CRITICAL DIGITAL HUMANITIES INITIATIVE
Strategic Plan
2021–2024

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

CDHI

CRITICAL DIGITAL HUMANITIES INITIATIVE
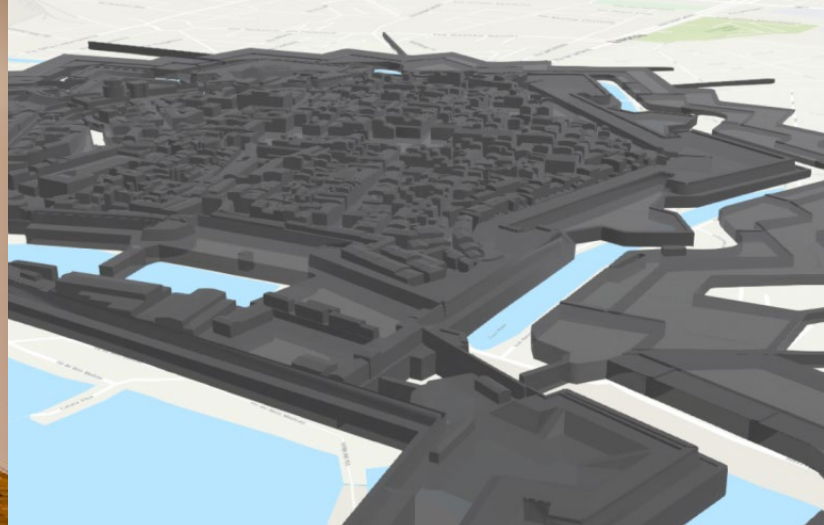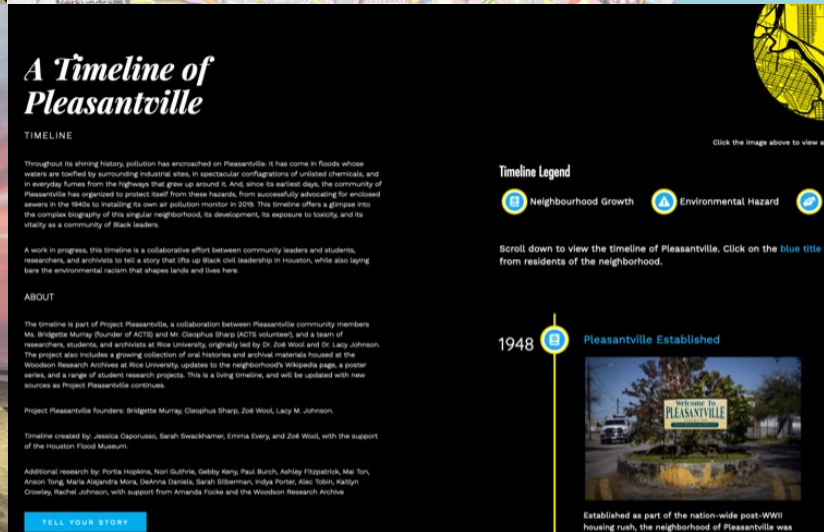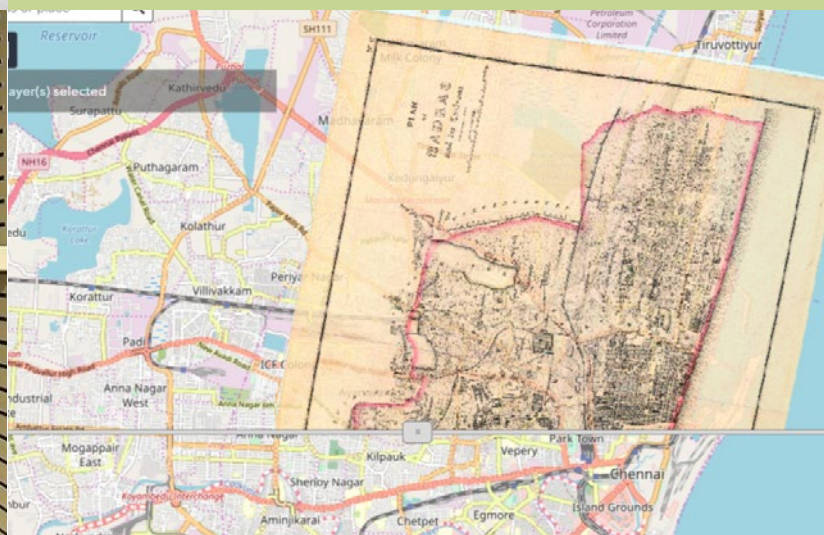DIGITAL HUMANITIES NETWORK

