Mapping New Brunswick Memories

Project Overview

Students in Professor Andy Urban's Digital Humanities seminar and Instructor Chris Rzigalinski's Introduction to Multimedia Composition course will work together and with representatives from the George Street Playhouse to digitally map, construct, interpret, and narrate place-based memories of New Brunswick. Students will create a series of online tours, hosted on the website mappingnewbrunswickmemories.org, which explore different themes relating to the cultural geography of New Brunswick, the meaning that different locations and institutions have had to residents of the city, and how landscapes have changed over time.

Specific Requirements

- Each group of students will be provided with a set of recorded oral histories (interviews about their social experiences in New Brunswick), conducted by the George Street Playhouse. Using these audio sources, students will identify a minimum of <u>five sites or locations</u> that the interviewees discuss, individually or collectively, which can be connected in a thematic tour. For example, one group might focus on memories related to the histories of capitalism and labor in New Brunswick as told through stories about jobs; another group might link together sites that deal with memories of recreation, play, and leisure.

- Each group will be required to come up with an interpretive plan for each site of memory and for the tour as a whole. In mapping the interviewees' memories, students will integrate audio material from the oral histories that have already been conducted, alongside narration and digital composition, accompanied by photographs, images, and documents pertaining to the locations discussed. To accomplish this, students will be required to access archival materials documenting New Brunswick's past, and to generate new photographs when necessary on their own accord.

- Each group will be required to write a short introductory essay (500 words or less) that explains the significance of the sites they have chosen, and what their virtual tour "argues" in regard to the cultural significance of the locations they have selected and in the context of explaining change over time. This essay will serve as an introduction to the virtual tour.

Task List

The following list of tasks is meant to guide each group in dividing and assigning responsibilities for the project as a whole. It does not represent an exhaustive, complete list of the labor that will need to be completed. Please be prepared to add items not covered here. Although group members from each of the two classes will work closely together, certain tasks are assigned on the basis of course. This is indicated in parentheses.

- Critically listen to the interviews your group has been assigned. Identify the physical sites and locations, keywords, themes (i.e. family, recreation, commerce, etc.) that connect them to each other. What structures the narratives?

- Identify areas of additional research and follow-up. For example, if a number of interviewees discuss a public swimming pool, develop a plan on how to further examine this site's meaning and significance

- Take present-day photographs of the selected sites (Digital Composition students)

- Conduct archival research, using the list of resources below, to locate images of sites and documents relating to sites as they existed in the past (DH Seminar students)

- Edit existing interviews for narrative (Digital Composition students)

- Conduct original interviews*

- Shoot footage of the urban landscape for video essay (Digital Composition students)

- Build MappingNewBrunswickMemories.org (DH Seminar students)
  - Including: uploading media, tagging and providing metadata that will allow tours to be searchable, properly archiving media properly to build website and archive simultaneously

- Draft, edit, and revise introductory essay

- Identify one member of your group that will coordinate and monitor logistics among members

- Identify a member of your group who will take the lead role in programming the website, and in coordinating its design features. This person will be designated the "superuser" on the website, and will also be responsible for communicating any technical issues or questions

- Identify one member of your group to consult with instructors regarding issues and concerns throughout the semester, including meeting with Prof. Urban and Instructor Rzigalinski to provide the required project updates (see schedule/deadline section below)

A list of people who have agreed to additional interviews will be provided by the instructors.

Additional Responsibilities

In addition to fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities agreed upon by the group, each student is also required to:

- Communicate regularly about the project with their fellow group members, and provide feedback on different components of the project as whole

- Complete a peer evaluation for each other group member at the end of the semester, assessing their contributions

- Complete an individual, three to four page reflection essay explaining how the readings and other materials from class informed their involvement in this project, and their methods as digital humanities scholars and practitioners (more information to be provided)

Resources

It is recommended that once your group has selected the sites you wish to interpret, you contact the archivist or librarian at these various institutions to see what materials they might have available relating to your project.

The Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission contains a large selection of historical photographs relating to New Brunswick. The contact information for the Commission can be found here: http://co.middlesex.nj.us/culturalheritage/

The Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives, located in Alexander Library, include a wide selection of archival materials relating to both the history of the university, and to the state of New Jersey: https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml

The Rutgers Oral History Archives provides numerous interviews with alumni, New Brunswick natives, and armed forces personnel. It includes transcripts that are full-text searchable: http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu/

The New Brunswick Public Library has a range of sources relating to the city's history, including image collections, digitized local newspapers, and other print materials: http://www.nbfpl.org/local.html

The New Jersey Digital Highway contains a wide selection of digitzed materials relating to New Jersey history and New Brunswick: http://www.njdigitalhighway.org/

Schedule/Deadlines

Monday, September 15 – students have been placed in groups and assigned interviews

Friday, October 3 – group members will have met, completed, and handed in the contract below

No later than Monday, October 27 – Progress Update #1

No later than Monday, November 17 – Progress Update #2

Tuesday, November 25 (DH Seminar) – In-class workshopping of tours with guest panel

Friday, December 5 – Website goes live; end of the semester event with public at George Street Playhouse

Friday, December 12 - Peer reviews and reflection essays due (see separate, attached documents for further information)

GROUP CONTRACT

Please use the space below to begin outlining how your group will divide responsibilities for the various tasks that are outlined above. As the semester progresses, you can further divide responsibilities into even more specific tasks that need to be completed for all of your tours, and in concert with other project deadlines we'll discuss in class.

Group Member   _____

(name)

Group Member   _____

Group Member   _____

Group Member   _____

Group Member   _____

Group Member   _____

Group Member   _____

Signatures: