

Race, Women, Methods, and Access: a Journey through Cyberspace and Back

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Abstract: *Feminist historians of rhetoric and composition have begun to consider how digital technologies may enhance and occlude their scholarship, and this growing body of scholarship is impossible to ignore. This article traces the authors' failed attempt to locate two historically important educators, Susie and Lottie Adams, in both physical and digital archives. While frustrating, the search for the Adams women led to some important conclusions about silence and invisibility and the underlying reasons why the researchers were ultimately unsuccessful in locating them. These explanations invite further discussion of a disciplinary conversation that is already well underway.*

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Almost a decade ago, I walked into the archive located in the main branch of the public library in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, for the first time. I was enrolled in a graduate seminar on the History of Rhetoric with Professor Carol Mattingly at the University of Louisville and needed to visit an archive and report on the experience. Having been a classroom teacher for many years before returning to pursue a PhD, and having grown up in Louisville and been educated in the public school system there, I chose to research the first school in the city of Louisville. The librarian handed me an accordion file with a hodgepodge of documents, but mostly photocopies of newspaper articles on the opening of schools exclusively for African American students in the Louisville area from the early 20th century. The contents included detailed accounts of the building of a variety of schools in prime Louisville areas and budgets in the tens of thousands of dollars (quite generous given the time period). My report, "white citizens of Louisville were willing to spend an exorbitant amount of money to prevent their children from attending school with my ancestors," stimulated lively discussion in class, but the discussion ended with Prof. Mattingly asking me how I knew that it was the white citizens spending money to build schools and ultimately suggesting that I follow the money to

be sure. I followed the money directly to a dissertation project that looked at public discourse surrounding the opening of schools for African Americans in the Louisville area.

This research uncovered legislation lobbied for and by African American citizens and passed in 1865 that assessed an additional tax of \$2.00 against all “negro and mulatto” citizens of the state of Kentucky for the purpose of opening schools for “negro” children.¹ I also discovered the first schools opened in 1871, housed in Fifth Street Baptist and Center Street churches, and that the appointed principals of both schools were women, Susie Adams and Lottie Adams, respectively. Though women commonly served as teachers, it seemed extraordinary for them to be appointed administrators, and I wanted to know more. Because of their last names, I suspected that the Adams women may have been sisters and possibly related to the Rev. Henry Adams. Rev. Adams was a high profile African American minister and pastor in Louisville from 1829-1872, and prominent in the annals of Louisville history. Critical imagination suggested that the Adams women were his relatives, and their ages suggested they could be his daughters, but the women seemed to disappear after their initial appointments by the Jefferson County School Board. I extended my search for evidence of Susie’s and Lottie’s professional and/or personal lives at the onset of the project, but was ultimately unsuccessful in my pursuits. Because of the time sensitive nature of dissertation writing, I moved on from the Adams women, but the absence of documentation for their lives never left me.

A Reason to Revisit

Fast forward the clock a number of years later to when I am serving in my first faculty position. I was teaching a graduate seminar in Feminist Rhetorics and had been paired with one of my students in a university-wide mentoring program. The mentoring arrangement was structured with periodic formal meetings. Through these meetings, we made the decision that the culminating experience from this year-long journey would be a collaborative article submitted for publication, and I encouraged Leah to take the lead in the scholarly exploration. Leah had recently read articles in the special issue of *College English* in November 2013, focused on Digital Humanities and Historiography and edited by Jessica Enoch and David Gold, and found interest in building on the work of that issue. She used her final paper for the Feminist Rhetorics

1 Robinson, Michelle Bachelor. *“Still I Rise!”: Public Discourse Surrounding the Development of Public Schools for African Americans in Louisville, Kentucky, 1862-1872*. Dissertation. University of Louisville. 2010.

course to explore a comprehensive review of literature, and after some conversation, we decided to resurrect the Susie and Lottie Adams project.

Because of technological advancement and the availability of digital tools that were not available when the project was originally conceived, because of Leah's interest in the intersections of feminist historiography and the digital humanities, and because of the campus mentoring program that brought us together as a collaborative team, we began the search anew. We were inspired by the growing AND expanding field of digital technologies and humanities, as well as the widening critical conversation surrounding the connection between feminist historiography and the digital humanities. Leah felt particularly inspired by the recent publication of the *College English* special collection, and so we were hopeful of a more fruitful outcome on a second look. Maybe this project could find, or even place, two important African American women's narratives in a digital space. Whatever the result, we had decided to embark on a digital journey to see where it might lead.

