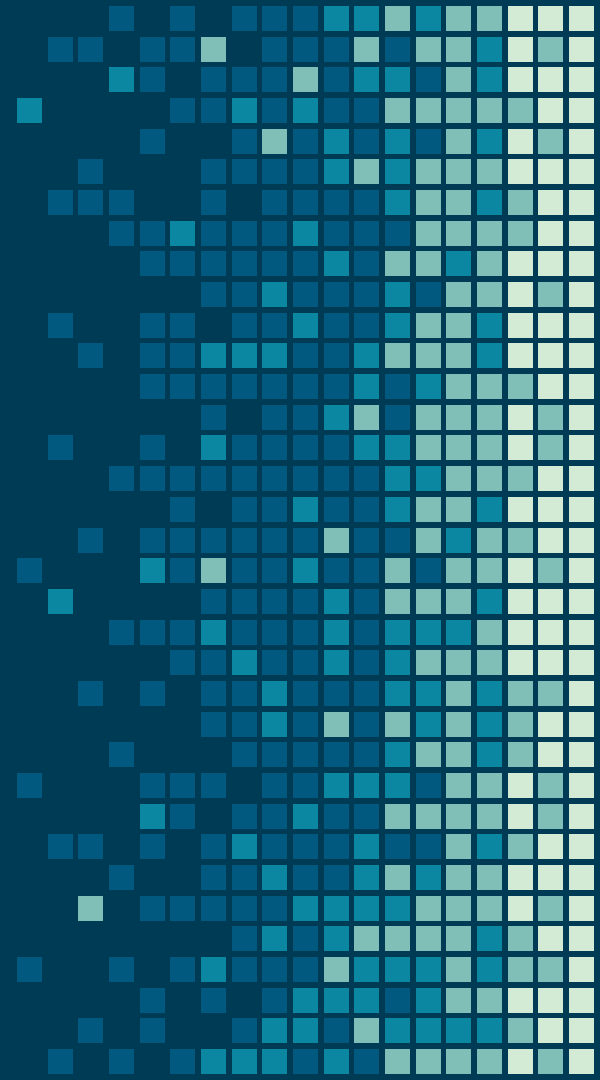


Digital Community Engagement at a Regional University

Jill Anderson, Jessica DeSpain,
Kristine Hildebrandt, and Katherine Knowles

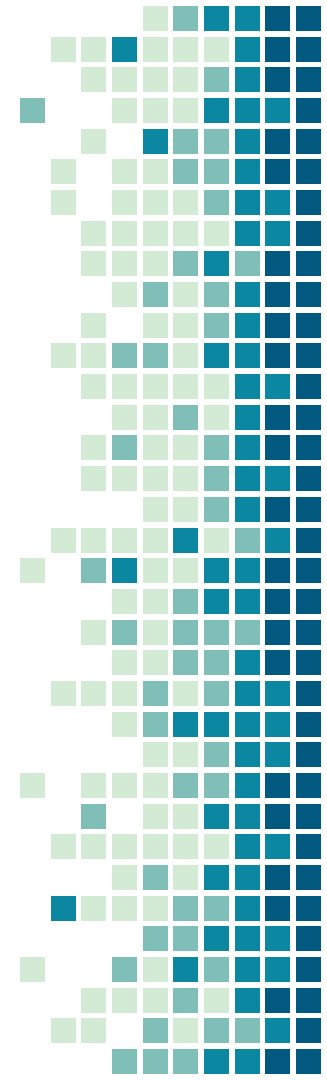
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville





The IRIS Center aims to support faculty as they create their digital scholarship. The Center's objectives are to:

1. Cultivate a community of digital humanities scholars (faculty and students) on campus.
2. Provide training in digital skills to promote participant agency in community-engaged DH initiatives.
3. Prepare humanities students with 21st Century skills via Digital Humanities-related partnerships with the community.
4. Address gaps in access and training for underserved students, specifically African American and first-generation college students.

