

Fostering Transborder Thinking at the Intersection of Digital-Public Humanities and Border Epistemologies with United Fronteras

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DOI: pending

Abstract

In this article, we delve into the intersection of digital and public humanities and border epistemologies, offering pedagogical frameworks that leverage the analysis and engagement of tools, practices, and ethical knowledge production to challenge dominant narratives of the Mexico-U.S. border. The article presents and explores the creation and impact of the online directory and memory project, *United Fronteras* (2020), which offers a framework for transborder thinking. The authors analyze diverse projects and digital materials to reveal the complexities of border communities through research, teaching, archives development, and/or lived experiences. Through this analysis, the authors offer pedagogical models that can help continue expanding transborder digital humanities work. This collaborative approach amplifies underrepresented voices, thus challenging common misconceptions and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of the Mexico-U.S. border. The article demonstrates the application of border epistemology and *United Fronteras* within border communities and academic settings across multiple universities and disciplines to foster the theory, praxis and pedagogy of transborder digital and public humanities across different borderlands.

Transborder Thinking in the Digital and Public Humanities through United Fronteras

Borders are imaginary, geographic, and man-made divisions that separate lands, people, and cultures. Borderlands are the regions surrounding this imaginary, yet enforced, boundaries, where “a third country — a border culture,” as proposed by [Anzaldúa 1987, 3], is born. We believe that the borderlands, and border culture, are a shared entity built by communities since pre-colonial times, entities that are not, as understood by many, divided regions or peripheral to the north and south.

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The issues surrounding the U.S.-Mexico border have been shaped by various historical events, including the territorial expansion that followed the U.S.-Mexico War (1846–1848), when the U.S. gained half of Mexico’s territory under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Beyond the loss of land, this event profoundly affected the people living in those regions, mostly Mexicans and Indigenous communities, who suddenly found themselves living under U.S. rule. Although the treaty promised to protect their property rights and grant them U.S. citizenship, many faced discrimination, land dispossession, and legal marginalization. Over time, these communities were politically and culturally marginalized, laying the foundation for long-term struggles over civil rights, identity, and belonging. Another major issue in the U.S.-Mexico relationship took place in the 1940s, during WWII. The Bracero Program (1942-1964) was a bilateral labor agreement that allowed millions of Mexican men to temporarily work in the U.S. in agriculture and in the railroad industry, often under exploitative conditions. The program had lasting consequences: it created a dependency on low-

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wage Mexican labor in agriculture and contributed to patterns of labor exploitation and discrimination still present in the U.S. It also increased Mexican migration, which has remained a central issue in U.S. policy. In recent decades, the U.S. has increased enforcement along the Mexican border, often citing drug trafficking as the primary concern. This rationale has led to a growing militarization and has expanded surveillance infrastructure throughout the region. These measures have been reinforced by a dominant narrative that depicts the border as a dangerous violent zone filled with criminality, a vision frequently reinforced by mainstream media. For this reason, counter-narratives about the border, its people, languages, and cultures, are critically important, especially in digital spaces that too often amplify violent and inaccurate borderland representations.

In this article, we delve into the intersection of digital humanities and border epistemologies, providing pedagogical frameworks that can help other researchers, teachers and community members analyze tools, practices, and ethical knowledge production to challenge dominant narratives of the Mexico-U.S. border. The article presents and explores the creation and role of the online directory and memory digital project, *United Fronteras (UF)* (2020), which offers a framework for transborder thinking. Transborder thinking is a way of understanding the world that transcends the boundaries imposed by nation-states, emphasizing the interconnected, lived realities of communities that exist across multiple sides of a border. These spaces are shaped by deeply relational networks — familial ties, economic exchanges, social structures, and political movements — that weave across national divides [Stephen 2012]. As [Saldívar 2022] suggests, transborder thinking is grounded in an epistemological condition — a way of knowing and remembering that challenges rigid geopolitical definitions by centering shared memory and distributed knowledge across borders. This mode of thinking resists binary logics and nationalistic frameworks, instead encouraging the recognition of historical connections and divisions, and prompting critical reflection on why certain narratives, resources, or communities are visible on one side and not on the other.

Stemming from this orientation to transborder thinking, we as authors analyze diverse digital projects to reveal the complexities of border communities through research, teaching, archives development, and/or lived experiences. This collaborative approach amplifies underrepresented voices, thus challenging common misconceptions to advocate for a more inclusive understanding and representation of the Mexico-U.S. border. In the article, we discuss the development of the digital memory project, *United Fronteras*, highlighting the multilingual and participatory aspects of this work. We introduce different initiatives that we developed to create this project through collaborative approaches, including hosting a 2021 *United Fronteras* online symposium that brought together project creators, activists, and community members to envision a future for borderland-transborder digital humanities. Given that pedagogy is an important aspect of borderland digital humanities, as it allows researchers and teachers to put into practice their own approaches to transborder thinking, we provide multiple pedagogical examples that showcase the application of transborder digital humanities (TBDH) in classroom contexts. We conclude the article by demonstrating the application of border epistemology and *United Fronteras* within academic settings across multiple university courses that promote inclusive, anticolonial, and *transfronterizo* perspectives that push back against dominant narratives and support ethical, collaborative approaches to learning. While the authors are based in the United States and the examples presented reflect that context, the broader objective is to document and analyze how these projects foster transborder thinking through multilingual digital and public humanities theory, praxis and pedagogy across different borderlands.

We acknowledge that the dynamism of transborder cultures is grounded in Indigenous perspectives and experiences, as exhibited in several zones of the American continent. These epistemologies and experiences are expressed through the ecosystem, family ties, trade, and political and integration associations, as well as through shared worldviews and ideas, which, in some cases, differ from state practices and geopolitical perceptions of territory [Álvarez Fuentes 2021]. Under the constant implementation and reinforcement of physical boundaries and border policies across the Americas, transborder communities, located in territories occupied by more than one state, challenge the notion of sovereignty, and put into question the principles that have defined the dominant international order [Álvarez Fuentes 2021]. Thus, through practices and dynamics developed in these territories, under a state of fluidity and interrelation, the nature of transborder dynamism is reflected in the shared territories people inhabit through interrelating languages, cultures, and ways of navigating and resisting nation-states. Through these practices, borderland communities continue learning how to negotiate nation-states in the face of foreign and domestic policies, living under conditions of resistance and survival

from impositions of assimilation, marginalization, and fragmentation derived from geopolitical conflict.

Transborder movement is not limited to the Mexico-U.S. borderland, but also extends to other borderlands in the Americas, such as the Southern part of the continent, since, according to Gonzalo Álvarez Fuentes “in Latin America today, in accordance with the Indigenous Territory and Governance Initiative, there are 108 transborder towns.” As he explains, “[a]mongst them there are fluid transborder practices between communities that differ from state sovereignty practices that include their own ideas, forms of organization, and relationships. This is the case of the Achuar peoples—separated by the border between Peru and Ecuador” [Álvarez Fuentes 2021]. Similarly, with respect to the Canada-U.S. border, the Jay Treaty of 1794 included a provision to maintain Aboriginal rights to freely pass and carry on commerce across the border, recognizing the unique situation of Indigenous people in the region ([Marchbanks 2015]Marchbanks. Indeed, processes of mobility, migration and navigating fluidly across borders were, and continue to be, an Indigenous praxis that was not stopped by the establishment of nation-states. Migration and mobility are central to human behavior, as border divisions are imposed by nation states to maintain and expand power.

Stemming from this orientation and acknowledgement of Indigenous communities’ past and current contributions to borderlands ideologies and interactions, we approach border studies not only through the examination of migration across nation-states, but also through the incorporation of digital technologies with humanistic inquiry into processes of studying, preserving, recognizing and disseminating borderland communities’ knowledge. To highlight the dynamic nature of the borderlands, and to work toward expanding borderlands theories to decolonize toxic narratives, transdisciplinary, translingual, cross-institutional, community-based, and individual-local collaborations are necessary.

In 2019, a group of humanities and independent scholars came together to discuss the development of a transnational memory digital project and directory of transborder digital production. Our goal was to document digital projects and materials that represent the borderlands or narrate stories from multiple views using various digital technologies and tools. This idea materialized into the project *United Fronteras*. The first phase of the project was centered on the Mexico-United States borderlands from pre-colonial times to the present, thus covering a geographical region that has been altered severely due to different geopolitical establishments. Phase one of the *United Fronteras* memory digital project-directory involved compiling active, inactive, and in-development digital projects and materials from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. The goal was to foster an understanding of these works as part of a broader representation of the borderlands within what [Fernández Quintanilla, de Luna, and Zapata 2022] describe as a digital third space — a virtual environment that makes visible the cultural, historical, and political complexity of the region and fosters ethical and responsible ways to create representations of underrepresented or silenced voices. The concept of digital third space expands on what [Risam 2019] calls the *digital cultural record* by challenging dominant narratives and filling in archival absences.

In parallel, the work of *United Fronteras* as a digital third space is informed by the theoretical and decolonial framework of Gloria Anzaldúa, who in *Borderlands/La Frontera* [Anzaldúa 1987], conceptualizes the third space as a site of hybridity, where the meeting of multiple races, cultures, and languages does not produce inferiority, but rather gives rise to a new consciousness and identity. This borderland consciousness affirms the generative possibilities of in-betweenness, where interconnected traditions and identities converge to form a richly layered border culture. The *UF* project draws from both frameworks — digital and embodied — to apply a theory-praxis model that reimagines the border not as a line of division, but as a site of cultural production, resistance, and transnational connection.

United Fronteras was developed in a non-hierarchical collaborative structure where each of the team members contributed their knowledge, academic and personal expertise, and skills, while also learning new practices and tools. Some of these contributions focused on border experiences and studies, multilingualism (Spanish, English, and Spanglish), project management, community engagement, and technical skills (Google Workspace, Microsoft Excel, YouTube, Zoom, programming languages, social media data scraping, among others). As a model of transborder digital humanities workflows ([Fernández Quintanilla, de Luna, and Zapata 2022]), *UF* engages in practices that align closely with those of public humanities. As [Rodríguez-Ortega 2022, 103] argues, public humanities work is “open to citizens at large, emerges from undoing the hierarchical organization of knowledge and asserting its own legitimacy in all its different forms.” Aligning with Rodríguez-Ortega’s definition of public humanities, *UF* seeks to create “spaces in which

academic and nonacademic communities can collaborate to elaborate a common knowledge that is valid and meaningful for all.” The *UF* team followed a process similar to the “indexing” approach described by [Rawson and Muñoz 2019], ensuring our collaborative data sharing preserves the diversity and context of the data rather than enforcing a uniform structure or concealing important contextual differences.

UF was created as an independent and autonomous project with no institutional support. Keeping in mind issues of sustainability, the team opted to use Wax, an open-source platform that adapts Jekyll for minimal exhibition sites. In this sense, the use of this platform aligns with the minimal computing approach that, first and foremost, “advocates for using *only* the technologies that are necessary and sufficient for developing digital humanities scholarship in such constrained environments” [Risam and Gil 2022]. Part of the team worked under the guidance of Alex Gil, one of the advisors of the project and one of the developers of WAX, to learn the implementation of Jekyll that required command line and Markdown, CSS, and Liquid, which was new to most of the members. The rest of the team prepared the multilingual content in the format required for the platform. Given the geographical landscape of *UF*, the use of minimal computing allowed the team to analyze how this approach can work in a transborder scenario to document cultural digital heritage by employing technology to bridge a region that lies between the Global North and South while considering its inequities, differences, and similarities.

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Positionality and Transborder Digital and Public Humanities Projects

UF emerged as an initiative intended to bring together diverse voices and experiences from the border. Our goal as a project team was to situate borderland scholars and community members as knowledge producers in the cultural digital record. As various border, feminist, and women of color scholars have noted, when engaging in research with underrepresented communities, it is important to acknowledge and represent researchers’ positionality. For example, [Hernández Sánchez and Bejarano 2022] acknowledge how border feminist *conocimiento* emerges from the border’s ecosystem, its multiple identities and encounters to resist hegemony by learning how to embrace and own border histories. Stemming from this *conocimiento*, it is crucial to recognize our individual and collective positionalities to “interrupt deterministic stories of self, and create transborder lifestyles, opportunities for newcomers to flee violence or hunger, to lay claims in border communities” [Hernández Sánchez and Bejarano 2022]. For this reason, we find it important to situate our own connections and positionalities to the borderlands as we have been involved in *United Fronteras*.

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As part of our reflexive praxis as feminist researchers ([Royster 2012]), rather than presuming neutrality as scholars and authors of this work, we centralize our identities and our connections to the border. In addition to describing our collective identities, we also provide brief insights into our individual connections to the borderlands, highlighting how experience translates into expertise that is necessary when we engage in *United Fronteras*. We intersperse our personal narratives and backgrounds in this section and throughout the paper, illustrating how our various positionalities reflect the dynamism embedded in borderlands experiences. To illustrate how method and theory merge in this project, in the following sections, we share examples of how members of our project team describe their positionalities as *fronteriza*, *transfronteriza* and/or immigrant. In this work, *fronteriza* identity refers to individuals who live or have lived along the Mexico-U.S. border, where daily life is shaped by the cultural, linguistic, and social dynamics of the borderlands. This identity reflects a deep-rooted connection to the border region itself — its landscapes, histories, and communities. In connection, *transfronteriza* identity reflects dynamics of those whose lives are marked by regular, sustained interactions across both sides of the border. This may include crossing the border frequently for school, work, healthcare, commerce, or to maintain family ties. A *transfronteriza* person not only resides in the borderlands but actively navigates the physical and bureaucratic boundaries between nations as part of their everyday experience. This identity embodies a fluid, hybrid sense of belonging that challenges fixed notions of nationality, mobility, and citizenship, reflecting the realities of binational life and the resilience required to move between contrasting systems, languages, and expectations. Maintaining the terms in Spanish, without translation, is essential for this work, since, unlike English, it has a gendered form and highlights the complexity of identity, culture, and the history of the border. Additionally, the distinction between *transfronteriza*, *fronteriza*, and immigrant identities lies in the intertwined nature of citizen/resident/tourist/migrant status, social position, race and ethnicity, access, and other aspects which either enable or restrict mobility and different uses of the border spaces. This includes the ability to cross the international boundary,

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participate in local life on both sides, and navigate everyday border dynamics. These varied relationships to the border shape distinct forms of border thinking and lived experience. Engaging with these questions of positionality helps deepen and expand the theoretical frameworks and ideologies that inform *United Fronteras*.

A *transfronteriza* experience...

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Living on the Mexico-US border, for me, has been an experience of mobility. Being an “anchor baby,” as the US government classifies us, means that I was born in El Paso to parents who reside and worked in the maquiladoras on the Mexican side, and who, as tourist-visa crossers, arranged to pay the hospital and the doctor for me to be born in the United States. We then crossed back and lived mostly in Ciudad Juarez, having Mexican citizenship, too. This dynamic allowed me to receive my elementary education under the Mexican system, then cross back and forth and have my education with the private sector on the U.S. side, and then start living in Las Cruces to continue higher education at a U.S. state university. Throughout time, my perceptions of the border, as a *transfronteriza*, have meant to be *de aquí y de allá y a la vez de ninguna parte*. But these notions have always been in transition, since my hometown is on the Mexican side of the border, but I have always relied on what the United States has offered me, as I have been able to cross frequently as a U.S. citizen for school, shopping, visiting friends and family members, and for work. It wasn’t until I started college, when I began to live in the U.S. and crossed to visit my parents and friends and for academic purposes, that I became more conscious as to how the border[lands] and its borders mean so much and so many different things to each person who inhabits this region for a lifetime, or just momentarily. Taking this into consideration, for me, being in projects such as *United Fronteras* is a compromise and responsibility; it means doing work that is connected to the personal and resists the culture to produce just for an opportunistic, capitalist and academic perspective. It is with the intention to intervene in the violence that humans have done in this place involving the print and digital records and to situate the humanity of the border[lands] with respect and recognition of its differences and complexities.

An immigrant *fronteriza* experience...

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When I was ten, my parents decided to immigrate from Monterrey, Nuevo León, México, to Laredo, Texas, USA. They chose Laredo, a border city, due to its geographical proximity to Monterrey — only a bridge away from México and a three-hour drive from our family and friends. Our arrival in our new home brought trauma because what little I remember from our first years in Laredo is prejudice from relatives, teachers, classmates, and strangers for being an immigrant. Ever since I crossed the border, I have felt a powerful survival impulse that propelled me to continue exploring my identity and not settle for the impositions of others as I navigated the educational system as a first-generation student. In higher education, away from my community and family, I learned about Heritage Language programs for the first time and had the opportunity to teach heritage learners; being in front of students who resembled me, who struggled not only with the language but also with their identity, was cathartic. As a grad student, I read for the first-time books by Latinos in the United States whose stories I could relate to and had access to Latino and Latin American archives that few have seen. Such experiences helped me question systems of power that for a long time tried to define me and my community, realizing that the toxicity of others’ prejudice is not mine to carry. After years of identity crisis, I embraced my past and present self. Becoming a *fronteriza* was a choice, and for the first time, I felt whole and liberated. I was *de aquí y de allá*, no need to choose one identity over the other. I embraced them all. Collaborating with projects like *United Fronteras* enables me to contest the single story of a dehumanized border[lands] by leveraging my multilingual and multicultural experiences, knowledge, skills, and expertise, while creating transborder digital-cultural records that promote social justice.

A *fronteriza* queer experience...

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I was born and raised in the Mexico-US border region of Reynosa, Tamaulipas, and the Rio Grande Valley, in Anzaldúa's border. My mother's family, the Flores, have lived on both sides of the border for six generations. Although my mom lived in the United States until she got married, I have never heard her speak English. My father is from a small municipality in Guanajuato, Mexico, but he migrated with his family to Reynosa, Tamaulipas, as a child. That is where my siblings and I were born and raised until we moved al otro lado. I was a teenager when that happened. My parents, without a university degree and without speaking English, went from being middle class in Mexico to struggling, as immigrants often do. The first time I read *Borderlands: La Frontera* (2007), I was 22 years old and finishing my master's degree. After reading it, I wondered many times how it was possible that I was born and raised on Anzaldúa's border and never heard of her before. *Borderlands* echoed the struggles of identity I was going through as a lesbian who felt that didn't belong on either side of the border. "Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien' in the dominant culture, the woman of color... her face caught between *los intersticios*, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits" [Anzaldúa 1987, 20]. Reading Anzaldúa not only reflected what I was experiencing but also validated these experiences as part of how we theorize and understand the border and border people. My *fronteriza* identity has given me the opportunity to present different visions of who I am and to question the way the media, official history, and politicians have described me.

A Bolivian immigrant (re)defining herself on the border...

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As an immigrant from Bolivia, I experienced the border as a space of learning and re-learning about the important connections between language, heritage, race, and identity. My grandfather was born and grew up in Hatch, New Mexico, near the Mexico-US border. While I always knew that my gramps was from New Mexico, where he lived until he was deployed for the Korean War, all I really knew about my gramps' ethnic background is that he was an American Marine and engineer who moved to Bolivia, where he met my grandma. Growing up, I identified with my Bolivian identity, but my gramps' history was less clear to me. It wasn't until I got to graduate school and started reading the work of Anzaldúa and other border[lands] scholars that I began asking questions and learning about my gramps' Mexican American heritage. Then, when I got my first tenure-track position at a university situated on the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez borderland, I began to work with students and community members who moved fluidly across Spanishes and Englishes in their daily communication, and everything came full-circle for me. I was there, close to where my gramps grew up, learning not only about the language histories and practices of borderland residents, but also, in some ways, learning about my own history with language and migration. To me, working on the *United Fronteras* team provided an opportunity for histories, like those I describe above, to be highlighted rather than hidden. In part due to the white supremacy embedded in mestizaje ([Ríos 2016, 109]), it's easy for white Latinx like me to lean into our privilege and ignore where we come from. At the same time, doing transborder DH can also help us as researchers and scholars to make visible the racial violence and anti-Blackness that also perpetuates borderland living ([Brown 2020, 3]), working to ensure that the digital-cultural record truly includes the multiplicity of experiences embedded in border[lands] regions.

As evidenced in the positionality statements above, the identities of our project team influence what we envision for *United Fronteras*. Our goal in this project is to continue recognizing identity, positionality, and experience as expertise in digital humanities projects. *United Fronteras* seeks to centralize borderland communities' knowledge, Global South and North border and digital humanities theory, praxis, pedagogy and community engagement to continue shaping the digital cultural record.

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United Fronteras Methodology: A Transborder and Multilingual Framework

United Fronteras is a project that "involves iterative processes and many dimensions of coordination, experimentation,

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and production” [Burdick et al. 2012]. As a feminist transborder endeavor, *UF* highlights the importance of recording how knowledge is produced through technologies that work differently on both sides of the border. In its first phase, the *UF* team focused on finding and documenting projects and digital materials produced at Mexican or US institutions and independent groups in both regions. The team began collecting and analyzing digital and digitized projects that highlight stories across the border through multiple perspectives. This included projects that were active, inactive, in development and that incorporated some form of digital technology to document borderland stories and narratives. Projects were considered inactive if their digital interfaces were no longer functional due to broken links, discontinued software, lack of updates, or unpaid hosting and service fees. The documented inactive projects were identifiable through references in other initiatives or mentions left behind in interviews, blog posts, articles, or on the creator/co-creators websites. We found it important to document inactive projects because we recognize that resource and other constraints frequently prevent digital humanities projects from having longevity. However, the existence and development of these projects reflects a commitment to borderland documentation that should still be recognized. Our team implemented qualitative methods to conduct extensive research, using various browsers and search engines, which resulted in the identification of 115 digital projects. The team analyzed digital stories, data collected, technologies used, and methods of dissemination for these 115 projects. We then developed a digital directory where these projects could be accessed.

Some of the projects we first identified produce knowledge that exemplifies border thinking ([Anzaldúa 1987]; [Mignolo 2000]) “which is deeply rooted in the subaltern experience of coloniality and the borderlands while at the same time freeing thought processes from colonial and modern epistemologies in order to promote alternative, decolonial ways of knowing, thinking, and becoming” [Fellner (Forthcoming)]. These projects respond to violence and colonial ideologies producing alternative knowledge using digital technologies. Other projects show limitations or resistance to non-hegemonic knowledge by perpetuating “official,” monolingual and/or colonial narratives that reinforce stereotypes of border experiences, people, and their shared histories. As such, the *United Fronteras* digital directory included projects that presented different perspectives regarding border thinking approaches or ideologies.

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After researching and analyzing the various projects collected, the team reached out to the projects’ creators to solicit approval and revisions that would help us develop the *UF* directory in the form of a publicly accessible digital exhibit. For each project, we included metadata, such as label/title, principal link/s, description, creators, contact information and status (active, inactive, in-progress), and an image of the project. All this information was collected in both languages, Spanish and English, allowing us to ultimately produce two versions of the directory, one in each language. With the intention of designing an exhibit that fosters a broader understanding of transborder digital production, the *United Fronteras* team chose to classify the projects by their status — active, inactive, or in progress. This approach aimed to highlight the ephemerality of digital projects and materials, and the inherent instability of their presence in the digital cultural record, often due to factors such as lack of funding, technical skills, or initiative support and coordination for long-term maintenance. At the same time, this classification intentionally avoided organizing projects by geographic or geopolitical location, helping to resist reinforcing the ideology of the border region as strictly divided. For instance, *Turista Fronterizo*, a video game that illustrated the border dynamics of individuals who regularly cross back and forth between cities and towns along the United States-Mexico border, was built using Adobe Flash, which is no longer available, and thus the project is categorized inactive. In contrast, *Torn Apart/Separados* and *Bracero History Archive*, two projects that document historical events and policies that impact communities from both sides of the border, as well as other countries in Latin America, remain available, largely through their use of minimal computing and stable institutional infrastructure, and thus are registered as active.

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To create a digital directory of projects that represent local, transborder, and transnational activism, *UF* embraces collaboration and multilingual workflows. Many sources have documented that on the Mexico-U.S. border, communities move fluidly among Spanish, English and multiple Indigenous languages, creating a “border language” that frequently mixes different variations in daily communication. On the border, many people use “[a] language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves - a language with terms that are neither español ni ingles, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages” [Anzaldúa 1987, 55]. While some communities on the Mexico-U.S. border speak Spanish, this language was (and in some cases still is) suppressed through colonial and xenophobic ideologies, forcing borderland communities to assimilate to white

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American communicative practices by speaking English. Furthermore, Spanish is itself a colonial language that was and is used in Mexico and across the world to oppress and erase Indigenous languages. Due to this history, newer generations of borderland residents do not always speak Spanish, even though they have Mexican heritage and come from Spanish-speaking families. A growing number of migrants coming into the United States from Mexico also speak their Indigenous languages and do not speak or understand Spanish.

Reflecting the realities of this history (which extends into contemporary contexts where Spanish and Mexican identities are still oppressed in many sectors), our team members navigate different varieties of Spanishes and Englishes and embrace such plurality in the project design by hosting events and meetings and sharing publications and presentations in both languages. For example, we hosted the *United Fronteras* Symposium 2021, which brought together designers and leaders of the different projects showcased in *United Fronteras* digital directory. The goal of the symposium was to humanize the digital projects showcased through *United Fronteras* by inviting project leaders to discuss their work. We also invited community members, faculty, and students interested in borderland digital humanities research to provide feedback on *United Fronteras* as we iterated on the project. Through two days of conversation, our team engaged with digital humanities practitioners and activists from Mexico and the US, hosting this bilingual symposium in Spanish, English, and Spanglish. Rather than separating sessions into “Spanish sessions” and “English sessions,” we conducted sessions in both languages, where attendees were asked to engage with bilingual content rather than selecting a single language at a time. In this way, our team dynamics and language practices reflect the bilingual collaborative engagement often exhibited in borderlands communities.

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Recent and ongoing work in DH acknowledges the importance of language diversity and multilingual representation in online spaces. For example, the 2022 DH Unbound conference theme specifically asked for proposals focused on multilingual DH projects, which could include topics such as “multilingual metadata, linked open data, preservation and dissemination of endangered languages, OCR for non-Latin scripts, methods for right-to-left languages, tools and interfaces for multilingual DH, multilingual pedagogies, and multilingual corpora” [DH Unbound Call for Papers 2021]. Furthermore, the recently established group, “Multilingual DH,” defines itself as “a loosely organized international network of scholars using DH tools and methods on languages other than English” [Multilingual DH n.d.]. This group highlights the fact that “DH scholarship is frequently criticized as being ‘English-centric’ and therefore culturally and technologically biased. This bias takes many forms, from the lack of awareness of DH scholarship from non-Anglophone countries to the need for robust tools for working with non-Latin scripts [DH Unbound Call for Papers 2021]. Furthermore, the recently established group, “Multilingual DH,” defines itself as “a loosely organized international network of scholars using DH tools and methods on languages other than English” [Multilingual DH n.d.]. As [Gil and Ortega 2015, 179] Alex Gil and Élika Ortega further point out, English is understood as the “lingua franca” of DH, despite the fact that most DH practitioners speak English as a second language.

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Indeed, many speakers of languages other than English continue to promote multilingual communication through DH projects focused on social justice activism and community building. For example, members of the *Ticha* project, seeking to revitalize and promote the Zapotec language and other Indigenous languages using multiple digital platforms, launched social media movements such as *#usatuvoz*, which increases representation of Indigenous languages in the digital cultural record [Broadwell 2020]. Indigenous language activists across the world continue developing and sustaining DH projects that highlight the importance of multilingualism in digital spaces. As [Viola and Spence 2023, 1] explain, “in recent years, numerous initiatives have been launched to address linguistic bias in the field and in digital scholarship more generally. Multilingual projects as well as community and special interest groups have proliferated, and in an international context where English is now accepted as a de facto lingua franca, space has increasingly been given over to debates in or about other languages, including at conferences and workshops.”

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In the case of *UF*, our transborder approach to DH collaborations also extends to the language practices represented in our team and in our collaborative workflow. While many DH scholars have rightfully focused on the importance of creating tools and platforms that have multilingual capabilities, as our team demonstrates, multilingualism and language diversity are important not only in the DH tools we use, but also in the linguistic strengths and makeup of our team and in our process of collaborating with other border[land] projects. In the following sections, we outline our bilingual collaborative workflow approach, which consists of 1) building a bilingual, *transfronterizo* team; 2) engaging in

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participatory translation; and 3) working creatively with bilingual data and digital tools.

