# FONDREN FELLOWS PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

## Fall 2020

## 1) Faculty-Student Research Collaboration in Digital History: Adjusting and Expanding visualizingabolition.org

### 1. Project Summary

Launched in 2017, visualizingabolition.org provides the public access to a database containing references to nearly 31,000 records of correspondence exchanged between the British Foreign Office and British commissioners, ministers, naval officers, and representatives of foreign governments around the world over the course of the nineteenth century. It lists the names of the senders, recipients, places of origin and destination, dates, as well as the subject of the letters when available, and, of course, their archival source. It also allows the public to access essays exploring different topics related to the suppression of the traffic in addition to a gallery of 104 images providing visual context for the information available on the website. Since it was launched, over 5,000 users have accessed the website's resources.

I created the website with the help of undergraduate students from my previous institution, the University of Missouri, where it was originally hosted. In 2018, after

moving to Rice University, I transferred the website to a Google Cloud. Now, I would like to recode the website to be hosted on Rice's Virtual Machines, and possibly on Oracle.

## 2. Key Tasks

- Recode the website

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

Knowledge of WordPress, JavaScript, Python, and D3.

## 4. Learning Outcomes

Over the course of the project students will learn a number of skills, including critical thinking skills, oral communication, writing, and working with key computer software. They will also learn some of the history of the abolition of the slave trade. Moreover, they will work with librarians at Fondren Library's Digital Scholarship Services as well as with staff from the Center for Computing Research and thus gain hands-on experience in how to develop and manage a research project in the digital humanities. Finally, they will familiarize themselves with many opportunities that our university and the library in particular have to offer for student professional and career development, such as lectures, seminars, workshops, prize competitions, etc.

# 2) The Sugar Land 95: Mapping Convict Leasing in Fort Bend County, 1865- 2018

## 1. Project Summary

This project emerged from the necessity to chronicle and document Convict Leasing in Texas. It utilizes selections from the Reginald Moore Sugar Land Convict Leasing System research collection (Woodson Research Center, call # MS 636) and Fort Bend County records such as historical maps to visualize the story of the Sugar Land 95. In 2018, during the ground scraping phase of construction at the new Fort Bend ISD James Reese Technical and Career Center, 95 bodies were uncovered in unmarked graves. Eyewitness testimony from the contractor indicated that once the bodies were found, construction ceased and the local authorities and the owner (in this case the school district) were notified. The discovery ignited a flurry of local and national media coverage, particularly

because the remains were from incarcerated African Americans leased to local sugar companies to cultivate sugar cane. Using a combination of multimedia, photographs, documents, maps, newspapers clippings, press releases and deeds to tell their story, the project will provide an important layer to archiving convict leasing in Texas.

## 2. Key Tasks

The project will focus primarily on the Imperial Prison Farm and surrounding area and the archaeological discovery of the Sugar Land 95. The fellow will organize materials across multiple archives that will contribute to the story map. Finally, the fellow will create a story map that will use ArcGIS (or another approved story mapping program) to visualize the social and cultural landscape of Fort Bend County and the economic landscape of the Imperial Prison Farm in Fort Bend County during the late 19th to mid-twentieth century.

- Phase 1:
    - The Fellow will collaborate with Rice staff and community members to draft the possible narrative and scope of the story map.
    - Fellow will use maps to relate original prison farm locations to current day Sugar Land and Fort Bend County, such as Fort Bend County maps available in the UNT Portal, property records from Fort Bend County Courthouse, and Texas State Prison records such as this exploration re- lated to selling prison property in Sugar Land in 2009.
    - Fellow will create several basic layers of data for use in the StoryMap's base map, possibly including known burial ground locations (Imperial Farm Cemetery, Sugar Land 95 site, and other known local cemeteries), and data drawn from existing agricultural, topographical, and socio-economic data sets, and possibility archaeological study data (examples available in the Reginald Moore Convict Leasing papers).
- Phase 2:
    - Narrative of StoryMap will be refined and storyboarded based on knowledge gained in Phase 1.
    - Snapshot and interactive views of the base map will be created/selected for the StoryMap.
    - Fellow will incorporate multimedia, photographs, documents, newspaper clippings, press releases and deeds to illustrate the StoryMap.

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

The Fondren Fellow should be a self-starter and have a working knowledge of ArcGIS or a willingness to learn new programs in digital humanities. Students from the School of Humanities or the School of Social Sciences are encouraged to apply. Remote work options are available for this project.

*Goals*
- The fellow will organize and analyze materials across multiple archives
- The fellow develop a StoryMap of the Imperial Prison Farm and

surrounding area in Fort Bend Country, Texas and examine the archaeological discovery, grassroots activism and preservation efforts commemorating the lives of the Sugar Land 95

*Learning Objectives*

- Improve data literacy skills and research skills including qualitative and quantitative data analysis
- Enhance knowledge of historical themes concerning convict labor in Fort Bend County using a spatial perspective
- Increase ability to work in conjunction with a variety of different source types (maps, images, narrative) to support your spatially based conclusions
- Learn to present conclusions in a digital format to a wide audience

## 4. Learning Outcomes

Students will learn collaborative research strategies, sharpen communication & writing skills, and build valuable knowledge in the areas of digital humanities and public history.

# 3) Centennial of the Vote! 100 Years of Activism

## 1. Project Summary

August 26, 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the right to vote for American women. Women first organized and collectively fought for suffrage at the national level in 1848. 71 years later, on June 28, 1919, the Texas legislature voted to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, the first southern state to do so. By August of 1920, 36 states (including Texas) approved the amendment and it became part of the United States Constitution. The Woodson Research Center contains several collections of women from all walks of life who used their right to vote as leaders in Houston and the broader national community, working for women's rights, civil rights for people of color, rights for the LGBTQIA community, improved education and health care, and many other issues. This exhibit will help tell their stories.

The Billie Carr political papers, MS 373, document Carr's long career as a political organizer for the Democratic Party in Harris County. Beginning in the 1950's Carr fought for civil rights, protested the Vietnam War and fought for women's rights in the 1970s, and for gay rights in the 1980s. She helped organize the 1966 campaign leading to the election of Barbara Jordan, the first black woman elected to the Texas Senate, and was elected to the Democratic National Committee in 1972.

The Judge Clarease Yates papers, MS 123, document Clarease Yates' commitment to civic engagement as a judge with the United States Immigration and Nationalization Service in Houston, Texas, as well as board member of the Sickle Cell Association of the Gulf Coast, member of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, the NAACP, and board member of the Houston Symphony.

The Glenda Joe / Houston Asian American community advocacy and festival arts records, MS 667, document the activities of Glenda Joe with the Houston Asian American Festival Association, as well as with community advocacy issues concerning the Asian American communities in Houston.

The Fellow might also review materials in the Frankie Randolph Carter papers (MS 372), the Oveta Culp Hobby papers (MS 459), the Sara Hickman collection (MS 718), and the Gertrude Barnstone papers (MS 587), for additional information on women activists in our collections.

Scans of the materials would be used to create an online exhibit using the Omeka platform detailing the history of these women and their impact on the Houston community. Each of the first three women also completed an oral history which resides in the Digital Scholarship Archive and can be linked to the exhibit.

## 2. Key Tasks

- Review the collections to identify a narrative of the exhibit
- Train with WRC mentor in the Omeka platform
- Select items for the online exhibit that are visually compelling to scan (WRC mentor will help scan the items selected and create the appropriate metadata)
- Prepare the Omeka layout
- Write the text for the Omeka exhibit

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

- An interest in history/ a humanities background
- The ability to identify items in the collections that contribute to the narrative of the impact of Carr, Yates, Joe's, and other activists' lives on the Houston community
- The ability to work with minimal supervision

## 4. Learning Outcomes

Using their research skills, students would learn how to analyze primary sources and develop a narrative based on these sources. Students would also become familiar with aspects of digital humanities, including becoming familiar with the Omeka platform, scanning original materials, and learning how to prepare an online exhibit.

