

Jennifer Guiliano

A Primer for Teaching Digital History: Ten Design Principles

Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. 272 pp.

A Primer for Teaching Digital History: Ten Design Principles is an excellent resource both for people who are new to teaching digital history and for those who have been doing it for a while. For historians who are new to teaching the subject, Guiliano begins in the introduction by situating digital history in the deluge of online sources, exploring the similarities with and differences from traditional or analog methods. Although digital history raises new questions about “access, audience, output, and privacy,” it “remains tied to the fundamentals of historical scholarship, evidence, and argument” (3-4). She critiques the common misconception that a student’s technical abilities relate to their age, foregrounds the issue of unequal access to digital technology, and notes that software, platforms, and algorithms are sites of analysis themselves. Her concluding discussion focuses on one of the most salient aspects of the field, the “potentially long arc of digital history adoption” (10). Practitioners and teachers of digital history know that computational fluency is not something one has, but something one works continually to improve.

More experienced digital history teachers will find much of value in the *Primer*, too. As schools and universities struggle to redress problems with equity, diversity, inclusivity, and decolonization, Guiliano offers a wealth of ideas for “antiracist, feminist, decolonial practice that implements practices from social justice and disability justice” (5). These include assignments that engage with, for example, the work of Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein (on data feminism), Katherine McKittrick (on “the way quantification of Black bodies in the slave trade can be read into the responsibilities of Black studies scholars today” [23]), Mimi Onuoha (on missing data sets—“blank spots that exist in spaces that are otherwise data-saturated” [29]), and Roopika Risam (on postcolonial digital humanities). Sources that have traditionally been used for history “from below” are explored with digital tools (for example using Open Refine with census rolls). She also includes a thoughtful discussion of the ethics of student collaboration, a situation which frequently arises in the digital history classroom.

One of the most valuable aspects of the *Primer*, for all readers, is the wealth of personal experience Guiliano shares throughout the book, including her past mistakes. She underlines the importance of making hidden logics explicit, describes the experience of working in public, emphasizes the need to manage fear of failure (without using the word fail), and demonstrates how to cope when a software version update breaks your carefully designed tutorial. She knows what students like and what they do not, how to encourage them to teach themselves, and when to use student peer evaluation feedback on draft work. She knows that explanations often need to be repeated. She frequently asks questions—about data, ethics, methods, digital source criticism, reverse engineering, visualization, accessibility, and so on—which can serve to stimulate discussion in the classroom or frame a rubric for an assignment.

She also frequently builds on the pedagogy of others, saying things like “I can imagine complementing this assignment with...” (105) or “If you were engaged in a similar project you could...” (116).

The *Primer* is organized into three parts, on Foundations, Selected Methods, and Forms of Scholarship. In the Foundations section, the first chapter is on Sources as Data, covering topics such as ethical use; data cleaning, curation, and maintenance; and dataset as publication. Chapter 2 is about Learning Outcomes. Guiliano stresses the importance of three kinds of outcome: historical, methodological, and technological. She builds on the *Digital History Reviews* criteria and outlines an approach to drafting a syllabus in terms of “will-not” statements that she later rewrites in positive terms. This allows her to respond to pre-conceptions students may have about digital history (e.g., that it requires mathematical skills or programming experience). She also discusses the issue of course evaluations and demonstrated biases against women and scholars of colour. The third chapter describes New Forms of Assignments, beginning with the “unessay” (11). She outlines digital micro-projects at length, including guidelines for evaluating them, and addresses partner and group work, multi-course and community-based projects, and the utility of asking students permission to keep their final projects on file. The fourth chapter, on the Basics of Digital Methods, is the last in the Foundations section, and covers tutorials from the *Programming Historian* website and the use of digital notebooks such as Jupyter. The Selected Methods section includes three chapters, on Digital Source Criticism (chapter 5), Text and Network Analysis (chapter 6), and Visualization (chapter 7). These chapters are necessarily a bit more focused on the possibilities provided by software available at the time of writing, like Voyant Tools, MALLET, and Palladio. Nevertheless, these tools are well established in the digital humanities and Guiliano’s focus on design principles means her ideas and examples can be easily adapted to other platforms. The third section, on Forms of Scholarship, also has three sections. Chapter 8 is about Digital Archives, Digital Exhibits, and Digital Collections. She notes that digital history students “are often missing basic knowledge about what an archive is and how it operates” (130). She also emphasizes the fact that the outputs of digital history courses and projects are rarely archives themselves, but better described as “digital historical representations,” (80) since they do not maintain standards that actual archives are required to meet. This chapter also has an excellent discussion of the relationship between digital and public history. Chapter 9, on Storytelling, continues that discussion, covering issues raised by genres such as films, podcasts, documentaries, and historical games. The tenth and final chapter is about Crowdsourcing, including the use of Wikipedia. After a short conclusion there is a twenty-two-page long Glossary and Resources section which will be especially useful for less-experienced teachers.

