

CHAT Lost Histories

November 4, 2016



Getting set for the Mellon Sawyer seminar on Colonialism, Slavery, and The Archive.
[#chatlosthistorie](https://pic.twitter.com/6vpDZ6RA0f)s pic.twitter.com/6vpDZ6RA0f

 CHRIS STRAUBER @CSTRAUBER · 4 MONTHS AGO



Chris Strauber
@cstrauber

One of today's themes: how what is preserved shapes what we can talk about, and who is represented in our histories. [#chatlosthistorie](https://chatlosthistorie)s

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First up, Professor Vincent Brown from Harvard. His digital project on Jamaica's 1760 revolt: revolt.axismaps.com #chatlosthistories

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Histories of people not traditionally archived are a challenge to the boundaries of traditional archival practices. #chatlosthistories

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V Brown on mapping the "disorder" of Jamaican slave revolt & its suppression in 1760-1761 #chatlosthistories

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Historians of the 1760 slave revolt in Jamaica find sources who think slave violence is random. #chatlosthistories

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Brown: how does one spatially represent the uncertainty of archival data? #chatlosthistories

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Cites White's Spatial History Project as a way of seeing the sources differently. web.stanford.edu/group/spatialh... #chatlosthistories

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digital cartography balances intelligibility with ambiguity [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Brown overlays the textual history (diaries, letters, etc.) on the geography and land ownership boundaries in Jamaica [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Even using colonial maps inscribes a colonial view of the world. How the rebels saw the world is probably unknowable. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Brown: How does one not reify colonial geography & temporality & represent uncertainty that was condition for rebels? [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Looking at the map shows that the rebels had a plan and coherent goals, which is not what the literary sources say. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Next, Prof. Elizabeth Dillon of Northeastern. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Dillon's major work, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* tufts.worldcat.org/oclc/869367552 #chatlosthistories

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Elizabeth Dillon @EMDillon on Caribbean assemblages and the poetics of the archive
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Today's talk: *Translatio Studii* and the Poetics of the Archive, forthcoming in journal form.
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Digital materials are not simply copies of the physical item, they create something new.
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Dillon: the archive is not merely "translation" of knowledge, it is also "poesis" – a bringing forth
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Dillon: the form of an archive not only mediates colonial power, but the legitimating social coordinates of epistemology #chatlosthistories

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Forms of knowledge and power are related to each other. Power shapes the archive.

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Dillon: "translatio studii" enhanced access that digital permits is not innocent but conveys existing relations of power #chatlosthistories



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Cites Lisa Lowe @driftinghouse History Hesitant on this theme of colonial influence.

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Mentions the Northeastern Early Caribbean Digital Archive. omekasites.northeastern.edu/ECDA/

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The British Library has more early Jamaican titles than the national library of Jamaica.

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Dillon contrasts differential resources of the National Archives of Jamaica and the Yale Rare Books Collection #chatlosthistories



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National and nationalist collections are the most likely to be digitized. Works on the colonized are not. #chatlosthistorics

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Liz Polcha

@EPolcha

@EMDillon just gave a shout out to me and @Daniannese for our work on @ecdacommons #chatlosthistorics

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Discussion of Edwards' history of the British West Indies colonies. archive.org/details/histor... #chatlosthistorics

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Traditional cataloging provides metadata for images, but not footnotes. Cites a slave who only appears in a footnote. #chatlosthistorics

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Dillon contrasts figure of the "sable Venus" with "Clara" an enslaved woman "present" in the colonial archive #chatlosthistorics

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Liz Polcha

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@EMDillon covers Bryan Edwards' History of British Colonies & the narrative of a slave named Clara embedded in the text #chatlosthistorics

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.@EPolcha @EMDillon @Daniannese @ecdacommons What's your favorite thing in the archives? What should more people see? #chatlosthistories

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Dillon: colonial archive contains contradiction: both denial of enslaved's humanity & their presence in archive #chatlosthistories

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Cites Philip's Zong. tufts.worldcat.org/oclc/185095663 #chatlosthistories

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Cites Lewis's Voyage of the Sable Venus, which changes the perspective on a colonial image. tufts.worldcat.org/oclc/899488683 #chatlosthistories

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Cites Ernst and Parikka, Digital Memory and the Archive. tufts.worldcat.org/oclc/846495554 #chatlosthistories

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Dillon: Shift from analog archive to algorithmic assemblages may permit revelation of embedded slave narratives #chatlosthistories