Engaging in participatory translation

Since our team speaks Spanish and English in different ways and at different capacities, our collaborative workflow includes what we call participatory translation. Participatory translation brings together principles from participatory design and human-centered design to create localized translations that reflect the language practices of a specific community. According to [Rose and Cardinal 2018], participatory design “[a]dvocates for the full and direct participation of end users within the design process” ([Spinuzzi 2005]; [Ehn 1993]) as part of a “commitment to the idea of industrial democracy” [Ehn 1993, 10]. Human-centered design, on the other hand, “Sets users or user data as the criteria by which a design is evaluated or as the generative source of design ideas” ([Karat and Karat 2003, 538], cited in [Rose and Cardinal 2018, 10] Rose &). For *UF*, translation is not something we outsource to a third party or something we do in retrospect after launching a part of the project. Instead, translation is something we do together, not only within the team but also with other border[land] project leaders.

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For example, to gather the data related to existing border[lands] projects, we created separate spreadsheets, where all content was translated into Spanish and English. In addition, we sent emails and contacted project leaders, writing in both Spanish and English in all our documentation. This opened a space where project leaders could then feel comfortable reaching out to us in the language that they preferred, thus working to decenter English-only DH models that privilege English above all other languages. While individually these processes seem small, in the spirit of minimal computing, participatory translation allowed us to make small waves in the linguistic diversity of the digital cultural record, while also building community with other border[land] scholars and community members who navigate Spanishes and Englishes to various degrees in different contexts. While members of our team use different variants of Spanish and English communication, our bilingual collaborative workflow structure draws on the language skills of all team members, where some create content in Spanish, some in English, and everyone participates in translation activities in both written and spoken forms.

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Working with bilingual data

While our team embraces bilingual praxis with attunement to translation, not all the digital tools we worked with had capabilities for bilingual communication and representation. For example, as [Fernández Quintanilla, de Luna, and Zapata 2022] explain in their discussion of *UF*, “the tools we used as part of the *UF* team, including Jekyll and WAX, were not always well-equipped to handle bilingual data. While we as a team collected data in both Spanish and English, and while we collaboratively translated our data sets into both languages, working to represent this bilingual data on the *UF* website required further work” (translated by the authors). Because existing digital tools are not made for bilingual or multilingual projects, teams like *UF* must develop creative solutions for expanding the linguistic potential of these English-dominant platforms. This meant that the team: 1. Collaboratively edited metadata to ensure that, as data was transferred from one format to another, accents and special characters (ñ) were not erased; 2. created two separate exhibitions, one in Spanish and one in English. However, given the recursivity between Spanish and English that we wanted to reflect as a borderland project, we found ways to connect these languages in our finalized site. For example, there are regions of the site that include both Spanish and English in the same section, requiring users to engage with both languages in contact.

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We acknowledge that through these creative interventions in existing platforms, bilingual and multilingual DH researchers can continue making space for language diversity, using collaborative activities, including but not limited to participatory translation, to expand the digital cultural record as we also shift conceptions about border[land] interests and identities.

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Conversations Across Borders in the First Binational *UF* Symposium

As [Risam 2019, 139] proposes, although, “the internet is a space imbued with tremendous power, [...] at least some of its possibilities remain unrealized.” The *United Fronteras* Symposium 2021, like *United Fronteras* itself, sought to help realize these possibilities through collaboration and dialogue, detailing different approaches to creating digital

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humanities research about the border. *United Fronteras* 2021 was the first binational digital humanities symposium that aimed to amplify work done about/on the Mexico-U.S. utilizing digital technologies with a humanities lens. The event was an initial conversation with the project creators whose work we featured on the *United Fronteras* site, as well as with students and other people committed to social justice.

The *United Fronteras* Symposium sought to bridge the gap [Posner 2016] observes between the data and data models we have inherited and people's lived experiences. The goal of conversations at the symposium was to humanize data about the border, bringing together creators, designers, and audiences to interrogate data representations about the border. This approach opened conversations on border and transborder experiences, and raised questions, such as: what would archives, maps, and data visualizations look like if they were built from humanities data to illustrate fluid border communities and their lived experiences? *United Fronteras* was established to help realize these possibilities through collaboration. The *United Fronteras* Symposium was one step toward this collaboration.

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Numerous DH projects with an emphasis on social justice and activism have been generated from both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border; several of those have been compiled in the *UF* digital directory and featured in the *United Fronteras* Symposium. These include:

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1. Social Media archives that document and record the history of people's lives and literary expressions that have lived on both sides or cross the geopolitical border constantly. One example is the *Poets Against Walls* border digital archive.
2. Activism and resistance mapping that document, monitor and georeferenced data of violence towards border communities like the border digital map created in *Ellas tienen nombre*.
3. Personal story maps that visualize fluidity in lands and communities that have been affected and transformed due to political boundaries, showing how the border's Indigenous communities have changed through time, space, and migration. The *Pee Posh Migration* storytelling mapping project exemplifies this kind of work.
4. Digital art and virtual games that are produced and installed on the physical border but, rather than emphasize the division, challenge these notions and emphasize interactions and connections. Two examples are *Border Turner* and the aforementioned *Turista Fronterizo*.

The symposium made space for a dialogue about these projects and others, with the goal of fostering conversation to understand the current state of the field and highlight necessary and urgent collaborations and infrastructures to amplify border experiences. The symposium was held virtually because of the pandemic, but also to connect people from both sides of the border, as well as other presenters and attendees from other parts of the world. The symposium sessions were archived on YouTube and on the *UF* website. The panels varied in topics, including social justice, border activism, digital art, pedagogies and mapping transborder communities.

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One of the projects featured at the symposium was *Poets Against Walls*, which began with the intention of showing other voices that authentically represent *fronterizos* and to challenge stereotypes. *Fronterizo* poet, César de León, participated in the *UF* Symposium in the panel "Intersections of Border Literatures," and explained how the project began:

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Somos cuatro poet organizers...The project began in a classroom by fellow students Arnulfo Segovia and Alejandro Sánchez and their goal, or their project, was to record poets reading by the border wall, el muro que se construyó desde los años de Bush en el 2010 en Hidalgo, Texas
[United Fronteras Symposium Day #1 2021, 4:34–5:55].

The four poet organizers, which also included the 2020 Texas Poet Laureate Emmy Pérez, continued the work and created *Poets Against Walls* to showcase the stories of the Rio Grande Valley through poetry, testimonies, and spoken word that represented authentic experiences of the region. This collective project had its first public event in April 2017 in the city of Hidalgo, Texas, on the border with Reynosa, Tamaulipas. More than twenty poets came together to read poetry that covered social, political, historical, and environmental issues related to the border wall, DACA students, and other topics regarding immigration. *Poets Against Walls* is active on different social networks such as Facebook,

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Instagram, Twitter (now X), and YouTube. In addition to the literary meetings, on their YouTube channel there are videos and reflections of people hiking and protesting the environmental threats that the wall presents, specifically in the case of the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, established in Alamo, Texas, in 1943 for the protection of migratory birds. Literature, through its different genres, has often been a source from which people have raised their voices to resist and protest the social injustices against their communities and environments. As de León stated: “*si quieres conocer el corazón del pueblo... la verdadera historia, entonces necesitas ver el arte de ese pueblo, la poesía, las artes visuales, la música, no lo que escriben muchos de los historiadores* that is biased” [United Fronteras Symposium Day #1 2021, 6:30–6:53]. This project represents a community live archive using social media platforms to document and contest local aggressions to the divided territory through borderlands cultural and literary manifestations.

