



Teaching Jane Austen in Bits and Bytes: D Undergraduate Archival Research

BRIDGET DRAXLER

Bridget Draxler (email: bdraxler@monmouthcollege.edu) is an Assistant Professor of English at Monmouth College; she has published essays on eighteenth-century literature, the history of the book, the teaching of literature, and public digital humanities.

THE ARCHIVE IS AN ANOMALY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: its contents are tactile, unduplicable, irreplaceable, and difficult to access for those with the ability to travel, the academic identification to gain access, and the patience for slow searching. The speed, replicability, and accessibility of online information is not just an ideological alternative; it may even seem to make this research tool of yesteryear obsolete.¹ Why travel halfway across the world to view letters and manuscripts when we can view them, in all their searchable, sortable, saveable glory, with the click of a mouse?

For scholars, the value of accessing an archive is clear: there are qualities of a text, including paper texture, ink seals, and watermarks, that cannot be fully seen or felt online. The illustrations, prefatory matter, or foreword, or edition, or marginalia and markings of an individual copy, help us to contextualize a text within a particular time and even a particular household. The smell of the paper itself is thrilling for those of us who have committed ourselves to the study of books. For researchers, the archive will continue to be essential in our field because the contents of an archive are their unduplicability.

For undergraduate students, however, digital archives and mass digitization projects open new windows into the past; specifically, new opportunities for undergraduate students to conduct humanities research in the archive.² The transition from bits of ivory into bytes of data invites new research, and new researchers. Although the pedagogy of a text is emerging, her life and work are particularly accessible to undergraduate humanities research, as many of her manuscripts, and early editions of her texts are available freely online.

The online archival resources for Austen are rich and varied: [Google Books](#) has numerous editions of her novels and letters; [British Fiction, 1800-1829](#) houses early reviews of, circulating library subscriptions to, and prefaces to her novels; the [Hathi Trust Digital Library](#) includes downloadable PDFs of her works and early Austen editions; the [Reading Experience Database](#) lets users search readers' responses to Austen as late as 1945; the [British Library](#) includes advertisements for first editions of Austen's novels; and [Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts](#) offers early manuscript versions of her juvenilia and unpublished manuscripts.

Although [18th Connect](#) includes few references to Austen, its searchable collections in

contemporaries. We may supplement archival research online with the Victorian Literary Study [Concordance to the Works of Jane Austen](#), Austen's entry in [The Dictionary of National Biography](#), or the Museum's online exhibition "[A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy](#)." Particularly worth visiting is an e-gallery of the 1813 art exhibit Austen visited at the British Institution in Pall Mall, London. [The British Institution](#) described the gallery as a "meticulous reconstruction of the exhibition" that allows visitors to "put themselves in Austen's shoes, at least behind her eyes."

Sites like [NINES](#) create online communities for scholars to exchange ideas, while [Google Scholar](#) makes research on Austen more easily searchable for scholars and more widely available to the public. In addition to sponsored sources, Janeites have created sites like [Molland's](#) and [The Republic of Pemberley](#), which offer trivia, and message boards for community discussion. There are also sites that actively seek to bridge the gap between scholars and a wider online community, including [The 18th-Century Common](#), which has created a "public space for the research of scholars who study eighteenth-century cultures with nonacademic readers." The site includes links to popular and scholarly sources online, along with announcements and CFPs. [Persuasions On-Line](#) provides peer-reviewed articles for both academic and non-academic readers united by an interest in Jane Austen. These resources create a more democratic Austen: they build communities of scholars, students, and fans, who interact actively and collaboratively in conversations about her life and works.

Digital archives and projects offer opportunities for students to fully immerse themselves in Austen and write research papers based on direct access to archival materials. For instance, undergraduate students could use Austen's assessment of a novel with contemporary reviews, analyze visual cues in advertisements, or contextualize Austen within a larger pool of contemporary female novelists whose works may be out of their cultural contexts that may have informed various Austen biographies.

In addition to these new possibilities for conducting undergraduate research, digital tools also provide students with the ability to collect and present this research. Because primary research can include a large number of sources such as book reviews, personal correspondence, maybe even tightly rolled laundry lists—students may struggle to organize these materials to produce an effective argument. How might students researching Austen's letters, which may be scattered across various sites, go about finding a pattern and building an arc for their argument? They could benefit from a digital storehouse to collate such materials.

A timeline can help students visually organize their archival research both as they compile their research and as they form a hypothesis as well as when they present the finished argument. By creating a digital timeline, students can create a basic chronology of events with images, links, scans, and maps, drawing a virtual path through their multimedia story of their findings. Beginning with my own archival research experiences using a digital timeline, I offer advice and resources for adapting these tools to the undergraduate college classroom and considering the future of digital humanities more widely on the future of Austen studies.

The digital literary timeline

I began experimenting with digital timelines as part of my own research process at the [Chawton House](#). I spent a summer tracking the friendship between Joanna Baillie and Maria Edgeworth. In order to understand the correspondence between two women with prolifically long literary careers, I created a timeline from the time the two writers met at a dinner party, through the late 1840s, by which time Edgeworth addressed Baillie as "my friend in weal or love ever tenderly and cordial by sympathising!" (14 August 1848).⁴ I looked for evidence of how their friendship may have affected their writing, and a timeline helped me to keep track of an inordinately large number of letters and visits between them in addition to the publication dates of their many poems, novels, and plays. I

secondary criticism, publication dates, literary excerpts, and biographical notes into a timeline using the tool [Prezi](#).⁵

The figures below provide examples of my first timeline. Figure 1 illustrates one year of the timeline, and Figure 2 shows a close-up of the same timeline.