# 4) A short history of the Leibniz Society of North America: explaining the foundation, early years, development and present form of an international academic organization dedicated to the promotion of the critical understanding and evaluation of the philosophy of G.W. Leibniz.

## 1. Project Summary

A very brief statement of the project is that it would be a 40-year history of an international academic/scholarly organization, a history that is intimately linked to Rice University, roughly 1980-2020.  The organization is the Leibniz Society of North America.  (Leibniz is an early modern philosopher and mathematician.  The Society emphasizes the former much more than the latter field.)

Most of the relevant documents are already in the Woodson Research Center.  At least three of the major meetings in the history of the Society took place at Rice University (in the Kylve Morrow Room, April 18-20, 2003), including a major international conference held in Fondren Library, with many scholars attending from places like Western Europe, Canada and South America.

The main responsibilities of the Fondren Fellow would involve organizing Dr. Mark Kulstad's papers, seeking out and organizing relevant data, and probably also drafting at least parts of the history.

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## 3. Fellow Qualifications

Graduate student and/or someone who specializing in history or philosophy would be preferred, along with advanced undergraduates.

## 4. Learning Outcomes

Fellows would get a very good idea of an important aspect of how academic research works, in ways that don't typically show through much at all to undergraduates, and surprisingly little even to many graduate students.  Key issues are national and international research specialty organizations like the Leibniz Society of North America, conferences, national meetings of disciplines, presentations at conferences, specialty journals (like the Society's *Leibniz Review*), and finally the rise up the academic ranks *outside*

*of an academic's home university,* in academic organizations that are national or international.

For some the main knowledge gains may well be in gaining research facility with archives and internet research. While I wish I could say that a philosophy student would gain a lot in terms of knowledge of strictly philosophical subjects, I don't think I can say that. They would, however, gain a lot of knowledge about one way things work behind the scenes in almost all sub-disciplines of philosophy.

# 5) Translational Humanities for Public Health

## 1. Project Summary

The proposed project, "Translational Humanities for Public Health," is the continuation of a project funded by the Rice COVID-19 Research Fund that launched in summer 2020. This project will identify, synthesize, and translate humanities-based responses to COVID-19 from around the world so that these projects may together provide a blueprint for education and research on pandemic preparedness and response in humanities disciplines.

The NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) defines *translation* as "the process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic, and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and populations – from diagnostics and therapeutics to medical procedures and behavioral interventions." It is a fundamental premise of this project that the humanities offer unique and critically important insights, observations, and methods that can improve the human condition and help alleviate suffering in our pandemic response.

The first phase of research, conducted from June-August 2020, involved a team of the PI (Ostherr), a recent PhD, a grad student and two undergrads in the development of a survey instrument in Qualtrics and a database of potential respondents based on research to identify relevant humanities-based COVID-19 responses. We will disseminate our findings through a public-facing website which the Fondren Fellow(s) will help to design, that will inform scholars, artists, policymakers, government officials, students, educators, health professionals, patients, community-based organizations, technology developers, and others who are engaged in helping individuals and communities survive and thrive during the pandemic.

We recently began sending out the survey to over 300 respondents around the world to identify translational medical humanities COVID-19 responses, from front-line response in hospitals or medical schools to writing public responses or developing educational resources, and other efforts we may yet be unaware of. So far, we have a robust response of 146 entries in our database, and we expect to reach at least 200 responses.