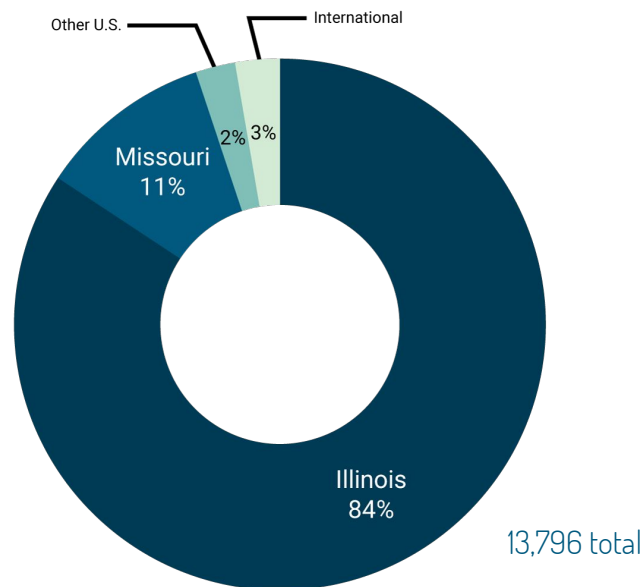


Southern Illinois University Edwardsville



- Public, 4-year, regional university
- Located in Metro East across the Mississippi River from St. Louis
- Numerous rural and urban local communities are underserved and underrepresented

- 84% of students are from Illinois
- Of Illinois students, 45% come from Madison County or St. Clair County



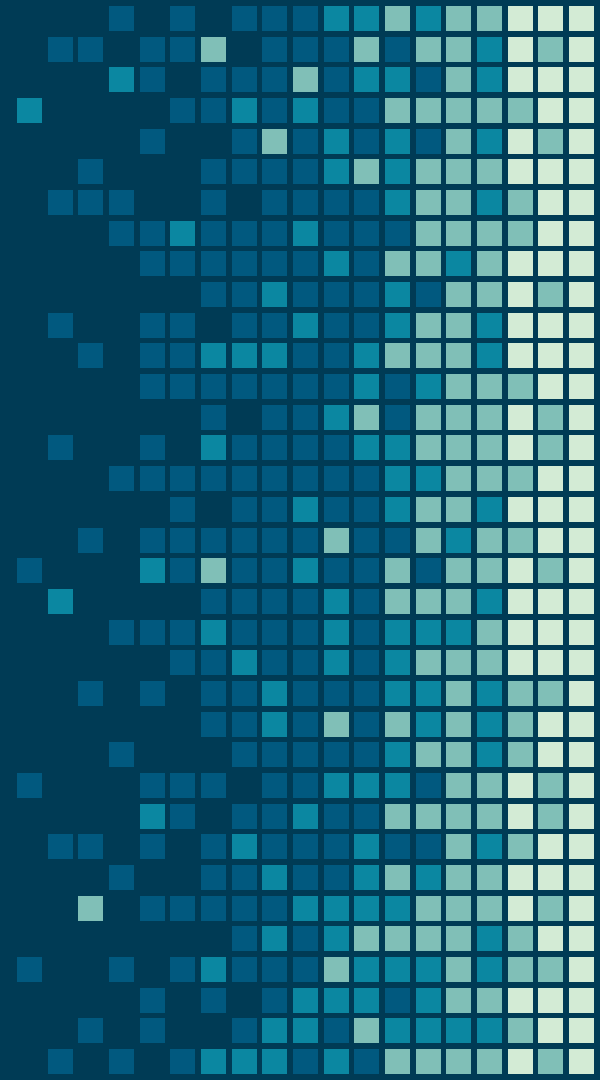


Center students and faculty have:

- Recorded the language practices of lifelong residents of the St. Louis Metro East.
- Constructed an encyclopedia of Madison County history.
- Designed an informal learning program for middle school students in East St. Louis to build a website about their city.



Conversation Toward a Brighter Future 2.0





1) Connected Content

A curriculum that incorporates novels, music, art, and oral histories through which students consider what it means to be a particular age and how to speak across generational divides.