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Critical Digital Humanities Initiative conducts our work in Toronto. For thousands of years, this has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Much of our work is conducted virtually. The infrastructure of our digital connection is built not only from rare earth metals in our fiber-optic network and devices, but also from underwater cables that transport 95 percent of cross-border data. Here in Toronto, the main cable is the Crosslake Cable, which lies in Lake Ontario. We invite all members of our network to consider the histories of the land and waters where you are located, and to reflect upon and acknowledge the Indigenous histories of these spaces.

CDHI is …
collaborative
creative
critical
computational
community

A Timeline of Pleasantville

TIMELINE

Throughout its shining history, pollution has encroached on Pleasantville. It has come in floods whose waters are toxified by surrounding industrial sites, in spectacular conflagrations of unlisted chemicals, and in everyday fumes from the highways that grew up around it. And, since its earliest days, the community of Pleasantville has organized to protect itself from these hazards, from successfully advocating for enclosed sewers in the 1940s to installing its own air pollution monitor in 2019. This timeline offers a glimpse into the complex biography of this singular neighborhood, its development, its exposure to toxicity, and its vitality as a community of Black leaders.

A work in progress, this timeline is a collaborative effort between community leaders and students, researchers, and archivists to tell a story that lifts up Black civil leadership in Houston, while also laying bare the environmental racism that shapes lands and lives here.

ABOUT

The timeline is part of Project Pleasantville, a collaboration between Pleasantville community members Ms. Bridgette Murray (founder of ACTS) and Mr. Cleophus Sharp (ACTS volunteer), and a team of researchers, students, and archivists at Rice University, originally led by Dr. Zoë Wool and Dr. Lacy Johnson. The project also includes a growing collection of oral histories and archival materials housed at the Woodson Research Archives at Rice University, updates to the neighborhood's Wikipedia page, a poster series, and a range of student research projects. This is a living timeline, and will be updated with new sources as Project Pleasantville continues.

Project Pleasantville founders: Bridgette Murray, Cleophus Sharp, Zoë Wool, Lacy M. Johnson.

Timeline created by: Jessica Caporusso, Sarah Swackhamer, Emma Every, and Zoë Wool, with the support of the Houston Flood Museum.

Additional research by: Portia Hopkins, Nori Guthrie, Gebby Keny, Paul Burch, Ashley Fitzpatrick, Mai Ton, Anson Tong, Maria Alejandra Mora, DeAnna Daniels, Sarah Silberman, Indya Porter, Alec Tobin, Kaitlyn Crowley, Rachel Johnson, with support from Amanda Focke and the Woodson Research Archive.

TELL YOUR STORY

Timeline Legend

Neighbourhood Growth   Environmental Hazard

Scroll down to view the timeline of Pleasantville. Click on the blue title from residents of the neighborhood.

1948   Pleasantville Established

Established as part of the nation-wide post-WWII housing rush, the neighborhood of Pleasantville was

VISION, MISSION, VALUES

Our vision is to forge a new paradigm of critical digital humanities scholarship, bringing together the humanities' critique of power in historical perspective with digital tools for socially transformative research.

Our mission is to create a large, active, and inclusive network of digital humanities researchers at U of T and to make U of T a world leader in critical digital humanities research, teaching, and training.

We will...

▶ Support and champion accessible, anti-racist, decolonial, feminist, queer digital humanities research

▶ Cultivate an ethical, accessible, and supportive digital humanities community

▶ Train and mentor the next generation of critical digital humanities researchers

▶ Incubate new critical digital humanities research and amplify established projects

▶ Equip researchers with innovative knowledge mobilization skills and techniques

WHAT IS THE CDHI?

The Critical Digital Humanities Initiative is a strategic research initiative of the University of Toronto. CDHI serves students, scholars, artists, and the community across the Tri-Campus.