An example of borderlands digital activism is the feminist mapping project, *Ellas tienen nombre*, created by Ivonne Ramírez Ramírez, who presented at the UF Symposium as part of the panel, “Activism and Feminist Movements.” The project focuses on Ciudad Juárez, a border city, incorporating data related to the cases of feminicides in this border region since early 1990s. The native from Ciudad Juárez describes her project as:

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[A] feminist mapping project using information made available in March 2015, within the framework of International Women's Day. The objective is to focus on the victims of femi(ni)cide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, monitoring and georeferencing the places where the bodies of murdered girls and women have been found, as well as breaking down the specificities and data of each of the cases [Ramírez Ramírez and Fernández Quintanilla 2020].

On the project description page, Ramírez makes it clear that “This feminist project of online cartography is a personal initiative, and it DOES NOT [*sic*] have any form of funding or financial support” [Ramírez Ramírez 2015]. The activist uses georeferenced digital mapping to monitor and map feminicidal violence that occurred from 1993 to 2014, which is the first part of the project, and from 2015 to date. *Ellas tienen nombre* not only points out the place where the bodies of the victims were found but, when possible, also names the women, since, as the name of the project indicates, these women are more than a statistic. Ramírez also presents data, videos, and relevant information about the cases of femicide she has documented. Local community members have been using digital tools, such as GIS, and mapping practices and approaches to visualize different forms of violence and advocate for justice and policy change for people affected in transborder regions. This type of project showcases solidarity and resistance through local border digital activism that is grounded in borderlands epistemologies through personal experiences and diverse data sources.

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Another example of borderlands digital mapping was presented on the panel, “Indigenous Lands, Mapping, and Technologies”, where Shane Lynch presented his project, *Pee Posh Migration*. Lynch, who created the project, stated how his work comes from the need to create a record of his Indigenous stories of migration in border regions: “I come from the Pee Posh community...that is where I lived before, I came back to school, and there was a need for this story to be told digitally” [United Fronteras Symposium Day #2 2021, 1:11:23]. This mapping project is based on stories of migration that are passed through “oral tradition that has been recited for generations...[it] combines written oral accounts from oral stories and maps to create a modern rendition of the Pee Posh migration” [Lynch n.d.]. Using tools like Adobe Illustrator to draw the different migration stories that this Indigenous community has experienced along the border regions of Arizona, Sonora, California, and Baja California, Lynch makes it possible to have a visual and digital record of transborder expressions of mobility. And rather than basing migration stories with institutionalized data that otherwise would erase the sense of human movements, this project becomes a new recording method that serves to preserve the Pee Posh cultures of migration and reflects how Indigenous communities challenge geopolitical borders. By combining digital mapping tools and practices with humanistic inquiry, these types of projects push borders and boundaries to create interactive resources and visualizations. These visualizations represent mobility and highlight the effects, resistance, and transformations for Indigenous communities across cultures, time, and space.

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Among the UF digital directory, there are inactive projects that disrupt and/or interact with transborder dynamics. Work such as *Border Turner* and *Turista Transfronterizo* are two examples of interactive art and virtual games that challenged the notion of border as an imposition of division and national monolithic representation. Allowing the users to interact with different forms of technology and humanistic expressions to have a sense of what transborder experiences look like

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to some border community members. In 2019, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer installed *Border Turner*, a large-scale, participatory art installation designed to interconnect the cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Using powerful searchlights, it made open live sound channels for communication across the Mexico-US border. Throughout time, the installation witnessed the presence of a variety of individuals from writers to historians, to visitors that recited poetry, shared stories, informed about different issues and overall exchanged and communicated through the oral tradition. This work not only created new connections between the communities on both sides of the border but also made visible the relationships that are already in place, magnifying existing relationships, conversations, and culture [Lozano-Hemmer 2019]. *Border Turner* represents a digital project designed to engage with border communities and exchange local stories and anecdotes merging artistic oral expressions and technology in a region divided by a geopolitical wall.

Turista Fronterizo is another project created in 2012 by Coco Fusco and Ricardo Dominguez. It is a virtual board game about daily life and bicultural negotiations in San Diego-Tijuana. It was designed using basic HTML, which allowed the game to be simple to use with the intention that populations can engage with the game easily. This project allowed the user to play the game either in English or Spanish and choose from four player personae, each of them representing a particular perspective on life experience in the border region. The local transborder practices incorporated into the game make it possible to create a consciousness of how even transborder commuters are engaged and perpetuate colonial and imperialist dynamics in this region. This project exemplifies a transborder resource that demonstrates how “forces outside the control of individuals, whether they are geopolitical laws, the rules of a game, or the entrenched structures of feeling of a given community, delimit the scope of one's experience” [Fusco and Domínguez 2012].

Both projects, *Border Turner* and *Turista Transfronterizo*, represent public and digital resources that no longer exist, neither in the border region nor in the digital record. However, through *UF*, these two initiatives are documented as important parts of the cultural record of the region. In this way, *UF* showcases resistance to erasure in the digital cultural record, contributing to the ways local communities are making efforts to document their stories and cultural manifestations, advocate for human rights, and interact with representations of border experiences. Using different digital technologies, the projects showcased through *UF* incorporate community engagement, collaboration, and digital literacies necessary to make use of tools and platforms. During the creation of the *UF* transnational-transborder directory, and throughout the two-day Symposium, the *UF* team was able to learn more about these projects and the impact they have within different communities along the Mexico-U.S. border and around the world, as well as the limitations and challenges creators faced collecting data, making data accessible, and sustaining their projects.

Transborder Pedagogy

Considering the importance of expanding border thinking through border[lands] and transborder digital humanities research, practices, methods and tools, there is a need to implement practices in the classroom to teach data, digital narratives of various themes, digital tools and platforms, and overall structures and developments of the digital cultural expressions produced about and from border regions and their communities. *United Fronteras* has been integrated in undergraduate and graduate curricula with languages, history, culture, literature, data science and digital humanities courses at various departments and universities. Through our collaborations, we have developed and co-developed pedagogical approaches and courses that highlight the value of transborder thinking. Our goal in developing and sharing these materials is to encourage not only the theorization, but also the application, of transborder digital humanities work.