And so the Journey Begins

Through the use of an experiential research project, this article invites readers on a journey. In some ways, the journey is pedagogical in the sense that it begins with a faculty member and her graduate student collaborating on a project. In other ways, the journey is methodological in the sense that it provides a model for research practice in digital spaces, as well as in brick and mortar archives. Ultimately, this journey is about discovery—the discovery that “open” in digital spaces is not synonymous with inclusion, and in some ways it can actually be “closed” to many underrepresented groups, particularly African American women. In the following sections, we enter the critical conversation surrounding feminist historiography and the digital humanities by examining the need for transformative access in using and creating digital archives for African American women. This discovery relies heavily on the epistemology of Adam J. Banks' taxonomy of access outlined in his groundbreaking work, *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, in which he articulates the particular forms of technological access necessary for African Americans to fully participate in American society on their own terms:

material, functional, experimental, and critical² (41-43). Feminist historiographers of color must gain all of these specific types of access to technology before the digital archives can achieve their radically democratizing political ends. In our final section, we offer suggestions for how we begin to move forward as feminist scholars, archivists, digital humanists, and the field at large.

The Journey through Scholarship

Feminist historians of Rhetoric and Composition have begun to consider how digital technologies may affect their scholarship. Traditionally, historical research in Rhetoric and Composition Studies has taken place between the physical walls of archival spaces, rather than within the virtual databases of cyberspace. Such methodology stems from the need for historians to study material artifacts that were produced long before the development of the Internet in the early 1990s (Enoch and Bessette 635-636). However, the growing body of literature regarding the merger of the digital humanities and feminist historiography in Rhetoric and Composition research is impossible to ignore. This scholarship suggests that the existence of digital archives creates the possibility for a significant democratization of historical texts in the 21st century.

The digital humanities/feminist historiography conversation begins with James Purdy's landmark essay "Three Gifts of Digital Archives," in which he builds on Susan Wells' discussion of the gifts of physical archives. Purdy argues Rhetoric and Composition scholars must understand the effects of integration, customization, and accessibility in order to both successfully use the digital archives as well as teach students how to navigate them. In her essay "Googling the Archive: Digital Tools and the Practice of History," Janine Solberg offers a discussion of the way digital search tools and digital environments support feminist rhetorical practices and uses her own experience digitally researching early-twentieth-century advice writer Frances Maule in order to

2 Banks calls for transformative access to technology for African Americans that eschews colorblindness and embraces race cognizance. In doing such, Banks outlines a taxonomy of access that he hopes will provide "a more effective matrix for understanding technology access... and what this changed understanding might mean for writing instruction – the work of composition, computers and writing, technical communication, and African American rhetoric" (41). Although Banks does not directly reference the subfield of feminist historiography, the implications of his theory do much to explain the scarcity of African American women from the digital archives.

explore how digital technology has “shifted conditions of findability” in the 21st century (53).

In their article, “Meaningful Engagements: Feminist Historiography and the Digital Humanities,” Jessica Enoch and Jean Bessette continue the conversation Solberg begins. Enoch and Bessette’s nuanced discussion of feminist rhetorical practices and the digital humanities explores the ways digital technologies both promote and impede the tectonic shifts in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship Royster and Kirsch initially advocate for in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*. They include a long list of digital archiving projects that provide opportunities for feminist research: HEARTH: The Home Economics Archive, the Victorian Women’s Writers Project, and the Poetess Archive, to name just a few projects that are perhaps less well known than other, larger databases such as the Perseus project or Google Books (638). Interestingly enough, of the digital archives mentioned by Enoch and Bessette, only one, Digital Schomburg: African American Women Writers of the 19th Century, focuses solely on the work of African American women. Such foundational texts were the beginning of a conversation that gained a tremendous amount of traction with the November 2013 Special Issue of *College English*, “The Digital Humanities and Historiography in Rhetoric and Composition,” edited by Jessica Enoch and David Gold.

Enoch and Gold highlight the ways in which scholars such as Shannon Carter and Kelly Dent, Ellen Cushman, Jim Ridolfo, and Tarez Samra Graban are now working to build digital historiographic projects. The collective work included in the special issue addresses the ethical imperative of contemporary Rhetoric and Composition Studies and argues that by creating digital historiographic projects that give voice to marginalized populations, scholars counter dominant historical narratives and begin to move beyond Royster and Kirsch’s acts of rescue, recovery, and (re)inscription. Though the special edition of *College English* extensively explores diverse communities, there was not an article engaging African American women in digital spaces. Knowing that the collection does explore a number of communities, acknowledging that editors Enoch and Gold are committed to engaging scholarship focused on underrepresented issues, and considering the foundational work of scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster³ and Shirley Wilson Logan⁴ in the

3 Jacqueline Jones Royster is the author of *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change among African American Women* and has theorized extensively about methodology and historiography.

4 Shirley Wilson Logan is the editor of *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth Century African-American Women*. Her work focuses on the written and oral performances of African-American women.

historiography of Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies, we wondered why African American women have a limited presence in this growing body of scholarship and also why many of the digital spaces hosting work about and by black women are often not recognized by digital humanists as work within the Digital Humanities discipline.

In 2001, African American Studies scholar Abdul Alkalimat called for “a move from ideology to information” in Black Studies. He argues this shift to the “virtualization of the Black experience” is not only the logical next step in critical conversations engaging “Afrocentricity, Afrology, Afro-American and African American Studies, Africana and African Studies, as well as all forms of ethnic or minority studies,” but a crucial one in “the evolution of survival” for African Americans. (“eBlack: A 21st Century Challenge”). He notes that such an information revolution has the potential to lead to “a renaissance of community development, cultural creativity, and liberation politics” both inside and outside of the academy. This movement provides an alternative to the vertical structure of established institutions and hierarchies (“eBlack: A 21st Century Challenge”). It resists any sort of authoritative ideology and, in theory at least, has the potential to defy the gatekeeping of academic knowledge production.

