Introduction

Kiersten Greene, State University of New York at New Paltz

Steve Brier, City University of New York Graduate Center

Issue #6 of the *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy* draws together scholarship that highlights the impact of digital technologies and tools internationally, with a special emphasis on Africa and the African diaspora. The call for this themed issue of *JITP* sought submissions that explore the ways in which digital methods of research, communication, and pedagogy have affected the heritage, policies, arts, histories, education, and activism of African and African diasporan communities. We teamed up with guest co-editors, Angel David Nieves (Hamilton College) and Marla Jaksch (The College of New Jersey), who served as the issue's content experts in the field and have co-authored a conceptual introduction to the four articles on African and African diasporan themes included in this issue.

The four African/African diasporan articles cover a spectrum of work that reflects the growing use of digital technologies and practices across Africa and the African diaspora. These digital tools include the pedagogical uses in universities of online scholarly articles, the efforts of particular African indigenous peoples to use transcription and blogging software for cultural preservation and educational and political purposes, the

uses of blogs and sophisticated digital humanities techniques, including data visualization, horizontal editing software, digital mapping, and big data analysis to explore African-American cultural practices historically, and the uses of various open source software to encourage transcultural digital dialogues linking U.S. and Ugandan college students. An additional fifth article included in this issue, though not specifically on Africa and the African diaspora, also employs videoconferencing, email technologies, and iPhones and iPads to encourage international dialogues and exchanges focusing on Shakespeare's plays among North and South American, Asian, North African, and European undergraduates. All of the articles focus on projects—whether educational, cultural, or political—that digital technologies have enhanced and/or made possible. Together, they present a kaleidoscopic lens for viewing and understanding access, implementation, and use of technology from an international perspective.

Contributions to This Issue

In her piece "Runaway Quilt Project," Deimosa Webber-Bey weaves together an intricate, two-pronged narrative that encompasses both her experience with digital exploration in the humanities and her curiosity and personal history with quilting, a cultural practice that traces its roots back to racial slavery and beyond. She draws together the concrete, tangible, and literal visualizations of story, time, and place that are represented in quilting and the two-dimensional art (if you will) of visual mapping and digital data visualization. Initiated in a digital humanities course for librarians taught by [Interactive Technology and Pedagogy](#) graduate and [*JITP* author](#) Chris Sula, the project grew beyond the scope of the original course assignment, encompassing a deep and broad exploration of digital tools from [Google Ngrams](#) and [Digress.it](#) to [Timeline JS](#) and [Tableau Public](#). Simultaneously, Webber-Bey created two "infographic"

quilts that indelibly display the results of research conducted for this project. She went on to display one of these quilts, "Maker Known," at the 2013 International Quilt Festival in Houston, Texas. Webber-Bey's scholarly contribution to this journal and the field encourages further exploration of digital tools that challenge "known" histories and data collection norms.

Thomas Fisher's "Teaching Online Journals in Tanzania: Knowledge Production and the Digital Divide" offers a case study regarding the limits and pedagogical possibilities of using online journals to teach undergraduates who do not have a strong sense of research culture. Fisher, who taught for several years at Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), one of the newly created private universities in East Africa, expands the conversation about the digital divide and access to include the skills students need to use available scholarly resources. Fisher details how the digital divide in African universities is more a question of slow (sometimes very slow) Internet access, rather than no access at all. Teaching students how to use online journals to improve their research requires a willingness to be flexible and to rely on students' longstanding knowledge of how to work around repeated problems with Internet access. Fisher concludes that it is not enough to make online academic journals accessible and to instruct students on how to use or apply these resources. Rather, teachers also need to take into consideration specific community practices with regard to study and research approaches that at times may include the desire to do communal and collaborative work rather than rely on more familiar Western notions of individual scholarly attainment.