For example, during the *UF* symposium's roundtable, “Pedagogy with *United Fronteras*,” Clayton McCarl, professor of Spanish and Digital Humanities at the University of North Florida, discussed how he came across *UF* during the pandemic while researching material for one of his courses on Latin American culture that was redesigned for an asynchronous format during 2020. What caught his interest about *UF* was its focus on research and activism, as the project “*incorpora muchas cosas diferentes y un tipo de trabajo académico que es muy diferente a lo que suelen ver los estudiantes*” (2:19:25) [incorporates many different things and is a type of academic project that is very different from what students are used to seeing] (authors' translation). Clayton worked with Sylvia Fernández on a video interview tailored for his course, where she explained what *United Fronteras* was about. This video was incorporated as part of

the course material. As part of the assignment, students were required to 1) watch the recorded interview; 2) explore the *UF* directory; 3) select a project that caught their interest; and 4) analyze and write a reflection about the project selected and connect it with topics related to the interview. Out of the twenty students registered for the course, everyone selected a different project — which was not anticipated by the professor (“Pedagogy with United Fronteras”). During the *UF* Symposium, Alexandra Zapata, one of the students from this course, discussed the project *Mapping Violence*, and contextualized it with current social and political events. Additionally, she presented her critical views on border[lands] and the conversations in class regarding the topic. Suerta Benga, another student from the course, commented on the project *Everyday la frontera*, expressing her appreciation for the way the project uses Instagram to appeal to a young audience on topics related to the border and its communities.

In addition to McCarl's course, other courses have been developed in collaboration with *United Fronteras*. These courses have two overarching themes: 1) fostering border thinking by putting together activism practices, community knowledge, and innovative approaches to populate the digital cultural record with border stories; and 2) engaging in open discussions, theory and praxis, and visualizing possibilities to create and question projects with digital humanities frameworks to expand anticolonial, anti-imperialist, feminist, and queer representations of border regions and communities in the past, present and future.

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Fostering Border Thinking through Pedagogy and Border Stories

In embracing a transborder digital humanities approach, several courses have been developed to populate the digital cultural record with border stories. For example, in the Spring of 2021, a multilingual course at the intersection of Border Studies and Digital Humanities was offered at the University of Kansas, titled, “Digital Storytelling in the Borderlands/La Frontera”. In this course, students had the opportunity to explore diverse ways to tell new stories, shed light on counter-stories and create digital spaces individually or collectively to produce and share their own knowledge about physical, geopolitical, metaphorical, linguistic and/or personal borders. Students gained foundational knowledge and developed skills to be digital storytellers by learning how to access, analyze and build data/records/archives and digital resources/components from borderlands and feminist perspectives with political, ethical and social justice-minded approaches. Students were challenged to critically analyze projects that narrated border/transborder stories with digital modes and begin developing digital projects in relation to Hispanic, Latinx and Latin American borders contexts with literature, oral histories, archival sources, databases and digital mapping, archives and other types of visualizations.

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The course leveraged the directory of *United Fronteras* for students to interact with a series of projects and examine how digital and public humanities tools, methods and practices were approached by understanding what digital border[lands] stories were narrated, the type of data that was used, how the data was collected and disseminated, what type of digital tools were employed, what workflow was established, how the project started and evolved, who were the team members involved in the creation of the project and what is the impact of the project to a particular community or a larger audience [Fernández Quintanilla et. al 2024]. Following this assignment, students wrote a review of a selected project found in the directory of *United Fronteras* using the guidelines of *Reviews in DH*. This work was enhanced by having the opportunity to hear directly from the creators of the projects through virtual presentations. Since the students in this course came from departments such as American Studies, Spanish and Portuguese, Women's, Gender and Sexualities, and African and African American Studies, students chose projects that resonated with their research interest or field of study. During the first semester, they learned from these projects and drafted a proposal, to start developing a project in the course offered the following semester.

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Another course was titled The Immigrant Experience, which was taught in 2022 at Fort Lewis College (FLC). In this course, border, borderlands, and transborder dynamics were discussed and analyzed through a holistic understanding of the land from Indigenous communities and perspectives. The *United Fronteras* directory features some projects that interrogate borders from an Indigenous lens, such as *The Pee Posh Migrations*, *Native Texans: The Coahuiltecan Speakers of the San Antonio Mission*, *Borderland the Struggle for Texas and Native Land Digital*. The *Native Land* map is a Canadian nonprofit project that maps Indigenous Nations and the original inhabitants of native lands. The class incorporated these resources into one of its class activities, "Where do we come from?" This activity involved students first embarking on an exploration of the regions to which they and some of their ancestors belong or come from,

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interrogating what border means to them or to their family members, employing the *Native Land* map as the main tool for this purpose. Students were tasked to investigate the languages that were historically and are still spoken in these regions, which often can be found in the same platform. Relevant information is often conveniently accessible through these sites to engage with different data and visualizations that represent their stories in what are now border regions.

Subsequently, students were required to write a report encompassing the nations, groups, and/or tribes to which they and/or their ancestors belong, shedding light on the languages that are spoken or were historically spoken there, and any additional information they found. Finally, the last part of this activity involved the collaborative creation of a collective map, capturing the ancestral information of each student and the professor. This visual representation serves as an incentive for a meaningful discussion emphasizing Indigenous history and culture as well as an approach to decolonial borderlands pedagogies and theories. Within the context of FLC, where over 40% of the student body identifies as Native Americans and 15% as Latina/o/e, it becomes evident that this activity is not merely a historical and cultural lesson, but also a powerful means of making visible students' experiences. Thus, *UF* serves as a tool to engage in different discussions about the cultural, historical, geopolitical, and personal meanings of borders through some of the digital projects featured in the directory.

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Expanding Representations of the Border

In addition to courses that focus on adding perspective to the digital cultural record, other instructors have expanded the work of *United Fronteras* by developing courses focused on highlighting anticolonial, anti-imperialist, feminist, and queer representations of the border. For example, drawing on the understanding that print records such as cartographies are products of colonial powers aiming to control the production of knowledge, the graduate course, "Borderlands, Cartography, and Digital Humanities" was offered at Arizona State University's School of International Letters and Cultures in 2021. This course examined what is known as the Spanish Borderlands colonial record to contest and re-signify the U.S.-Mexico border region. It introduced postcolonial digital humanities theory and praxis, which actively resist reinscriptions of colonialism and neocolonialism, and explored how we might ethically remake the borderlands through social justice-minded approaches.

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Throughout the course, the class analyzed projects focusing on digital maps using the *United Fronteras* directory and reflected on how the integration of borderlands, digital technology, and humanities challenges the common perception of borders as monolithic entities and amplifies the nuances of everyday borders. These projects were accompanied by scholarly readings and organized around weekly topics, as follows: *Border Land: The Struggle for Texas, 1820-1879* (U.S.-Mexico borderlands), *Native Land* (the Spanish borderlands), *Mapping History Project: Stories of the Southwest* (cartography), *Borderlands Archives Cartography* (archives), *Pee Posh Migrations* (local voices), *Ellas tienen nombre* (femicide), *Borderlands: International League of Conservation Photographers* and *Tierras fronterizas en la mira* (environment), *Monroe and Florence Work and Mapping Violence* (lynching), and *Torn Apart/Separados* (humanitarian crisis).

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One of the course activities was blog posts, where students discussed their views on the topic, readings, and digital projects for the week. These blog posts served to open class discussions, while the digital projects helped expand on the readings and further analyze and discuss the weekly topics. For instance, the digital map of *Ellas tienen nombre* opened the discussion to the documentation of femicides and how digital maps can narrate stories to humanize spaces and individuals, contesting and re-signifying the border[lands] through theory and praxis. Similarly, students reflected on how their work can contribute to the production of knowledge beyond academia and reach multiple audiences who otherwise would not have access to such information. For most of the students, having digital projects as resources was a new learning experience that gave new meaning to the topics, as the digital maps amplified the reading material and the notion of border[lands] they had before this class.

