THE VOYAGES PROJECT
A Sustainable Model for Partnership between Scholars & Digital Librarians

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- Qualitative & quantitative historical data
- 27,000+ records
- 500+ variables
- Drawn from multiple sources

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- Expensive
- Limited audience
- Not easily updated
Voyages Project - Goals

1. Expand dataset
2. Create open access website for redesigned database and interface
3. Develop contextual materials for K-12
4. Establish system for regularly adding data
5. Archive and preserve the database with institutional partners
Sustainability

- How will we keep this resource going, once the project is over?
- How will we ensure that this resource continues to be used and valued by researchers?

Can collaboration help?
Sustainability

How will we keep this resource going, once the project is over?

- Endowment to cover maintenance costs
- Online data entry form for submitting data
- Editorial distribution system for receiving, reviewing, & incorporating new data
- Digital preservation network for securing & preserving database
Sustainability

How will we ensure that this resource continues to be used and valued by researchers?

- Scholars’ active participation at all levels & phases of project development
- Regular consultations with scholars to discuss design & development issues
Collaboration

Higher levels of scholar involvement in database development
Collaboration

Continued investment

Higher levels of scholar involvement in database development
Collaboration

- Continued investment
- Awareness of implications

Higher levels of scholar involvement in database development
data structure ↔ scholarly practice
data structure ↔ scholarly practice

Prefer downloading data to own stats program
data structure ↔ scholarly practice

Limited stats functionality in original database

Prefer downloading data to own stats program
data structure ↔ scholarly practice

Desire download option in enhanced database

Limited stats functionality in original database

Prefer downloading data to own stats program
data structure ↔ scholarly practice
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Researcher using DOS spreadsheet software
data structure ↔ scholarly practice

8-character codes used to identify variables

Researcher using DOS spreadsheet software
data structure ↔ scholarly practice

- Researcher using DOS spreadsheet software
- 8-character codes used to identify variables
- Short codes still used to quickly scan data
Collaboration

Higher levels of scholar involvement in database development

- Continued investment
- Awareness of implications
Collaboration

Higher levels of scholar involvement in database development

- Continued investment
- Awareness of implications
- Aligned expectation
Collaboration - Challenges

1. How do we acknowledge distinct individual and institutional roles without undermining the collaborative nature of the project?

2. How do we nurture a sense of shared purpose among project partners without getting stuck in a search for consensus?

3. How do we encourage participation from potential partners if there is little monetary incentive to do so?
Collaborative practices

1. How do we acknowledge distinct individual and institutional roles without undermining the collaborative nature of the project?
   - Be clear about partners’ roles and contributions
   - Use wordmarks for branding resource & crediting institution
   - Note contributors & editors in the resource itself (variables & acknowledgements)
Collaborative practices

2. How do we nurture a sense of shared purpose among project partners without getting stuck in a search for consensus?
   - Include all partners in design & development discussions
   - Establish clear roles and responsibilities, and deadlines for making decisions
   - Build in cycles of discussion & assessment
Collaborative practices

3. How do we encourage participation from existing and potential partners if there is little monetary incentive to do so?
   - Identify critical needs that participation fills
   - Find commonalities in mission, work
   - Publicly acknowledge contribution
Comments & Questions

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

Voyages

www.slavevoyages.org