Although Alkalimat stressed the importance and necessity of African Americans in the production of all things digital nearly fifteen years ago, scholars working outside of the identity categories of white and male often have difficulty navigating the disciplinary terrain of the digital humanities. As Moya Z. Bailey notes, “The ways in which identities inform both theory and practice in digital humanities have been largely overlooked” (“All the Digital Humanists are White”). Because the marginalized and underrepresented often occupy “the liminal spaces” of the digital humanities, Bailey calls for a shift in the types of critical conversations we are having in the digital humanities. She argues that we might “[center] the lives of women, people of color, and disabled folks” in order “to engage new sets of theoretical questions that expose implicit assumptions about what and who counts in digital humanities as well as expose structural limitations that are the inevitable result of an unexamined identity politics of whiteness, masculinity, and ablebodiedness” (“All the Digital Humanists are White”). Due to the present ubiquity of digital culture, now more than ever, African Americans must create and be represented in digital spaces in order to ensure that technology supports revisionist historical interventions.

Despite the immediate challenges of doing work in the digital humanities as a person outside of a dominant identity politic, a growing body of intersectional digital humanities projects exist. For example, the Crunk Feminist Collective began using blogging/microblogging platforms to explore feminist theory and thought outside of the academy in 2010. Recently, the #BlackLivesMatter Movement has gained traction across social media platforms and has found

its way into composition classrooms across the country. Grassroots initiatives such as Black Girls Code provide opportunities for Black women to learn and engage with the skills necessary to work in STEM fields. In terms of digital archives themselves, an increasing number of virtual projects explore the lives of women, including African American women. The New York Public Library Digital Library Collections in connection with the Digital Schomburg houses *African American Women Writers of the 19th Century*, a virtual, key-word-searchable collection of 52 published works by black women writing in the 19th century. On a more localized level, *A Gathering of Women*, a digital repository sponsored by the Arkansas Women's History Institute, provides a collection of the unwritten history of Arkansas women.

And yet, while these projects are substantial, they do not explore the structural limitations that scholars working in rhetoric and composition studies may encounter while trying to trace the history of the discipline. We hope that our search for the history of Susie and Lottie Adams highlights some of the ways in which digital technologies are "raced" in their infrastructure and are used in a way that "race" our thinking about literacy, rhetorical practices, and composing in general. In exposing some of these structural limitations, we hope to answer Bailey's interdisciplinary call to examine the identity politics at play in the digital humanities.

Taking a Second Look: Recovering a Historiographic Search

Having explored the growing scholarship at the intersection of historiography and the digital humanities and having identified an experiential project to engage, we decided the best approach would be to begin the project with each of us searching for one of the women in cyberspace. We searched the following databases: the Subject Guides within our university library system (both Education and African American Studies); HathiTrust; Google Books; Dissertations and Thesis Abstracts; American Memory; African American Newspapers: the Nineteenth Century; and many more. In most cases we came up with little; however, we experienced a breakthrough with [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). One search for Susie Adams in Kentucky placed her in the household of the Rev. Henry Adams in the 1870 US Census. Another placed Lottie in the household of one Margaret Adams in the 1880 census. We were curious if Margaret had appeared in the 1870 census with both Susie and Henry and discovered there was a Margaret listed under Henry. Henry was 67, Margaret was 45, and Susie was 22, followed by a host of other adult age people in the Adams' household. In the 1880 census, Margaret was listed at age 50 (which would indicate that in 10 years, she only aged 5, and if indeed these two were the same

woman, someone was not honest with the census collector). Neither Henry, nor Susie is listed in the 1880 census, but Lottie appears. Records indicate that the Rev. Henry Adams died in 1872, and therefore, if this entry were indeed his family's household, he would not have been alive for the 1880 census. The search had not put Susie and Lottie in a household together and was not conclusive on whether or not the two Margarets were the same person, but we remained optimistic and hopeful.

Endnotes and footnotes in pivotal historical texts referenced both women in some capacity. For example, L. A. Williams' *History of the Ohio Falls Counties* was in our university's special collections and also appeared in digital form. However, when we attempted to access volume 2, which contained the Adams women's reference, we discovered that only volume 1 had been digitized. This partial digitization suggests that the resources in archives are limited and certainly not apolitical. Either the digital humanist who made volume 1 available could not commit time and resources to digitizing volume 2, or s/he simply had no vested interest in making it more widely available. Although this scholar likely did not intend to erase anyone's history, nevertheless, our link in cyberspace to the Adams women was lost once we attempted to access this text online.