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Archival work shapes what is possible for scholars. All modes of humanist analysis are relevant to digital projects. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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[@ecdacommons](#) remixes the archive & deforms the book by treating Clara's Narrative in Edwards' History as its own text [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Now, Vivek Bald on Colonialism, Slavery and the Archive. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Bald studies a group of migrants, Muslim men from Bengal, in the US in the 19th century. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Vivek Bald [@losthistories](#) Muslim Bengali peddlers who came to Harlem, Treme, & Detroit [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Men settled into local communities of color in New York, New Orleans, Detroit, Ohio, elsewhere. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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By mid-century, Bengali Muslims as part of African American and Puerto Rican communities across the US. Not in archives. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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People who don't settle permanently don't leave the same trace. People in the gray areas of immigration intentionally not [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Peddlers and ship's crew had a compromised legal status, as deserters from Britain and illegal aliens in US. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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These people exist now as scraps of archival documents about other things, and family memories of descendants. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Ref. to Subaltern Studies Group's method of reading colonial texts against the grain. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern... [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Bald: tracing fragmented remnants of migrants between British & US empires, marrying Black & Latina women [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Second reference to making a separate archive from bits of the colonial archive. Recontextualizing what is known [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Traces of the men in census records, Ellis Island arrivals each spring, newspapers, ship records [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Cites Alien Contract Labor Law of 1885. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alien_Con...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alien_Contract_Labor_Law_of_1885) [#chatlosthistories](#)

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What exists in the Archive about the men is essentially state surveillance by two great empires. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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As the project went on, family began to contribute stories and images. Lost Histories Project is a place to assemble them [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Bald's archival research moves from documents of state surveillance and border control to family stories and photographs [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Online version of this adds state documents to the family's stories and images. bengaliharlem.com
[#chatlosthistories](https://twitter.com/hashtag/chatlosthistories)

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Making the site open to labeling and commentary by relatives, which adds the personal stories to the traditional archive. [#chatlosthistories](https://twitter.com/hashtag/chatlosthistories)

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Bald's digital archive, The Lost Histories Project, is photo centric - crowd sourced and multimodal - totally amazing! [#chatlosthistories](https://twitter.com/hashtag/chatlosthistories)

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Three approaches: scraps of The Archive; re-analysis of it; adding personal details and stories from unrelated sources. [#chatlosthistories](https://twitter.com/hashtag/chatlosthistories)

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Sari C Mauro

@ArchivistSariM

Seriously, an example of archival research and digital humanities at its best. [#chatlosthistories](https://twitter.com/hashtag/chatlosthistories)
twitter.com/EPolcha/status...

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Kendra Field [@fieldkendra](https://twitter.com/fieldkendra) on overcoming binaries of "old" and "new," "official" & "unofficial" archives [#chatlosthistories](https://twitter.com/hashtag/chatlosthistories)

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Commentary by Kendra Field of Tufts. Physical access to archives for African Americans in the Jim Crow South. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Field: on access, voice, archival silence, poetry, song, embodied memory [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Keepers of the stories of Af-Am migration were women, but the subjects were men. Erases women's experiences. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Questions: what do you do when there is no archive, or there doesn't appear to be one? [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Question: What sorts of changes at your institution have been required, flowed from your work [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Kris Manjapra of Tufts commentary. Colonial voices are partly hard to trace because they were trying not to be seen then. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Questions: What kinds of texts are being digitized in digital humanities? Does institutionalizing DH change it? #chatlosthistorie

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Kris Manjapra @kmanjapra queries the nexus of digital humanities & study of slavery & colonialism #chatlosthistorie

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Working with digital tools means a translation to computer language also. Macluhan on humans as connectors for machines #chatlosthistorie

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Part of the power of digital humanities is a focus on visual experiences. Are there other ways to make the past material? #chatlosthistorie

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Lowe points out that digital techniques allow the archive to be read in new ways. #chatlosthistorie

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As a librarian I empathically agree that The Archive doesn't make a good singular. There are many archives. #chatlosthistorie

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Dillon cites UVa's Social Networks and Archival Context. socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu A social network of white dudes. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Bald stresses archival interpretation of lost histories in which singular/anomalous is more important than the numerous [#chatlosthistories](#)

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The men Bald studies are marginal to the archive; the women associated with them are even more so. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Brown: capitalism wants slaves. Slavery outlawed when machines became available. DH requires human labor, not machines. [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Brown: beware of digital humanities & capitalist desire to replace human beings with machines [#chatlosthistories](#)