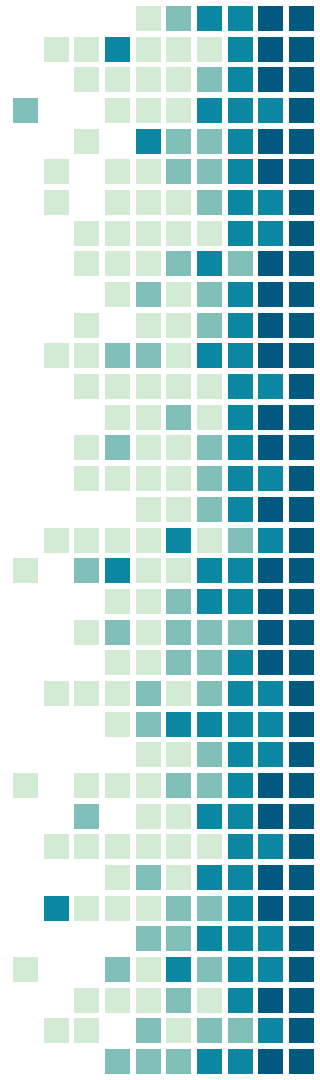
2) Digital Storytelling

Area high schools students build digital narratives with members of the community about about how we can value age differences and speak across generational divides.

Joining a National Conversation

“For the first time in U.S. history, our country is simultaneously growing older and becoming more diverse... The destinies of racially and ethnically diverse younger and older generations are intertwined. There is an intimate connection between our oldest Americans, many of whom need the care and support provided by younger workers, and our youngest Americans, whose prospects in a changing economy depend upon which social policies are enacted now.”

—Jean Accius and Christine Jarmin Yeh, *The Journal of the American Society on Aging*



NEH Access Grant

- 2 years; \$100,000 matched funds
- Support humanities programs for children, family, and young adults
- Part of the Common Good Initiative, which “seeks to connect the study of humanities to the current conditions of national life”



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

Grant no. ZH-258469-18

Program Design

- Teachers at eight high schools in Madison County serve on the curriculum planning committee, attend training events, and implement the project in their district.
- Requires a flexible approach: teachers integrate the program according to their school's needs.
- Curriculum builds so that in year 2, stories from year 1 become a part of the program's content and students learn about storytelling from other students and community members.

Sharing Curriculum with Area Schools

- Project resources are shared online and via social media so that teachers throughout the county have access to curricular materials.
- Partnership with the Regional Office of Education provides additional opportunities to share with teachers beyond the eight facilitators.
- Once-a-year professional development opportunities are available to the eight facilitators and ten additional teachers.

Building Intergenerational Community

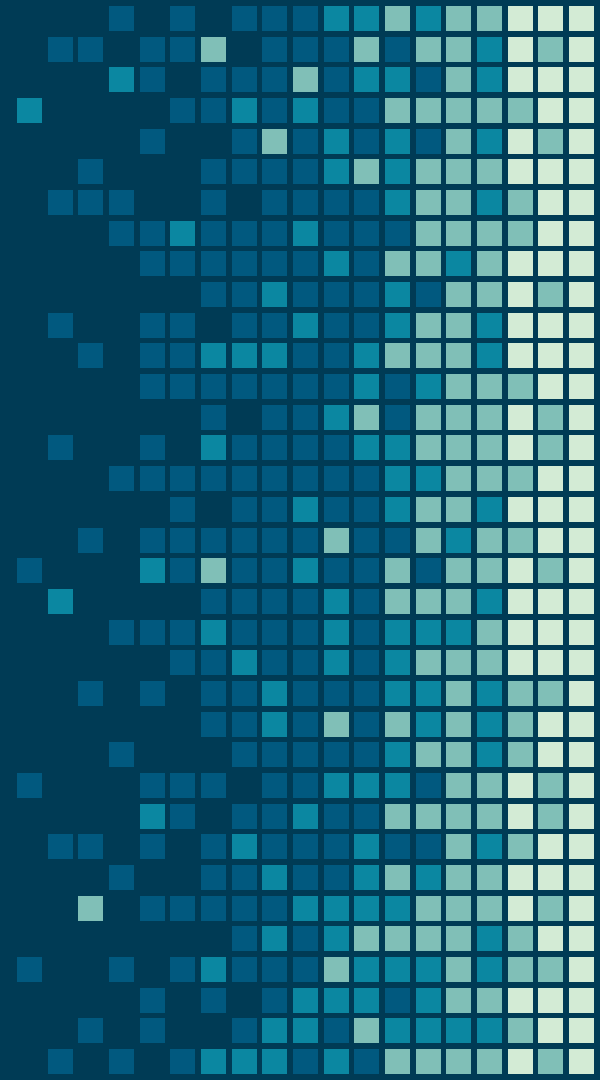
- Two project summits are held each year.
 - Human Library
 - Story Sharing
- A storytelling showcase is maintained on the project's website and stories are integrated into future versions of the program.