Marion Lucas's text *A History of Blacks in Kentucky from Slavery to Segregation 1760-1891*, one of few texts on this subject, referenced both Susie and Lottie and cited a number of 19th century newspapers as sources, all of which we were able to secure on microfilm through interlibrary loan, but we were not able to find any direct or conclusive references to either Susie or Lottie in those original periodicals. Following Lucas' sources led us to *Weeden's History of the Colored People of Louisville* compiled by H. C. Weeden and published in 1897. The full text was available on microfilm through interlibrary loan and was able to provide as much information about the schools and the women as any text we had encountered thus far.

Weeden had transcribed into his text, the minutes from several watershed moments during the opening of schools for "colored" people in Louisville. We contacted the Jefferson County School Board Archive, who sent a list of researchers for hire. We solicited via email the services of one and requested scanned copies of the original minutes from the various moments Weeden had included in his narrative. On April 4, 1870, he recorded (and we confirmed) that a committee on colored schools had been appointed (Weeden 22).⁵ We were able to confirm the appointments to the office of principal for both Susie

5 Louisville Board of Education Minutes April 4, 1870, Jefferson County Public Schools Archives and Records Center.

Adams and Lottie Adams (Weeden 23).⁶ We also discovered that in 1872, Lottie was later appointed as an assistant to Professor Joseph M. Ferguson, the principal of the newly constructed colored high school. Lottie was paid a salary of \$400, which made her the highest paid assistant, even exceeding by \$50 the salary of Florence Murrow, an assistant identified as “white” (Weeden 33). A bonus discovery from Weeden’s text was that he identified schools for colored people that had been opened and actively functioning since the “early forties” (22). Following that statement, Weeden provides a comprehensive list of teachers, schools, and locations. First on the list of teachers for some eight to ten pre-emancipation colored schools was Rev. Henry Adams, and again in this intimate African American community, we believe it more than coincidence that he shares a name with Susie and Lottie (Weeden 22). Although the women were listed in the Jefferson County School Board minutes housed at the University of Louisville Archive, and the women were listed as the appointed principals, along with their salaries and the names of those who had been hired as teachers, they seemed to disappear from both physical and digital spaces after their initial appointments.

Despite our best efforts, we were limited in what we could find. We were hopeful that there would be some personal or professional documents that chronicled the Adams women’s lives. Personal correspondences, professional materials, lesson plans, curriculum—any of these kinds of documents would have given us a better understanding of the women who were the first principals for Louisville’s African American public schools. However, historical documentation practices are vastly different than they once were, and oftentimes important source details have not been included in these older texts. These limitations beg the question of whether or not there are some histories that are privileged over others, and whether those privileged histories have been preserved at greater lengths and with greater detail. Some have been displaced, unexplored, and possibly forgotten or at best moderately preserved. Most of what we are able to confirm about Susie and Lottie is based on inference. Were they the daughters of the great Rev. Henry Adams? The answer is untenable, and so we offer an interpretation of 1860 and 1870 Census Records. However, we were not able to substantiate the validity of this reading (Royster and Kirsch 106-107). We highlight two historical texts that cite Susie and Lottie Adams in the history of education in the city of Louisville and the state of Kentucky, but when we ordered the original cited documents from interlibrary loan, we were not able to validate the citations from those texts.

6 Louisville Board of Education Minutes October 3, 1870, Jefferson County Public Schools Archives and Records Center.

With doubts prevailing, we took our double checking carefully. With Williams' *History of the Ohio Falls Counties*, we found that only half the text had been digitized, and interestingly, it was the half that did not contain information about Susie and Lottie. We discovered that a hardcopy of the Williams text was housed in our university's special collections, which afforded us the opportunity to read the undigitized portion of the book; however, there was not any information included to which we did not already have access. Additionally, the Williams text was published in 1882, and source documentation has evolved significantly over time. His methodology for reporting history was largely undocumented, therefore impossible to validate, and did not really provide a trail of breadcrumbs for us to follow.

On the other hand, *Weeden's History of the Colored People of Louisville*, did make a valiant effort at accuracy. Though his methodology varies significantly from contemporary research practices and standards, he did leave a trail of breadcrumbs for our journey. We were able to substantiate, through engagement with his text as well as acquiring copies of the primary sources he references, much of the limited history that he records. The most compelling discovery in Weeden was the fact that Lottie Adam's salary in 1872, as an assistant to Professor Joseph M. Ferguson, exceeded that of her white colleague Florence Murrow, who also was appointed an assistant to Professor Ferguson. This historical fact contributes a layer to a conversation about who Lottie Adams must have been as an educator and a professional. Clearly, she was viewed in the highest regards by the administration at the schools housed in the Fifth Street Baptist and Center Street churches.

Getting Back to the Basics

Since we realized such a limited amount of success with research in digital spaces, we decided to follow the breadcrumbs left from traditional research spaces and give brick and mortar methodologies another try. Traveling to Louisville, KY, we met with Carol Mattingly for a nostalgic discussion of revisiting the project, intellectual exchange, and maybe a little advice. We shared with Carol what we had found in digital spaces. She offered an alternative interpretation for Lottie's 1880 census appearance, that she might have been a younger sister who joined the family household between 1870 and 1880. She explained that unwed women in their twenties would not have lived alone, and so her appearance in 1880 might be accounted for in her moving from her

parents' home to the home of an older brother. This interpretation is one that of course made perfect sense⁷.

