Roundtable

Imagining the Digital Future of
The Public Historian

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Abstract: The digital revolution has transformed research, exhibition, writing, review, participatory public engagement, and every other aspect of history practice. To consider the influence of these changes on *The Public Historian*, the journal has solicited the perspectives of six scholars with expertise on digital history to reflect on what the internet age affords *TPH* as a scholarly journal for the field of public history.

Key words: Digital publishing, online scholarship, public history and the internet

Introduction

IN THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY and responding to dramatic recent changes in scholarly publishing, this roundtable discusses the opportunities opened to *The Public Historian* by the digital revolution. As research, exhibition, writing, review, participatory public engagement, and every other aspect of history practice is transforming, the journal has solicited the perspectives of Bill Bryans, Albert Camarillo, Swati Chattopadhyay, Jon Christensen, Sharon Leon, and Cathy Stanton on what the digital age affords *TPH* as a scholarly journal for the field of public history.

In founding the journal in 1978, G. Wesley Johnson and his colleague Robert Kelley sought to promote the research of historians for and with publics, to attract research into the public practice of history, to recognize

and critically evaluate the work in the field, to establish a body of shared inquiry, and to coalesce, build identity, and give forum to the historians already employing their history in diverse public sites. Much of that mission has been realized, as has what was perhaps its central project, to establish the significance of the emerging field as "scholarly" and "professional." Much of that mission has changed, too, reflecting the change in practice and self-understanding of those identifying as public historians over the thirty-five years. Decades of innovation, discovery, advocacy, profession-advancing, profession-questioning, institution-building, public-engaging, and boundary-breaking in the field will have that effect. Although the journal has often paused to reflect critically on mission, content, and format among its staff, board, and advisors, and in sessions with constituent contributors and readers, its form has largely evolved in practice, at the nexus of contribution, innovation and convention. Now, at thirty-five years into the venture, the mix of what continues, what emerges, and what is envisioned recommends this self-examination of the medium "the scholarly journal" at this opportune and important moment in the history of publication and life of the field of public history.

We have the benefit of a wide array of perspectives contributing to this roundtable: editors of a scholarly journal and of scholarly web publications; association presidents as well as relatively new contributors to the field; scholars of art and architectural history, anthropology, and American Studies as well as historians; a digital media project director and a self-professed (with tongue-in-cheek) Luddite. Bill Bryans, Past President of the National Council for Public History, is professor of history and Public History program director at Oklahoma State University. Albert Camarillo, President of the Organization of American Historians, is Leon Sloss Jr. Memorial Professor, Professor of History, and Special Assistant to the Provost on Diversity at Stanford University. He also recently chaired the California Historical Society's committee on the future of the journal *California History.* Swati Chattopadhyay, Editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (in both digital and print formats) is Professor of History of Art and Architecture at UC Santa Barbara. Jon Christensen, of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA, is past director of the Bill Lane Center for Western History at Stanford and principal investigator there of the Spatial History Project and the City Nature digital-humanities project. Sharon Leon, Director of Public Projects at the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, is Research Associate Professor in the History and Art History Department there. Cathy Stanton, faculty at the Anthropology Department at Tufts University, is Digital Media Editor at the National Council for Public History and frequent consultant to the National Park Service.

Finally, we would be remiss in not thanking the journal's Editorial Board members (and alumni); Contributing and Advisory Editors; faculty colleagues at UC Santa Barbara, California State University, Sacramento, and across the University of California system; and the many of you at work in the field who helped shape this roundtable.

What do you envision as the digital possibilities available to a journal like
The Public Historian?

Al Camarillo: The world of publishing is in the throes of some funda-
mental changes, and the question of print vs. digital publication is in the
forefront of discussions everywhere. Most academic and other professional
journals are faced, or will soon be faced with decisions about how best to
proceed as the "digital age" hits full force. The questions are complex and
difficult, but they offer interesting and important opportunities for publishers
and editors. The editors and editorial board members of *The Public Historian*
must consider options that make sense for the journal's readers. It is far better
to begin making plans for some future conversion to digital format (in part if
not in whole) before financial or other considerations force the editors to do
so. Although the journal is available online, the "big" question for *The Public
Historian* is: what are the advantages and disadvantages of considering an
exclusively online publication and what else might the journal include online
that it now does not include in its print version?

Jon Christensen: Wow. The digital possibilities available to a journal like
The Public Historian open up such a vast horizon that the challenge is not
envisioning them. The challenge is devising a viable strategy for digital inno-
vation that is aligned with the mission of the NCPH and *The Public Historian*.
The mind reels at the possibilities that new digital technologies afford for the
journal to thrive as "the definitive voice of the public history profession in
providing historians with the latest scholarship and applications from the
field." The field of public history is being transformed by digital technologies
and applications that are often described in the journal—from websites and
multimedia displays to databases and interactive maps. But envision how
much better it could be to experience and interact with these applications
in some fashion, reflect and think critically about them in action, and share
our insights and conversations, using some of the same digital tools. Sharing
and conversation are the hallmarks of public history and among the key
affordances of new digital technologies and applications. It only seems
logical and compelling that we should envision new ways to use them "in
putting history to work in the world by building community among
historians, expanding professional skills and tools, fostering critical reflec-
tion on historical practice, and publicly advocating for history and histor-
ians." My advice would be to start innovating. Collaborate with authors and
institutions that are already innovating. Find ways to work with them to
bring the digital into the journal online, either within JSTOR, or linked in
ways that satisfy the needs of the journal, the authors, the collaborating
institutions, and JSTOR. Know that there will not be a perfect, lasting
solution, but that experimenting and innovating is the key to finding our
way forward in this new era, as a journal, an organization, and as public
historians.

