

# *Pioneer Days in Florida* Lesson Plan: Materiality and Artifactuality of Digital Objects

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## Overview

Students will learn about the Digital Humanities by learning about considerations for digital objects in terms of how they represent embodiment, materiality, and artifactuality. This lesson supports teaching with and about primary historical sources, including teaching about materiality and its importance for digital representations to support artifactuality and research. In doing so, this lesson informs digital research methods as well as concerns and considerations for leveraging new opportunities with the digital to go beyond artifactuality and complement it with reconfigurations that re-envision materials.

- **Time Required:** Half day (4 hours: mix of computer time, small and large group discussions)
- **Target Audiences:** Advanced high school, undergraduate college, or graduate students
- **Materials Required:** Computer classroom with web access to go to:
  - *Pioneer Days in Florida*: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/pioneerdays>
  - Reading from *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, edited by Sherry Turkle: [http://courses.ischool.berkeley.edu/i290-2/s08/readings/Turkle\\_Evocative\\_Objects.pdf](http://courses.ischool.berkeley.edu/i290-2/s08/readings/Turkle_Evocative_Objects.pdf)
- **Assessments:** Because this is an introductory lesson, it is designed to introduce new terms and topics, including helping students become familiar with primary sources, digital research methods, and concepts for materiality. Future assessments will build off of the material presented in this lesson. Assessments on this lesson alone could include methods to evaluate learning the new terms and concepts.

## Introduction

### About Pioneer Days in Florida

The *Pioneer Days in Florida: Diaries and Letters from Settling the Sunshine State, 1800-1900 Digital Collection* (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/pioneerdays>) includes 36,530 pages of diaries and letters describing frontier life in Florida from the end of the colonial period to the beginnings of the modern state. These first-hand accounts document the experiences of settlers, soldiers, and travelers who trail-blazed Florida during the wars of Indian Removal, the Civil War, and the Gilded Age. These 19<sup>th</sup> century manuscript materials from the Florida Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection within the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

*Pioneer Days in Florida* is a Digital Humanities scholarly work curated archive that builds on existing scholar created intellectual access from finding guides, metadata records, and database information built by scholars to support access to the resources in the collection (first as physical materials, and then as digital). As a digital collection, new opportunities are possible, including text and data mining.

### About the Digital Humanities

As defined by Wikipedia (with many competing and complementary definitions in use by scholars):

The **Digital Humanities** are an area of research, teaching, and creation concerned with the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the [humanities](#). Developing from the field of **humanities computing**, digital humanities embrace a variety of topics, from curating online collections to data mining large cultural data sets.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_humanities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_humanities))

Digital Humanities research builds and uses tools for exploring digital texts, and much more.

# Teaching Activities

## 1. Introduction & Orientation to *Pioneer Days*

- Introduction to the Digital Humanities and *Pioneer Days in Florida* (text above)
- Orientation to *Pioneer Days in Florida*: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/pioneerdays>
  - Browsing
  - Searching
  - Description, and permanent URLs for referencing

## 2. Student Activities with *Pioneer Days*

- Student exploratory time on the site in pairs or groups, to read about materials
- Student time to select at least two items of interest, identifying:
  - Title
  - Permanent URL
  - What they think this item will be about, contain, main themes, topics, etc.?
  - How does its physical condition inform what they think?
- *Optionally*: to the class and by turns, each pair/group of students may share their notes on their selected items of interest

## 3. Overview of Artifactuality and Materiality

With a reading from *Evocative Objects* or another reading, discussion in small or large groups on the representation of materiality and artifactuality in the digital form. Students may wish to consider the digital images of a physical logbook (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00017190/00001>) in comparison to the transcription of the logbook (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00017190/00002>). The digital images of the physical logbook offer a different sense and a different perspective into the material, and the contents as well. [Depending on the course and the level of the course, other relevant readings may include those on interface design and how interfaces/forms shape understanding.]

## 4. Discussion and Possible Activity

After the initial discussion introducing concepts for materiality and artifactuality, using the logbook, have the students consider the example of a survey book (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00003442/00001/thumbs>). This survey book has been digitized as it is—as a book. This supports the artifactual representation and is a faithful reproduction of the physical in the digital form. However, this representation does not easily lend itself to other uses. In the same manner that the digital images for the artifactual representation of the logbook are enhanced with another version that is the machine-readable textual transcript, this survey book can have alternate representations that support other uses.

One example to augment the artifactual representation of the survey book comes from the handling of some scrapbooks, as with this example from the Martin Rikli collection: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091283>

In the example from the Rikli collection, the full scrapbook is represented as a complete object. Then, attached and connected to the full scrapbook are each of the photos in the scrapbook, with each photo also existing as its own unique item with item specific metadata. Representing the scrapbook as both the complete book and each of the individual photos ensures full support for the material and artifactual representation of the scrapbook and then augments this by allowing each photo to be connected as separate items with additional metadata. In this manner, each photo could be mapped, placed on a timeline, or explored and represented in manners that exceed or are simply outside of what would be possible within the scrapbook. Rather than having to choose either/or for artifactuality and enabling new representations, both are possible and having both offer enhanced opportunities for supporting and expanding upon the item.

Returning to the survey book from *Pioneer Days*, students may have small or large group discussions and/or hands-on activities to explore additional ways of representing the survey book and its contents with respect to enabling research, inquiry, and understanding of the materials and the contents.

Questions and points to consider include:

- What new representations are wanted? Why and what would this/these add in terms of enabling research, inquiry, and understanding of the materials and the contents?
- How will the new representation be connected or linked to the existing artifactual version? Why was the method selected?
- How would the new representation be created?
- Consider another item from the collection and discuss new opportunities with new forms of that item.