Early the following morning, we arrived at the Filson Historical Society, a community-based library and archive in the Louisville area, which focuses on preserving primarily local, but also state history. Our search began in the special collections. The Filson Historical Society is a very stately archival space in the sense that it exudes an ambiance of wealth and privilege. It is housed in a beautiful Victorian style home in Old Louisville, an area just south of downtown that boasts of being one of the largest collections of Victorian homes in the south.⁸ The interior of the building donned dark and heavy wood trim and crown molding. Adding to its stately atmosphere, there were many portraits on the walls of various people who had been citizens of Louisville and whose families had preserved their legacies by donating family artifacts. The portraits were almost exclusively of white people and primarily of men; there were several portraits of women, oftentimes painted alongside their children. Though portraits cover the walls in the three-story facility (four stories if the basement is included), there was only one portrait of an African American woman labeled "Hattie." When we inquired about other portraits of African Americans (just in case we had maybe missed some), the librarian informed us that there were possibly more in storage, but there were no others on display.

Navigating this onsite archival visit reminded us of Jessica Enoch's reflection of the Webb County Heritage Foundation (WCHF), a local archive in Laredo, Texas. She describes the space in this way:

The WCHF is an archive alive with contributions that community members compose, and it is a place where public memory in Laredo is constantly created and re-created. Moreover, the WCHF is not simply a library where scholars can research and compose histories of rhetoric and writing instruction. The WCHF is itself an extracurricular educational space: one of its objectives is to teach the community about its history while also connecting its past to Laredo's present and future. Therefore, as researchers continue to visit local and community archives like the WCHF, it is important that we avoid seeing ourselves as detectives or hunters. We might instead recognize that we are often outsiders to these communities whose members have

7 Dr. Carol Mattingly (professor emerita) in discussion with the authors, February 2015.

8 "Old Louisville: Preservation District." [louisvilleky.gov](http://louisvilleky.gov/sites/default/files/planning_design/landmarks_and_historic_pres/oldlouisng.pdf), http://louisvilleky.gov/sites/default/files/planning_design/landmarks_and_historic_pres/oldlouisng.pdf.

leveraged very different arguments from these archives and about the figures we study. (“Changing Research Methods” 60)

Our response to this local archive was quite different. We concurred with feeling outside the culture, though one of us is a native Louisvillian. At first glance (and at concluding reflection), this local archive appeared in direct contrast to that of Laredo, as it was reinforcing and maintaining historic power structures, definitely not “recreating” but rather reinscribing public memory. We both felt this sentiment upon entering the facility, but we kept an open mind. Though I am sure the founders and benefactors of the Filson Center would make the argument that the facility was developed and curated for the mainstream, with a majoritarian focus, the facility exists in this current, 21st century, diverse environment, and yet there has been little effort at revisionist curation.

With our open minds, we were hopeful and yet not surprised that we were unable to find anything about Susie and Lottie, especially in this space. The archivist was wonderful in helping us to conceive of the various places where there might have been potential breadcrumbs, again, relying on our “critical imagination” and already having ascertained that there were no documented trails to Susie and Lottie, we made Rev. Henry Adams our focus for the day. We thought if we can find “personal” information about Henry in some place, the Adams women might make an appearance. We began with church histories. According to Marion Lucas in *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, Rev. Henry Adams had been the pastor of the First African Baptist Church, which was originally part of the First Baptist Church congregation before they became independent in 1842 (Lucas 124). The First Baptist Church merged with the Second Baptist Church and became the Walnut Street Baptist Church in 1845, which is still an active congregation to this day. We used all three institutions—their church histories, their church programs, and any other files that could potentially provide a crumb—and there existed no documented sign of Rev. Henry Adams in any of those spaces. At the urging of the archivist, we left the Filson Society and traveled to the Western Branch of the Public Library, which has one of the largest collections of African American artifacts in the city. The librarian was again supportive and helpful, but most of the materials were from the early 20th century and were part of the Joseph Cotter collection, many years later than the period in which we were working.

The librarian at the Western Branch helped us to identify a book that was housed at the public library’s main branch, The book did not provide any additional information, but here we were standing in the exact space where this brick and mortar search began more than nine years ago, with a tattered folder stuffed full of xerox-copied articles. Though we had hit a literal wall in the physical space, a librarian, intrigued by our journey, introduced us to a

database of periodicals that could only be accessed with a local library card. Because neither of us had one, we once again called on Carol Mattingly, who offered hers and was excited to help. After chatting with her about the day's methods and dead ends, she assisted us with searching the periodical database. She felt sure that Rev. Henry Adams obituary would have been published and surely his daughters' names included. We were able to locate Rev. Henry Adams obituary from November 8, 1872. The obituary identifies that he was survived by five children, but it did not list the names of his children and therefore could not provide confirmation of Susie's and Lottie's relation ("HONORING MERIT" 4).