Cathy Stanton: My experience over the past few years as chair of NCPH's Digital Media Group has taught me that digital projects are often best envisioned as a series of small steps, close to home, rather than as a vast universe of possibilities. The vast universe exists and it's exciting to think about, but it's also overwhelming, and you have to start somewhere. Given *The Public Historian*'s conservatism in connecting with the digital thus far, I think we shouldn't get too lost in the whole range of potential projects, but should begin to build out from the journal's existing offerings toward NCPH's emerging digital publications, while keeping a sharp eye on what's already happening digitally around the field of public history.

When I think about it from those perspectives, I see two immediate possibilities. First, we can start to create cross-platform collaborations around specific topics that will let us combine the various strengths of the journal, the History@Work blog, and NCPH's social media interfaces (and all that they connect to). Our nascent partnership around the War of 1812 commemoration, which begins in this issue, is a first step toward that kind of collaboration. There are many precedents among scholarly journals for making selected materials open access, and *TPH* could use that approach to publish occasional or regular articles that would serve as bridges to related materials appearing concurrently in the blog or elsewhere.

Second, we can rethink how and where reviews of public history projects are published, and make some of the journal's reviewing activity digital, housed either within a *TPH*-specific venue or in existing NCPH spaces. I'm thinking in particular of the series of reviews of historic sites in the places where our annual meetings take place; the shorter individual reviews could conceivably appear digitally (and closer to the conference date), perhaps with a commissioned essay in the journal helping to frame them by discussing longer public history trajectories in the city or region being explored. Building a collaborative reviewing program with a unified set of conventions could be an invaluable tool, as it would also help *TPH* and NCPH to take more consistent note of (and begin to develop new and shared ways to respond critically and curatorially to) the still-emerging universe of digital history projects *per se*.

Sharon M. Leon: The real question here is not what are the digital possibilities for the journal, but will *The Public Historian* remain in the same role it has played for NCPH and the profession. That requires us to ask where the journal fits in the scholarly communications ecosystem for public historians and what services does it provide to the community. There is a range of important answers here and they need to be taken into account in this act of imagining.

First, *TPH* exists as a place for sharing the best scholarly work in and on the field. The journal focuses on what public historians do and the challenges they face. It reviews individual examples of public history work. It is a print journal, so it cannot offer a platform for the work itself. That can change with a transition to a digital platform by serving as a showcase for the increasing number

of digital public history projects. By embracing multimodal publishing, rather than text-driven, linear work, a digital version of *TPH* offers almost limitless possibilities to surface and to foster the most interesting developments in the profession. The last thing that I would want to see with a digital version of *TPH* is for the publication to reproduce the artificial constraints of a print journal by insisting on long-form, text-dominated articles as the standard form. There are so many more possibilities open to digital publications, and we should embrace and experiment with them. More about this later.

Second, *TPH* has served as a credentialing and authorizing agent for scholars in traditional academic departments. Being able to point to a publication in the field's flagship journal can be an important element in an individual's fight for promotion and tenure, especially if that person is offering an exhibit or major public program as the anchor of their case rather than the monograph that typical departments require. NCPH has addressed these issues in their guidelines on tenure and promotion for publicly engaged historians. In order for a cutting-edge digital *TPH* to be successful, the editorial team and advisors need to carefully consider the way that their work can serve the same needs for credentialing and authorization by planning for a rigorous and visible peer review process. The good news is that there is a growing set of successful examples of how this might work, including experiments in open commenting (*Writing History in the Digital Age*, http://writinghistory.trincoll. edu/) and post-publication peer review.

Third, and in my opinion most importantly, *TPH* has served as a tool for building community amongst the NCPH membership. We can have a conversation about how well the journal has served this role in the years past. In comparison to the annual meeting, I would argue that it has not performed very well. And, in the wake of the launch of History@Work, I think the lack in this realm is even more glaring. On a day-to-day basis, History@Work is producing work that much more lively, interesting, and useful than traditional journal articles. It includes a wide range of work and contributions that speak specifically to the interests and concerns of the varied NCPH membership. "Public Historian" is a big-tent designator that covers many subfields, and constituents of those subfields see themselves represented in the content published at History@Work. Its relatively open policy about contributors helps to expand the investment in the site and the conversations that take place there. As such, it is helping to grow communities of practice in a collegial, but serious environment that offers a civil space for exchange.

Any move to a digital platform for *TPH* needs to continue to allow the journal to serve these three key purposes for the community of public historians. Once there is a clear commitment to pursue these goals, NCPH can be free to experiment with the facilities of the web to do a better job of fulfilling these goals than a gated print journal has up to this point. Moving to a digital platform allows for agility and flexibility in a way that would never be possible in print. So, the editors of *TPH* can experiment with formats that embrace the

facilities of the web such as digital exhibits, annotated multimedia elements, and multi-channel conversations amongst members of the field.

