DIGITAL SEED GRANT WINNERS AND FINAL PROJECTS 2020-2021

ABOUT

Walker Library *Digital Scholarship Initiatives* supports individual and collaborative digital projects in research, teaching, and public outreach from any discipline on campus. The Digital Seed Grant is an annual award for start-up funds, developed to encourage and create opportunities for faculty, staff, and graduate students to use digital technologies in their research, service, or teaching.

The Digital Seed Grant (**dsi.mtsu.edu/dsgrant**) had impressive applications for its fourth year (award period 2020-2021), which initially launched in 2016 for the award period of 2017-2018. The Digital Seed Grant Review Committee and Library Dean decided to award two grants for the 2020-2021 academic year and extended this into 2022 to help projects impacted by Covid.

The AY 20-21 awardees were announced on the website at https://dsi.mtsu.edu/dsgrant20-21. Below is a summary of the winning projects and resulting outcomes.

Hidden Town in 3D Website

Primary Investigator (PI): Dr. Molly Taylor-Poleskey, Department of History

PI's Project Description: This grant enabled the web presence, https://HiddenTown3D.org, for a multi-year, collaborative project of a digital reconstruction of a slave dwelling that no longer exists physically. It is a platform for scholarly and public engagement and builds awareness about the role of museums in considering the impacts of racism on the public understanding of American history. The seed grant covered the wages of a PhD Candidate to create the webpage with a SquareSpace template and populate it with our images, essays, and links to 3D models in SketchFab.

Purpose and Audience: This project launched a website to present 3D animations and scholarly essays for the project, "Hidden Town in 3D." Hidden Town in 3D virtually presents the home and speculated possessions of Christian David, an enslaved man who lived and worked in the Moravian community of Salem, North Carolina in the 19th century. Public History students researched and composed essays explaining their curatorial choices in building and furnishing David's dwelling, which was not preserved with the dwellings of white enslavers when the Old Salem Museum was created in the 1950s.

This website and its 3D animations are the result of a partnership between Old Salem Museum and Gardens in North Carolina and the Animation and Digital History Programs at MTSU. The idea came from the museum's attempts to recover and represent the stories of the African Americans who lived in the village in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Until the last decade, the museum has focused primarily on the stories and artifacts of the town's white inhabitants. This project advances new understandings of the nature of race in southern town life

through virtual reality, affording the public to perceive historic Salem in a way that is not possible in the current physical landscape.

With the website enabled by the Walker Library Digital Seed Grant, we are now able to share our research and models with a broad audience of scholars, students, and museum visitors. We are currently using the launch of the website as an opportunity to progress to the next phase of the project by asking for feedback through emails to prominent scholars of the interpretation of slavery at American museums. The next phase of the project is to apply for external grants for an on-site iteration of the virtual Christian David house at Old Salem Museums and Gardens. On one unsuccessful National Endowment for the Humanities grant application, two reviewers noted the need for this website to clarify the purpose of the project. HiddenTown3D.org brings all our work together in a succinct, yet informative platform. Website visitors can customize their visit to delve as deeply as they choose into the details of the reconstructions and how they are made.