The obituary listed a number of accolades and gave an account of the number of white citizens who attended Rev. Adams' funeral, yet his family members did not receive acknowledgement in the publication. Given the historical racial climate of this nation, we can deduce that providing an account of the number of white citizens in attendance at one's funeral was far more newsworthy and validating for a life well lived than a list of his family. There was also a memorial from his fellow ministers printed a few days prior on November 6, and many years later we located an article, printed on July 4, 1886, and listed under the "Our Colored Citizens" column, that reported on Rev. Adams son, John Quincy Adams, who was leaving Louisville for Saint Paul because he felt that better opportunities could be found there (4). Imagine the frustration when we located an article on the son, but none on the women we imagined were his daughters, or possibly his daughter and sister. We had come full circle. Our search for the Adams women ended where it started, in digital spaces. We knew little more than we did when we began, and so it begged the question: What next?

Without a doubt, digital research and the creation of the digital archives is yet another of the "tectonic shifts" in the history of Rhetoric and Composition Studies that Royster and Kirsch theorized (Enoch and Bessette 636). As such, we soon realized that our project presented us with specific challenges, particularly in terms of critical imagination. Although we desired to discover how the Adams women navigated their public and private lives as African American educators, we recovered few of their primary artifacts. As a result of this gap in the historical record, we realized that, as David Gold suggests, we might apply critical imagination not only to the lives of the Adams women, but to the digital archives themselves (25). We used this concept to engage in a microhistorical search for the Adams women in cyberspace. By thinking "between, above, around, and beyond," we discovered that our journey did not merely describe the limits Susie and Lottie faced while living in Louisville, Kentucky during the 19th century (72). Instead, our use of digital archives illuminated larger technological questions that relate to race and gender in the 21st century.

Why can't we Find Susie and Lottie?: The Material Conditions

The limited success of our exploration not only presented some interesting complications due to the lack of preservation, but it also illuminated the complicated intersections between race, gender, and technology that Banks articulates. For Banks, the problem is not just about our team being unable to locate digital primary texts which provide a window into the lives and work of the Adams women, but rather that raced people in general are unable to achieve the kind of “transformative access” that will prevent the issue of limited preservation and access from perpetuating itself. According to Banks, “transformative access” is the “genuine inclusion in technologies and the networks of power that help determine what they become, but never merely for the sake of inclusion” (45). “Material access” is the foundation of such transformative access, as it affords researchers the opportunity to “own, or be near places that will allow [them] to use computers, software, and other communication technologies when needed” (Banks 41). Though the researchers here, as well as other academics committed to inclusive digital work, may have some material access, that access must be “meaningful” (Banks 41). Scholars and digital humanists need to continue their pursuit of the kind of access that transforms digital spaces. We need more women and people of color engaging in digital humanist projects utilizing methodologies that do not privilege some parts of materials over others and that digitally preserve all texts making them more widely available.

Considering this argument in the context of lack of access may seem surprising because both researchers own computers, have high speed internet connections, and are adept at using other communication technologies (digital cameras, sound recording equipment, etc.) when conducting research. However, according to Banks, one of the major difficulties in defining real access to technology “lies in the stubbornness of common understandings of technologies as merely the instruments people use to extend their power and comfort” (40). While material access to technology certainly requires availability to physical devices such as computers, Banks argues that meaningful access “begins with equality in the material conditions that drive technology use or nonuse” (41). Carried to its logical end, true material access would thus require a complete restructuring of the economic relations of the United States (41), and even such a radical economic revolution would not ensure the full participation and representation of African American women in our rhetorical history.

The issue of material access is exacerbated for African Americans, such as the historical Adams women. Even if we achieve the transformative access to

digital spaces and begin to create and cultivate a meaningful presence, there remain issues of preservation in physical archival spaces that will impact, and likely hinder, access. Abdul Alkalimat notes that Black women have been “all but ignored by major [physical] archives,” on account of not only their gender, but their race (“eBlack: A 21st Century Challenge”). Therefore, if there is not preservation and representation in brick and mortar, there is no large collection of materials to digitize. Further, in “Meaningful Engagements,” Enoch and Bessette argue that feminist projects like ours, which explore small, local archives, often stand in stark contrast to large and often well-funded digital projects that focus on the work of canonical, mostly white male, rhetors such as Jeremy Bentham, William Blake, Abraham Lincoln, and William Shakespeare⁹ (638). In this sense, the values perpetuated by digital archivization projects may seem to be at odds with the ethics of care and hope at the very heart of feminist recovery work.¹⁰ The lack of preservation of black women’s material artifacts in traditional brick and mortar archives translates into a lack of material artifacts in digital archives. Because Susie and Lottie’s rhetorical contributions were not available for us to find in a large, well-funded physical archive, it was far more difficult (if not impossible) for us to trace their histories in cyberspace.