Artistic Adventures by Angel Jenkins



Digital Community Engagement Pathway



Goals and Design of the Digital Community Engagement Pathway

- 4-year, cohort model to increase success rates for underserved students.
- Interdisciplinary teams of students, faculty, and community partners research local manifestations of global problems.
- Apply digital methods in research design: data mining, mapping, storytelling, networking, and cultural analytics.



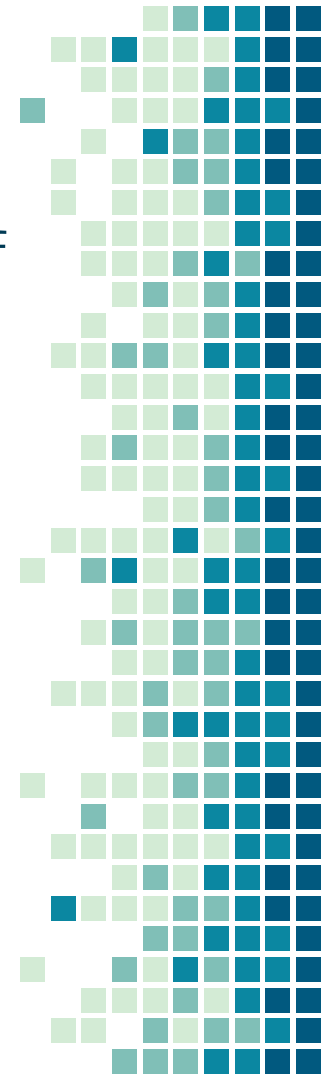
Humanities Connections

- To create innovative, interdisciplinary undergraduate programs at 2- and 4-year institutions.
- Planning and implementation stages for projects.
- Imagine programming that plays upon the strengths of humanities disciplines, such as valuing the interpretive possibilities of ambiguity.



Rationale

- Exclusion of humanities disciplines from discussions of global problems despite the importance of studying culture to understand systemic issues.
- Need to expand availability of high impact practices (HIPs): activities including undergraduate research, community-based learning, and capstones.
- HIPs improve personal and social development and increase deep learning, practical competence, and speaking and writing ability by more than 50%.



Research Team Model

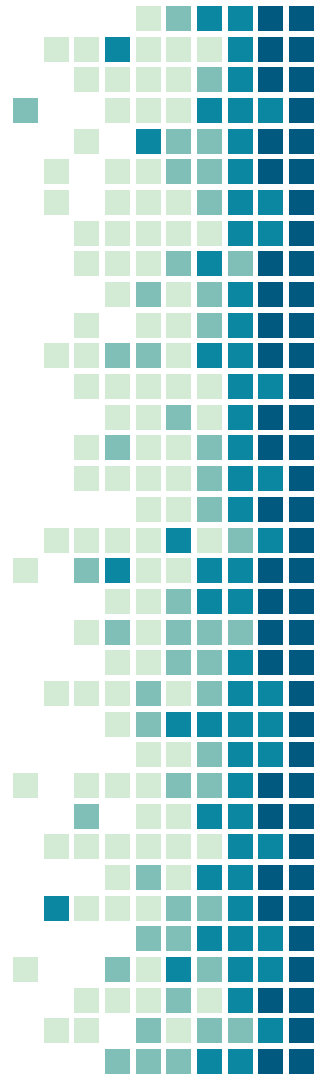
- Students collaborate with faculty mentors and interdisciplinary research teams.
- Integrate readings from diverse fields, including history, literature, anthropology, sociology, and the sciences to study the problem using critical thinking, writing, and qualitative methods.