[\(Click here to see a larger version.\)](#)

[\(Click here to see a larger version.\)](#)

Figures 1 and 2: Excerpt from “Maria Edgeworth and Joanna Baillie” Digital Timeline

The timeline tells multiple, interwoven stories of unmarried, ambitious women writers experiencing success, and personal tragedy; sharing stories of their mutual friend Walter Scott; and observing the emerging potato famine in Ireland (14 August 1848). Depending on which threads I followed, I found what their friendship meant to these women. By resizing items according to importance, highlighting corresponding colors, and weaving a “path” along the central points, I told a story that traced Edgeworth began in her childhood, through to Baillie’s 1823 poem [“Sunset Meditation, Under the Apprehension of Blindness.”](#) The timeline helped me to see patterns, intersections, and themes in a vast body of research, to present this research to an audience like so many breadcrumbs along a trail.

The following summer, during the NEH seminar [“Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries,”](#) I juxtaposed Austen’s composition of *Northanger Abbey* with her exposure to Gothic drama. According to [on 19 June 1799](#), Austen planned to see George Colman’s gothic spectacle *Blue Beard, or Female Curiosity* on June 1799, shortly after she began drafting *Northanger Abbey*. Colman’s hybrid tragic-comic tone, melodrama, gave an ironic and playful nuance to the Gothic genre. The parodic tone of Austen’s novel is more of the Gothic stage than the “seven horrid novels” mentioned directly in the text.⁶

The play may have inspired other elements of plot and character in Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*. *Female Curiosity!* dramatizes paternal tyranny, misogynistic violence, and, as its title suggests, the curiosity. Critics who have made connections between Austen’s novel and Colman’s play tend to use the connection between General Tilney and Blue Beard, a Turk who beheads his wives for their curiosity.⁷ This reduces the reader-critic into the same imaginative mistakes as Catherine Morland, who falsely believes the General is a villain. In the end, the more sinister (because seemingly benign) vices of Colman’s Ibrahim prove a true villain, whose greediness would also sacrifice the happiness of his children.⁸ And interestingly, the pivotal scene in the novel, in which General Tilney is misled about Catherine’s fortune and decides to invite her to Northanger at the Orchard Street Theater in Bath—the same theater where Austen saw Colman’s *Blue Beard*.

In my second Prezi digital timeline, I traced the confluence of Austen’s drafting of *Northanger Abbey*

Gothic drama at the theatre in Bath, visually demonstrating the proximity of these events (Figure 3).

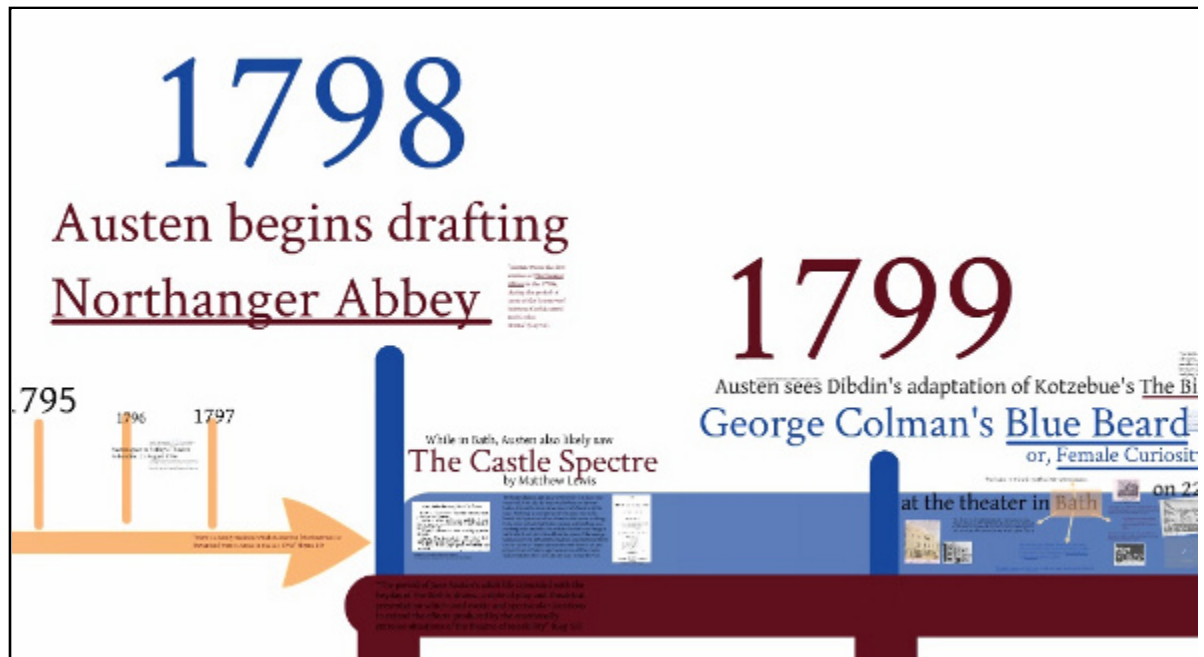


Figure 3: Excerpt from “Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey and the Gothic Afterpiece” Digital Timeline

The Austen timeline was even more valuable to me than the Baillie-Edgeworth timeline because I had to organize, including playbills, letters, maps, quotations, images of playhouses, reviews, portraits, and a timeline gave me a way to collect, organize, and present my research; however, this time, the top half of the timeline was Austen’s writing process, and the bottom half of the timeline was a student tutorial that chronicled the digital timeline (Figure 4). As part of the NEH seminar, I hoped to develop the digital timeline as an useful tool by creating tutorials to help them organize and share their own discoveries in the archive.