We are:

▸ Connecting innovative but siloed digital humanities research across Canada's largest university

▸ Focusing on issues of power and social justice in historical perspective

▸ Supporting accessible, anti-racist, decolonial, queer, feminist approaches to DH

▸ Embracing public scholarship and community-engaged research

▸ Connecting research networks to act as a hub for critical, creative DH research in Canada and internationally

▸ Building the only network that connects critical, creative DH researchers in Canada and internationally

CDHI AT A GLANCE

The Critical Digital Humanities Initiative (CDHI) is a three-year, 2.9M strategic initiative based at the University of Toronto that supports trans-disciplinary collaborations bringing together questions of power, social justice, and critical theory in digital humanities research.

Digital humanities encompasses not only digital computational methods in humanities research such as digitizing, digital curation, analysis, coding, visualization, mapping, versioning, prototyping, and more. Digital humanities also includes interpretive and theoretical work on digitality and data.

Our work in critical DH prioritizes creative praxis, co-creation, public engagement, community-based, and community-led DH research that is accessible, antiracist, decolonial, feminist, and queer. As a research workshop and design atelier, the CDHI equips humanities researchers to ask new questions, share new knowledge, and analyze power and inequality in historical perspective, through consultations, workshops, fellowships, seed funding, and more. The CDHI establishes the University of Toronto as a global centre of excellence in Critical DH and an international model for collaboration, training, and knowledge mobilization.

ca. 2.5 billion color texture samples

Detail, SW anta

Texture resolutions higher

3D geometry captures detail down to 1mm
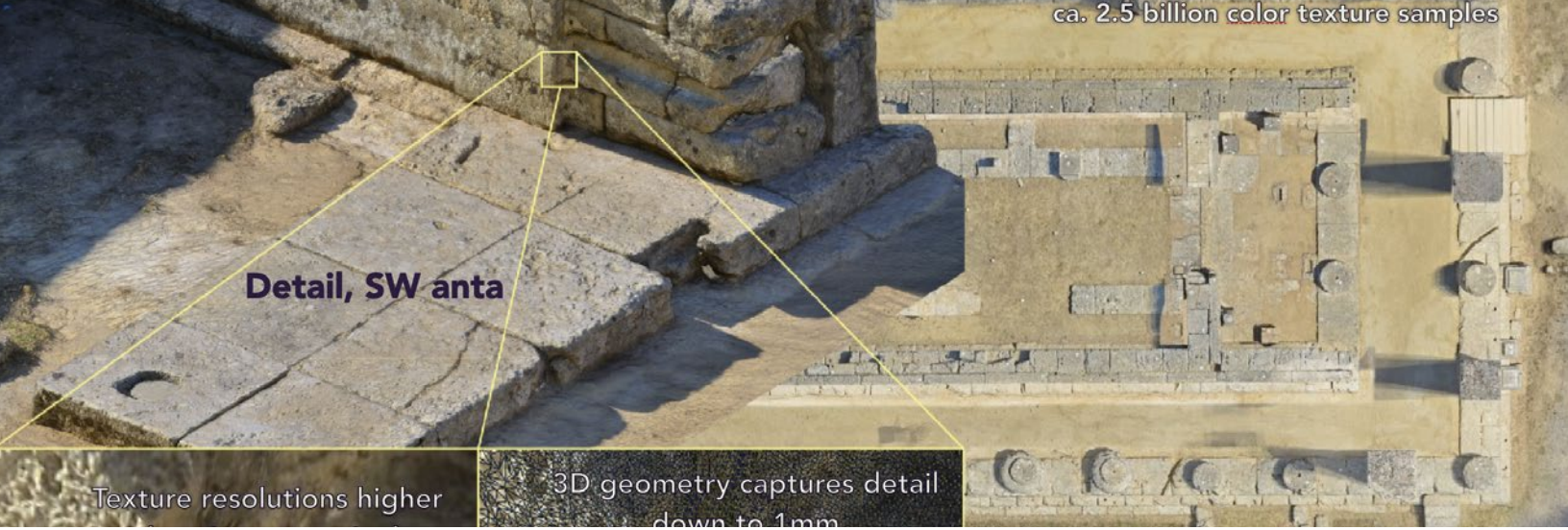
CATALYSTS

Foundational and organizational supports that allow CDHI to deliver on our goals:

