel that, for them, the most important traits are the abilities to think critically and communicate verbally and nonverbally, which are at the heart of the humanities...." ■

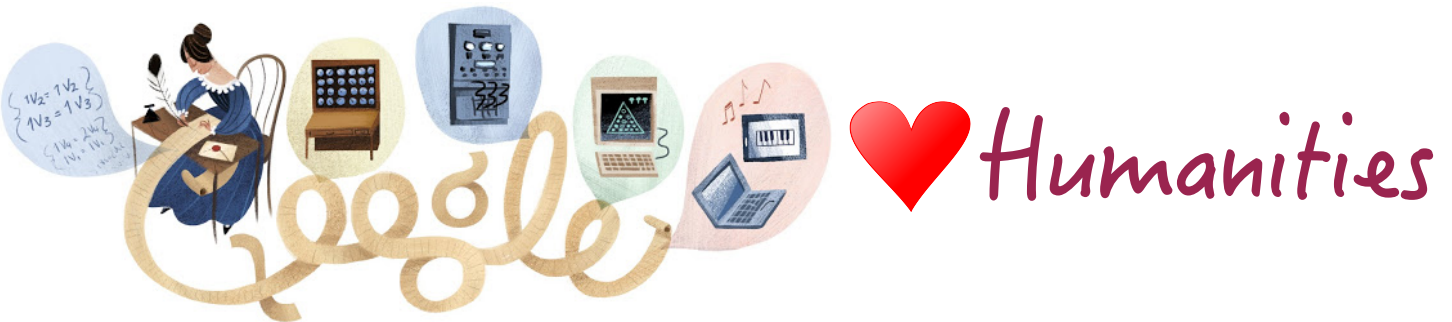
Dan Foster is a retired Charleston surgeon, a former state senator and a Gazette contributing columnist.



On Friday, Jan. 13, 2016, the GHP Program and one of our community partners, Step by Step, Inc., hosted a meeting with Maggie Laidlaw, (right) a visiting Scottish doctoral student from the University of Edinburgh, seventeen freshman students from Allegheny College, PA, and local nonprofit leaders, VISTAS, and faculty. Maggie and the students engaged in a discussion around civic engagement and having confidence in yourself. Maggie's interview with Doug Imbrogno, staff writer of the Charleston Gazette-Mail, can be read online (Jan 22, 2017).



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Is Google one of the largest purveyors of the Humanities in the world?

If you “googled” for information on December 10, 2012, you might have seen a Google Doodle on Augusta Ada King-Noel, Countess of Lovelace (December 10, 1815 - November 27, 1852).

Countess King-Noel was an English mathematician and writer, chiefly known for her work on Charles Babbage's early mechanical general-purpose computer, the Analytical Engine. Her notes on the engine include what is recognized as the first algorithm intended to be carried out by a machine. As a result, she is often regarded as the first computer programmer.

According to Google’s doodles website, “Doodles are the fun, surprising, and sometimes spontaneous changes that are made to the Google logo to celebrate holidays, anniversaries, and the lives of famous artists, pioneers, and scientists.” (www.google.com/doodles/about. Web. 1 January 2017) Since 2000, Google has placed over 2000 “doodles” on its homepage, averaging one doodle every third day.

Visit Google’s doodle archive to view other doodles, their histories, and “global reach” at www.google.com/doodles#archive.