

Book Review

Jennifer Guiliano, *A Primer for Teaching Digital History: Ten Design Principles*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. Pp. 272. \$27.95 (Paperback)

Jennifer Guiliano's book *A Primer for Teaching Digital History: Ten Design Principles* is for high school educators and college professors who are thinking about teaching, or are currently teaching, a branch of digital humanities: digital history. Guiliano writes, "This book serves to assist you in thinking through how the history classroom can serve as a site of knowledge production with and about digital technologies, tools, and approaches" (2). In other words, this work is a pedagogical how-to that provides insightful discussions about syllabi creation and course preparation in a subject matter that has been around for at least three decades but still has not quite yet caught on in many secondary schools and academic institutions around the globe. There are multiple reasons for this educational injustice - a lack of adequate funding, a general disregarding for anything humanities-based, or a small number of instructors who have the knowledge or the technical savvy to take on these courses if and when they are offered. Guiliano attempts to write an accessible book to make it easier for those who may have limited knowledge or resources to generate a fruitful curriculum, and, ultimately, to include or centralize digital history into "our teaching practices" (8).

A Primer for Teaching Digital History is broken up into three compact parts: foundations, selected methods, and forms of scholarship. "Foundations" focuses on "digital history fundamentals and their relationship to analog historical practice in the classroom" (11). "Selected Methods" is written to get teachers "versed [in] digital source criticism, textual analysis, and visualization" (13). And, "Forms of Scholarship" speaks to the types of digital history scholarship produced and how "you'll be ready to consider what form your students' work will take" (13). Each part contains three to four of the ten design principles mentioned in the title. These principles are: sources as data; learning outcomes; new forms of assignments; the basics of digital methods; digital source criticism; text and network analysis; visualization; digital archives, exhibits, and

collections; storytelling; and, crowdsourcing. What makes Guiliano's work so easy to digest is that she makes the creation of material in digital history seem simple. If "you" just follow the instructions, "you" should be able to produce successful assignments or courses devoted to this very vital field of study, which appeals to a variety of audiences in a variety of communities; and, in turn, teach students to become potential digital historians in a world where analog is slowly being phased out.

As someone who appreciates digital humanities and has gone to conferences devoted to the field of study, I can welcome Guiliano's enthusiasm and passion for digital history. There is no doubt she has an abundance of knowledge about the field and her insights are enlightening to the point of almost feeling doable. One can equate *A Primer for Teaching Digital History* to a coach's pep talk before the big game, for those ready, willing, and able to build assignments and a curriculum as robust as she is suggesting. With that said, however, what about those not ready, willing, and able? Throughout the text, Guiliano uses the pronoun "you," which means she is very focused on the readers reading her text; however, that also means she is not focused on those not interested in digital history, which may seem too innovative for those educators still living and working in the twentieth century. Guiliano writes in her conclusion, "Don't be afraid to reach out and learn more from other historians working digitally. Don't be afraid to struggle. Don't be shy about iterating. And, most importantly, don't forget that what makes you a great teacher is you desire to continually improve your own pedagogy" (177). In a way, these comments are contradictory: those who are willing to improve their own pedagogy are going to be the ones who also understand that they have to struggle. It is their fears and anxieties that push them to improve their skills and to embrace the new and unique. The educators that are not going to follow her principles are the ones that are confident and prideful, the ones that believe their teaching methods are tried and true, thus there is no reason to change the way they have been doing things for decades. In essence, although her intentions are good, Guiliano is singing to the choir, to those who want change and understand that change is necessary. Thus, what do we do with those who are stuck in the past?

Unfortunately, there is no workable answer to the question above; and, admittedly, that is not a question Guiliano is trying to answer. The larger problems associated with academia are not on her radar, at least as it pertains to *A Primer for Teaching Digital History*. This book is meant only to give those historians who want it, advice about how to teach classes or produce assignments that use the digital to enhance the learning experiences of their students. Her book is filled with helpful hints, websites to use, programs of benefit, dos and don'ts. It is a helpful guide for those of us with the time, energy, patience, backing, and resources to make sure the past can crawl its way into the present and the future.

Dr. Douglas C. MacLeod, Jr. is an Associate Professor of Composition and Communication at SUNY Cobleskill. He is an interdisciplinarian who writes book reviews, academic journal articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries. He lives in Upstate New York with his wife Patty, and dog, Cocoa Love. He can be reached at MacLeoDC@cobleskill.edu.