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Brown: we require more (not less) human labor for interpretation of new archives that digitization permits [#chatlosthistories](#)

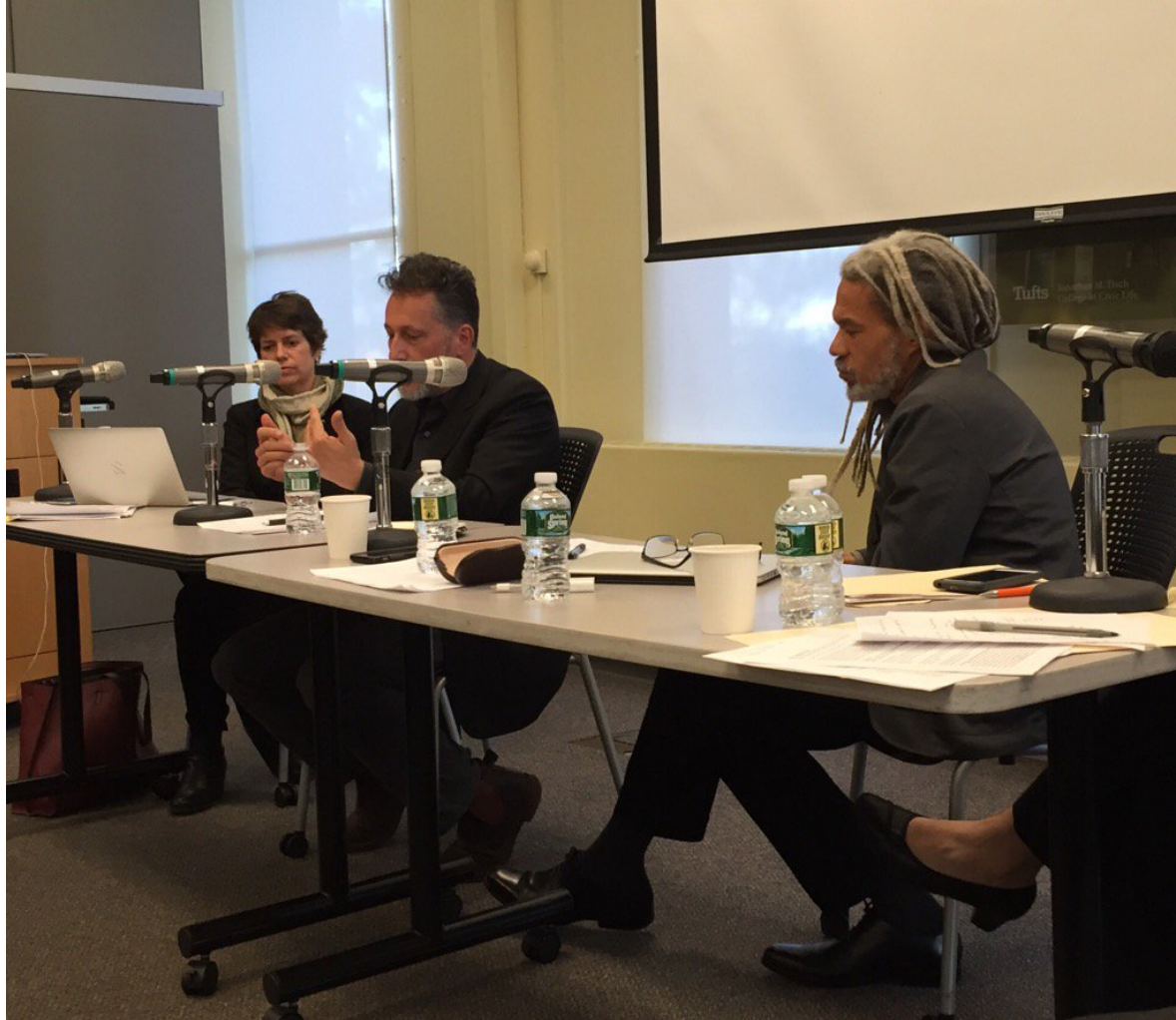
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Dillon: digital not only opens different stories, but makes us think of media, performance, materiality differently #chatlosthistories

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#chatlosthistories @EMDillon @losthistories & Vince Brown pic.twitter.com/DdXMXgHqVW

LISA LOWE @DRIFTINGHOUSE · 4 MONTHS AGO



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Brown: the "archive" is perpetually unstable & the history we are telling matters in the present #chatlosthistories

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Dillon: some of the "core" work of the humanities is rethinking "categories" [#chatlosthistorics](#)



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