Philip Kreniske's "How the San of Southern Africa Used Digital Media as Educational and Political Tools" provides a case study in the uses of technology within communities of the San, an indigenous people spread across Namibia, South Africa, and Botswana.

The article focuses on the ways the San use digital technologies, in Kreniske's words, "to document, communicate and represent their values and struggles." Despite severely limited Internet connectivity, lack of access to computers, and low literacy rates, some of the San are employing digital technologies to generate educational texts by using digital transcription services and web publishing of traditional oral folk tales. They also use blogs to communicate their own perspectives on critical political and educational debates across Southern Africa. Employing narrative analysis to assess the work of two well-educated San bloggers and editors from different areas in the San diaspora— Magdelena Lucas and Job Morris—Kreniske argues that the two bloggers used their online presences to consider challenging issues and formulate "critical positions on controversial topics such as the value of and access to an education, the pros and cons of cultural tourism, and the large-scale displacement of San peoples in Botswana."

Richard Mutagejja Kabiito, Christine Liao, Jennifer L. Motter, and Karen Treat Keifer-Boyd's piece, "Transcultural Dialogue Mashup," grew from an action research project that, in each of its iterations, fostered a community of partnership and learning between geographically disparate universities located in Kampala, Uganda; University Park, Pennsylvania; and Helsinki, Finland. Drawing on theories of constructivist learning and culturally relevant pedagogy, participants structured their project to "make visible to self and others their cultural beliefs, practices, and values." The project participants largely sought to utilize open source and no-fee technologies in their quest to communicate digitally. They encountered various speed bumps along the way while attempting to make use of digital tools that foster online collaboration, resulting from varying bandwidth and other access issues; however, they ultimately succeeded in creating a transcultural dialogue between students in the United States and Uganda, thus

motivating participants to foster future collaborations and partnerships — both in person and via digital technologies.

Sheila Cavanagh's "'All Corners of the World': The Possibilities and Challenges of International Electronic Education" describes the World Shakespeare Project (WSP), an international effort that originated at Emory University in Atlanta, that uses Shakespeare plays to create ongoing educational and cultural dialogues and exchanges among undergraduate students. Students in Argentina, India, and Morocco connect with students at Emory University in Atlanta, with students at Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College in Michigan, and with incarcerated students at Monroe Correctional Facility in Washington State. Employing a mix of teleconferencing platforms like Vidyo as well as Skype and email, the students exchange ideas and responses to universal themes revealed in various Shakespeare plays and put on their own performances of the plays for fellow students. Cavanagh rightly concludes that "this approach to cooperative, international electronic education holds great promise" and that "the intersection of Shakespeare and videoconferencing portends a dynamic pedagogical future."

Collaboration Through Digital Tools: Communication, Partnership, and Exploration

In an age when digital technology undeniably transforms the way we consume, produce, and share knowledge, scholarship that draws on the growing possibilities for digital collaboration helps us both theoretically and practically reimagine the reciprocal relationship between culture and technology. The spectrum of technologies explored by the authors in *JITP* Issue #6—from cell phones and screenshots to web-based apps and visual mapping—encourage readers to consider the power and purpose of these readily

accessible technologies in fostering collaboration, communication, partnership, and exploration in instructional pedagogy and digital scholarship. Each of the articles offers ways to imagine "exploring and embracing new possibilities rather than reinforcing existing structures" (Waltzer 2010) in an effort to proactively draw together communities, histories, and voices that often find themselves outside of culturally and geographically "mainstream" settings. Such creative uses of everyday technologies encourage participants and readers to reimagine what it means to "collaborate meaningfully...to develop more empowering and accessible environments" in ever-changing times (Donovan 2013, 17).

We are excited to broaden *JITP*'s reach to consider the international intersections of digital technologies and digital pedagogies, with a special focus on Africa and the African diaspora. We are hopeful that the expanded focus in this issue will yield many more international and transnational contributions in the future.

Kiersten Greene and Steve Brier, Issue Co-Editors

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