Consequently, a double marginalization of the Adams women left us to piece together their history from artifacts we located in a Special Collections Library at our home institution, through systems of interlibrary loan, the Filson Historical Society, and public libraries located in Louisville, Kentucky. Having to piece together fragments of the Adams women’s lives leaves us with an incomplete narrative and a limited history. While frustrating, our search for the Adams women led us to some important conclusions about the underlying reasons why we were ultimately unsuccessful in locating them, especially when considering Banks’ concept of material conditions. Throughout our journey of tracing the fragments of the lives of Susie Adams and Lottie Adams,

9 According to Enoch and Bessette, there are “2,421 manuscript transcriptions collected in the Bentham project; over 6,000 digital images in the Blake Archive; and 30 million searchable words in the Lincoln Historical Digitization Project” (638).

10 Royster and Kirsch define an ethics of hope and care as a “commitment to [being] open, flexible, welcoming, patient, introspective, and reflective. It requires looking and looking again, reading and returning to texts, learning about the contexts of those who use rhetorical strategies under conditions that may be very different from our own” in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies* (145-46).

we identified four likely reasons for our inability to find any primary texts that would significantly locate them in Louisville's educational history:

1. It is possible there was no preservation of Susie and Lottie's history, as their accomplishments may have been overshadowed by their famous possible relative, the Rev. Henry Adams. Therefore, we cannot recover a history that has not been recorded.
2. It is possible documents may exist in a brick and mortar facility, yet there is no political or academic investment in making them more widely available in a digital archive, or even in digital or onsite index, for that matter.
3. Other feminist historiographers, like ourselves, may have a vested interest in digitizing the historical artifacts of Susie and Lottie, yet lack the technical expertise to create or contribute to a digital archive.
4. Digital humanists are not invested in searching for the narrative history of women like Susie and Lottie Adams because their histories are often some of the most difficult to recover.

These conclusions point to the obvious archival circumstance. We could not access material about Susie and Lottie because equality does not exist in the material conditions that drive the use or nonuse of digital archives. Primary documents, such as records of salary distribution, lesson plans, letters, journals or any other written texts of the Adams women, were most likely not preserved during the 19th century. Consequently, we were unable to access these important artifacts online, even if another scholar had a political investment in digitizing them. The fact that we had access to powerful communication tools through our university was inconsequential. We found very little documentation to substantiate our theory that the Adams women were important 19th century rhetors.

Lower Order Concerns/Higher Order Concerns

On a local level, our inability to locate, substantiate, and validate the Adams women is demonstrative of the limited historic value that community members, historians, and preservationists have assigned to women's work in general, and African American women's work in particular. However we argue, and research supports, that these limitations are still very prevalent in current scholarly conversations, which continue to uphold a significant gap in the literature. In *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century*, Cynthia Selfe suggests that when we do not pay attention to the way we use technology, it serves the status quo rather than questions it. Our ability to provide revisionist

histories in the 21st century depends largely on our abilities as feminist historiographers to “pay attention to the ways” in which the use of technology “races” our thinking about the past and requires that we take an active role in joining and expanding future conversations (XIV).

In order to assure that the newly emerging field of the Digital Humanities and Historiography of Rhetoric and Composition attracts the work and perspectives of people of color, we must become race-cognizant multimodal scholars. We begin this critical process by asking ourselves several important questions before we use technology or engage in the creation of a digital humanities project: What is it we are designing and why? Who is designing these projects? Who will use them? How will we know if we have been successful? These questions, initially posed by Michelle Kendrick in “Invisibility, Race, and the Interface,” force us to pay attention to both the digital and social aspects of our projects (and the way we access them) in ways that ask us to recognize the racialized aspects of digital technologies (399). We would like to add the following question: Have we considered a multitude of intersections when developing that design? The ways in which we engage these technologies to create our projects matter. We would argue that if we ignore the ways we utilize technology to construct the digital archives, these virtual spaces may continue to serve the majority culture and status quo rather than provide opportunities for revisionist inclusions.

On a more global level, the Adams women phenomenon has forced us to reconsider the four critical terms of engagement (critical imagination, strategic contemplation, social circulation, and globalization) that Royster and Kirsch propose as a critical framework for evaluating the major shifts in rhetorical inquiry (638). What is the theoretical relationship between the terms, race, women, methods, and access? What intersections occur when considering both feminist historiography and the digital humanities? What epistemologies will emerge from the collision? And ultimately, how does that collision look differently with African American women as both researchers and subjects? Enoch and Gold’s special edition began this conversation, and we hope this work builds on that beginning.

Of the research included in the special edition, we believe the work of Shannon Carter and Kelly L. Dent most closely illuminates methodologies that are relevant to constructing a more complete history of underrepresented groups. In examining the Carter and Dent article “East Texas Activism (1966–68): Locating the Literacy Scene through the Digital Humanities,” we appreciated this work as a strong methodological model and wondered how a remix method applied to Susie and Lottie Adams might look. Though Carter and Dent offer a detailed methodological description of the historical recovery work they have accomplished at East Texas A&M, that work includes the

narratives of African American male athletes and leaves room for a project of African American women's narratives. In their description, we realize all the ways one might democratize and employ texts that could be useful in building Susie's and Lottie's narratives.

