SourceLab

Call for Proposals for the SourceLab Prototype Series
Deadline: No later than November 30, 2015

The Problem: You know of a fascinating historical artifact that someone has digitized and placed online: a text, or an image, or a film, or a sound recording. You'd like to use this artifact in the classroom, or for your research, or as part of an archive or public history project. Yet you're not sure if you can use this thing you've found, because you know too little about it. Who created the original, of which this is a digitized copy? When, where, for what purpose? How was it preserved? How faithful to the original is the digital copy? What right (in Intellectual Property terms, or otherwise) do you have to use it? Will it be there tomorrow?

What you're missing, in short, is the kind of framework a good scholarly edition of the source would provide. And there's not a lot of chance that a commercial press—or a mass digitization project like Google Books—is going to provide one fast enough to be of use.

A Solution: SourceLab is a new digital publishing initiative sponsored by the Department of History at the University of Illinois. We're helping students create digital critical editions of online materials.   Our editions take the artifacts you find on the Internet, and build scholarly frames around them to provide the contextual information you and your audience need. We describe the artifacts' origins, provenance, current archival location, and publication history. We investigate their copyright status, and provide reliable ways to cite them. We stabilize them in the online world, to help make sure they won't go away.

For more information about the program, see our brochure, "SourceLab: An Idea." For an early prototype of our work, see our edition of "Red Cross Work on Mutilés, At Paris" (1918).

But we're just getting started. Next Spring, we'll be organizing a special seminar where University of Illinois students will work to create new, and better, prototype editions.   *And that's where we need your help!*

What We'd Like from You:

We're looking for suggestions of online materials that we could use in building our next prototype editions. In return, once approved by SourceLab, these prototypes will join our public prototype series, and be available for your use however you see fit! For example, "Red Cross Work on Mutilés, At Paris" will be used this Fall (Fall 2015) in History 142 (Western Civilization Since 1660), taught by Professor Tamara Chaplin.

To submit a proposal, simply write up a short paragraph describing the item in question. Provide:

- *The current hyperlink you have to it (if you have one: if you think it's 'out there', but don't know where, that's okay too.)*
- *Whatever bibliographical references you may have that could help us research it.*
- *A description of why you think it is interesting, for teaching or scholarship or public history, etc.*
- *An example of how you would like to use the work in the future. (This last is important, as our ambition is not simply to get material "out there," but to get it into actual use.)*

Save this in a document, and then send this proposal to us, care of:

SourceLab2015@gmail.com

That's it: we'll take it from there, and get back to you about what we think we can do.

FAQ

"What Kind of Things are You Looking For?"

We're very open to ideas, and interested in all kinds of possibilities. Like the Web, we're not limited to text or image: we're interested in sound and video and even numerical databases—for example, geospatial data—as well. Nor do we want to limit ourselves to things in English. We see translation as one of the public services our student editors will work to provide, with their editions. Our main limitation is one of scale. We're leaving long texts (e.g. novels) or large collections of papers to professional scholarly editors, who can more easily handle the multi-year effort necessary to see such editions to fruition. Rather, we're looking for shorter individual documents, which while more manageable for our students, will be of great use to some audience.

"For Example?"

- You've found a rare book on GoogleBooks, that speaks eloquently to a theme of interest to you. You'd like your students to read 10 pages of it. But it's 900 pages long, no one has heard of the author, the GoogleBooks version seems to be somewhat corrupted, and there are words in the text that need to be glossed or translated. *We can clean all that up, make it easier to handle, provide the students the context they need to follow the section you've assigned, make sure the copy is legit, and also provide downloadable versions for offline reading or printing: for free.*

- There's a picture you've seen a million times online (a search reveals 1000 different copies), everyone knows it and talks about it, you'd like to use it in a lecture as well as in an article you're writing. It's origins and current location are a total mystery, as is its title. It's probably in the public record, right? *We can help you with this, too.*

- There's a famous song that you'd like students to hear and study. There are 10,000 different versions on line. But which is the best for your purposes? And can they

download it to their phones? And can its text be transcribed—or even translated—so that students can talk about the words as well as the music? *Those are also questions we hope our editions can clarify.*

- Your group has digitized a document, and you'd like to make it available for scholarly use, but you're not sure how to publicize it or don't have the resources. You also think having it in a scholarly series will help the public find it and take it seriously as 'real history'. *Sounds great and we'd love to take it on.*

- You've produced a quantitative data set (say, a statistical spreadsheet or a GIS shapefile) from some historical sources.   You think it would be great to make it available to the public. But you're not sure you have time to do it, and in any case it might involve technical questions you're not prepared to research or handle. That, and you think scholars would need to see the source with which you've been working, and you're not sure it's online. *Publishing data is part of what we're hoping to do.*

These are just a few of the possibilities we are hoping this initiative can explore: and we're very open to other ideas and suggestions as well. Write us at SourceLab2015@gmail.com

Thank you for your attention!