Finally, the NCPH membership should affirmatively commit to open access because it meshes with their professional ethics and values, not simply because *TPH* is shifting to being a digital publication. Nothing about the move to a digital platform implies a commitment to open access, but in my opinion a commitment to open access goes hand in hand with the mission of being a public historian. Our concern for open engagement with a public audience demands support for open engagement across the profession.

Bill Bryans: Of course, there is the opportunity to make it readily available to the public in an electronic format. Some have argued that this should be done through a gateway open to all free-of-charge. Although I philosophically am sympathetic to this idea, it strikes me as impractical. *The Public Historian* represents a significant revenue stream for the National Council on Public History, and the University of California Press certainly operates to at least recoup the costs of producing the journal. The current arrangement with JSTOR works well, in my opinion. I do think the establishment of a blog, or incorporation into the existing History@Work blog topics tied to a recently released issue, provides a great opportunity to allow discussion by interested readers in a very timely manner. Similarly, it seems this would also enable timely book reviews of recently published works. By the time a review appears in print, the book typically has been out for a year or more. I suspect that in the near future, book reviews will be more common in digital outlets than printed journals. It is all ready occurring. Look at H-Net for example.

Swati Chattopadhyay: The two main reasons for producing an on-line scholarly journal are to expand/enhance content and increase readership—to disseminate to a global audience. The first has to do with what the producers—author and editors—want to present and what the platform allows; the second has to do with the press and its marketing policy, and also what the readers (as user or user-contributor) want to do with the content. Current copyright issues cut through all constituencies, even though these will likely be unenforceable in the future (that is, presuming it is enforceable now). We have to keep in mind that a journal's move to the digital is not optional any longer. It will happen—if not now, in the next few years; the goal should be to adapt the myriad possibilities to suit one's own needs and parameters.

The available opportunities are already quite impressive: enhancing visual content, adding audio content, interactive operations, hyper-referencing, enhancing collaborative opportunities, and providing newer platforms for scholars, museum practitioners, policy makers, and the public to converse. Much depends on how you see the future of public history scholarship (what kind of engagements between author and reader you envision) and what constitutes a work of research and authorship in the field. For example, do you see an article as a finite, singular, closed work (that is the current model of

the *JSAH*) or you see the text (and image) as open-ended and changeable. The latter might allow authors to update information and/or enable readers to add comments (on the margins of the text, so to speak). One could envision more fluid connections between research, article (as a finished product), and archives/site than is possible in print. Much would also depend on whether you envision running a parallel print version with the on-line version of the journal (for at least now, as the *JSAH* does), or whether you want to move 100% online.

In terms of content, *JSAH Online's* priority was a more intimate relation between reading an article and experiencing the building/site, or making the sites discussed in a research piece more vivid: 2-d reconstruction drawings are now modeled in 3-d which may be viewed from different angles, and one can take a video-"walk-through" (or fly-through) a site. These modes can have significant explanatory power and ought to be encouraged. Their usefulness, not unlike that of a still image, is *how* you wish to deploy it in support of an argument (as illustration, as analytic). However, simulation of sites that no longer exist, no matter how visually-experientially attractive (think of fantasy films or historical docu-dramas), are expensive and require technical expertise to which not all authors have access, and they come with their own problems of anchoring historical understanding in a mythical real. Such approaches can be painfully positivistic. If digital reconstructions, for example, help us produce better analytic models or engender new ways of thinking about the past (and I have seen some good examples as *JSAH* editor), they could be marvelously useful. But that also requires rethinking research methods, historical assumptions, and our theoretical approach.

How can these digital possibilities augment what The Public Historian *does as a journal of record for the field of public history?*

Leon: There are two primary benefits of moving to a digital platform. First, by enabling multi-modal publishing, the move would dramatically expand the range of formats that authors/creators can use to share their work. The inclusion of digital exhibits that include narrative and digital items (images, documents, audio, video, geospatial visualizations, and other types of data visualizations) means that authors can craft work that uses the affordances of the web to expose insights that simply cannot be shared in print text. Second, moving to a digital platform offers an opportunity to fully engage the community of public historians in conversations about the work through robust commenting and discussion tools. This layering of engagement enhances the scholarly work of a single author by bring the community of practice together around that work.

Furthermore, if NCPH commits to open access, a digital platform will dramatically increase the reach of the journal's work, globally and locally. As scholars commit to only publishing in OA journals, being open access will offer *TPH* credibility with that community. Finally, given that so much public

history work is publicly funded, individuals who work on those projects may have an obligation to freely offer their work back to the community. This community of enthusiasts, local historians, and genealogists frequently grow to have a deep investment in projects and publications that show respect for them. NCPH should not overlook them as a key audience for this work.