Figure 4: Excerpt from student tutorial in “Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey and the Gothic Afterpiece” Digital Timeline ([Click here to see a larger version.](#))

Digital archives in the undergraduate classroom

I introduced the digital timeline project to student researchers in August 2013 as part of Opportunities for Intellectual Activity, an undergraduate research program at Monmouth College. “[Jane Austen in Community](#)” project invited four students—two incoming first-year students, one sophomore, and one senior—two weeks researching Austen.

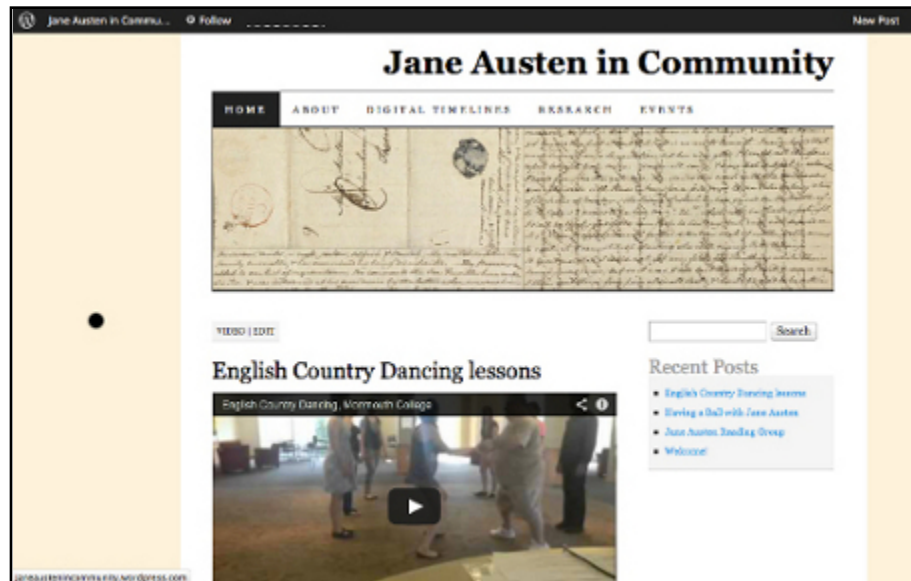


Figure 5: “Jane Austen in Community” WordPress Site
([Click here to see a larger version.](#))

Our seminar had two major projects. First, the students created a series of community events in celebration of its bicentennial, including a weekly reading group in partnership with the local [community arts center](#), and an evening of English country dancing and Regency-era food open to the public at the theater.² Second, students conducted original research projects on Austen that connected her to larger social or literary contexts and then created digital timelines to present this research. In tandem, the two “Jane Austen in Community” projects contextualized Austen in her community and carried her to our community.

Our daily seminar sessions included discussions of the novel along with research and technology. In the first week of the SOFIA project, I introduced Prezi with basic lessons on how to sign up and [create a Prezi timeline](#) about how to [choose a topic](#) and [gather research](#) using the campus library, online archives, and other digital resources. In the second week, we discussed the visual presentation of information and how to use color, size, and image strategies to visually prioritize and present the research. The last week included tutorials on how to [draw conclusions](#). A good argument, like a good story, builds logically and incrementally; it shows how students can use [writing techniques](#) to craft an effective argument. In addition, students used [Screen](#) to create short videos of their research. A sample video, based on my “Northanger Abbey and the Gothic Afterpiece” research, provided student example of a final video project.

“Northanger Abbey and the Gothic Afterpiece” Video, also available on [Youtube](#).

The students’ approaches to contextualizing Austen varied as widely as their approaches to visualization. One student explored the paradox of early nineteenth-century American hostility to English social hierarchy and the simultaneous popularity of Austen’s novels after the first U. S. edition was published in 1832. This project contrasted these two phenomena as parallels on either side of a timeline.

