

VIRTUAL LEARNING AT...

THE HISTORY CENTER



SPRING 2020

MARINNA CHUNG, JEREMY DINGLE, LARA HARVEY,
GWEN STARK

THE THC TEAM



MARINNA CHUNG

2021, Industrial and Labor Relations



JEREMY DINGLE

2020, Information Science



LARA HARVEY

2023, English and Government



GWEN STARK

2020, Landscape Architecture

TABLE OF CONTENTS

pg. 03 - introduction

pg. 04 - previous work

pg. 06 - virtual learning proposals

pg. 13 - resources

pg. 15 - image credits

PART 1: IN THE FIELD



OUR PAST VISITS TO THE HISTORY CENTER

Our team, THC, worked alongside the Tompkins County History Center, which is located in Ithaca, NY. The History Center has museum, gallery, and archival spaces all in their space on the Commons. Their resources are centered around artifacts and art pieces that connect with the history of the area, but they use technology and mixed media to keep their exhibits current and accessible. They have relationships with many community partners and schools, and the space is free and open to the public!

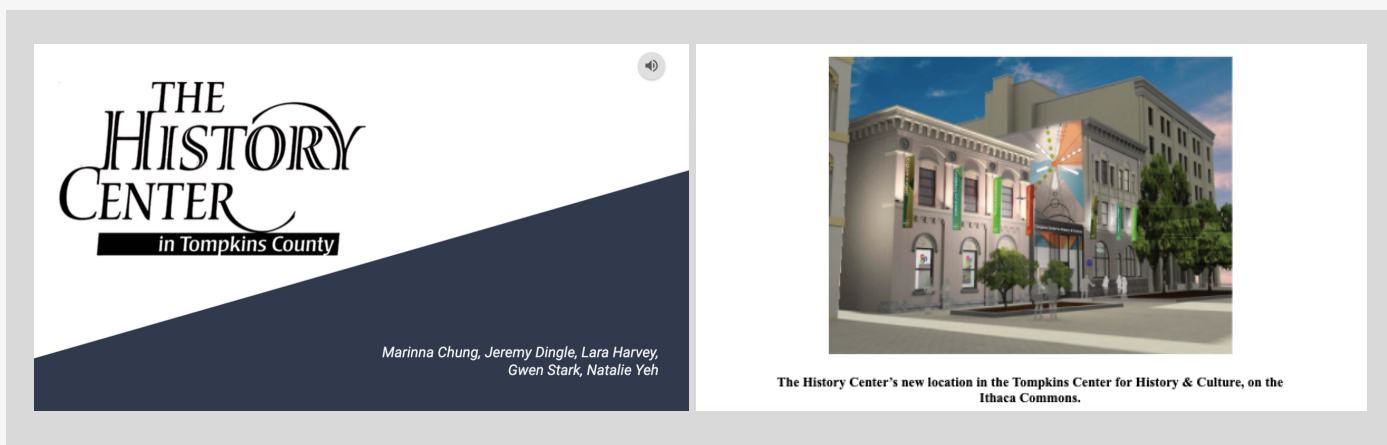
Over the course of the Spring 2020 semester at Cornell, our team -- Lara, Jeremy, Marinna, and Gwen -- have been working to learn about THC and create the best possible bonds for them and schools in the area.

We originally visited The History Center and learned about their resources in the museum space, archives, and gallery. The THC staff explained their relationship with local schools and how they help out with student showcases, research, and field trips. On this trip, we were able to see what they have and consider how they could expand their relationships with external groups like these schools.