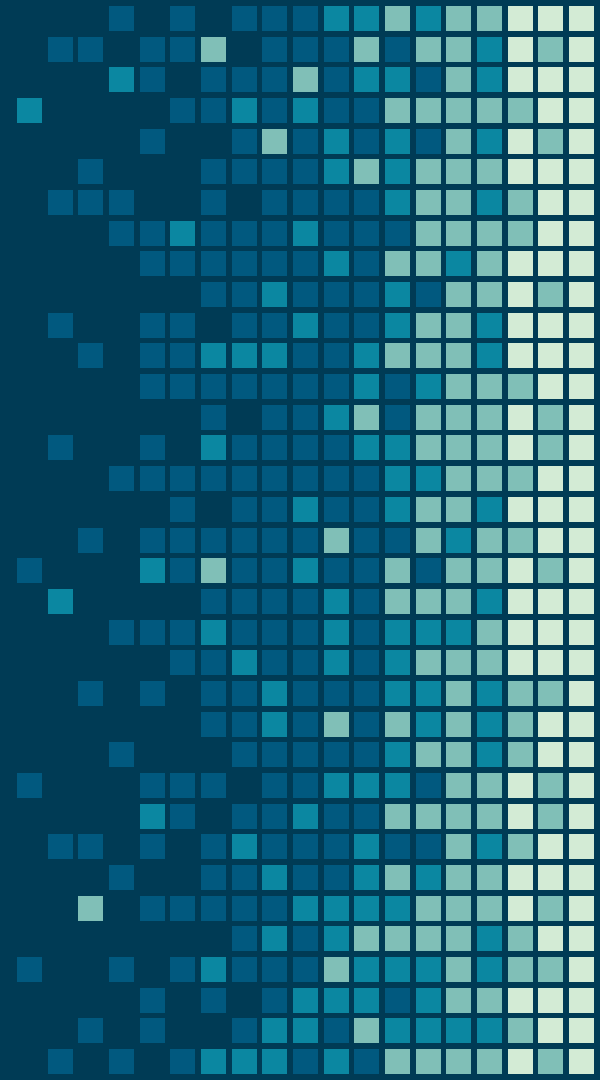
Example Research Team Curriculum

Food Sustainability Research Team:

- Read essays from Wendell Berry's *Bringing it to the Table*, bell hooks's *Belonging*, and William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis* to deepen understanding of the social and cultural implications of their problem.
- Work with Extension Service to create an interactive visualization about the encroachment of housing development on farmland with digital stories about its cultural, environmental, and socioeconomic impacts.



Nepal Earthquakes & Manang Languages



Collaborative Efforts in an International Context

“Documenting the Languages of
Manang” (NSF BCS 1149639)

“Narrating Disaster in Response
to the 2015 Nepal Earthquakes”
(NSF BCS 1547377 RAPID)

3



Project ▾ About Nepal ▾ Languages ▾ Archives ▾ References ▾



Collaborative Efforts in an International Context

Both projects involved multiple, “team-type” collaborators from different origins, undergraduate 7 graduate student participants in Nepal and the U.S.