Partnerships

ISI Program

4 contributing divisions

UTM

UTSC

Faculty of Information

Faculty of Arts and Science

Our Team

CDHI Executive Team

Steering Committee

Working Groups

Evaluation + Accountability

Quarterly and Annual Reports

Programming Evaluation Process

Governance Process

CDHI Strategic Priorities

ONE

Building the Network

TWO

Amplifying Research and Translation Impact

THREE

Innovating Training Strategies

FOUR

Establishing a Sustainability Plan

FIVE

Enhancing EDI in Initiative Activities

Critical digital humanities scholars are widely dispersed across the University's divisions and campuses. New dedicated staff, in-kind space, and programming (research showcase, Lightning Lunches, visiting scholars series) will bring cohesion to the latent synergies across U of T. We are catalyzing our critical mass for greater impact locally and internationally.

Establish the CDHI Executive Team

New dedicated staff will manage the CDHI's operations, implement programming to promote collaboration, and mobilize knowledge.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** A CDHI staff that includes a Managing Director, a Knowledge Mobilization and Communications Officer (part time), Events and Program Coordinator (part time), Development Officer (part time), a DH Developer (UTM), and a Research Associate in Digital and Collaborative Research (UTSC); CDHI staff available for consultations with research teams; increased capacity for critical DH programming and events.

Establish our Governance Model

A robust governance structure will ensure CDHI is well managed, and leaders are effectively supported.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** Established Executive Team, Steering Committee, Working Groups, and Advisory Board; quarterly and annual reports; ISI governance structures, including annual meeting of Council of Deans & Principals and quarterly meetings of Implementation Committee.

1. Building the Network

Build an Inclusive, Cross-Divisional Research Community: Through consultations, membership drive, and events, CDHI will attract a diverse group of interdisciplinary members from across the Tri-Campus.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE One-on-one consultations with faculty PIs; Lighting Lunches (6 per year); annual Visiting Scholar Series (3 per year); Bi-Annual Research Showcase with focus on DH Research at U of T (2021 and 2023); and a Critical Digital Humanities International Conference in Fall 2022.

Build CDHI Communications: Vibrant, well-designed communications will facilitate knowledge transfer and relationships across research teams.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE A new CDHI website and blog; increased promotion of critical DH research on CDHI social media and newsletters; more active communications presence online and across campus.

Increase access to research space and tools: Virtual programming and streamlined access to existing physical spaces will facilitate innovative research collaborations by connecting researchers.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE Improved access to the Critical DH Co-working Space (JHB 222) on the St. George campus; Research Teams in Residence hosted annually at the Critical DH Co-working Space; an inventory of DH spaces and tools, hosted on the new CDHI website; collaborative planning with University of Toronto Libraries for a DH Lab on the St. George campus.

**Strategic
Priority Two**

Amplifying Research & Translation Impact

The CDHI will support research initiatives through focused mentorship, coordination of resources, and seed funding for new projects. A dedicated CDHI staff member will support knowledge mobilization to both university and community audiences through community engagement, media coverage, and a new Critical Digital Humanities International Conference.

Support New Research: Focused mentorship, consultations to link research teams to major facilities support, coordination of resources, and seed funding will develop innovative research projects in the crucial early stages.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** CDHI staff available for consultation with research teams; an Emerging Projects Fund that supports five projects per year (15 total); Critical DH Learning Communities as a new venue for exploring research foci and methods; mentorship of research teams seeking next level funding; one annual Postdoctoral Fellow in Critical Digital Humanities (in partnership with JHI); two two-year Postdoctoral Fellows in Community Data (in partnership with iSchool and UTSC).

Mobilize knowledge: We will support research teams in sharing their research with university, community, and international audiences.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** Training, consultation, and mentorship around knowledge mobilization for research teams; CDHI researchers publishing their research in a variety of formats, including peer-reviewed books and articles, digital research creation, exhibitions, etc.; CDHI researchers sharing their work with the wider public via blogs, social media, magazines, newspapers, podcasts, research creation, and more.

2. Amplifying Research & Translation Impact

Develop Knowledge Mobilization Tools: Critical digital humanities research requires appropriate metrics and tools for ethical partnerships. We will support research teams in developing these.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** resources for community-based partnerships shared on the CDHI website; annual events showcasing ethical community-based and community-led partnerships; metrics for DH projects developed in consultation with Digital Scholarship Librarians and piloted with three faculty research teams.