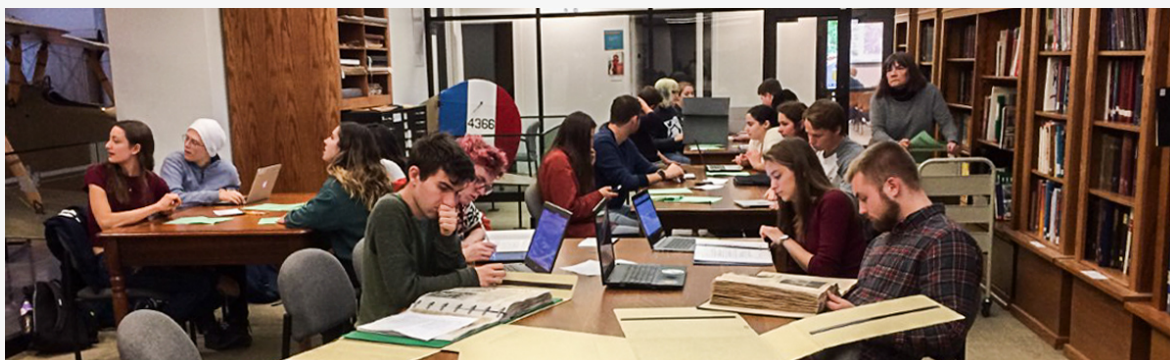
IN THE FIELD

After the first visit, we drafted a report of our findings about their space and made a PechaKucha summarizing our experience and main takeaways. The History Center has great promise and opportunity to be a huge resource for schools. They have an extensive understanding of transmedia knowledge (TK) and have a variety of displays and resources in mixed media. They also have community events that teach about different kinds of TK, like Info Comic making with local artists.

Our first PechaKucha (left) and our original report (right) can be viewed through the links below.