Chattopadhyay: There are five aspects to consider: textual content, audio-visual content, the relation between images and text, manipulability/interactivity, and format/design. Let me give a brief outline of what *JSAH Online* allows authors and readers to do, some of which might be useful for *The Public Historian.* The print version of the *JSAH* has undergone several format changes since its inception in 1941. We publish long extensively researched articles (10,000 words plus extensive endnotes) that are generously illustrated (a few of which since the 1990s have been printed in color), as well as book, exhibition, and multimedia reviews. The primary goal of *JSAH Online* is to build on the scholarly strength of the print version and enable authors to present their research in a manner that moves beyond the static format of print by embedding multi-media content: 3-d models of buildings/sites, film and video clips, sound, zoomable images, digital maps that interface with Google Maps. All of these audio-visual modes would enhance the content of the *The Public Historian.* One important gain is color visuals with no extra cost (though they require color-proofing). *JSAH Online* also allows one-click back and forth jumps to references. An added feature could be the ability to immediately connect to referenced articles, at least those archived in JSTOR. (There are some problems with using JSTOR as a platform—see discussion of design below.) However, the number of visuals in the print and on-line versions of the *JSAH* are the same. The on-line version is geared towards enhancing, but strictly speaking, not adding content, i.e. more images are not allowed on-line. This has largely to do with keeping content as singular as possible; otherwise the editorial responsibilities would increase (the content of the on-line text would need to be altered to insert additional images). It is doable, but something to consider in terms of pros and cons. If you are not confined to traditional modes of thinking about the article as a finished product (complete with conclusion!) then the choice of interactive modes would need to be carefully thought.

Christensen: Since digital innovation is so central to the field of public history now, it seems essential that the journal of record—and perhaps even more importantly the journal of critical self-reflection for the field—find a way to fully, robustly represent these innovations, chronicle these experiments, and convene a lively discussion around them. A journal article that mentions, features, or contains a digital innovation in public history in some fashion or another is a good start. But it often only affords the barest sketch of what is actually taking place, so it is hard to imagine, let alone critically evaluate the digital aspects of what is often a complex story, report, or project, that often

involves a site, sources, history, contemporary community, and in–person interactions as well as the digital. And this only addresses bringing digital innovations in the field more fully into the journal by representing them. New digital technologies and applications also afford opportunities for the journal itself to organize critical reflection and conversations about digital innovations across the entire field of public history, helping to spur and shape innovation, share valuable lessons, and perhaps avoid costly mistakes.

Stanton: The kinds of digital projects and collaborations I've sketched above have multiple potential benefits. They would enable much more timely critical responses to new materials and projects in the field, better reflecting the dynamic qualities of public history itself. Having some kind of consistent digital interface would facilitate dissemination and discussion among readers, scholars, practitioners, and perhaps even audiences, a key benefit in a time when (as NCPH's recent Readers' Survey showed) public historians are receiving and disseminating their information and ideas about the field through myriad channels, many of them digital. Taking advantage of the flexibility of digital publishing and reviewing can enable more timely responses to a wide range of history-related materials, including popular history projects (this was one goal of NCPH's "Off the Wall" blog, which has since become absorbed into "History@Work"). And collaborating with existing, fully digital public history critique and communication could free up space and energy at the journal itself for work that takes broader, more synthesizing looks at the field.

The Public Historian could work toward building its own digital portal for some or all of this, as the *Journal of American History* has done very successfully. But since *TPH* has no digital infrastructure of any kind in place yet, and since NCPH has been building its Public History Commons (on which History@Work is currently the sole tenant) specifically as a space where these kinds of critical conversations and collaborations within the field can take place, making connections with what is happening there seems like the most immediately feasible and productive way to add a digital dimension to our journal of record.

Camarillo: In addition to the articles and book/exhibit/film reviews now published in the journal, digital publication offers possibilities for increasing access to more information through links about other events, conferences, publications, etc. that may be of interest to readers. However, there are costs associated with this type of expanded information, mostly in the form of a staff person with knowledge about website management.

Bryans: I am not sure of the meaning of the term "journal of record." It seems to imply that the printed journal is perhaps more authoritative and permanent that anything digital might be. I do not believe that is the case. Digital formats that allow interested members and readers to discuss issues

stemming from articles in a timely manner greatly augment the intellectual influence of the journal. Posting such commentary and discussion where many can see and respond only adds to this new intellectual vitality. Given the seemingly impermanent nature of electronic media, or at least the lack of knowledge regarding its permanence, I can understand some concerns that fulsome and stimulating discussions may become lost. As historians, we value the permanence of records. I would hope a solution will be found to store the electronic discussions and other digital activities in a reliable and permanent fashion. For all I know, they all ready exist. Even if they do not and we risk losing digital exchanges, I think the value of promoting exchange far outweighs this concern.

How do digital possibilities allow the journal to generate new article formats? What might these look like?

Stanton: I'm often struck by how persistent older article formats are even within the most digitally venturesome scholarly journals. We still see the same kinds of long and short papers, roundtables, interlocution, reviews, etc. They may be hyperlinked, but they're still very familiar in shape and style. And I'm not sure that's a bad thing, or that we need to come up with anything daringly new in this area. To me, the innovation here should come from how articles are linked up with content and communication outside the journal itself, both in terms of developing cross-platform publication projects in the near term and perhaps eventually connecting in some way with strong public history work that's being produced digitally elsewhere.