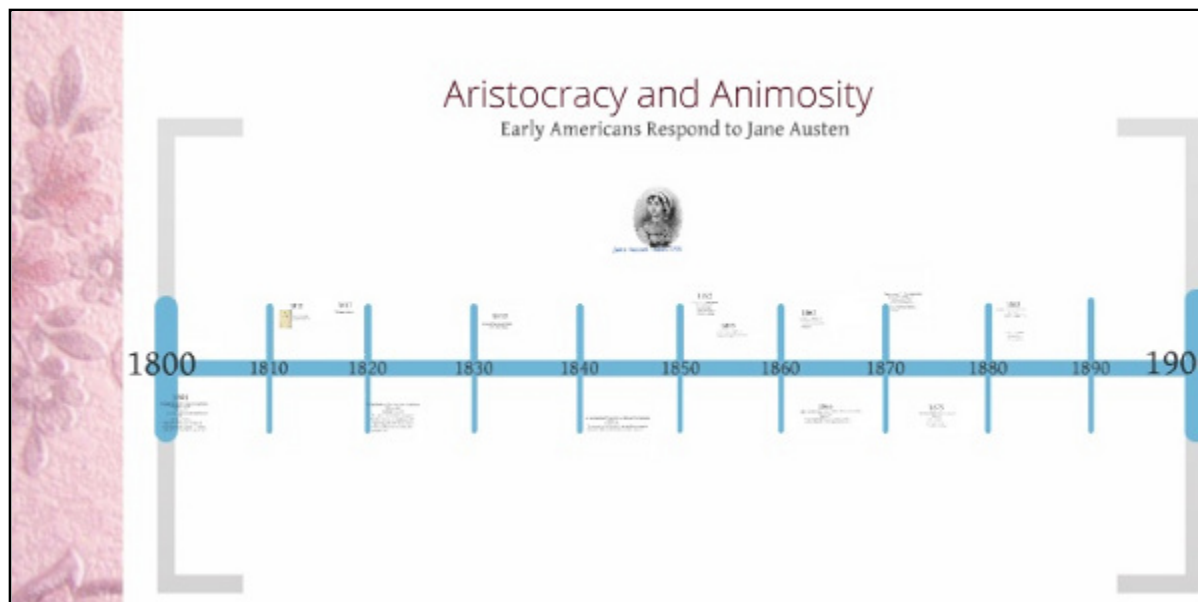
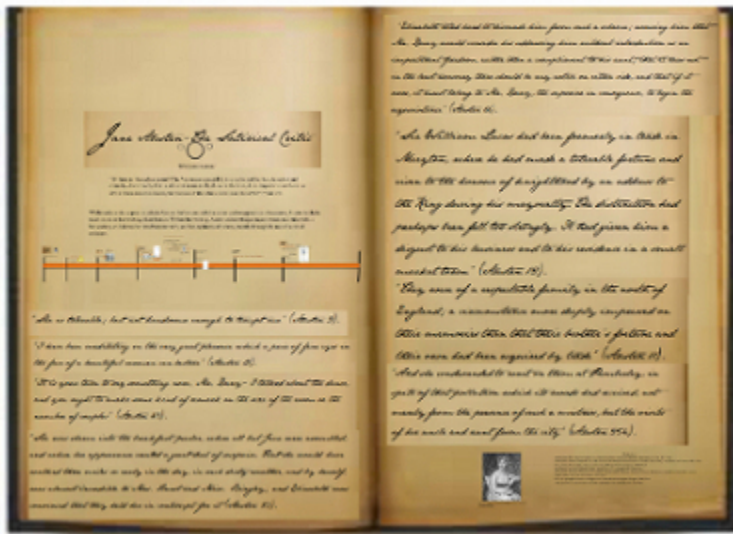
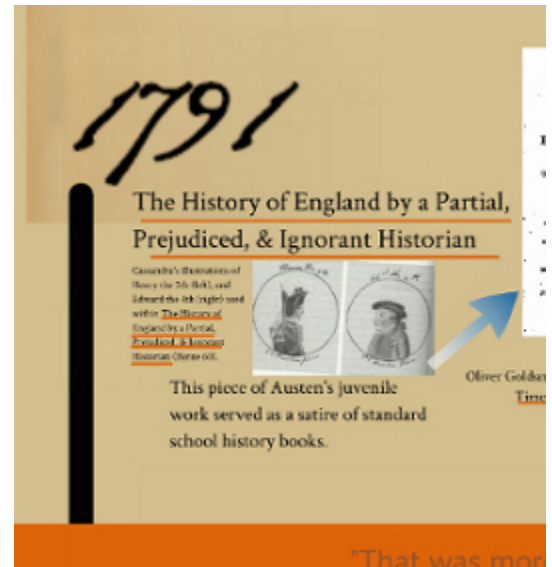


Figure 6: Screen Shot from “Aristocracy and Animosity: Early Americans Respond to Jane Austen”

Another student researched Austen as a social satirist, and presented this research on the pages of a book timeline followed by relevant primary and secondary quotations.



(Click here to see a larger version.)



(Click here to see a larger version.)

Figures 7 and 8: Close-up Screen Shot from “Jane Austen: The Satirical Critic”

One student examined conduct books in order to explore late eighteenth-century “portraits” of the ideal “framed” her argument as portraits on a digital wall.



(Click here to see a larger version.)



(Click here to see a larger version.)

Figures 9 and 10: Screen Shot from “A Portrait of the Ideal Woman and What Austen Seems to Say about

For each of these students, the ability to include multimedia components (including images, graphs, and tables) and an overarching spatial metaphor (such as a book, picture frames, or footsteps) guided and informed their task of populating a timeline that tells a story seemed less daunting to them than researching and writing though the process and outcomes were similar: they gathered evidence, synthesized sources, identified arguments.

The biggest challenge students faced was completing the project in a three-week summer term. S

had never read Austen before the seminar; only one had read scholarly criticism in literature; and no archive. Even though students frequently submitted progress reports and met individually with me, we had time to do substantial drafting and peer reviewing. I anticipate that the project could be more successful in an upper-level course.