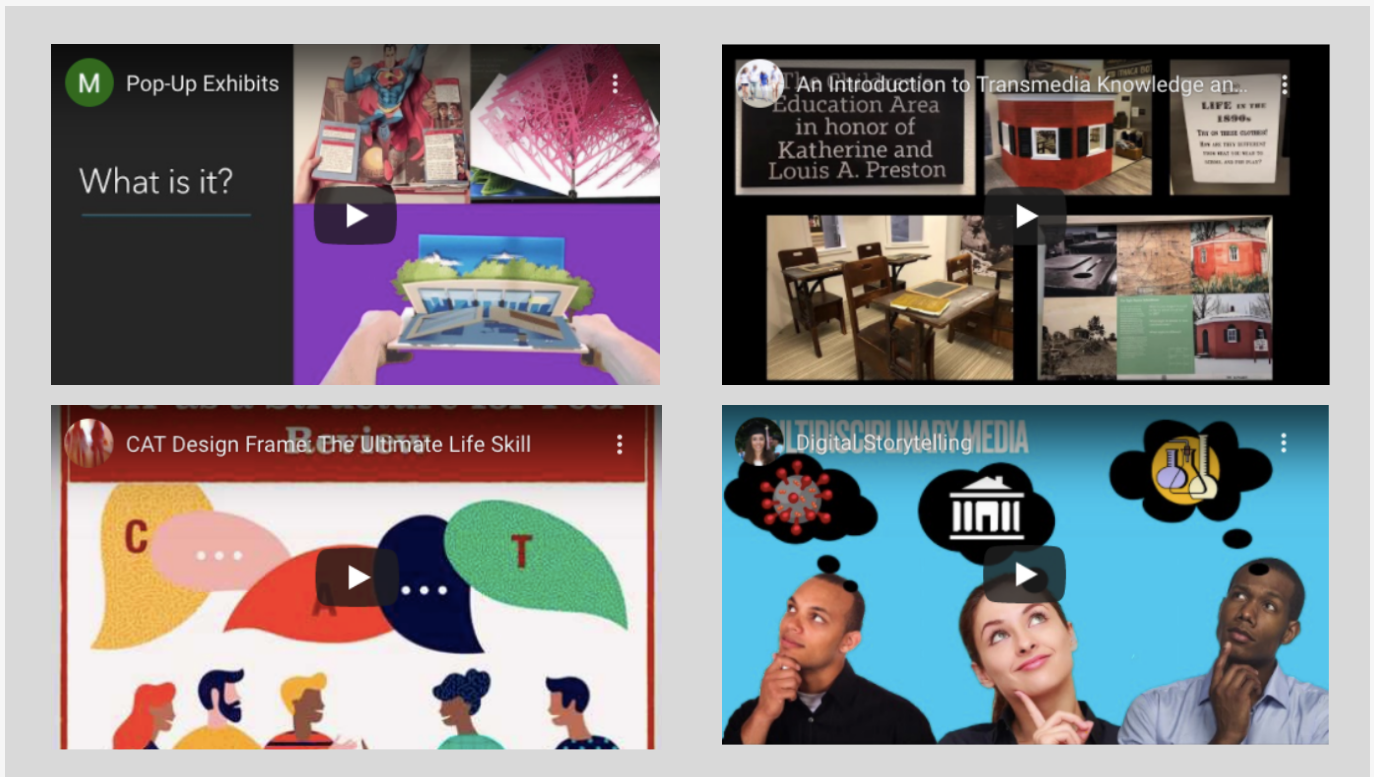


On our second visit, we worked alongside students from Dryden to show them around The History Center and help with research for their documentaries. While the resources from THC were not perfectly matched with their topics, the personal perspective and primary resources they had added a more local and intimate feel to their research. From this experience, we drafted an info comic about an ideal situation in which students work with The History Center to produce a student showcase that brings in families, classmates, and community members to appreciate student work and learn about local history. We focused on the ways that schools and The History Center can form a symbiotic relationship.



IN THE FIELD

Since then, we have each drafted PechaKuchas on aspects of Transmedia Knowledge that we find most valuable and made presentations for students/teachers to learn about them. Our chosen topics are the CAT Design Frame, Digital Storytelling, Pop-up Exhibitions, and Place-Based Learning. These videos are linked below.



Given the present confines of quarantine, we have had some setbacks in our partnership with The History Center. Their location in the Commons is currently closed, which means engaging with their resources and archives is not possible. They do not have their full resources online, but have continued to offer online learning opportunities for the community. We were inspired by their continued work and dedication to local art and history, and have drawn up some possible plans and projects for students and teachers to take history into their own hands while quarantined. The History Center has had initiatives to keep people engaged with their surroundings, and we believe this is a goal teachers should strive for with their students during such an uncertain time. While the physical space of an educational center like THC is not available in a time of stay-at-home orders and social distancing, this is the perfect time for students to become more literate in transmedia knowledge and learn more about art and history in a digitized format.

PART 2: GOING VIRTUAL

HOW SCHOOLS CAN TAKE HISTORY INTO THEIR OWN HANDS



"NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION." - PLATO

COVID-19 OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS TO CREATE ENGAGING VIRTUAL CLASSWORK.

For our proposed activities for students, we have curated additional resources for more background information and help with the research and creative sides of the projects. These are in addition to our PechaKuchas, which are great starter materials for getting familiar with transmedia knowledge. The historical/research materials are largely Tompkins County focused, because we are using The History Center as a point of reference for our work. However, similar websites can be found fairly easily for any region if you research local art museums, history centers, or famous landmarks. In addition, there are also many larger institutions with online resources that would work well for a more “zoomed out” project, although our suggestions are locally focused. For the complete list of local and general resources, please see pages 13-14.

Now, let's get into the projects!

PODCASTS



AN INTRODUCTION TO PODCASTING

Podcasts are an easily digestible and popular way to learn new things. They have been on the rise in recent years because these audio lessons/discussions are accessible, interesting, and can be great to listen to while completing other tasks (like driving, cleaning, making art, etc). Podcasts are also a great form of media because they're easy to make at home, as long as you have a computer or phone!

Schools can work in partnership with the History Center to develop a podcast project. With this virtual learning assignment, students can use THC's resources, while THC has the opportunity to benefit from students' sharing their own experiences and oral histories.

Under the current global pandemic, it would be timely to have students produce a short podcast 'episode' reflecting on their lives under quarantine. Along with reflecting on their own, they also could interview family members or roommates. This would align with THC's existing oral history initiatives and their current archival project to collect COVID-19 stories from the local community.

Before getting started, it may be helpful for teachers and students to read this [basic guide to podcasts](#), published by NPR.