Chattopadhyay: New digital possibilities should allow us to generate new article formats, but this is what I would call the most undeveloped aspect of on-line journals. I have not come across an e-journal that is well designed. The format of *JSAH Online* is determined by narrow JSTOR platform protocols whose aim is to homogenize (lessen contingencies) and not craft distinct journal design and identities. At present, JSTOR enjoys a monopoly, and there is not sufficient reason for them to try harder to enable unique identities. But that will change or needs to change. *JSAH Online* is design-poor compared to its print counterpart that is designed with great care. We need better design protocols for e-journals and someone like Joanna Drucker to theorize/analyze how digital reading-viewing-experiencing practices operate, to help us better design e-journals.

Bryans: I am not sure digital possibilities will generate new formats for the printed version of the journal. As I suggest in responses to other questions, the digital realm allows us to add value to the traditionally printed article. The only way I see new formats stemming from incorporating digital elements would be if the journal were entirely electronic. I am not in favor of that. For public historians working in academia, a printed, peer review journal

is important in the promotion and tenure process, at least until the very tradition-bound academic side of the discipline embraces the twenty-first century. For right now, I predict blending the very traditional printed format with digital augmentations will enhance the journal's value to non-academics. And once again, that is a good thing.

Christensen: There are very, very few limits to the new "article" formats that new digital technologies might afford. Again, the key is deciding what innovations align feasibly and sensibly with the journal's mission and its near-term and medium-term editorial capabilities and capacities with an eye toward creating more capacity for innovations in the long-term. I tend to think that the key is to very publicly open the journal's doors to the new digital scholarship and public history that is being created as we speak and then work closely with the authors and producers to figure out how to incorporate this work into the existing "frame" and "brand" of the journal, NCPH and JSTOR. I think we'll learn very valuable lessons through this incremental approach. This might mean articles that are dominated by visual arguments, maps, interactive graphics, audio, video, and other multimedia. It will be up to the editors and reviewers to continue to determine whether the criteria for argument, evidence, coherence, and significance have been met, and how much leeway and credit can be granted for creativity. It might be possible to imagine much more radical versions of "articles" or even "communications" in the future, but I think we have plenty of work to do right now simply figuring out how to bring existing innovations in the field into the ambit of the journal.

Leon: The range of possibilities here is limitless. The web allows for less polished, quicker, immediate and dialogic work. If *TPH* were to embrace that and a process of post-publication peer review, then the journal could showcase the entire process of intellectual development by showing the evolution of work. Additionally, the web offers the flexibility to publish mashups, storified twitter conversations, podcasts, annotated audio and video work, field notes, short essays, exchanges that are open and real-time (and that might lead to a more polished piece), networks of blog posts responding to one another.

Some possible formats include:

- Short notes: 300 to 500 words.
- Short essays: Up to 2000 words.
- Long reads: traditional article length: 6000 to 8000 words.
- Review essays
- Object and Site notes/readings
- Roundtables
- Experience scenarios and annotated walk-throughs

- Case studies/Lessons Learned
- Programming notes
- Digital Exhibits

For possible publication formats, see:

- *Journal of Interactive Teaching and Pedagogy*, http://jitp.commons.gc. cuny.edu/
- *Kairos*, http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/
- *Journal of Digital Humanities*, http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/
- *Vectors*, http://vectors.usc.edu/archive/
- *Hacking the Academy*, http://hackingtheacademy.org/
- MediaCommons Press, http://mediacommons.futureofthebook. org/mcpress/

Camarillo: Digital publication may allow the journal to expand beyond the type of articles, essays, and reviews it currently publishes in print. For example, solicited and unsolicited letters to the editor, and/or brief commentary pieces on a variety of topics may be attractive to the readership. These types of communications would require minimal editing but would require the expertise of a web manager.

They do raise important further questions that require substantial consideration: who would be able to author, and how permanently would their comment join the journal's content. Would the online portal be restricted to journal subscribers and NCPH members only or would it be available to the public at large? (Certainly the former, but maybe not the latter.) The question of how or whether these communications would be recorded requires a discussion about their importance and the costs of electronic storage.

Many of you have pointed out that digital possibilities allow us to expand content through links to other sources. Is it appropriate for a journal of record to incorporate links that may not always be stable or to refer readers to content housed on platforms that become obsolete?

Christensen: Expanding content through links to other sources is an obvious, easy first step. Links do decay. It seems inevitable. The journal may be able to stem some of this decay and help move the whole field forward by encouraging authors to establish repositories for supplementary materials in institutions, such as university libraries, that have digital collections with stable URLs. That is not going to work for every source that we want to cite today, however. And we should not limit our work as public historians to such citations and collections. I think we have to become comfortable with this flux and innovation, even as we work on finding ways to continue to document and in some cases preserve these contemporary sources as historical documents. The journal can help move the field in this direction. I am told that

photographs and videos are likely to be much more stable and able to be migrated across new platforms than many of the new interactive digital platforms where some of the most interesting innovations in digital public history are increasingly likely to appear. Videos, photographs, narrative and technical descriptions of these applications and interactions may be the best that we can hope to preserve for the future, and authors could be encouraged to set aside an archive of such documentation at a stable URL as part of a journal article that also includes a link to the working application, which will inevitably cease to work at some point. I have come to the conclusion that while we should be aware of this decay, worry about it, and find ways to work around it, we should not let that stop us from experimenting and innovating, as well as documenting to the best of our current abilities, and thinking critically about these innovations.