In spite of these time constraints, however, students gained new perspectives on both Austen and the digital process. Students not only drew upon digital archives to create a timeline, but also authored their own digital curators, students experienced first-hand the difficulty and inherent subjectivity of choosing, evaluating, and organizing content. They wrestled with questions of inclusion and organization. What is important? What is not? What is connected? What patterns do I see? How do these objects tell a story? By reflecting on their own digital curation of both Jane Austen and digital technology from new points of view as these digital tools, archives, and platforms and overlapping contexts in which to read Austen's life and work. When read together, their timelines offer new perspectives.

Although these projects provided students with valuable learning outcomes, integrating digital technology can be tricky. Experimenting with technology requires patience, persistence, and a degree of trial and error. The successes and setbacks as "teachable moments" has made this approach to teaching worthwhile and rewarding.

Digital research can and should be different from non-digital work; the bigger opportunity here is not to make traditional research better, but to change the paradigm for research itself. For instance, a student's digital exhibit may have a unifying theme, but it may not have a thesis statement, because museums make arguments through decisions of inclusion and exclusion, by ordering and grouping items, and by noting patterns rather than by having thesis statements. Through techniques of museum curation, students learn new strategies of argumentation—strategies that are different from traditional academic contexts. In a digital exhibit, students may also use multimedia objects like videos, images, and audio clips. Quotations from a novel as evidence to support their arguments.¹¹ This variety of evidence affects their arguments, and maybe even the arguments themselves.

In developing a research project for students with a digital component, teachers' priorities may differ from traditional methods might. Instructors need to figure out what they value most in student learning—such as critical thinking, or argumentation—and be open-minded about teaching these skills in ways that may look different from a hard-copy term paper. For instance, in this essay, I use external links in lieu of an MLA-style works cited list. This works only if I recognize that my goal for citation is not to demonstrate mastery of MLA style but to credit sources and quickly take readers to these sources. Likewise, my students' final Prezi projects included transitions, like typical transitions—they displayed connections between ideas visually. For instance, a ladder might represent development in a list of items, while a scale may represent the weighing of contrasting possibilities. This is possible if we are creative in illustrating and interpreting visual correlatives for conjunctions.

These decisions raise important questions about technology, composition, and source attribution. Is there a more efficient way for readers to access source texts? Do visual transitions show deeper understanding between ideas? Possibly—but only if we are open minded about how we define "citation" or "transition." We need to be creative, and we also need to be transparent with students about these goals and methods. These projects offer an opportunity to discuss the purpose and value of citation, and explore or evaluate different strategies for citation. We should talk with students about our learning goals and why we believe a particular project is an effective way to achieve those goals.

Whenever technology plays a role in a project, students tend to need extra guidance, encouragement, and support from the instructor. I tend to concentrate reading within the first two-thirds of my courses, so that students can do

end almost exclusively to research projects. I post self-paced technology tutorials on our course website, but I inevitably use a few class periods to walk students through the technology with screenshot-laden talks.

Whenever possible, I encourage students to help each other, sharing technology tips in mini-tutorials. The senior English major in our SOFIA group, for instance, taught the incoming students on our library's website; another student who had used Prezi in the past helped her peers to get started. I became the "pointperson" in the class for a particular skill by mentoring peers who need extra help.

Digital projects would seem to work best in a seminar-style English major class with self-selected members, but I have also taught digital humanities projects in general education courses, where I have been pleasantly surprised to have a tech-savvy engineer, a more visually-oriented artist, an emerging Janeite English major, and a student who has finished a novel in her life work together on a project. There are more opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and to bring varied skill sets to the group.

By investing time in student-generated digital projects, such courses become focused less exclusively on the interrelationship between literature, archival research, and the digital humanities. Adding a digital project to a course also means taking time away from other texts or topics, and I have struggled with hard choices of which classes to include digital projects. For me, giving students this opportunity to conduct and publish original research and to take a meta-perspective on literary studies is worth the investment of time in and out of class.

Reallocating our time and rethinking our goals are important, but most crucially, teachers need to be reflective and self-conscious about these tools, not only in terms of how they mediate the experience of researching Austen, but also in terms of how they affect humanities research, the archive, and literary studies. We need to encourage students to weigh the value of digital and physical archives, the experience of reading on a page versus the screen, and the learning outcomes of a traditional term paper or a digital humanities project. We need to help students think about what it means to be authoritative, and who has the ability to create, organize, and disseminate information in the digital age. We need to include students in these important, complex, and sometimes difficult conversations about the future of libraries, archives, and humanities programs.

If we use digital tools in the classroom thoughtfully and intentionally, including students in our research, these resources have the potential to improve student learning in the following ways:

1. Digital literacy

Because students are digital natives, having grown up in a post-digital world, we might assume they are [digitally literate](#). But students vary in their technological fluency, and few challenge the default uses of digital tools. Humanities projects like this one are an opportunity for students to learn to more effectively search for resources and choose appropriate digital tools for different contexts.

The School of Information at the University of Michigan, for instance, is thinking critically about [Digital Natives](#), training a generation of digital natives to be digital archivists and preservation specialists. As the school explains, "Even though technology is intertwined in our students' lives, many do not possess the information literacy strategies for learning with technology or learning how to learn new technologies" (23). By integrating digital literacy into our curriculum, we help students to demonstrate persistence, creativity, and integrity in their use of these tools and become more effective consumers of digital information, both inside and outside the classroom.