Elevate U of T's profile in the international community: A new CDHI international conference, international collaborations/partnerships, and a communications strategy will promote U of T as a hub of innovative critical DH scholarship on an international stage.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** CDHI members and staff engaging with major DH consortia; leading international DH scholars presenting at U of T via CDHI events; new partnerships developed with international DH clusters; funding for partnerships, including one Collaborative Research Workshop and an International Doctoral Cluster (funded via U of T Global).

Innovating Training Strategies

New training programs will provide a key opportunity for convergence among researchers, while simultaneously developing highly qualified personnel with the expertise to extend our impact in the public and private sectors.

Create new graduate and undergraduate research training and experience: Fellowships and grants will be created to embed students in faculty research projects across multiple fields.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** Annual cohorts of CDHI Graduate and Undergraduate Fellows; annual one-year critical DH postdoctoral fellowships in collaboration with the Jackman Humanities Institute; two two-year CDHI Postdoctoral Fellowships in Community Data (2022-24).

Support student and faculty training in specialized DH skills: A robust schedule of workshops will support training across the tri-campus and a bursary program will help graduate students and faculty travel to access specialized training at prominent DH sites.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** a new Critical DH Training Bursary; Praxis Workshops on specific skills and tools for critical DH research; Digital Drop-Ins series, which creates opportunities of connections, mentorship, and collaborative consultation with Librarians and technical experts; CDHI participation in the Canadian Certificate in Digital Humanities, a new national micro-credentialing program.

3. Innovating Training Strategies

Support the implementation of new curricular activities: New certificates and minors in DH-related fields proposed, developed, and supported to build additional training opportunities within Humanities degree programs.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** New Minor in Game Studies at UTM; new Certificate in Digital Research Creation at UTM; CDHI advocacy for faculty hiring to support new programs.

Certify computational skills/data literacy trainers to expand campus training capacity: CDHI will co-sponsor tuition in The Carpentries—the leading certification program for training digital skills instructors.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** A complement of certified Carpentries instructors with Humanities research and training backgrounds at U of T; U of T Carpentries Instructors expanding training offerings across the campus divisions.

Establishing a Sustainability Plan

The CDHI provides the structure and fertile intellectual ground to attract external funds to support long-term sustainability and growth of both the wider initiative and the work of individual teams. By the ISI end date, the CDHI will be fully supported through philanthropic and peer-reviewed funding.

Establish our sustainability team: Identifying the support and infrastructure available across the Tri-Campus that will contribute to CDHI's sustainability plans.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** An established Sustainability Working Group; relationships with Advancement, U of T Libraries, and ISI Advancement supports; a new CDHI Executive Team member with a Sustainability portfolio.

Environmental scan, phase two: Interview-based study of leading DH programs' sustainability models will inform long-term CDHI plan.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** 10+ interviews with leading DH programs conducted and analyzed by Sustainability Working Group members; a Final Report on global DH sustainability models, with recommendations for CDHI.

CDHI Sustainability Plan: Establishing a plan that outlines short-, medium-, and long-term fundraising opportunities for CDHI.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** A clear case for support for CDHI; targeted cases for DH support featuring faculty-led research teams; a plan to submit competitive proposals to key global foundations and international partnerships; opportunities for industry partnerships.

4. Establishing a Sustainability Plan

Engaging foundations and philanthropic donors: Applying to foundations—a key source of support of operational and research funding in the Humanities.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** CDHI proposals to Mellon and other key foundations concerning Digital Humanities, such as McGovern, Open Society, and Luminate; cases for support for specific project-related asks; CDHI collaboration with Advancement to approach donors and foundations.

Engaging industry partners: CDHI will build opportunities for project support through industry partnership initiatives.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** CDHI collaborations with Advancement to secure operational support and project support from industry partners; leveraged opportunities, such as fellowships through Mitacs Accelerate program.

Grant development support for critical DH researchers: CDHI will design and deliver tailored support for faculty research teams to build their grant development capacity

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** Grant development workshops and mentorship opportunities; increased number of faculty applications to collaborative grants and international partnerships; increased number of applications to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

Enhancing EDI in Initiative Activities

Lesbians Making History Project

Mirha-Soleil Ross Archives

Trans Collections Guide

The CDHI is committed to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) by supporting research that embodies EDI in its research questions, methodology, and focus. The CDHI also offers programming that is inclusive and reflects the diversity of our communities.

