Stanford University

July 15, 2016

Dear Amy Schindler and Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the position of Digital Engagement Librarian at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am currently the Academic Technology Specialist (ATS) in the History Department at Stanford University, a decentralized position under the Center for Interdisciplinary Digital Research (CIDR) in the Stanford University Libraries. In 2016 I completed my Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the fields of digital history, environmental history, and the American West. I have been an enthusiastic proponent of digital humanities in libraries for the past five years. My research background, engagement in the field of digital humanities, experience with building bridges between libraries and faculty, and participation in designing and teaching courses in digital historical methods will enhance the digital engagement initiatives at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The mission of the University of Nebraska at Omaha faculty and students to have more opportunities for digital instruction and collaboration is an exciting change for me to offer my wide familiarity with current methodologies in the field of digital humanities. Since 2013 I created and facilitated numerous projects and programs to promote digital scholarship and community-building at Stanford University. My day-to-day work as an ATS has been to consult and collaborate on research agendas for faculty and students. These projects include early and recent American history, Chinese computing and information technology, African decolonization, early modern Europe, and Chinese laborers on U.S. railroads. In addition to this work, I played a crucial role in the service of building a campus community around digital humanities: I am involved in the agenda of educating people on the R statistical language, I hosted several workshops across various University departments and programs, and I created and now direct the Digital History Reading Group. The Digital History Reading Group is a research colloquium of graduate students in the History Department. We meet twice monthly to discuss readings and participate in a workshop setting on methods, tools, and frameworks for digital historical research and teaching. These meetings have turned into spaces for student cohorts to learn from each other and exchange critical feedback on works-in-progress. Finally, I am a member of the planning committee for Stanford's Graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities. In this role I surveyed the programs of peer institutions and offer suggestions on coursework, requirements, skills, and needed resources to develop a challenging course of study.

The importance of collaboration across disciplines spans the digital scholarly projects that I have helped plan and develop. I gained experience as research staff at the Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis (CESTA), which is an umbrella unit for three faculty-led research labs: the Spatial History Project, the Literary Lab, and Humanities+Design. I work with students, faculty, and researchers across disciplines in CESTA on collaborative research projects, digital consulting, data visualization design, and leading workshops that aid CESTA research wile also bridging their relationship with Stanford Libraries. These projects are housed in various units and departments from across campus. For example, I assisted two Stanford University professors in their large-scale digitization of archival material on Chinese laborers working on nineteenth-century American railroads. The project involved close partnerships and communication with library colleagues in our digital library systems division, metadata specialists, and other technologists. Together, we helped bring their data collection methods up to current standards. The team also adopted a platform we are developing (called Bibliopedia) for the creation and management of metadata, which also integrates a workflow system to aid the project leads in managing their pool of undergraduate research assistants.

I especially enjoy the opportunities to work with undergraduate and graduate student research. I recently

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led a development team of undergraduate research assistants to develop a custom visualization platform for a Stanford graduate student. Together we built a custom interactive visualization of 14,000 post offices in the nineteenth century American West. This platform is a unique product that emerged from cross-disciplinary collaboration, and resulted in a resource that is accessible to larger audiences. My work in digital scholarship extends beyond the classroom and connects with external partners. Together with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH), and the Buffalo Bill Center for the West I served as the project manager to digitize the papers of William F. Cody. I managed the workflow for our designer, programmer and TEI specialist in the encoding of a large-scale documentary editing project, while also working closely with the Buffalo Bill museum staff. I am eager to bring these experiences to UNO and play a role in connecting the campus to a broader community.

My knowledge in digital humanities also supports my own research agenda, in which I am currently designing my own public digital history project. Titled *Silicon Valley Historical*, this is a spatial exhibit built with Curatescape to explore the history of Silicon Valley. The project launches this fall in conjunction with a digital public history course I am teaching. Students will work closely with Stanford University Archives to build exhibits and digitize objects. As the project grows, I will pursue partnerships with other university archives, historical societies, museums, and alumni associations to expand the archival base of the project and seek new contributors. I have presented my work at several academic conferences and I am currently revising my doctoral dissertation. Titled "Machines in the Valley: Community, Urban Change, and Environmental Politics in Silicon Valley," the University of Washington Press and University of Oklahoma Press have expressed interest in publishing it as a full-length monograph.

The chance to join the University of Nebraska at Omaha is a welcome professional opportunity. I am particularly interested in this position because it will afford me space and time for my own research and writing; this is not the case in my current position at Stanford. But I am also attracted to this job for personal reasons, as my wife and I are from and lived in the area for many years. We enthusiastically welcome the chance to make a long-term relocation to our roots in the Midwest.

Enclosed you will find my curriculum vitae, references, and an annotated list of digital scholarship and initiatives I have participated in over the last few years. More samples of my digital work can be found online at http://jasonheppler.org/research/. Please let me know if you need additional information or materials.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jason A. Heppler
Stanford University