2. The writing process

As both a note-taking system and presentation system, the digital timeline begins as a catch-all cogent argument. Students use visual cues like font, size, and color to create a hierarchy of information as a kind of virtual outline, thinking critically and reflectively about the choices they make in organ Because students can view each other's works in progress online, it is also easier to run out-of-class pe that students can get peer feedback throughout their writing process.

3. Organization strategies

Students might use these timelines as a springboard for a term paper or senior research project; th a CV or graduate school application. My real hope is that they carry forward the skills they will learn navigating, citing, sorting, organizing, prioritizing, and evaluating research. They might create a digita temporality in a time-hopping narrative like *Slaughterhouse-Five* or, as Cheryl Wilson has so beautiful [Abbey.](#)"

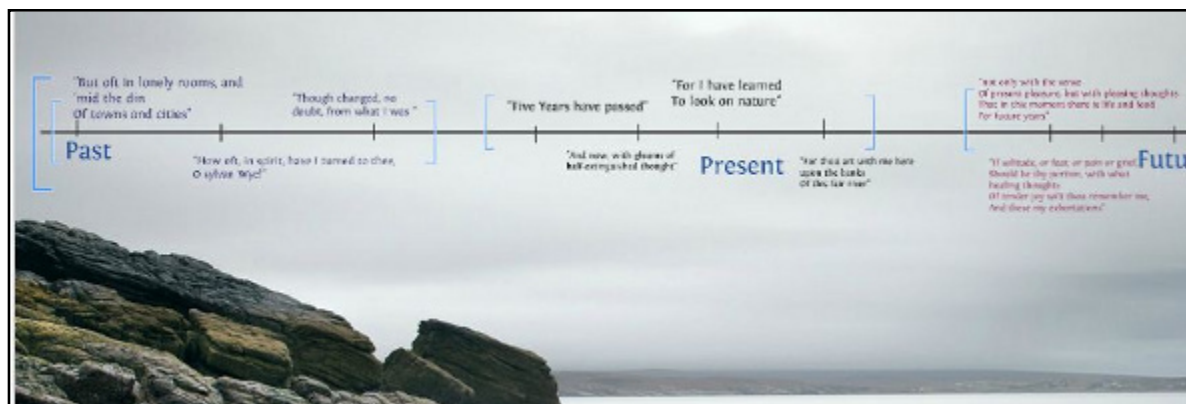


Figure 11: Screen shot from Cheryl Wilson's "Tintern Abbey"

A timeline is only one possible organizational strategy—students might apply the idea of a sp locations on a map for a geographically-driven argument, or they might find creative ways to visu and-effect or pro-versus-con argument. These tools give our students new ways to categorize, tag, sort, and they let students tell narratives that are non-linear, but that are interconnected and spatially a information overload, the ability to *organize* knowledge may be an even more crucial skill for our stude find it.

4. Active learning

Digital humanities projects like the digital timeline are not just tools to help students organize: help students think. These resources allow students to study literature and history, as explained by [Writin](#) a way that is engaged, participatory, and creative. By asking what it means to research Austen in a di recognize that there are larger changes taking place—even fundamental changes to the kinds of que humanists.¹² How, for instance, does technology mediate our experience or engagement with a text? H text itself changing? How do digital tools change not just how we conduct research, but what and why v place, and with whom we share our findings? How does technology change our process of learning, ou the way we see the world? What old assumptions about the humanities does technology challenge, and v do we need to be aware of? How will collaboration and public scholarship shape the direction of humani future?

These changes also affect who gets to ask the questions. For example, digital projects can be knowledge-creators rather than knowledge-consumers. In the 2013 article [“Learning, Teaching, and the Digital Age: Web 2.0 and Classroom Research: What Path Should We Take Now?”](#) Christine Greenhow, Beth Hughes argue that “Web 2.0’s affordances of interconnections, content creation and remixing, and interaction have led to an increased research interest in learners’ creative practices, participation, and production” (249). According to them, Web 2.0 technology affords an interactive learning process in which “knowledge is decentralized and co-constructed by and among a broad base of users” (247). The ability to create, share, exchange, remix, and learn online is fundamentally collaborative, and students play a more active role in their own learning.

In [Teaching History in the Digital Age](#), T. Mills Kelly suggests that “by giving students the freedom to play with the past in new and creative ways, whether using digital media or not, we not only open up a possibility that they can do very worthy and interesting historical work, but also that there are significant results from giving students that freedom” (5). If we want our students to be critical thinkers and active learners, we should give them freedom and trust to work in ways that demonstrate what Cathy Davidson calls [twenty-first century learning](#): creativity, collaboration, and recontextualization.

The future of Austen studies in a digital age

These new ways of learning will also inform the future direction of Austen studies, which will be shaped by the values of creativity, collaboration, and recontextualization. In addition to collaborating with our colleagues to gather information, feedback, and guidance on digital humanities projects, we should also collaborate with [librarians and archivists](#), who can offer insights on the complexities of digital curation, metadata, authors’ rights, and digital preservation within digital humanities research. I hope to see more research from humanists that credits digital collaborators or co-authors.

