Background

Building Duke is a new three-year initiative that will be implemented in three phases: data collection and organizing (first year); data analysis and interpretation (second year); data output (third year). It will explore the conception, design and construction of the Duke University campus as well as its changes and expansions. Principal aims are to offer an historical narrative of the physical environment that the Duke community inhabits and to explore the desires and visions that have materialized in the making of the campus. This project is especially relevant at a cultural and political moment when physical space and its historical connotations are at the center of a heated public debate.

The three-year initiative will culminate in a relational database of textual and visual archival material on the architectural history of Duke campus; an interactive digital 3D model of campus developments since the 1920s; a series of multimedia thematic narratives on history of the campus; and a series of augmented reality tours.

Project Description

This Bass Connections project will combine historical research with digital technologies through two main components: 1) a chronological timeline of Duke’s buildings, landscape and infrastructure, which will explore the phases of development from conception to land acquisition, design and construction; and 2) a series of historical narratives along thematic axes such as patronage and financing, architectural and landscape design, techniques, materials and labor as well as around issues of identity, gender, class and race.

The 2018-19 team will focus on the identification, collection, organization and digitization of textual and visual material from the University Archives. This data will populate a relational database that will serve as the core of the project and support the following two years of data analysis and output.

Student Opportunities

Students, faculty and staff will work together in the University Archives, in the library and in the classroom on research questions, datasets and materials. The team will meet weekly.

Four graduate students and six undergraduates will be chosen from a variety of fields in the humanities, social sciences and information sciences as well as engineering and environmental sciences. All graduate students will have mentorship roles. All students will gain experience in conducting research on primary sources, contributing to publications and developing writing and digital skills (including relational database design, website design, content development and 3D modeling).

Research will be conducted by team members in collaborative environments that include a 500-level research course (Building Duke Research Seminar 504SL), Research Independent Studies at all levels and laboratory time (University Archives, Perkins Library, Wired Lab for Digital Art History and Visual Culture).

Faculty/Staff Team Members

Jahi H. Edinger, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies
Sara Galletti, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies
Valerie Gillispie, Duke Libraries
Hannah Jacobs, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies
Mark Olsen, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies
Victoria Szabo, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies
John Taormina, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies
Ed Triplett, Arts & Sciences-Art, Art History, and Visual Studies

Community Team Members

Elizabeth Bolton, Coastal Carolina University

* denotes team leader.

Images courtesy Duke University Archives.