In all our searching, the only primary document including the Adams women's names are the minutes from the Jefferson County School Board meetings in which they were appointed principals. Every secondary source referencing them cites the same primary document—the minutes. Though we have been unable to find other primary texts that speak to the lives and legacies of the Adams women, we might employ other documents to contextualize their lives and work. What were the national, state, and local conversations about African American schools in 1871? How might employing those documents help sculpt an appropriate understanding of Susie Adams and Lottie Adams? Who are the audiences for an artifact of this nature? Where would one house such an artifact upon creation? To what resources might scholars have access to accomplish digitizing localized histories?

Clearly, there are more questions raised here than solutions offered, and in order for the digital humanities to truly provide a means to revisionist histories, African Americans, feminist historiographers, and underrepresented groups in general, must gain proficiency at all levels of Banks's taxonomy of access. It is necessary, as Banks emphasizes, for them to "know how to be intelligent users and producers of technology if access is to mean more than mere ownership of or proximity to random bits of plastic and metal" (42). Given the current limits of critical conversation concerning race and access as they relate to the digital humanities and feminist historiography, more could be done either practically or theoretically to ensure that the digital archives are inclusive spaces that challenge the status quo rather than reinforce it.

Toward a More Inclusive Digital Humanities

We realize the picture we have painted of the current state of African American women and the Digital Humanities in Rhetoric and Composition may seem rather bleak, perhaps even futile. However, looking toward the future, the creation of digital archives certainly offers the possibility for the radical democratization of historical texts. One way that we might begin to reconsider critical engagement involves the role graduate students might play in creating the digital archives of the future. In his 2006 article, "The Foreign Language Requirement in English Doctoral Programs" Doug Steward noted that most English departments rarely take very seriously the foreign language reading proficiency exams that graduate students must pass in order to complete

their degrees because little research is actually conducted in a language other than English.

Unfortunately, very little has changed in 2016. Rather than viewing this institutional requirement as an archaic hoop that graduate students must jump through, Rhetoric and Composition scholars might view these tests as exciting opportunities for students to become proficient in computer programming and/or coding. Department chairs and program heads might consider allowing coursework in computer science to be considered a part of the core curriculum for Rhetoric and Composition graduate students interested in pursuing digital scholarship as an area of expertise. Although many graduate programs in Rhetoric and Composition Studies may offer seminars on computers and writing or rhetorical history, in which students learn to question technology and accepted historical narratives, these courses rarely (if ever) teach the computer coding skills necessary for students to create their own digital archives. Transformative digital literacy, as Stuart Selber defines it in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, requires students to not only critique technology, but also to use and produce it effectively (24-25). Thus, the pursuit of transformative digital literacy is necessarily an interdisciplinary one—one that might require students' pursuits to take them outside of English Studies.

Jessica Enoch suggests in her article "Changing Research Methods, Changing History: A Reflection on Language, Location, and Archive" that individual institutions may consider offering grants to graduate students and Rhetoric and Composition scholars interested in creating a digital repository. We acknowledge that there are some entities like the University of Alabama Digital Humanities Center and the Ohio State University Digital Media and Composition Conference (DMAC) that are doing so, but our national institutions like NCTE and CCCC could develop a more robust support system for the Digital Humanities and Historiography in Rhetoric and Composition. The computer sciences and related disciplines might also consider cross-listing courses with required Rhetoric and Composition coursework. Such an emphasis on collaboration between more experienced Digital Humanities scholars and graduate students or other less experienced Rhetoric and Composition faculty members provides new and exciting ways to broaden our understanding of critical engagement. Fortunately, this tectonic shift in methodology has just begun to occur. Because the intersection of these two fields is still in its infancy, there is still time to ensure that African American women gain the forms of access necessary for them to become equal stakeholders in the Digital Humanities. However, we should act quickly to do so. To begin this process, we must continue the difficult conversation Banks began when he theorized his taxonomy of access in 2006.

The End of the Journey

Though we were unable to locate the substantial primary evidence we would have liked, we acknowledge the scholarly value of this journey. The journey resonated for us both pedagogically and methodologically. First, we took this journey together, learning about the ways in which knowledge is preserved and constructed, and secondly, we tried every archival trick, digital and brick and mortar, leading us to know nothing more about Susie Adams and Lottie Adams than Michelle discovered almost a decade ago. Not one letter, journal, curriculum, or tangible material was discovered in this exploration. However, we learned that in 1871, during the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), two African American women served as principals of the first two African American public schools in Louisville, Kentucky. This fact in itself is significant, but we know gaps remain. Our journey raises important questions about how the many fragments and gaps in history, especially in the narratives of African American women, cannot be addressed by digital technologies alone. Most importantly, our journey generated far more questions than answers, and yet when readers complete this article, they will have read both the Adams women's names more than thirty times. At the very least, this work places them in a scholarly context. Our search for the Adams women emphasized the importance of Banks's concept of transformative access and the reality that in the 21st century, if African American history is not made digital, then it is not accessible in fundamental ways for important audiences in the academy and beyond.

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