Technology coupled with a collaborative research methodology has also enabled new interdisciplinary fields like “literary neuroscience,” which has used MRI brain scans to confirm what we, as admirers of Austen, already know: [Jane Austen makes us smarter](#). Researchers at UN-Lincoln are attempting to tag and code Austen’s free indirect discourse in order to see if it is stylistically discernible to a computer program. Non-native English speaking students at the intersection of literature and linguistics, using [collocation analysis](#) as a form of literary analysis, have paved the way for alliances between Austen studies and film studies scholars. Digital humanities’ multicultural relevance today.¹³ Future Austen research will continue to reach creatively across disciplines. Digital technology gives us—and our students—new ways of reading, interpreting, and analyzing texts.

Digital archives also open new possibilities for contextualizing Austen within the study of her contemporaries. The 2010 [British Women Writers Conference](#) included a session titled “Teaching and Researching British Women in the Digital Age” that grappled with the complexities of inclusion within digital archives, particularly concerning digital rights. Maura Ives, a panelist from Texas A&M University, argued that the construction of knowledge in digital archives is not innocent.¹⁴ We need to examine what is and is not included, who makes these decisions, and how they are made—and I would add, we need to include students in these conversations.

Ives pointed out that because specialized databases are often prohibitively selective in their holdings, interesting work in digital archives takes place in open-access, uncensored spaces.¹⁵ With [Google Books](#), it is no longer so bothersome to “weed out” the women and obscure figures, so readers, scholars, and students are not limited to the authors that someone else has predetermined as worthy of scholarly interest. While feminist scholars have recovered long-forgotten women writers, the Web is quickly becoming the great canon-busting democratizer.

Of course, the mantra of “if you build it, they will come” is no guarantee online, and postir writers—or student or scholarly projects, for that matter—does not automatically draw a wide and eager composition essays, class blog posts, and boutique archives may reach few readers, if any. But Jane Austen story. Austen is poised to succeed in the digital age, as her crossover classics have already bridged prof readers. While all of literary studies is in a moment of transition, Austen studies, with a robust and dive of readers and researchers, is uniquely situated to take advantage of digital tools that are redefining the audiences of twenty-first-century scholarship.

Digital archives and online presentation tools make Jane Austen more accessible, but more ir empower unlikely or unexpected researchers, including students, to make active contributions to scholars video [Collaboration by Difference](#), published by the Harvard Business Review, digital humanist and Cathy Davidson says, “It’s often the non-expert, the outlier, the odd-ball, or the person who isn’t in cha innovative or important thing to say. You have to structure ways to hear that person or you will always c We call this collaboration by difference.”

Jane Austen studies may be the ideal place for this kind of collaborative approach to kn “non-expert” specialists abound—students, fans, and Janeites are creating some of the most creative dig on Austen, including [The Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#), a modernized adaptation of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*; [Austen Unbound](#) and [Ever, Jane](#), role-play video games set in Regency England; and [Write Like Jane](#) inspired thesaurus.

The bicentennial anniversaries of Austen’s novels reflect this increasingly democratic approa which models creative and collaborative efforts to celebrate Austen. The Chawton House Library, wh both scholarly archive and Austen pilgrimage destination, has collated a comprehensive worldwide [cele bicentennial](#) that includes everything from academic conferences to community film screenings, faculty dance workshops. Claudia L. Johnson’s [Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures](#) explores the history of A Susannah Fullerton accessibly analyzes translations, adaptations, and illustrations in her [Celebrating Pric Years of Jane Austen’s Masterpiece](#). Readers who buy one text on Amazon will be told that “customers also bought” the other. Are fans buying “scholarly” books, or are scholars buying “fan” books? It is prc we dare draw a line between them at all. And, for our students, seeing both Austens—or many Austens and more nuanced understanding of both the complexities of resource reliability, and the ways we c Austen.

There is no single authoritative online resource for Jane Austen, and that is a good thing. Digital t to hold multiple truths about Austen at once: Austen is included in both eighteenth-century and nineteent She can fit in both a timeline of feminist writers and a timeline of conservative writers. Austen is both relied on the creaky hinge of a door to warn her of approaching company as she wrote, and a delight visitor, and observer of society, who delighted in a trip to the city. She is both a writer of her time, influ literature, and culture of her day, and a writer of our time, continually reframed and refreshed in interpretations. Through the medium of the aptly-named web, students can move from site to site, apprec that each resource offers individually and the vision of Austen that these resources offer as an intercor them new ways of appreciating the both/and of Austen.

We are only beginning to see the possibilities for how technology and the digital humanities will experience Austen. What if digital archives of Austen included texts she read in addition to texts she w copies of Austen’s texts would link directly to textual allusions as we read? What if the 15,000 entries

seminal [Chronology of Jane Austen and Her Family](#) were tag-able, searchable, and linked to chronology of women writers? What if students read Austen the way they read online, navigating through connections based on curiosity more than chronology? In a digital age, when students, scholars, and fans can access digital archives, reading Austen “in context” is increasingly becoming not just possible, but unavoidable.

APPENDIX

Please see the [syllabus](#) for the course discussed in this essay.

