



**Workshop**  
**The Digital and the Visual:**  
**New Approaches to Urban Studies Research of East Central Europe**

**November 7-8, 2013**

**Organized by**

The Center for Urban History of East Central Europe

**With Support from**

The European Association for Digital Humanities

**Coordinator**

Mariya Pohorilko (Center for Urban History)

**General Description:**

The emergence and rapid development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and multi-media technology has produced a dynamic impact on modern life, inserting itself into every aspect of daily existence. These technologies, notwithstanding the degree to which they have served as sophisticated study tools in the investigation of the past and the rendering of that historical research in innovative fashion, have yet accomplished so much more. They also have had a direct effect on the research itself, its methodology and thematic focus, as well an ability to alter the perception of an audience. “Digital History” is the digital rendering methodology of the spatio-temporal data of historical movements, social and ethnic groups, linguistic dynamics, and putative geography. Urbanistics and Urban Studies – employing the new research tools and methods proffered by digital history – occupy a discrete place within this research structure, and assist the pursuit of multiple lines of inquiry and multi-cultural urban histories in an exacting, and non-linear fashion.

Modern research is able to work in new media in the formation of digital libraries, archives, cultural heritage data bases and museum collections, and participate in the creation of digital historical reconstructions employing the combined efforts of scholars in the humanities, IT programmers, designers, and other specialists. The digital story involves not only novel forms of the accumulation and transmission of historical knowledge, but also new approaches to the organization of the academic community and educational environment.

Questions and debates abound concerning this dynamic process. For instance, in what way does the emergence of digital technology influence the structural development and dissemination of historical information? What influence does the technology have on the functioning of scientific institutes and communities domestic and international? Do ‘new media’ affect the method of historical research, or only the manner in which this research is presented? Does the appearance of supplementary, occasionally excessive, resource materials stimulate new research approaches or is it simply the accretion of material? In what way does the multiplication of digitized research projects on the internet – yet another new archival resource – influence a historian’s work with source materials? Does the World Wide Web play a significant role in overcoming disparities and assist in the exchange of differing methodologies in historical research? How do the methods and tools of digital history affect the processes of deconstruction of extant narratives and the creation of new narratives? Has the structure of historical narrative been altered in the era of the hypertext and its combining of various media – text, photography, video, and audio? Turning our attention to fully-realized digital and interactive urban studies projects, what can we say about changes in the methodology of historical research and what exactly are those changes? Correspondingly, what is the potential of “digital history” in our own region and how does this influence changes within the historians’ scientific paradigm? Finally, what challenges and advantages do digital histories impart upon the field of urban studies?

The Seminar “The Digital and the Visual: New Approaches to Urban Studies Research of East Central Europe” is a forum for the consideration of local efforts and the global relevance of the use of new forms of media and geo-instrumentation in East Central European Urban Studies research. The new technologies have intensified to a remarkable degree the development of ongoing studies and the formulation of new digital historical projects. The presentation of designated projects will serve not merely to focus the discussion, but will further provide opportunity to examine the potential as well as the challenges encountered during the various stages of this type of project. This seminar is the first in a series to be offered at the Center for Urban History with the stated objectives of establishing a platform for the exchange of experience, and for the facilitation of collaborative projects employing digital history methodologies in the urban studies research of Central and Eastern Europe.

Those interested in attending the seminar are asked to register by **October 20, 2013**. Please send a brief biography and state your interest in this seminar to coordinator Maria Pohorilko.

email: [m.pohorilko@lvivcenter.org](mailto:m.pohorilko@lvivcenter.org).

The presentations will be given in **English** or **Ukrainian** language. A simultaneous translation will be available.

The workshop is open for the public.

## Program

Day One / Thursday / November 7, 2013

### Opening and Welcome

10:00 – 10:15

### Panel 1: Cities “in digits” – representation, investigation, or collaboration? Various Methods of Presenting Urban History on the Internet

10:15 – 12:15

The expansion of and access to the internet has created a world of nearly limitless potential for those interested in compiling and distributing content via a designated website or blog. Despite the physical existence of a museum in a particular city, the net has made possible the creation of virtual urban museums, as well as museums of events and processes, past and present, which relate to the urban space. The literary, sport, cultural, and historical city, the city in memoir and photography: the contemporary setting requires a minimal amount of resources for the establishment of its own virtual city.

What is the place of digital history projects, assembled by qualified researchers, among the hundreds of historical projects on the internet? Given these new formats for the assembly and propagation of information, of what value, if any, is the arbitrary distinction of the professional vs the amateur researcher? What in the given context is meant by a work of “scholarship”, and who can and should be involved in urban research and its dissemination on the internet? What is the function of trust and data verification in the attendant pluralistic context?

