Project Results Including External Funding
(Final Report on the CAH Award, 2008)

The CAH Award encouraged innovative research and attracted external funding. In times of economic crisis, we made finding external funds and funding the top priority. We completed our applied research projects, generated public interest, and applied for additional funding for an extended period. We have now received pledges of approximately 60,000 dollars from Rice University Press for to publish digital editions based on our research. The entirely digital Rice University Press has also committed to having Professor Saper edit a series of additional digital works [critical editions] for a potential investment of 160 thousand dollars or more [the Press estimates that it costs 10-20 thousand dollar approximately for each digital and on-demand volume published]. These additional digital and on-demand critical editions of works by an inventor of a reading machine will appear over the next few years. We also received smaller amounts of funding for travel, and to stage international workshops, based on our research, in Copenhagen and Frankfurt; those amounts might total 10 to 20 thousand dollars, and will also include a University Press publication [Copenhagen University Press and a future University Press in the US or Britain]. The total amount of pledged support from Rice University Press, the Doctoral School of Copenhagen University, and the Frankfurter Kunstverein all for the above projects will probably be in the range of 175 thousand dollars spread over the next few years. The prototype, funded entirely by the generous CAH Research Award, led to a flurry of emails the very next day we posted the final version, and a series of phone calls and more emails and agreements soon after. We could not have begun this project, nor attracted the funding and support from external sources, without the support of the CAH award. We initiated a major project that attracted positive attention to UCF from scholars like Professor Jerome McGann, from UVa, who connected our project to Rice University Press (and he made the connection unrelated to his visit here, but directly related to the posting of our research), and institutions from UCLA, MoMA in NYC, the Doctoral School at Copenhagen University, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Swineburne University in Melbourne, and others.

We will apply for additional funding for a fellowship with the theme of “Networks and Mobilities” from the A. D. White Humanities Center, we have received a production grant from the Community University Research Alliance in Canada for two journals to produce special issues of Textual Studies Canadian and Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge, we applied for an NEH summer stipend, rejected, and plan to do so again, and we plan to apply for a larger Digital Research grant from NEH. From the relationships and goodwill our CAH funded research has made possible [scholars literally saw our research online and emailed their interest in supporting our projects as soon as they saw the website publication of our research project], we are lining-up distinguished senior scholars outside of UCF to recommend our projects for these national grants, fellowships, and opportunities. We are in encouraging discussions with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. because one of our key team members has moved to a librarian position there. They are interested in our research. With national grants, the review boards – at least the one on Digital Research that I’ve served on – want evidence of the work before ranking the project as worthy of funding. With the project we now have, we believe we can get a fair shake at consideration.
The CAH Awards are a glimmer of good news that proves that we can use internal funding as leverage to continue to raise UCF’s reputation, increase external funding, and promote our faculty’s research.

We also continued to share our resources with other projects, and are building new collaborations that will use the equipment, and our new knowledge, into the future. The award will continue to support research and external grant applications for a long time to come. We expect to receive ten times the CAH award in external funding from Rice University Press, for the publications mentioned above, Copenhagen University Press, for another project directly related to our research and based on the research, and from the other sources mentioned above. We now own 10’s of thousands of dollars in production equipment. More than 10 students, both graduate and undergraduate, either worked directly on this project or made extensive use of the specialized equipment. Perhaps one dissertation will grow out of the project.

The actual research project began with putting together a team, first including Professors Bruce Janz, Philosophy and Humanities, and Kien Hua, Computer Science, and the Director of the UCF Art Gallery, Theo Lotz. Then, once Professor Saper met with Professor Hua, they determined what database computer skills were needed. Similar meetings with Professor Janz determined what humanities skills were needed, and with Mr. Lotz what design and artistic skills were needed.

We moved the project to the Humanities trailer, which proved to be a great success. Even though we initially moved because we could not continue to meet and work in Professor Saper’s office, the move proved to be enormously successful allowing our entire team and even six or so students working on the equipment for other CAH projects to come and go without bothering any staff for keys or special access.

We could not afford to hire a doctoral student in computer science, but we did involve two database developers, who are also pursuing doctoral degrees in Texts and Technology, who wanted to participate in the project for possible dissertation ideas. With some small frustrations, we also hired two students associated with the Department of English – one who recently received her Masters degree and one Honors in the Major undergraduate; another Honors in the Major in English also worked on the project as it was tangentially related to his undergraduate research project.

Finally, the project depended heavily on the interface designer, Tzywei Cheng, who was a graduating senior in Digital Media taking the internship course. The excellence of her work was demonstrated in a large course, Digital Rhetoric, where her work distinguished her from the 80 other digital media, art, technical communication, and IT students.

We also had another six or so students working on the same equipment for the Chinavine project. The specialized production equipment, and that project’s initial dependence on the equipment, makes its continued use essential. This kind of helpful relationship should be a model so that equipment and resources be used as much as possible by as many as possible. We are the supporters now, and hope in the future our colleagues with other projects will look on us kindly.
We learned much from both our failures and successes. We decided to post six iterations of the project, a description and context for the project, and to explicitly suggest advantages of all the iterations rather than to see only the last iteration as useful. The project sought to develop database and interface design skills looking at two related humanities issues: the mechanics of reading and the contemporary efforts to build visual maps based on databases. We sought to investigate and reproduce a reading machine from 1929.

We researched the original reading machine's designer, met with collectors of his work, and met a few of the most distinguished scholars in this area. As I mentioned the day after we posted the research, we received tentative offers to start to publish digital editions related to the project. We began conversations with the series editor, Professor Jerome McGann, and Frederick Moody, the Director and Editor in Chief of Rice University Press, that culminated in a commitment to digitally publish three scholarly editions by 2010 of Words, Readies for Bob Brown's Machine, and Gems, all edited by Professor Saper and based on our collective efforts in the CAH funded project. Rice UP will also start another series edited by Professor Saper, and in that series eventually publish both many more critical editions of works by Bob Brown, but also potentially to publish or at least link to the research for the CAH 2008 funded project. The Press will cover all the production, publicity, and international distribution. Beyond the production costs of these digital publications, including scanning rare documents, preparing them for online and on-demand distribution, the normal editorial processes, and more, the relationship with Rice University Press will raise our status.

We did not finish the social networking aspect of the project, but hope to continue that work in the future. We had hoped to use the reading machine's designer as a test case in considering an innovative way to construct conceptual, historical, and biographical diachronic maps. We still need to build a sample, and research other maps using GIS [geographic information systems] technologies. Professor Hua suggested we build a prototype even if it did not function; so, our prototype focuses on the reading machine. Professor Saper did co-edit three journal volumes [including the Textual Studies Canadian and Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge mentioned above] – forthcoming in the fall of 2008 – on how GIS projects might function in humanities research. Finally, we investigated variables usually excluded from reading: speed and design. We mapped those relationships on to a database built from the original works that appeared for the reading machine.

Without the support we received, we could not have conducted the archival research, built the online prototype, or created relationships with future funders of aspects of the project.

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