NOTES

1. Technology is often surrounded by either utopian or dystopian rhetoric. Robert Darnton has addressed digitization will make libraries obsolete, including at his 2011 keynote address “The Research Library Too in Search of a Happy Ending” at the University of Missouri symposium [“The Future of the Archives in a Digital Age”](#). He argued that digitization is not the death of libraries, but instead a metamorphosing rebirth. At the “Platform for Scholars” Humanities Symposium (sponsored by The University of Iowa Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, October 2009), Scott McLemee described the utopian beliefs surrounding the rise of the virtual sphere as a nineteenth-century rise of the public sphere, founded on principles of open access and democratic discussion. How can technology change our teaching for better or worse. For ongoing discussion on best practices for integrating technology into the classroom, visit [HASTAC](#); in particular, I recommend Cathy Davidson’s post [“If We \(Profs, Teachers\) Are Replaced by a Computer Screen, We Should Be!”](#)
2. See Lara Karpenko and Lauri Dietz’s [“The 21st Century Digital Student: Google Books as a Tool in Professional Undergraduate Research in the Humanities.”](#)
3. The Chawton House Library is a great example of an archive that sees [community-building](#) as the great challenge of an archive in a digital age.
4. This letter comes from the [Hunter-Baillie Papers Vol. 9 at the Royal College of Surgeons of England](#).
5. Prezi, a variation of PowerPoint, is an online information visualization tool that uses one large canvas and multiple slides to organize and present text, images, and video. Users navigate through the canvas by zooming in and out to reveal a more interconnected narrative.
6. Isabella Thorpe’s reading list includes *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont*, *The Mysterious Warning*, *The Black Forest*, *The Midnight Bell*, *The Orphan of the Rhine*, and *Horrid Mysteries*. Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is a favorite of Catherine Morland, Isabella Thorpe, and Henry Tilney; other plot details mirror Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Romance of the Forest*. For further reading on Gothic literature and *Northanger Abbey*, see Bette Knicker’s [“Horrid Novels: The Mysteries of Udolpho and Northanger Abbey”](#) in Kenneth Wayne Graham’s edited collection *Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression* (89-111) and Andrea Rehn’s excellent article in this issue, [“‘Hastening to Felicity’: Teaching the British Gothic Tradition through Parody and Role-Playing.”](#)
7. Casie Hermansson, for instance, reads General Tilney as a Bluebeard figure in her 2001 [Reading Femininity Through Bluebeard Stories](#) (134).

8. In Coleman's play, Ibrahim encourages a romantic attachment between Selim, a soldier, and his daughter. When a wealthier suitor arrives and he abruptly rescinds his earlier matchmaking efforts. In the opening scene, Selim tells Ibrahim about breaking his engagement, and Ibrahim explains that when you "throw Riches and Power in simple merit soon kicks the beam" ([Colman 3](#)). Like Ibrahim, Austen's General Tilney encourages a match between Elizabeth and Catherine, only to retract it for similarly mercenary motives, as "she was guilty only of being less rich than she supposed her to be" ([Austen 170](#)). Both Gothic parodies indulge in violent fantasies that mask a more subtle tyranny.

9. The community events, while not the primary focus of this essay, added an element of civic engagement. We had seventeen participants in our reading group, ourselves included, which met at the Buchanan Center to discuss one volume of *Pride and Prejudice*. Over eighty people in the community attended the "Having Austen" event, which included food and dancing at the Rivoli Theater in downtown Monmouth, IL.

10. In *Digital Humanities* (2012), Burdick et al. describe the "Generative Humanities" as "a willingness to embrace failure, and the realization that any 'solutions' generated within the Digital Humanities will spawn new 'problems' (5). This is all to the good" (5).

11. The value of asking students to "curate" Austen has already been explored by Phyllis Roth and Annett in "[Exhibiting the Learning: Austen's Legacy on Display](#)," which was published here in *Persuasions On-Line*. The article draws a similar analogy between exhibit curation and paper writing: "the students quickly understood that what they were doing was creating a visual version of a piece of writing with a thesis and supporting paragraphs, and that this required some help from the written. . . . [T]he exhibit cases would comprise a chronological experience for the audience as in a clear, coherent piece of writing, the audience would be led from one deliberate view of the subject to the next. . . . authors describe the students' shift from the mere accumulation of information to the careful sorting, organizing, and presenting involved in curation as reflecting the interpretive work of literary criticism.

12. We often think of the digital humanities as using digital tools to do humanities research, but it can also be used to ask humanist questions to a digital age. The [NEH Office of Digital Humanities](#) supports this dual nature by funding projects that explore how to harness new technology for humanities research as well as those that study digital culture from a humanities perspective."

13. See Kathryn Sutherland's "[Jane Austen on Screen](#)" or Jodi Wyatt's excellent essay in this collection, "[and the Now: Teaching Georgian Jane in the Jane-Mania Media Age](#)."

14. A recent NPR article, "[What's In A Category? 'Women Novelists' Sparks Wiki-Controversy](#)" offers a look at how Wikipedia controversially excluded women writers from the "American Novelists" page in favor of a separate page for women writers.

15. Single-author databases, for instance, have become more common in recent years; even the digital archives often include a sampling of writers from a particular period or a niche collection from a particular archive. As we become accustomed to the comprehensiveness of the Google Search, archival research still tends to require multiple places, and digital archives are still limited by curators' decisions of what to include and what to exclude.

16. See Misty Krueger's article in this collection: "[Teaching Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey as a 'Cross](#)

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