Leon: Link rot is an issue, but it shouldn't hold us back. Increasingly, best practices in digital publishing are helping to mitigate against this kind of deterioration. One of the key principles of making linked open data a reality is the stable URI. The world is moving in that direction, and we should encourage that. On the other hand, NCPH can archive a copy of materials using something as simple as a Zotero account – snapshot the content and share it, offer an alternative link. These are mundane technical issues. The Library of Congress is on the case through their Digital Preservation initiative, and we should follow their counsel. Finally, the university that hosts the editorial offices for the journal should have an institutional repository at the host library that will take on the role of preserving the digital products of the publication.

Stanton: The possibilities for expanded visual and multimedia content, plus the potential for linking to projects being analyzed or reviewed, seem so obvious that I don't feel they need much discussion here (respondents to NCPH's Readers Survey made it clear that they readily grasp these possibilities as well and are eager to see the journal move toward them). So let me comment on the second issue, of stability.

It seems important to differentiate between digital materials that *TPH* might build for itself and those that are external and beyond the journal's control. Again, the *Journal of American History* is a good model of a scholarly journal with an extensive web presence that consists largely of content created in-house which can be maintained and, if needed, updated or migrated by its creators. External links are clearly chosen for the institutional stability of their sources (for example, images from the Library of Congress or collections within established archives, particularly those in government agencies or universities).

Even with this degree of control and caution, though, there are going to be some uncertainties associated with digital materials. In an important sense, that horse is already out of the barn, and if a public history journal is going to

engage with the digital at all, whether by creating original content or linking to others' work, there's going to be some risk that links or platforms will not be permanent. If we accept that things are happening in the digital realm that are interesting and important, then I think we have to accept the risk, and perhaps even embrace it as a welcome reminder that we're responding to a dynamic field where a good deal of the control is often out of public historians' own hands.

Bryans: The opportunity to hyperlink to related electronic sources is, of course, almost limitless—and extremely valuable. Imagine, full color photographs and maps that were impossible to reproduce in the printed version of the article becoming available through a link! Links to exhibits and web pages relevant to the issues raised in an article are equally exciting. I understand the concerns some may have about the credibility of what can be found on the web, and some kind of quality control will need to be devised. However, the benefits once again outweigh the concerns. At the very least, the journal could include on a gateway to such links a statement that it, NCPH, and the University of California Press are not endorsing any of these links. Rather, they are offered as portals of exploration by which users can pursue their interest in a topic that was generated through the journal. That seems a very good thing to me.

Chattopadhyay: Opening up the journal to outside sources will always remain somewhat problematic, but avoidance is not a solution. Or put another way, it is unavoidable, if the goal is to sustain readership and create an internet presence. It is certainly useful, and as we define e-journal protocols in the next few years, new arrangements will evolve so we are on surer grounds as to which links to forge. If we worry about broken and obsolete links, it is well to remember that with print media, we do not have any quick access, let's say to a document at the Vatican or housed in a provincial archive in Brazil. The key problem now in these arrangements is that not all archives are open-access, either because they are technologically incapacitated or are profit driven. In an ideal digital world, each link is ember-like, non-linear, spawning its own links. Deployment of hyperlinks is key, as is internet presence. No matter how sophisticated the digitally enhanced format, the impact would be limited if it is not strategically geared to have significant internet presence (litmus test: internet search for key terms should show up the journal among the sites on the first page).

Who gets to speak through our digitally augmented portal? What happens to the discussion that occurs in the digital realm? Does it become part of the journal? How is it preserved and made permanently available?

Chattopadhyay: There are two problems here: one with constituency—readership/viewership/peers; the other with duration and design. It is, of course, possible to maintain a distinction between an article proper, and

a discussion of it (analogy: the page and its margins, where the margins at some point may become more important); as an organized and controlled effort, one could imagine a roundtable formed around an article and added on to the text (sort of a multi-vocal exegesis). The desire for permanence/completeness, and interactivity/manipulability are somewhat at odds. To preserve something, after all, is to still it.

The questions you are raising here are very important to tackle, but they must confront the problem of what constitutes a scholarly work and who gets to decide its limits (what happens to peer review? what happens to academic expectations of promotion/tenure based on peer-reviewed publications?). Also, how permanent do we want these works to be? Which parts need to be permanent? One can envision a future scenario in which the task of the editor is also that of a moderator who "manages" the conversation, decides which conversational accretions would be allowed to remain with the body of a text, as a text+, and delete those that are less relevant. For a journal dedicated to public history, I would think you want to lean towards as-open-as-possible format and mode. Ultimately, one could argue, it is not what a researcher has presented in an article that is important, but how it becomes important to the readers—for example, would it be easily available in class to use with smart technology? Also, digital archiving practices are in a nascent stage: for future access to "originals" one would need both the hardware and the software, and for this to be manageable one has to set some time horizons—it may be useful to think of a time-span (50 years? 100 years? 1000 years? . . .) that you want a work, or a part of the work, to survive.

Bryans: At least initially, I suggest that access to the digital portal be limited to members. My reasoning is similar to that expressed above against open access to the electronic version of the journal. Essentially, I see it as one of the benefits of membership. It may even prove a means of increasing membership. Regarding what happens to digital content, I cannot say technically. I would say, however, that it should become part of the "journal of record," if at all possible, in whatever form that might take.

