Digital Community Engagement at SIUE

How a Regional University can have a Global Impact

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Interdisciplinary Research and Informatics Scholarship

Founded in 2009 by Drs. Jessica DeSpain and Kristine Hildebrandt

Designed to support individual and collaborative scholarship that applies digital content as a primary methodology

Attempt to address and remedy the digital divide
Public, 4-year, regional university

Located in the Metro East across the Mississippi River from St. Louis

Numerous rural and urban local communities are underserved and underrepresented
Where SIUE Students Come From

More than 60% are first generation college students

Of Illinois students, 45% come from Madison County or St. Clair County

13,796 total

The Digital Divide at a Regional University

“The digital divide isn’t just experienced by students; the concentration of informatics scholarship at research universities has cordoned off access to this scholarly practice so that it may be difficult for some scholars to establish or maintain a foothold in the field. At these teaching intensive universities, bringing faculty and students together may be the best method for addressing [this] digital divide.”

- Jessica DeSpain and Kristine Hildebrandt

Creating Communities at SIUE

Student recruitment based on interest over technical experience

Encourage participation through engagement with project, not grades

Treat students as research colleagues
Engaging K-12

Buy-in from teachers and administrators
Student interest and peer social engagement
Specialized recruitment
Clear communication between collaborators
Partnering with a Local Humanities Center

Humanitarianism vs. academic humanities
Public programming for audiences of all ages
Recognize different priorities of individual collaborators
All participants receive the same training and resources through the project
Collaborating with Cultural Institutions

Clear communication of our intentions and process
Ensure institution benefits from relationship
Willingness to adjust digitization plans to meet their needs
International Community Engagement

Awareness of technology obstacles

Importance of field work and community input

Access to skills training and equipment

Process of data collection vs. analysis, translation, and interpretation
Looking Forward...

Create infrastructure to encourage reciprocal partnerships between the university and Metro East communities

Develop connections through the Digital Community Engagement Pathway

Recruitment of underserved students to use digital humanities methodology to address local problems
THANKS!

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Digital Humanities Clubs and CTBF Sites - Coming Soon!