



a biweekly digital art history digest

# QUADRIVIUM

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## WELCOME!

Welcome to the first issue of *Quadrivium*, a new digital art history digest produced at the Michelle Smith Collaboratory for Visual Culture housed within the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland, College Park.

[Digital technologies are becoming increasingly prevalent in art history research, teaching, and publication.](#) As the field grows, however, it can be tough to keep track of new developments.

This newsletter aims to share interesting projects and new tools in digital art history (DAH) and digital humanities (DH) with a broad audience of readers. On a biweekly basis, we will present a selection of stories related to pedagogy, museums, and scholarly research as well as opportunities within the field.

We hope to demonstrate the many exciting ways that digital tools are enhancing the field of humanities, and art

history in particular. Ideally, *Quadrivium* will inspire you to explore the field on your own and consider how these new methods might change your own approach to the humanities.

We look forward to any suggestions, comments, or criticisms on our first few issues. And if you have any content that you would like to share with our readers, please feel free to contact us by Twitter or email.



*"I'm not sure what a computer is, but art + math + logic? What could be better?" -Luca Pacioli on DAH*

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## DUKE OFFERING NEW M.A. PROGRAM

Duke University is now offering an M.A. program in Cultural and Historical Visualization with concentrations in Digital Art History or Computational Media. This program has broad interdisciplinary appeal, aimed toward students who envision careers in "such fields as public history, city planning and

architectural design, cultural heritage, museum exhibition design and visualization-based journalism" as well as more traditional graduate students ultimately seeking Ph.D.s in art history, architectural history, and archaeology. Over the course of three semesters, students take classes on

new visualization technologies as well as graduate seminars on visual studies. The program culminates with a M.A. thesis project. You can find more information on the program's website: [M.A. in Cultural and Historical Visualization](#).

## FEATURED THIS WEEK:

- Social media!
- Apothecary jars!
- 3-D modeling!
- Paleography!
- Crowd-sourcing research!
- And more!

## 3-D MODELS ENHANCE INKAN EXHIBITION



One 3-D model available thanks to the Smithsonian

From June 26, 2015 to June 1, 2018, the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian is hosting an exhibition on [“The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire.”](#) Not only does the exhibition have a gorgeous online presence, the Smithsonian has included a number of 3-D models of Inkan buildings and architectural elements that visitors can explore on the web. They were created by the Smithsonian X 3-D team using 3-D scanning technology at Inkan sites in Peru. You can read more about the creation of the models on the [museum’s blog](#).

## REVIEWING DIGITAL TEACHING TOOLS

Have you used any digital technologies that have changed your teaching? Or any that have been seriously unhelpful? What technologies are becoming most popular on campus?

This past week, the Chronicle for Higher Education brought us a new perspective on digital teaching tools. [“UNC Gives Professors a Way to Rate Classroom Technologies Across Campuses”](#) describes a new, Yelp!-like platform for faculty to share their experiences with various pedagogical technologies available on campus.

On a practical level, this platform will allow departments to research teaching tools that others have tried before making decisions to buy expensive gadgets or implement new teaching strategies.

This is also a very creative usage of existing social media technology that will help cut down

on bureaucracy, improve teaching outcomes, and — importantly! — build community between departments and faculty members that may rarely communicate.

What can math profs learn from art history profs? Or biology from sociology? We’ll soon find out!

## UNITING PAINTED OBJECTS AND THEIR MODELS

Gentle readers, let me tell you about a visual database project that is close to my heart.

In the late 1980s, the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam developed a detailed documentation system for pre-industrial functional objects that appear in prints and paintings. More recently they have turned

this documentation system into the [“ALMA database”](#) which links these *depictions* of pre-industrial objects to their material counterparts.

This database deepens our understanding of works in the museum collection and facilitates research on material objects and their drawn

or painted forms. For example, the ALMA showcase features Alexandra Gaba-van Dongen [discussing a Syrian apothecary jar](#) that appears in *The Three Marys at the Tomb* by Jan van Eyck. Such objects were part of lived experience as well as art in the fifteenth century.



The UMD College of Arts and Humanities and the Maryland Institute for Technologies in the Humanities (MITH) have received a \$1.25 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the project [Synergies among Digital Humanities and African American History and Culture: An integrated](#)

[research and training model](#). This venture will unite a number of departments and centers across UMD in the study of “African American labor, migration and artistic expression,” a broad field that “has not yet been widely engaged by the digital humanities.” The principal investigator, ARHU

Dean Bonnie Thornton Dill, will oversee a team that includes staff from MITH, the University Libraries, and the David C. Driskell Center. They hope the project will serve as a catalyst for scholars to bring digital humanities research methods to a field of study that is already strong on campus.



## PHOTOSHOP AND DIGITAL PALEOGRAPHY

Many art historians find themselves spending weeks, months, and even years sifting through archival materials. These resources are often difficult to decipher due to variations in handwriting, shorthand notation, and the physical depredations of time.

Thankfully, researchers are exploring new ways to augment old documents and increase their legibility. [In an article from the journal Digital Humanities Quarterly](#), Hilary Havens of the University of Tennessee describes how she used Adobe Photoshop to

enhance eighteenth century documents that she was preparing for publication. She was able to recover text that had faded or been purposefully crossed out using the color manipulation capabilities of this common photo-editing software.

Students, staff, and faculty can often download Adobe Photoshop for free from their institutions. Open source software like GIMP is also a good alternative.

## CROWDSOURCING ICONOGRAPHY

Social media is a growing platform for scholarly exchange. Besides the traditional listserv, researchers use services like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr to connect with academics around the world. Case in point:

last week, the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee’s Special Collections posted a beautiful but puzzling frontispiece from a 1702 theological volume in their collection. They solicited opinions on the strange

iconography and the post was further publicized by other Special Collections librarians on Twitter. Want to make your own contribution, or see possible answers? [Check out the images on their Tumblr post](#).



# UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

## Wading in DAH Water: A Digital Art History Workshop for Curious Beginners

The Michelle Smith Collaboratory's DAH workshop will return for its second year on May 23-27, 2016. Conceived as a gentle and easy introduction to some facets of digital art history, akin to slowly entering a swimming pool via the shallow section, this four-day event will cover some of the more popular areas of DAH, such as mapping, virtual modeling, augmented reality, online exhibitions, database-building and visualization. All are welcome! Stay tuned for more information about the particulars; for now, [you can take a look at last year's offerings](#).

## Digital Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Victoria, British Columbia

According to their website, this two-week June event "provides an ideal environment for discussing and learning about new computing technologies and how they are influencing teaching, research, dissemination, creation, and preservation in different disciplines, via a community-based approach." They offer a wealth of in-depth courses and workshops, such as "Fundamentals of Programming Coding for Human(ists)." And what could be more beautiful than Vancouver Island in the summer? [See more on their website](#).



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