

DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART OF RANCHING PROJECT LARIMER COUNTY (DOUGLAS, ELBERT, GARFIELD, ROUTT)

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Art of Ranching project (AOR) is a collaborative community history project that works with 4-H youth and community members to research historical topics related to Colorado agriculture to make visible the agricultural labor and legacy of Colorado communities. Agricultural operations and agricultural work is an art form in itself and every operation and agriculturalist takes a unique approach. Capturing these stories and making visible the significant contributions of these operations in these communities reveals that art. The AOR project sought to build a publicly accessible digital platform for the project to serve as a repository for project resources and products, such as audio and video, images, interactive maps, and the project curricular materials. Project leaders determined it would benefit from the construction of a more intentional and robust digital platform housed within the larger CSU frame. The project partnered with the Public and Environmental History Center (PEHC) and with the CLA Digital Hub to produce the platform.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

1. Design and construct a website for the project
2. Create unique digital materials, such as graphics, image galleries, and maps for the project website
3. Link to state-wide digital history resources that support the project and liaise with History Colorado's Centennial Farms and Ranches program
4. Adapt 4-H Art of Ranching materials to meet accessibility standards

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

This internship provided opportunity to apply the theories and methods of public and digital history to a tangible project. By designing digital content for the AOR website, I improved my ability to communicate complex historical narratives through alternative modes of storytelling. I used techniques such as label writing, communicating ideas through visuals, and centering big ideas common in museum exhibitions to accomplish this work. Additionally, I learned to prioritize accessibility and align public-facing content with the principles of inclusive and equitable historical scholarship.

THE DIGITAL HISTORY PROCESS

In this internship, I relied on my comprehensive understanding of digital and public history methodologies. The process began with planning for the website by recognizing the target audience and how best to serve them through my work. I recognized that there were two prongs to this project: one being the 4-H youth and leaders and the other being the ranching community. Because of this, I determined that the website needed to be a resource for the 4-H members who are wanting to get involved with the project, while also acting as an exhibition of ranching in Colorado. This two-part understanding of the website helped to shape its construction and design. With this structure outlined, I began to develop content to fulfill both of these goals.

While in the design process, I applied various accessibility accommodations to ensure the website was inclusive and usable for all individuals. I incorporated alternative text for images, which provides descriptive content for users who rely on screen readers, enabling them to understand visual elements of the website. Additionally, I considered color schemes and fonts to enhance readability for users with visual impairments or color blindness. This process involved adhering to web accessibility standards to ensure the most effective and informative user experience. These accommodations were crucial in making the digital content accessible to a broader audience, demonstrating my commitment to inclusive design and the practical application of accessibility principles in digital history projects.



WHAT YOU LEARNED

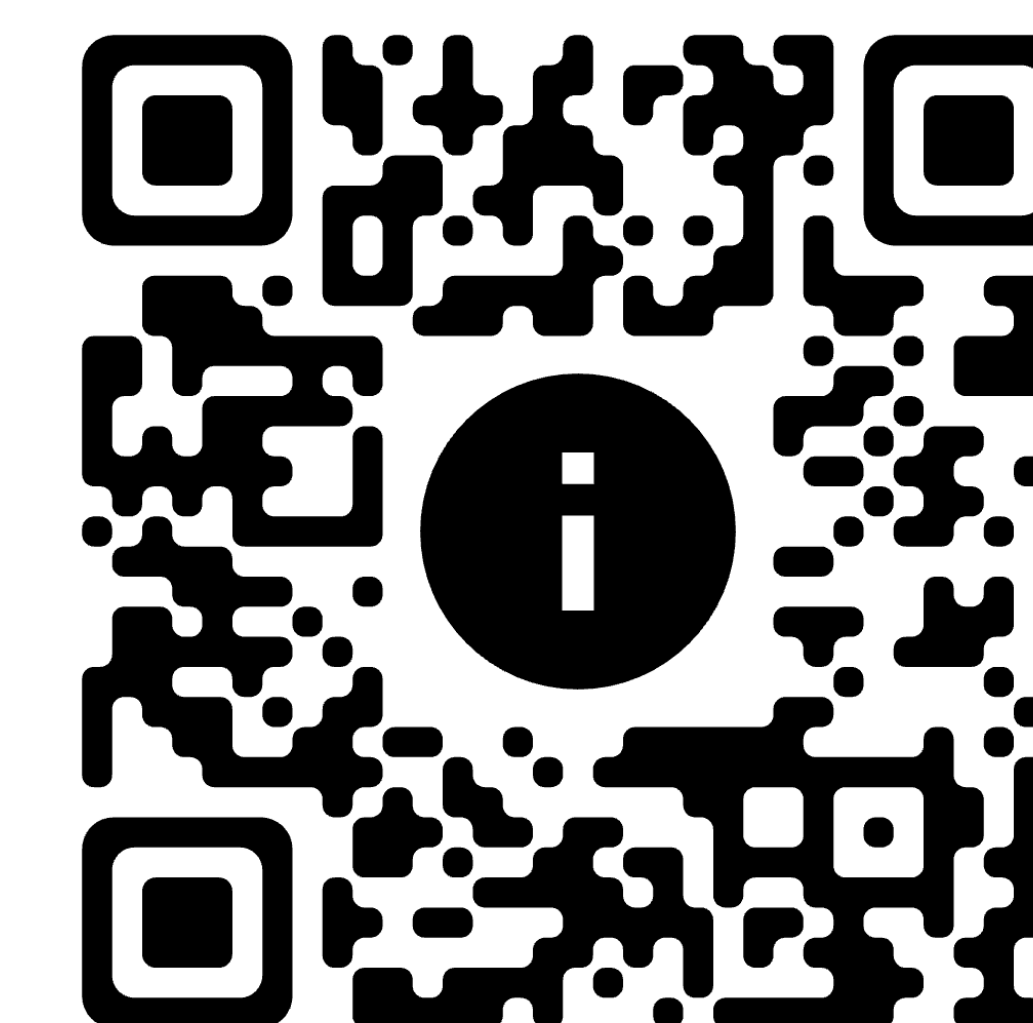
Through this internship, I gained valuable insights into the intersection of history and digital technology. I strengthened my skills in design by constructing a functional and engaging website that translates historical research into accessible online formats. Additionally, adapting materials to meet accessibility standards highlighted the importance of creating inclusive and equitable historical content. Overall, this internship honed my digital skills, expanded my professional experience, and deepened my commitment to making historical information accessible to all audiences.



NEXT STEPS

The Art of Ranching website is now published and can be viewed by scanning the QR code to the left.

Although the website is published, it can be continued and expanded upon as more 4-H youth become involved and more ranching narratives are collected.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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