Cultivate and serve a diverse community: Inclusive programming that is reflective of the diversity of our local and global communities.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** Diverse representation in CDHI speakers, grant recipients, fellows, blog writers, and event attendees; diverse representation in the types of projects that the CDHI funds and promotes; outreach to diverse student groups.

Accessible digital resources and events: Resources and events that are accessible for all.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** An AODA-compliant website and events designed to be accessible.

Support work that has a social impact: Funding, promoting, and incubating projects that promote the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as supporting artistic and/or community-engaged research.

> **WHAT YOU'LL SEE** Training and support for community-engaged and/or artistic and/or activist knowledge creation; grants targeting interdisciplinary work.

5. Enhancing EDI in Initiative Activities

Promote critical DH work beyond academe: Critical DH that is accessible and relevant within our broader local and global communities.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE Knowledge mobilization mentorship for non-traditional knowledge creation; advertising programming beyond the university.
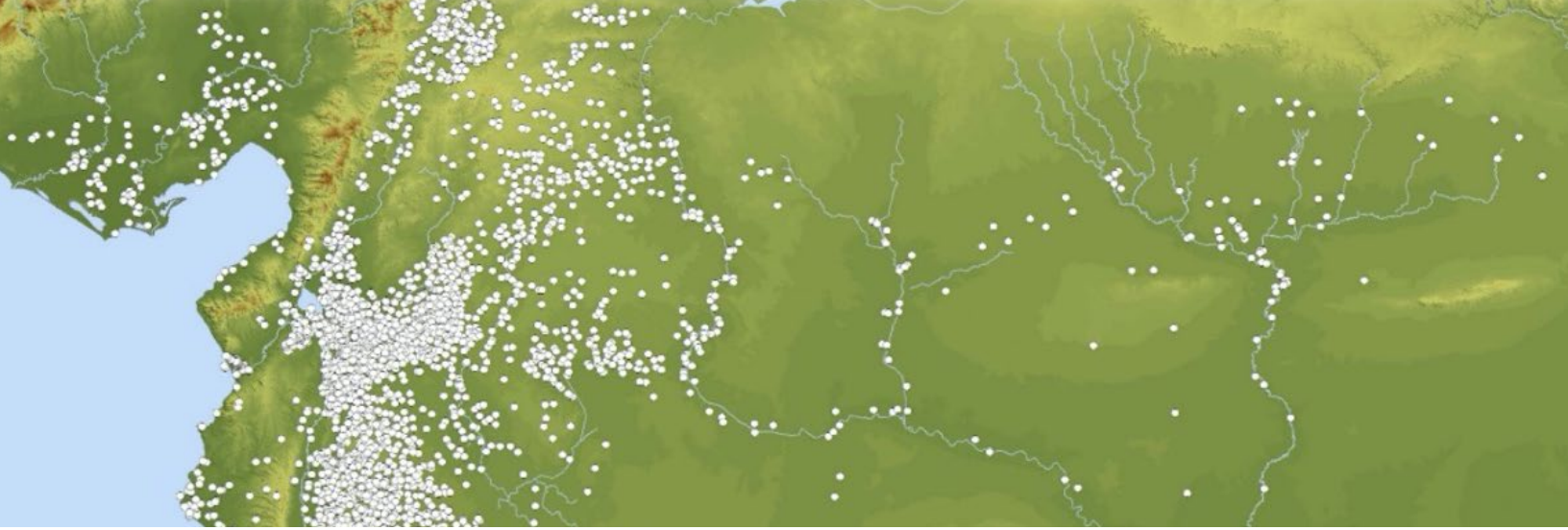
HOW WE GOT HERE

An extensive consultation process guided the strategic priorities, goals, and indicators of our Strategic Plan 2021-24. These included:

▸ Two major strategic planning consultations with ~50 people each, attended by cross-divisional faculty, librarians, IT staff, Advancement, and government relations (29 November 2019 and 14 April 2020)

▸ 55 individual meetings with Chairs, Deans, librarians, and faculty research clusters

▸ A critical DH faculty working group, involving eight members who met in July and August 2020

▸ Phase One of an Environmental Scan of 15 global DH institutions, focusing on each institution's online presence, as well as limited informational interviews