Christensen: One of the most powerful affordances of the new digital technologies and applications is that it opens up a conversation. Communication is no longer a one-way street where the author speaks and everyone else either listens—or reads — or does not. To begin, I would think that all subscribers, all readers could speak and converse in a digitally augmented portal. Ideally, that discussion would become part of the record of the journal. It could be preserved and made permanently available on the same terms as the journal in a lasting digital archive. This, obviously, raises the question of whether the conversations will be moderated, and whether the journal and authors can afford to make that commitment. With this, as with other innovations, it might be valuable to experiment, starting with an article that might benefit from a wider conversation, like this one, and asking some or all of the

authors to commit to participating in and moderating a conversation for a certain period of time. Then we can evaluate the results and the value of the process with experience and evidence.

Leon: I prefer the pyramid model here that has been working for the PressForward journal experiments, http://pressforward.org/. The editors carefully monitor the work in the field, selecting promising pieces to showcase. Then, those pieces move through an editorial process, which results in a polished piece for the journal issue. *TPH* could use this process to elevate material through its own process of review and editing. Similarly, the editors could solicit materials for special issues and focus areas.

Stanton: I don't know the answers to these questions—they will depend on what the journal builds or connects to and whether the material offered there is compelling to people in the field—but I do know that the questions themselves have been vigorously debated all around the preservation, archives, and library worlds for many years now. As with my other suggestions above, I don't think *TPH* has to reinvent the wheel on this one, or to figure everything out in advance. What it could perhaps most productively do is to frame the issue within a specifically public history perspective and use it as a starting-point for connecting to those broader discussions. Can we see any emerging consensus on whether or how to preserve digital culture and communication? How does this complicate the already-complicated definitions of "public" and "public history"? What are the social and archival implications of locating so much material in changeable and often commercial digital venues? This would make a strong topic for a cross-platform roundtable in partnership with NCPH's existing digital outlets, as well as a fitting format for this piece of an ongoing dialogue about some of the foundational issues in the field.

How do digital possibilities such as open source/open access/public commons media invite change in what we do as editors, including acquisition and solicitation of the best work in the field, managing peer review, guiding authors in the revision of their work, and moderating roundtable discussions?

Bryans: Digital possibilities probably will change what editors do a great deal, especially regarding information made available through open access. That need not be feared in my opinion. I believe editors can make clear to users of both the printed and digital elements of the journal that the very nature of each is unique. What appears in print will undoubtedly be more formal, carefully researched, peer reviewed, and readily incorporated into the academic literature of the field. Open access digital content will probably be more informal, spontaneous, and contested. It certainly will be, for lack of a better term, "messier." It is that quality that makes digital content so exciting and interesting. The best of it will no doubt eventually find itself in more traditional formats I predict. I really have no advice on how editors will handle

all this, except that the pool of editors will need to be expanded, something NCPH recognizes and is addressing.

Camarillo: Because the broadening of the content of any journal, print or digital, increases the likelihood of greater engagement for current subscribers and the potential to reach new audience, these questions of the editors' roles are important to the life of the publication. Ultimately, they must be addressed by the editorial staff, editorial advisory board, and others with expertise in digital publication.

Stanton: Digital technology doesn't necessarily need to change anything that journal editors do (and there's plenty of evidence of deep conservatism within scholarly publishing and disciplines in the face of the expansion of digital media). To me, approaching it as though this is an inevitable set of changes—or, worse, yet, an *imposed* change—misses the opportunity for taking a broader look at what we might want to change in service to the field anyway, no matter what media we use, and for thinking about whether and how digital tools might let us accomplish those goals.

For *The Public Historian* and public history, I think those changes could center around broadening and strengthening the intra-disciplinary conversation about what constitutes "the best work in the field." A more multi-faceted, multi-platform review program could help us to do that. It could also help us experiment with multiple modes of peer review (including the open commentary that can follow naturally from open-access publication) without needing to make any immediate changes in how the journal itself operates. Traditional double-blind peer review can continue in parallel with more open discussions of whatever projects, reviews, and articles are published on the open web, and once we've got some experience with this, we can take a comparative look at not only where the best work is, but also where the smartest and most productive critiques are coming from. Maybe double-blind is most useful after all—but maybe it isn't, or maybe there are hybrid modes of editorial development and peer review that would serve public history well.

This is the kind of decision I don't think we can make in advance—we need to start experimenting, continue to build up our online base of readers and interlocutors, and reassess based on what we see happening there. We might even find that this approach would let us position some of our intra-disciplinary conversations toward the more porous edges of the field, so that we're not just talking among ourselves but actually communicating and engaging with various publics as we talk about the doing of history. However we do it, we need to be careful that it's not the digital tail wagging the disciplinary dog—the technology and processes should serve our larger disciplinary goals and values, not the other way around.

Leon: Some of the best work on open access comes from Kathleen Fitzpatrick, who is the director of scholarly communications for the Modern

Language Association. In particular, her piece "Giving It Away" http://www.plannedobsolescence.net/blog/giving-it-away/ makes a very convincing argument for the deep tie between a commitment to open access and our most prized professional values. Furthermore, Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence* (NYU Press, 2011) is the most complete discussion of the changing nature of scholarly publishing.