PODCASTS

RESEARCH RESOURCES

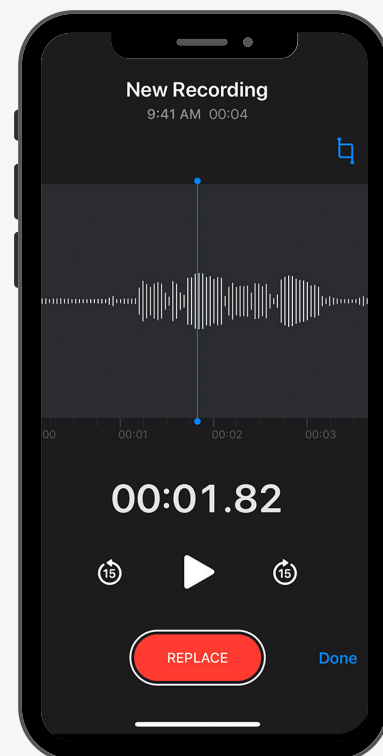
The History Center has a vast archival collection on-site, but unfortunately it has not been digitized and made available publicly online. The only items that have been shared are those that they choose to highlight on their website or on their social media profiles. This is the biggest challenge in truly using all the History Center's resources, since the majority of their content is inaccessible to people who cannot visit the physical space. However, there are several other resources that could be helpful to students in a virtual environment. For example, [We Are Ithaca](#), a group of visual journalists, has started their own project to document life in Ithaca during COVID-19 through short video stories and photos. Students may find inspiration by going through this content produced by passionate storytellers.

Additionally, there are other organizations that have extensive online archives, many possibly related to past pandemics and other global crises. Local public libraries are a great place to start for research. Historical societies also have a wealth of information about broader geographical areas.

PRODUCTION METHOD

Producing a podcast can be as simple as recording using voice memos on a smartphone, making sure that you are recording in a quiet place and speaking clearly. For improved audio quality, students can also use microphones that are compatible with laptops if they have access to them. They can be scripted or unscripted, and can be educational or more conversational in nature. This assignment should be left open to interpretation, as students will find their own way to incorporate authenticity and their own creativity.

To edit the audio, students can use programs such as Garageband and Audacity to trim, splice, and add effects to the MP3 files.



PODCASTS

COLLABORATION METHOD

Having guests on a podcast episode can make it more dynamic as well as more fun to produce! If students want to add another voice to their podcast, they can record conversations with people in their immediate household, like family members or roommates. Collaborating with people who live elsewhere takes a little more coordination and probably extra editing time, but it is definitely possible. In lieu of meeting in person, it might be helpful to be on a Zoom/Skype/Facetime call with their partner so that the student can guide them through the conversation, while the person records their answers on their end. The audio files can be merged later on. If they are unable to call at the same time, students can also ask the other participant to respond to a provided list of questions or prompts and record their own voice memo, then edit it in later.

PUBLICATION/SHARING METHOD

Podcasts, especially if they're short, can be quickly and easily shared on multiple platforms. For example, audio files can be posted to Soundcloud or Youtube for free. The teacher could create a playlist to compile students' work, or embed the audios on a website page. Alternatively, if the projects aren't going to be posted publicly, the teacher could create a shared online folder where students can upload their work for review. Zooming out, students could also be encouraged to publish their podcasts on a wider scale as a contribution to a larger community project like We are Ithaca or [THC's COVID-19 collection](#).



VIRTUAL EXHIBITION OF "HOME"



AN INTRODUCTION TO VIRTUAL EXHIBITS

Virtual exhibits are a form of art that has been well developed in recent years, but has not blown up in the same ways podcasts have. Some museums have online exhibitions of their works, and other web developers have created sites so people can make their own. This is the perfect way to engage with art without the physical space we had originally intended on working with at THC.

The assignment that best suits the conditions of quarantine using online exhibitions is for students to make an exhibit of their own, inspired by their community's history and nature. For this project, students would take a walk on their own to reflect on their favorite parts of their town and area. This gets students out and moving safely, which can be therapeutic during these dark times. While on their walks, students would photograph (or draw) their favorite locations and landmarks, and then would research the history or nature in that spot. After gathering their art and information, they can create an online exhibit.

VIRTUAL EXHIBITS

RESEARCH RESOURCES

The resources for this kind of research vary depending on what kinds of scenes the students capture. For example, if they choose to photograph a natural landscape, they may want to look into the plant life there. Using Ithaca as a point of reference, Cornell Cooperative Extension has a [page on plant life in the area](#), which could prove to be helpful for research. Another starting point for research is using [PocketSights](#), which THC has promoted for guided tours of Tompkins County through its app. This shows the main attractions of the area and has background info on them.

PRODUCTION METHOD

Overall, the process for making this project is straightforward. First, students must take a walk and photograph their favorite things about where they live. They should ask themselves: What park do I love? What is the history behind this statue? Who is my street named after? Through this assignment, students take the Conceptual/Aesthetic/Technical design frame to analyze the components of the space around them and articulate what makes their personal “landmarks” special. When they have their photos and locations selected, they can research them and create a description for each that is both historically accurate and unique to them. This should be a personal tour of the town, not just information that can be found on a pamphlet. These images can be taken on any kind of camera.