Fondren Fellow(s) will help with several phases of the project. First, Fellow(s) will participate in the review, analysis, and interpretation of the survey results. On the basis of the results, the Fellow(s) will conduct follow-up interviews with a sampling of respondents whose work represents a distinct form of applied medical humanities pandemic response. We will simultaneously work to design and develop the public-facing website (using Drupal or Omeka-S), with technical support from John Mulligan in the Center for Research Computing at Rice. All of these activities will take place under the guidance of the PI and a graduate RA, and we will hold weekly lab meetings. This project has already undergone IRB review. Our survey includes a consent procedure, and all students and faculty involved in the project are required to complete CITI certificates to ensure compliance with human subjects training.

This digital project will expose students to a wide range of cutting-edge, innovative humanities methods for engaging publicly with current events, while also enabling them to develop independent research, analytical, and collaborative skills. The project will benefit the scholarly communities at Rice, across the U.S., and internationally, as we draw on and bring together approaches from around the world.

## 2. Key Tasks

The project will entail participation in multiple phases of qualitative research: identifying and adding respondents to an existing database of over 300 potential research participants; disseminating the survey through Qualtrics; reviewing and coding survey responses; conducting follow-up interviews by phone/zoom; analysis and interpretation of interview results; and design and development of a public-facing website in Omeka-S or Drupal. In addition, the fellow will conduct independent inquiry to identify techniques for enhancing the design for the site and identifying effective data visualizations for our results.

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

At a minimum, the students would have some humanities training, strong written and oral communication skills, detailed note-taking abilities to document research process and interviews, and would feel confident in their ability to learn new digital platforms and troubleshoot on them. Ideally, students would also have more advanced technical skills, including familiarity with Excel and basic database management, basic website development (Drupal and/or Omeka-S), survey management software (Qualtrics), and experience working on collaborative teams. The advanced technical skills are not required as long as students are tech-savvy enough to learn quickly.

## 4. Learning Outcomes

Students will learn how to translate their humanities training into methods, perspectives, and tools that can be useful for a wide range of settings that are dealing with the pandemic response. More broadly, this will help those students learn how to translate humanities methods for future jobs within and beyond the academy, and it will also provide a blueprint for how to do the same for other crises, such as the climate crisis. Overall, the students will develop technical, communicative, analytical, design, and collaborative skills, and they will also contribute to valuable work that benefits society as a whole.

# 6) Women of Rice Omeka Exhibit

## 1. Project Summary

CSWGS and the Woodson Research Center have collaborated over the last few years in three different exhibits in the first floor hallway of Fondren Library that we have collectively called **"The Women of Rice."** The first exhibit featured staff; the second, faculty; the third, alumni. While the first two never had a web-presence, the third did. With the university's switch to Drupal 8, a free-standing Omeka exhibit site seems the best route to make all three exhibits available online. This Omeka site fits within existing Fondren Library priorities for Omeka collections of Rice historical information (such as "Rice Between Decisions"). The CSWGS website would continue to point to the site as an external resource, helping to guide more people to the assets managed by the Woodson as well. This stand-alone project also fits the Fondren Fellowship's mission to produce work that benefits Fondren and Rice's scholarly community as it builds students' digital, library, and research skills.

CSWGS has retained files for all images, text, and hyperlinks associated with the three exhibits. **Work can begin immediately in fall 2020.** CSWGS has no hard internal completion deadline, so a Fellow's 200 hours could occur entirely within the fall semester, or be paced over the full academic year and into summer 2021 if needed. While much data is already available for the third alumni exhibit, it is also possible that the first two exhibits (staff and faculty) could be supplemented with additional archival work. The three stages of the project allow work to begin entirely remotely and then potentially transition into face-to-face work if conditions allow.