### Presentations:

- Warsaw 39 (<http://www.warszawa1939.pl/>)
- The Center for Urban History – LIA Project (<http://www.lvivcenter.org>)
- City Maps of the Russian Empire of the late-18<sup>th</sup> – early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Methods of Digital Analysis
- TimeMachine (<http://timemachine.comuv.com/>)

**Discussion Leader:** Dr. Charles van den Heuvel

**12:15 – 1:30 Lunch**

## Panel 2: The Multiplicity of the Past: the Urban Space as Place of Alternative Memories and Competing Narratives

1:30 – 3:30

Until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the typical central European city had been a space in which varying ethnic groups, religious confessions, social groups were woven together in a braid of cultural coexistence. The Second World War nearly inextricably altered this demographic and, in many instances, the very spatial structure of these cities. The radical extent of this change expunged prior urban histories and former communities in residence, communities of which, in the post-war period, there was often no account in official – and often unofficial – narratives. The struggle to establish “ownership” of a city is often carried out on the internet through the formulation of highly selective, exceedingly narrow viewpoints in the examination of complex histories. Visual materials play a vital role in these representations, in particular when the discussion turns to heritage that is expressed in multiple languages for readers from different countries with different views of the past.

In consideration of the given contexts and challenges in the examination of the selected projects, a vital question comes before our panels: what is the potential contribution of visual research to changes in the putative urban *mapscape*? How can the mapped visualization of data assist the interpretation of historical fact, event, or process? Are digitized historical resources able to facilitate the research of topics previously unavailable to historians? Does the accumulated data reconstruct comprehensively the varying ethnic, cultural, and historical phenomena of a city’s past? By depicting only certain aspects of life, do these project resources effectively silence other aspects? Conversely, do projects of this type possess the potential to stimulate interplay among differing narratives? Or does the internet contribute to the development of a niche appropriate for the city of the past and its multi-ethnic history? Do projects which employ visual materials, and in particular historical materials, also invite critical consideration of said materials as instruments fostering a particular narrative to the marginalization of others?

### Presentations:

- reVILNA. Vilnius Ghetto Project (<http://www.revilna.org>)
- Starosajmiste.info – Past and present of Staro sajmište (<http://www.starosajmiste.info/en/#>)
- Teatr NN. Ośrodek Brama Grodzka. (<http://teatrnn.pl/>)
- Lwow przedwojenny (<http://lwowprzedwojenny.eu/>)

**Discussion Leader:** Professor Paul Arthur

3:30 – 4:00    **Coffee Break**

**Discussion with Dr. Charles van den Heuvel: Digital Cartography, Social Networks, Historical Record**

**4:00 – 5:30**

**Moderator:** Maria Pohorilko

**Day Two / Friday / November 8, 2013**

**Discussion with Prof. Paul Arthur: Collective Biography and Social History**

**10:00 – 11:30**

**Moderator:** Volodymyr Kulikov

**11:30 – 12:00 Coffee Break**

**Round-table: Isolated histories, contradicting narratives, collaborative projects: how can “digital history” assist in the teaching of East Central European urban history?**

**12:00 – 2:00**

Currently, in post-communist and post-socialist Europe recorded histories to a large degree continue to be formulated in keeping with state, political, and established institutional, academic guidelines. One may assert in general terms that for an extended period history has been monopolized and turned to the purposes of political parties on every level of civic life. Certain states and communities have worked to consciously sever this connection, attempting to liberate historical research from the paradigms of the past. Still other states have been unable thus far to dispense with “old habits” and continue to exploit the historical record for political purposes.

During this roundtable, enlisting all our participants, we will discuss what is public, i.e. nonpolitical and non-ideological, history? What distinguishes one from the other? What else has changed along with the regime, border, and social structure changes that accompanied the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Has there been – and will there be – a reconsideration of the role of history and the historian in society and in the State? Can “digital history” foster a better grasp of history in this complex and contentious corner of Europe? What advantages do researchers who employ the tools of digital history enjoy? What are the challenges and limits of these tools? Does “digital technology” imply a change in research methodology? Or is this merely new technology which supplements the technique of extant research praxis and method?

How to best benefit from collaborative projects which digital technologies make possible? What is the impact of crowd sourcing on historical research?

**Moderator:** Bohdan Shumylovych

**2:00 – 3:30**    **Seminar Closing. Informal communication and a buffet & wine**