When the photography and research is done, students will use [Artsteps](#), a virtual gallery maker, to upload their pictures and create a digital exhibit of their work. Artsteps is the suggested website for this because it is free and easy to use, although there are other platforms that can be used. On Artsteps, students will put their images on digital canvasses with their historical explanation and personal anecdotes attached as the description for each piece. Students should have 10 photos on the site. They do not need to make their exhibit space particularly fancy, nor do they need to have a set pathway for the viewer to “walk” through, but they can do so if they would like. The main purpose of using Artsteps is to mimic the feel of the presentation of art that a gallery space like THC would normally produce, but the photos and descriptions are more important than the software’s themes.

VIRTUAL EXHIBITS

COLLABORATION METHOD

This project would require students to share their projects with the teacher. Starting a Google Document to post links to the Artsteps exhibits would be an easy way to keep everything in one place and accessible to everyone. This collaboration method would also allow for flexibility in case students want to revise and re-upload their work after receiving additional feedback from teachers. On a less technical note, students should feel free to collaborate by peer reviewing each other's work. Using Zoom or another "face to face" calling service would be best for this, because students can freely communicate and share screens, etc. when giving critiques.

PUBLICATION/SHARING METHOD

If teachers make a GoogleSites with the links to their students' final Artsteps pages, their work will be centralized and students can freely view their peers' work and be proud of how they have published their own "exhibits". Since Artsteps is a public site, students can directly publish their exhibits there. The GoogleSites is just a more accessible way to find everyone's Artsteps in one place.

To view a prototype of an Artsteps exhibit, click on the image below.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LOCAL

The History Center Online Initiatives/Opportunities

These are some of the initiatives THC has moved towards due to the temporary closure of their space. This page links to some of their digital resources, as well as some interactive community projects!

THC's Oral History Project

A great example of a community project for digital forms of storytelling.

THC's Coronavirus Outreach Research

THC's current call to action for community members to reflect and document their quarantine experiences.

"We are Ithaca" COVID-19 Project

We are Ithaca's ongoing project to document the community's pandemic experience through photography and short videos.

Tompkins County Community Arts Partnership

A page for people to browse how the community and art spaces are continuing to provide entertainment and resources for Tompkins County amidst stay-at-home orders. Can give students a jumping off point for activities or research during their time at home.

Tompkins County Public Library

The Public Library has a lot of online resources for research on local history! A good place to learn more about our surroundings.

Cornell Library Digital Collections

Another great resource for history in the local area as well as other works that students can use!

Cornell Cooperative Extension Native Plants

The links on this site provide information about plants native to the Finger Lakes region, which students may find interesting to research as they explore their communities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GENERAL

NPR podcast guide for students

A guide to understand the basics of podcasting. This is super helpful for students to get a formal understanding so they can do their own!

New York Historical Society

A broader resource for history and art!

National Archives and Other Resources

A much broader scale platform for research and browsing.

Artsteps

A virtual exhibition builder that will allow students to display their work, just like a physical gallery space!

PocketSights

This mobile app provides self-guided walking tours of historical landmarks and other areas of interest.

IMAGE CREDITS

LINKS

All images are our own or sourced from Canva's photo gallery, except for those listed here.

Page 01 - <https://www.tessellatestudio.com/tchc>

Page 03 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGt08r5vox8>

Page 04 - <https://theithacan.org/news/students-present-research-at-the-history-center/>

Page 06 - <https://theconversation.com/online-learning-can-prepare-students-for-a-fast-changing-future-wherever-they-are-80497>

Page 07 - <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662070097/starting-your-podcast-a-guide-for-students>

Page 08 - <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT206775>

Page 09 - <https://icon-icons.com/icon/soundcloud/122489>
https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/youtube_187209
<http://www.iconarchive.com/show/google-play-icons-by-marcus-roberto/google-drive-icon.html>

Page 10 - <https://www.sfreporter.com/arts/2020/04/01/santa-fe-museums-adapt-to-stay-at-home-order/>

Page 12 - <https://www.visitithaca.com/the-ithaca-experience>