▸ A strategic planning consultation process with Sue Pulfer of Management Advising Services (MAS) Consulting

▸ Consultation with CDHI Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group and Nicole Kaniki, Director of Equity and Inclusion at U of T

▸ Consultation with CDHI Steering Committee and Implementation Committee

IMAGE CREDITS

ELSPETH BROWN
LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory's Pussy Palace Oral History Project

Digital sketches of real and imagined Pussy Palace patrons, Pussy Palace Oral History Project by Ayo Tsalithaba. From left to right: T'Hayla Ferguson, Nancy Irwin, and the Temple Priestess (project narrators). NOTE: Image of 2 people hugging is an original illustration of imagined patrons.

Collaboratory's completed projects
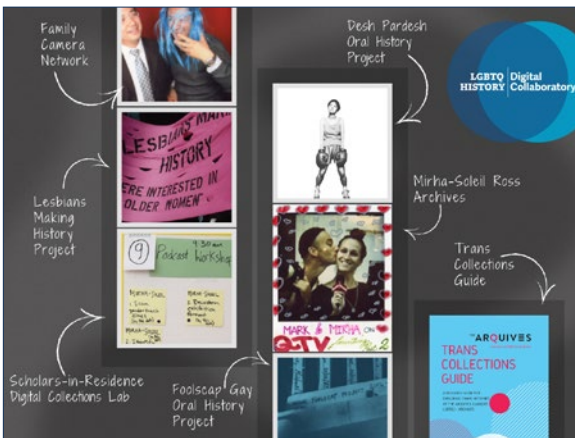
Representative images from past projects: Leftmost column, from top to bottom: Family Camera Network, Lesbians Making History Project, Scholars-in-Residence: Digital Collections Lab; Middle column, from top to bottom: Desh Pardesh Oral History Project, Mirha-Soleil Ross Archives, Foolscap Gay Oral History Project; Rightmost column: Trans Collections Guide.

TIMOTHY HARRISON
Computational Research on the Ancient Near East
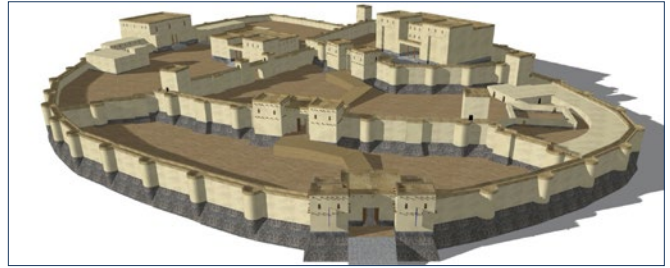
3D reconstruction of Iron Age city of Zincirli, created using Google Sketchup (created by Stephen Batiuk).

CRANE's data collection, processing and integration initiatives; top left: hand-written field notes from 1930s excavations at Tell Tayinat; top right: database of archaeological sites in and around the Orontes Watershed, collected from published sources (created by Dominique Langis-Barsetti); bottom left: aerial photo of excavations at Tell Tayinat, 1930s; bottom right: architectural plan of Building I, Tell Tayinat, 1930s excavations.
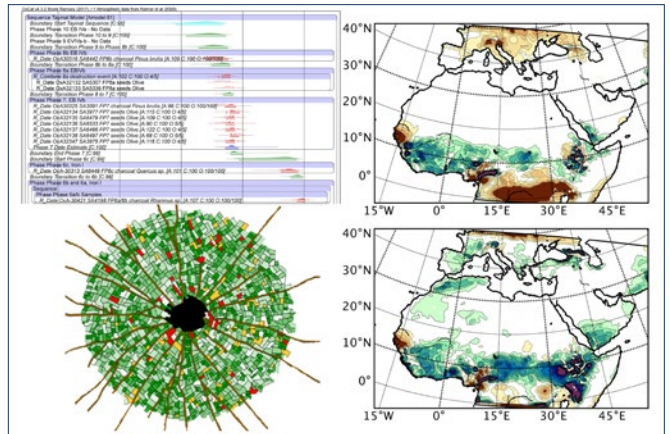
CRANE's human-environment interaction modelling initiatives; top left: modelled chronological framework for Iron Age at Tell Tayinat, created using OxCal 4.3.2, published in Manning et al. 2020 (created by Sturt Manning); bottom left: visualization of output from agent-based model examining agricultural decision making, created using Repast Simphony (created by Lynn Welton); top and bottom right: comparison of modelled outputs of daily precipitation to observed modern values for different model configurations, created using the Weather Research and Forecasting (WRF) Model (created by Deepak Chandan).