Decisions about platforms and formats are bound to shape the everyday editorial workflow for a digital *TPH* in ways that are hard to predict. But, the importance of editorial guidance, and the solicitation of both work and commenters/reviewers will remain essential. Just because review is post-publication or open does not guarantee that it will attract the attention and thoughtfulness that has sometimes characterized blind peer review. Open peer review still requires editors to solicit reviewers and to recognize their work. The difference here would be that those reviewers finally have a way to point to what has heretofore been hidden labor.

Platform choice will be an issue for this transition. Significant work is happening using WordPress, http://wordpress.org/; CommentPress for Word-Press, http://www.futureofthebook.org/commentpress/; CUNY's Commons in Box platform, http://commonsinabox.org/; Open Journal Systems, http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs; Scalar, http://scalar.usc.edu/; and a host of more general content management systems such as Omeka, http://omeka.org, and Drupal, http://drupal.org/. Each platform has its own workflow that the editors of *TPH* will have to carefully consider before they make a selection.

Chattopadhyay: The editorial role has changed and will increasingly change as media protocol-fluency will become paramount with open source/access, and I am sure that peer-review system that we have in place now will change more in the near future. The process from submission to review and production has already changed significantly in the last few years just by moving from print to electronic media: four years ago, a small number of articles were accepted and reviewed in paper form (and there was the outside option of submitting a hardcopy manuscript and photographic prints for images). With my editorship the entire process has become 100% electronic. Earlier, one could reasonably only request reviewers within the country because the paper version had to be snail-mailed with a copy of the images; now, with all stages of editorial work managed through Manuscript Central, we can accept an article or review from someone across the world as long as they have electronic access. The process has certainly aided expansion of the range of authors and contributions.

Interestingly, one of the bigger concerns is not how to solve the problem of access or interactivity, but how to change research practices. *JSAH* might have pioneered a digital journal, but a very small percentage of authors utilize the full available multi-media possibilities, even with tutorials and modest financial support. Must the quality of a work (or our criteria for evaluation) be determined by its multimodality? As dedicated I am to enhancing the

visual-spatial, my answer would be, no. It is important to recognize that the textual operations and visual operations of an argument are very different, and the latter need not take precedence over the former.

Christensen: There are various ways that new digital possibilities change what we do as editors. Open source/open access/public commons is a long-term challenge to the journal publishing model. And we must keep close eyes on developments in the field and be in constant conversation about the challenges to journal publishing as well as the possibilities. Some of the best work in the field is becoming more quickly and easily discoverable through Twitter, Facebook, and blogs. Editors have more ways of having much better radar for innovation. Changes could be made to peer review too. Some advocate for post-publication peer review, which could bring more critical perspectives to bear on work, and also guide authors in the ongoing revision of their work. Or it could simply be overwhelming and the revision unending. This seems to have worked well for some, and not so much for others. In the end, I still believe in the personal relationship between editors and writers and the value of a well-managed peer review process. But I am open to change too. Moderating roundtable discussions would be one innovation that would be easy to make. With the possibilities afforded by a simple, free blogging platform, it would have been quite easy to do this as something like a real conversation rather than a collection of individuals answering questions in isolation. Again, the possibilities for having real conversations about "putting history to work in the world" are among the most appealing aspects of new digital technologies at large in public history and within our profession.

In what other ways might these digital possibilities benefit or improve the journal?

Stanton: In a word, "mindset." One of the main things I've learned from serving as NCPH's Digital Media Editor—and the main reason I was interested in the role in the first place—is that people working in the digital realms of the humanities fields tend to be highly collaborative, tolerant of experimentation and uncertainty, flexible, and inventive, in ways that I see as suited to a lot of what public historians do. It's also a mindset that seems like a natural and needed complement to the more glacial pace that is the result of doing meticulous scholarship; together, there's a healthy balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces, which, again, seems to map well onto public history as a field that blends scholarship and action.

The Public Historian comments critically on the "action" part of the equation but itself remains more firmly within the world of scholarship. There have been good reasons for that, including establishing our *bona fides* as a professional discourse and practice with a solid grounding in the historical discipline. But it seems like time to move beyond that now, and to create and discover a wider range of venues where that discourse can take place. As I hope my

comments have shown, I don't draw too sharp a line between print and digital media—they're all just platforms for expression, and to me the important thing is what you want to say and do, not where or in what medium you say and do it. But I do see a sharp distinction between the digital mindset and the more traditionally scholarly one, and I'd love to see *The Public Historian* starting to find a way to blend the two.

Chattopadhyay: I have already mentioned two of these, but let me restate: 1. Internet presence is perhaps more or at least as important as digital makeover. 2. Digital analysis and dissemination have created new gaps between theory, method, and the idea of historical research. Embarking online might help—or force us—to advance our thinking in terms of how to close/bridge the gaps.

Bryans: I would say that I am very excited about the opportunities that incorporating digital content provides. As a more senior member of the profession, the expansion of digital technology and its transformative force has been nothing short of staggering. I find it extremely difficult to keep up with and to utilize to its full effect. At times, it is tempting to be a Luddite. Yet, I do clearly see the possibilities, and even if I do not understand it all, I am excited about what it can bring to the journal and NCPH.