Project News:
MTSU history, animation students break 3D ground on 19th-century 'Hidden Town.' MTSU News article written by Gina Logue on May 15, 2018. https://mtsunews.com/mtsu-old-salem-project-summer2018/
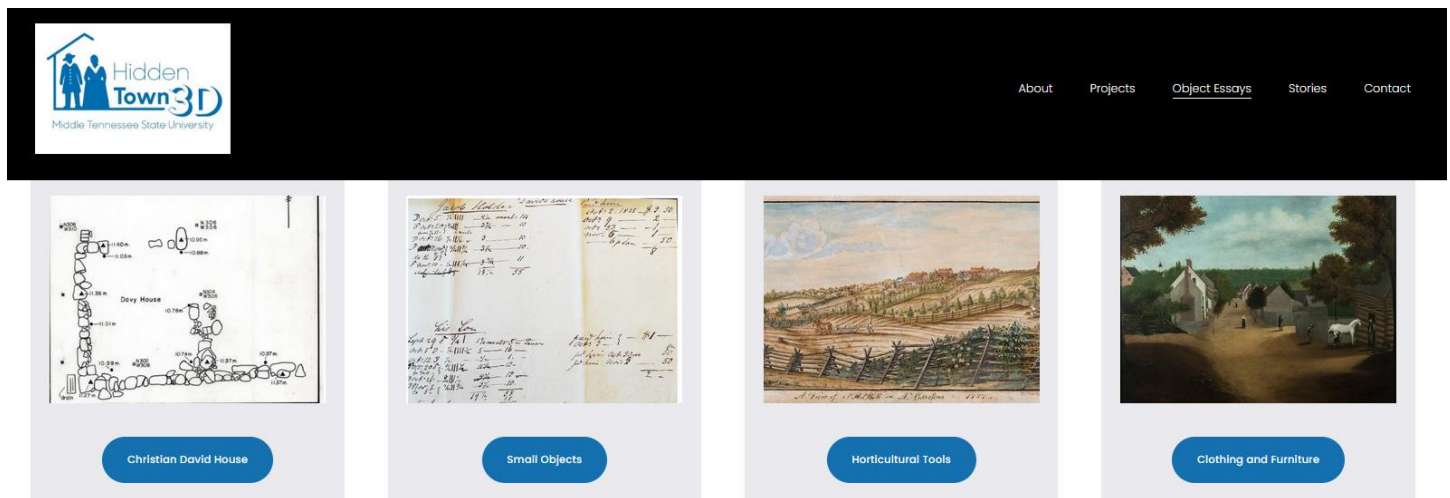
Studio Art Teaching Resources

Primary Investigator (PI): Professor Mark Mcleod, Department of Art and Design

PI's Project Description: The Digital Seed Grant proposal was submitted to encourage collaboration among Art and Design Foundations faculty through the creation of a website for studio art resources. As part of the Digital Seed Grant that was awarded in September 2020, an email was sent to fellow faculty in the Art and Design Department requesting sample studio assignments and other resources. The resources that were submitted included assignments and assessment measures which are not only invaluable to new faculty that may not have much teaching experience but also beneficial to seasoned faculty members in the ongoing development of their course curriculum. Because of the collection of these resources, studio art faculty now have access to each other's curricular content and can adjust their own assignments to better align with the learning objectives for foundational courses in Studio Art.

Purpose and Audience: During that first call in September, five colleagues responded with a total of 100 assignments. These 100 assignments were then edited by the grant-funded student worker for clarity and duplications were removed. This editing left us with 25 Drawing (ART 1620 and 1640), 25 Two-Dimensional Design (ART 1610), 18 Three-Dimensional Design (ART 1630), and 13 Digital Foundations (ART 1650) assignments. Although the Foundations faculty meet regularly to discuss the development of our area, I believe that this is the first time that assignments were gathered and shared so broadly. In addition to these 81 assignments other resources such as rubrics, student guidelines for documenting artwork, and course content were also shared.

The grant-loaned equipment included a scanner, digital cameras, and lighting kits. The ongoing pandemic and the continued implementation of remote courses made in-person collaboration with colleagues difficult. We were, however, able to train our current work-study students to use the equipment to document student work. They set up a drop-off table outside of the student gallery space where students and faculty could submit work to be documented. This went surprisingly well and is something we might implement going forward. As things start to return to normal the equipment should see more frequent use.

Through ongoing website maintenance and the inclusion of an assignment submission page, the website is anticipated to continue growing in both content quantity and quality. Encouraging faculty to use the resources provided and to contribute their innovative teaching ideas should improve both student learning experiences and the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in learning objectives.