IMAGE CREDITS

CASSANDRA HARTBLAY
#CripRitual

#CripRitual Exhibition, installation view, 2022, Tangled Art + Disability Gallery, Toronto ON.

Installation detail, Margeaux Feldman, *Soft Magic*, #CripRitual Exhibition, 2022, Tangled Art + Disability Gallery, Toronto ON.

PATRICK KEILTY
Sexual Representation Collection

16mm small-gauge erotic films from the Erotic Film Collection in the Sexual Representation Collection at the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto. Photograph by Patrick Keilty.

8mm film reel player, Sexual Representation Collection at the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. University of Toronto. Photograph by Patrick Keilty.

IMAGE CREDITS

JESSICA MACE
Hidden Toronto

Image of St James Cathedral reflected in an industrial building.
Courtesy of the Toronto Archives.

ALEXANDRA GILLESPIE
Old Books New Science Lab

A palm leaf manuscript in Javanese or Balinese script, from the
collection of Don Taylor. Photograph by Nicholas Iwanyshyn.

THY PHU
Refugee States

Barbed Wire Fence at Sunset
"181115-H-VJ018-0008" by U.S. Department of Defense

Migrant Butterfly Poster
"Migrante" by Daquella manera

Border Patrol Sign

IMAGE CREDITS

BHAVANI RAMAN
Decolonizing Archives of Water

Ennore, Chennai, Tamil Nad India. Photograph by Bhavani Raman.

Screen shot of the Chenna map project in progress

E. NATALIE ROTHMAN
The Dragoman Renaissance

Facing pages from the "Carte turche" featuring a copy of an Ottoman official record and its contemporary Italian translation.

Intermarriage Across Istanbul's Dragomanate, ca. 1570-1720. Visualization developed by E. Natalie Rothman and the Dragoman Renaissance Research Platform team. Programming by Alice Shu Qi Yang and the Digital Scholarship Unit at UTSC.
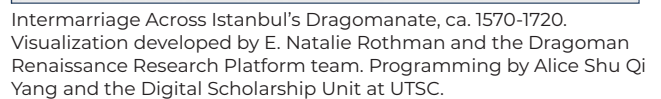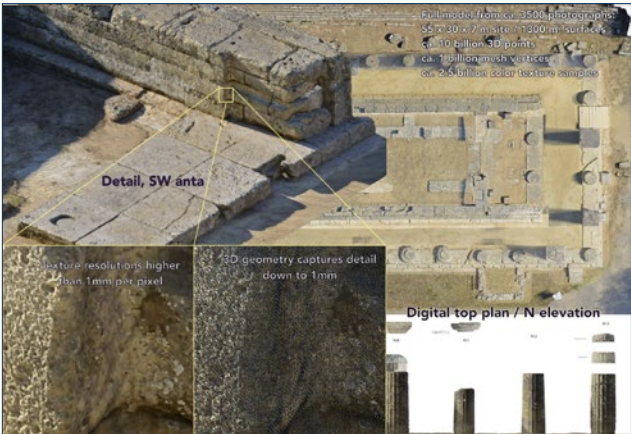
IMAGE CREDITS

PHIL SAPIRSTEIN

Overview and detail from the cella of the temple of Hera at Olympia, rendering from the 3D model created of that monument by means of photogrammetry, c. 2019. Model by Phil Sapirstein. Sapirstein Digital epigraphy.

MOHAMAD TAVAKOLI-TARGHI

Tavakoli Extremities 1941:
Image by Mahmoud Sayyah in *Itila'at-i Haftigi* (Iran), 1941.

NICHOLAS TERPSTRA
DECIMA Project

Interface for the DECIMA project; courtesy of Ariana Ellis on behalf of the DECIMA team.

ZOE WOOL
Project Pleasantville

Project Pleasantville is a community engaged collaboration that explores the intertwined histories of environmental racism and Black civic leadership in the Houston, Texas neighborhood of Pleasantville. The timeline, pictured here, lives as a permanent exhibit at the digital Houston Flood Museum and incorporates archival media, as well as oral histories.