## 2. Key Tasks

*Stage One:* **Design Consultations** with CSWGS and Woodson staff to ensure aesthetic continuity within the site and relative to other Woodson Omeka collections of similar scope

and purpose. The Fellow would work with Angela Wren Wall to shape and bolster existing narrative content. *Skill aspects* – Zoom meetings, Rice Box access, Omeka training (if necessary), and email correspondence. ***Stage Two:* Organizing and Mounting Pre-existing Data** into the Omeka platform, including text, images, and hyperlinks. This stage includes occasional meetings with CSWGS and Woodson staff to check progress, quality, and questions that arise in construction. *Skill aspects* – Zoom meetings, increased technical expertise with Omeka, minor text drafting and editing, potential image modification with Photoshop or other software, email correspondence. ***Stage Three:* Additional Archival Work** to supplement the data available for the three exhibits. *Skill aspects* – remote and in person archival work; image sourcing beyond Woodson's holdings.

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

Omeka experience desired but not required. Image editing/web optimization experience helpful but not required. Familiarity with Zoom, Box, and professional email correspondence expected. No prior subject knowledge of women's studies or Rice history required.

## 4. Learning Outcomes

A Fellow selected for this project would hone practical skills in the Omeka platform and related digital competencies (such as Photoshop, Zoom, Box, etc.). Archival and research skills are also key for the work of Stage Three. Substantively, the student will become more familiar with the role women have played in the history of Rice University. At a professional and disciplinary level, the student will also engage broader principles informing digital museum exhibit construction, as well as humanities perspectives on narrative and representation.

# 7) Teaching and Consulting in R

## 1. Project Summary

This teaching position helps extend the reach and effectiveness of Fondren's data training and consulting services.  It helps to increase campus awareness of Fondren's data services and improve data literacy, particularly among students.

We've offered 63 Data@Rice workshops in the last fiscal year with 466 registrants. R workshops in particular were very popular and well rated.

The student would be doing some independent, inquiry-based work by improving existing courses and developing new ones.

## 2. Key Tasks

- Teaching existing data courses, such as R for Data@Rice workshop series and Software Carpentry
- Developing new data courses and course materials, such as github
- Assisting researchers during consulting hours
- Helping to shape our data program, such as by assisting with outreach, assessment, and program development
- Working on occasional programming projects

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

- Proficient in R programming language, statistics. Familiarity with Python, Github, Javascript is a bonus
- Preparing course materials and teaching audience with different levels of programming proficiency

## 4. Learning Outcomes

The student will gain a lot of teaching and consulting experience during the project period. He/she has the opportunity to get certified as a Software Carpentry instructor.

# 8) "Who's Using It?": Open Educational Resources at Rice

## 1. Project Summary

In response to University and Library concerns about course affordability and accessibility at Rice, Fondren has begun to explore ways to encourage adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) and library-licensed material in Rice courses. A recent Fondren intern report on affordable learning (https://doi.org/10.25611/chme-rx68) makes a number of recommendations for supporting such an initiative. One of the recommendations is that the Library identify potential campus partners, including instructors already incorporating OER into their courses. These "early adopters" can offer useful feedback about their experience using OER (benefits and challenges) and be valuable partners in campus course affordability programs.

For this project, the Fellow will design and implement a project that identifies existing OER usage on campus.  The Fellow will be encouraged to learn how other institutions have done this via literature and program reviews. If appropriate, the Fellow will be encouraged to reach out to other campuses to learn more. The Fellow will then design and implement a study to identify OER usage. The Fellow will be encouraged to leverage their unique background, experience, and skills for the project.

## 2. Key Tasks

- Evaluate other institution's models for identifying campus OER usage to determine if any are appropriate for Rice project. If not, develop alternative model.
- Design and implement project to identify existing Rice instructor usage of OER.
- Develop report on project findings and make recommendations for next steps.

## 3. Fellow Qualifications

- Interest in OER and course affordability.
- Experience with project design and implementation (e.g., surveys, interviews, research)

## 4. Learning Outcomes

- What OER is and the benefits and challenges of campus adoption.
- The role libraries can play in OER adoption and other affordable coursework initiatives on campus.
- Library research skills (e.g., literature review).
- Project design and implementation.