Project News:
The assignments and other resources are viewable on the web at https://studioartteachingresources.com. Instructors can even contribute with the Submit Assignment option on the website.
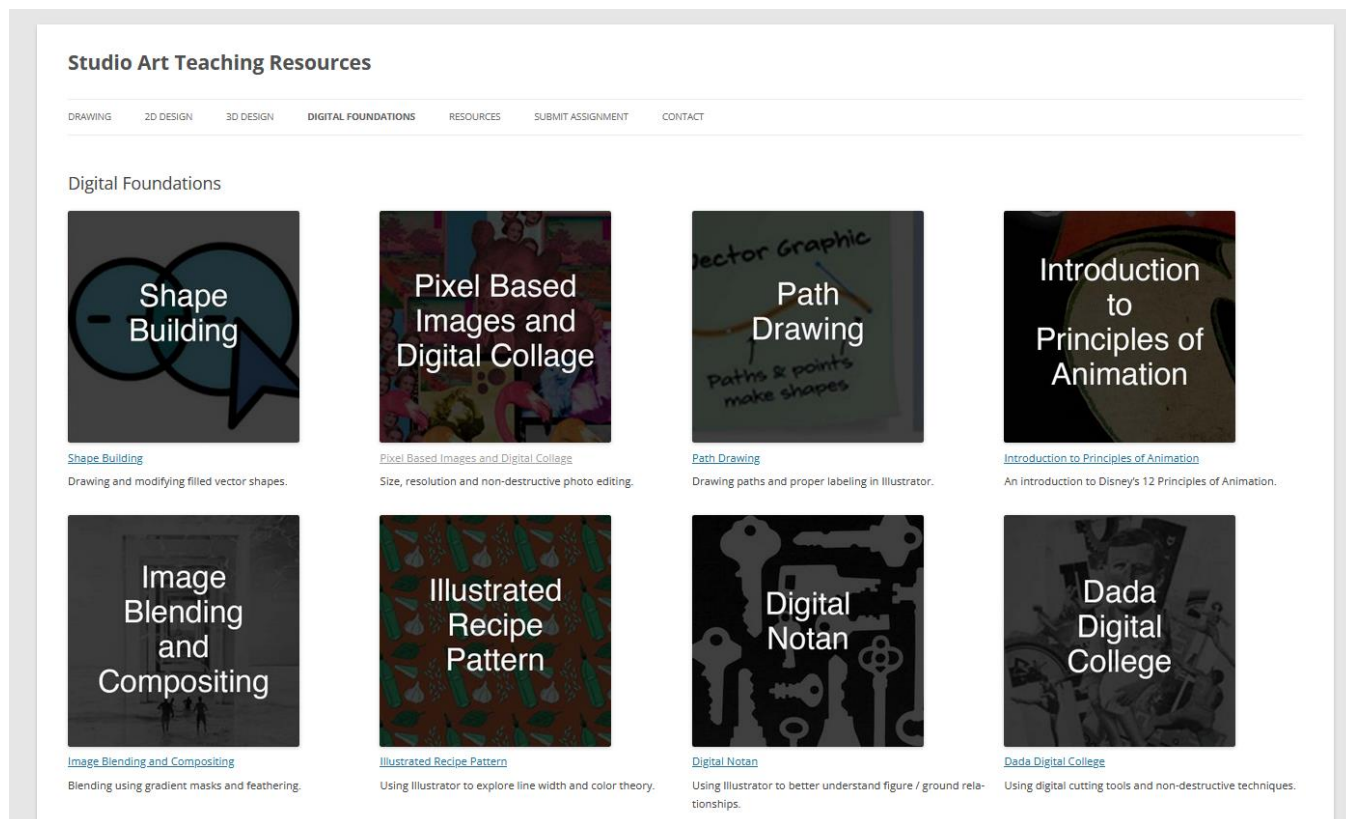
FUNDING AND SUPPORT

The Digital Seed Grant is made possible by generous funding and support from the Library Dean and the Digital Scholarship Initiatives team. For many, this is a starter grant, which can lead to national grant opportunities in the future and Walker Library wants to encourage and support such creativity activity.

As a competitive grant, evaluation of applications and assessment of digital lifecycles of selected projects takes time. The Digital Seed Grant is indebted to the time of the Review Committee, comprised of digital project experts from Walker Library and the Digital Partners (a rotating member from the Department of History, Center for Historic Preservation, Center for Popular Music, Albert Gore Research Center, and the University Archives). The Walker Library also thanks those that help promote the grant and encourage participation. Since 2017, the library has jumped-started campus research by funding 15 digital seed grant projects across various academic disciplines.

The 2021-2022 call for proposals closed; and those projects recently concluded on June 30, 2022. As those projects are finalized, the following website will be updated: https://dsi.mtsu.edu/dsgrant21-22.

The 2022-2023 call for proposals will closed, and those projects are running from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022. As those projects are completed, the following website will be updated: https://dsi.mtsu.edu/dsgrant21-22.

For more information on the Digital Seed Grant and access the application, visit https://dsi.mtsu.edu/dsgrant.