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In Fall 2023, an interdisciplinary course of Border Literature, Women's Studies, Data Science and Digital Humanities was offered at the University of Texas at San Antonio supported by the Mozilla Foundation, titled "Border Women's Literature and Feminist Cartographies." In this course, students had the opportunity to explore and critically analyze a selected group of border women's literary texts, archival material, oral histories, databases and digital projects that

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address gender-based and related violence and feminicides at the U.S.-Mexico border and other regions. Through the use of *United Fronteras*, students were tasked to identify and analyze digital materials and projects of these topics such as *Ellas tienen nombre*, *Ecos del desierto*, *Mapa de #UnVioladorentuCamino*, *Huellas Incómodas*, and *Femme Frontera Filmmaker Showcase*. Centering the work done by feminist activists, human rights defenders and community and family members from the Mexico-United States border region, specifically in the Paso del Norte (Chihuahua, Texas and New Mexico,) students learned the practices and different methodologies that individuals involved in this border human rights movement have used to collect and disseminate data to advocate for justice and create anti gender violence and feminicides awareness. Students explored these projects through transnational, intersectional, antiracist, geographical and historical frameworks to better understand how border people like these mothers, family members and activists have collected, recovered, and interpreted feminist data working from the “ground-up” and on the margins of power to create digital and public resources to contest to the authorities.

In the course, “Thinking Like a Historian: Borderlands in the Archives”, taught at the University of Texas at Austin in the Department of History in 2024, a seminar for undergraduate History majors, students learn to read, write, and think like historians. That is, they understand history as a discipline in terms of research methods, evidence, and analysis. The course examines topics related to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands through archives and practices to make historical primary and secondary sources publicly available using various digital tools and platforms. Similarly, through archival material, students analyzed a topic of their interest, considering how, or if, the narratives differ, and question the digital and analog cultural record finding ways to shed light to local border histories, personal stories and gaps and silences present in “official” history. As future historians, the course also explored new ways to present research findings using digital tools by first understanding initiatives of openness, access, and democratizing digital knowledge production in the digital age. Using the *UF* directory, students learned of various projects and their approach to historical documentation and storytelling. One of the projects analyzed in class was the El Paso Museum of History *DIGIE* project, a 3-D representation of El Paso, Texas past and present through a collection of co-curated images and videos from the museum archives. In small groups, students explored and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of presenting archival material in an interactive digital format. One observation was how *DIGIE* visually conveyed a sense of binational relations between Mexico and the United States through some cultural representations and images of Mexican political figures. However, the students questioned how the project did not fully convey a sense of border cities and culture given the absence of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico history. These observations led to a deeper conversation about border and transborder historical representation, documentation, funding in digital projects, the problem of the single story, and divided cultural records — topics covered in previous course readings. Overall, the projects students analyzed through the *UF* directory were helpful resources to question how to convey border histories and ways to create digital and public spaces that foster broader understanding of history in border regions.

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The integration of *United Fronteras* in classrooms has served as a pedagogical resource that showcases projects that are fostering a border thinking by putting together activism practices, community knowledge, and innovative approaches to populate the digital cultural record with border stories. Similarly, the use of *UF* in the classroom has served to open discussions, engage in theory and praxis, and visualize possibilities to create and question projects with digital humanities frameworks to expand anticolonial, anti-imperialist, feminist, and queer representations of border regions and communities in the past, present and future. We envision that *United Fronteras* can continue to be used as a pedagogical and community resource to analyze the existing digital materials and projects through other perspectives and disciplines, fostering new ways to teach with such projects and materials, and explore collaborative practices to produce digital scholarship through ethical and responsible border[lands] and transborder frameworks.

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Towards a Manifesto on Digital Humanities Centered in Border-Transborder Epistemologies

Developing the first transnational and transborder directory of digital projects and materials of borderlands regions, *United Fronteras* highlights the importance of working in collaboration across geopolitical borders. Its interdisciplinary approach brought together individuals with different lived experiences and professional backgrounds who were open to learn new ways, methodologies and skills to reclaim border representations by producing knowledge that centers border and transborder stories. Embarking in this work, we confirmed how systems of power dominate the border rhetoric and

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emphasize a colonial, imperial, patriarchal and othering understandings of the space, communities and cultural, social, historical contexts. We recognize the roles of technologies and the various forms of data that are being produced, collected and distributed running the risk of populating the digital cultural record in ways that limit our understanding the border[lands], erasing social realities that foster mobility, resistance, resilience, and embrace the border as a living and multifaceted place.

With this in mind, we propose centering border and transborder stories as a framework for digital humanities research, pedagogies praxis, and community engagement with borderlands experiences to bring forward perspectives that oftentimes contradict the sentiments of division frequently influenced and represented by those in power. Under the current political climate, when much critical humanities scholarship is under attack and the development of technology is moving at a fast pace, it seems necessary to push for scholars and community members to work together to engage in the analysis and development of digital and analog knowledge through ethical, responsible, reciprocal and meaningful collaborations and practices. We propose Border and Transborder Digital Humanities as a pathway for the emergence of digital third spaces that contextualize other borderlands regions, dynamics and histories. Thus, TransBorder Digital Humanities establishes a connection with decolonial and postcolonial practices of digital humanities that work towards enhancing and putting together “knowledge from the margins, an emphasis of history from below” ([Ibekwe 2022]), as well as examining structures of power, globalization and colonial ideologies in the use and development of information, digital technologies and tools between the Global North and South [Risam 2019]. This manifestation speaks to a border thinking that emerged with Anzaldúa and has thereafter been developed by decolonial theorists. It works toward digital cultural knowledge production that responds to “the violence of imperial/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity (and globalization) of salvation that continues to be implemented on the assumption of the inferiority or devilish intentions of the Other and, therefore continues to justify oppression and exploitation as well as eradication of the difference” [Riebová 2023].

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Conclusion

The work of *United Fronteras* is ongoing and far from finished. Indeed, as we draft this article, we are in the process of expanding our collaboration by receiving funding to plan the development of a center and consortium for transborder digital humanities research, teaching and community engagement. This center will echo the values of *United Fronteras* by being collaborative, cross-institutional, interdisciplinary, and grounded in community. As we expand these efforts, we also aim to collaborate with other transborder scholars and digital producers to document borderland projects in other regions beyond Mexico and the U.S. We look forward to working with other scholars, digital humanities practitioners, library professionals, students, and communities across the Americas.

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Transborder digital humanities is an orientation to DH projects that embraces fluidity, collaboration, and identity. In this article, we introduced the TBDH framework to inspire other researchers, teachers, and practitioners to continue (re)envisioning DH beyond borders, while at the same time recognizing that borderland spaces are rich sites for linguistic study and connection. We shared specific examples of TBDH projects and outlined courses where pedagogies of TBDH are being imagined and implemented. We hope that through these examples, other practitioners and educators will continue recognizing fluid borderland identities, cultures, and languages, as central to DH work.

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