Research activities took place in Nepal and at SIUE campus

1



3

21



4



2



Digital Community Engagement

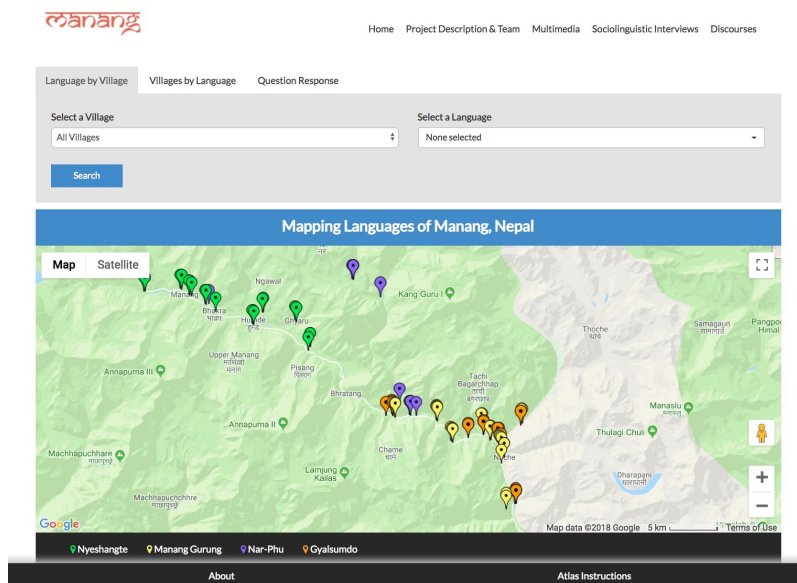
Participant Agency in Nepal



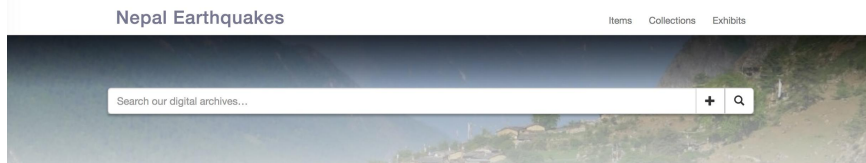
Digital Community Engagement

Collaboration that Crosses Borders and Builds Bridges

Both the online, interactive atlas (<https://mananglanguages.isg.siue.edu/atlas/>) and the Nepal Earthquakes archive (<https://iris.siue.edu/nepal-earthquakes-archive/>) were constructed by SIUE students in consultation with project collaborators and Nepal community participants



1



Nepal Earthquakes contains 486 files and 479 items in 21 collections.

Featured Exhibits

Derivatives



Materials derived from the work done in Nep...

Manang



Mustana

Gorkha



2

Models for Community Training



Example: Forgotten Illinois

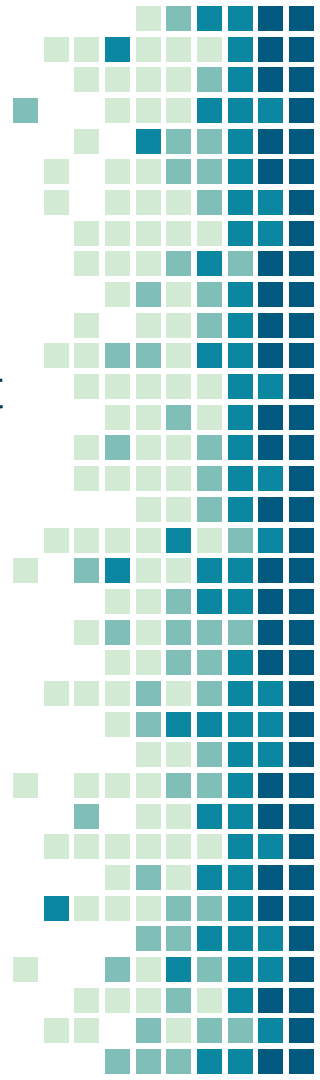
- In honor of the bicentennial, this grant program asks the question: "What can lesser-known features of Illinois history tell us about the ever-evolving identity of our state?"
- Consulting with organizations across the state via phone to determine:
 - What digital media makes sense for the project?
 - What is the comfort level participants have with technology?
 - What resources do these organizations need to make their digital project?
- IRIS disseminates tutorials, offer training, and further consultation
- IRIS staff implement sustainability plans for the project
- The projects are federated on a single site to connect projects by broad themes and create an online community

Deciding to Go Digital



Ethics and Agency

- Participants develop their own voice, we offer guidance but do not impose our own goals
- We create infrastructure to ensure partnerships are reciprocal
- All partners are credited on projects
- Participation is completely voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time



THANKS!

Any questions?

Dr. Jessica DeSpain
IRIS Center Co-Director
jdespai@siue.edu

Katie Knowles
Project Manager
katknow@siue.edu