For a volume of modest size, there are relatively few notable omissions. One thing that is not explicitly covered in the *Primer* is the history of digital history itself. To take a single example, the name of the late (and missed) Roy Rosenzweig appears fourteen times in the text, but most of the mentions are to the digital history centre which he founded, and which is now named for him. I do not see this as a flaw,

however. Since the book focuses on design principles rather than on the details of specific technologies it is about as future-proof as it is possible for a digital history book to be. Instructors who wish to ground digital history in historiography can tailor that aspect of their own course to the contemporary material they plan to cover.

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David Bastien et Charles Gaucher

Éduquer les enfants sourds : les architectes d'une histoire au Nouveau-Brunswick

Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 2022, 192 p.

Il y a toujours lieu de se réjouir lorsqu'un nouveau chapitre s'écrit dans l'histoire des personnes sourdes. C'est particulièrement le cas lorsque l'ouvrage porte sur une population pour ainsi dire « excentrée », c'est-à-dire éloignée, dans ce cas, des centres institutionnels d'éducation des personnes sourdes qu'étaient Montréal au Québec et Belleville en Ontario. Le fait que ce livre est publié en français par des auteurs francophones peut aussi laisser croire que le volume abordera la dimension bilingue de l'éducation dans les Maritimes avec une certaine profondeur. C'est beaucoup demander pour une plaquette d'à peine 130 pages en format poche. On devine également que les co-auteurs ont eu à faire face à une documentation éparpillée et peu abondante, surtout pour certaines périodes, ce qui explique entre autres l'absence quasi-totale d'information sur les années 1900 à 1960. Toutefois, ce petit volume mérite d'être lu par quiconque s'intéresse à l'éducation en milieu minoritaire parce qu'il défriche un territoire véritablement nouveau, même s'il laisse plusieurs souches au sol; les labours à suivre exigeront donc un effort considérable.

Les co-auteurs, un historien et un anthropologue, ont choisi de diviser leur étude en trois parties. La première concerne les origines de l'enseignement pour les personnes sourdes à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle et la seconde, la vie associative sourde au tournant du vingtième siècle. Ces deux parties ont une cohérence entre elles qui s'explique, dans une certaine mesure, par le fait qu'elles couvrent des institutions néo-brunswickoises dont la création et la disparition se sont étalées sur quelques décennies, la dernière institution d'enseignement aux personnes sourdes de la province ayant fermé ses portes en 1917. La troisième partie couvre l'histoire depuis 1960, alors que l'éducation des personnes sourdes du Nouveau-Brunswick devient une responsabilité partagée avec la province voisine de la Nouvelle-Écosse, et prend racine dans une institution située à Amherst, tout près de la frontière entre les deux provinces. Les première et seconde parties adoptent une perspective d'analyse plutôt anecdotique, axée largement sur les individus, sur les édifices et sur la géographie de l'enseignement aux personnes sourdes. La troisième partie est davantage analytique et creuse des questions axées sur les politiques éducatives et sur les relations interprovinciales.