

**World History Center Annual Report for
Academic Year 2020-2021**

*For Submission to the Dietrich School
Dean's Office May 6, 2022*

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The World History Center is pleased to report a robust program of activities during the 2021-2022 academic year despite the uncertainties related to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the year, the Center accomplished major goals related the three Pillars of Pitt: Our People, Our Programs, and Our Purpose. The Center proudly sponsored four working groups of faculty and graduate students, awarded two Teaching in World History Credentials, funded five excellent grant proposals, and reevaluated the Center's governance procedures. A range of WHC programs continued to flourish, including the Alliance for Learning in World History, the Digital Atlas Design Internship, and the award-winning World Historical Gazetteer Project. We held a robust program of public facing events that prioritized meaningful engagement with global scholarship and pedagogy. The core mission of the WHC - to promote teaching and research about the global and transregional human past - is perfectly aligned with Pitt's purpose, that of improving lives and communities. This is exemplified through our initiatives and collaborations, which tackle some of society's largest problems, including contested spaces, systematic racism, and environmental justice.

Major Accomplishments: People

By hosting working groups, awarding research and travel funding, and supporting graduate students, the WHC enables students and faculty to succeed in building channels for connection, collaboration, and professional success. In collaboration with the History Department, the WHC has strengthened its governance policies and leadership succession procedures.

The WHC hosts [Working Groups](#) of faculty and graduate students who explore a shared theme of interest related to the global past. In doing so, working groups prioritize engagement that facilitates connections between new people and ideas. Working groups also contribute to Pitt's purpose, as discussed under the Major Accomplishments: Purpose section.

- The [Transimperial Working Group](#) held three meetings to explore the concept of trans-imperialism. The outcome of the working group is a strategic partnership with the Transimperial History Center at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. The group plans to contribute their insight to the broader profession through conference presentations in 2023 and an edited volume in a journal.
- The [Challenges of Migration and Belonging: Interdisciplinary Perspectives Working Group](#) held four meetings that brought together diverse interdisciplinary scholars from Pitt and outside

institutions who conduct research and scholarship on the field of migration. The group has planned a series of speakers for the next academic year.

- The [Black Built Pitt Working Group](#) created a digital archive that explores and highlights Black historical events at sites around the University of Pittsburgh campus, including the Computer Center Takeover, the Kuntu Repertory Theater, and the Afrolatinidad Studies Initiative. Through this initiative, the working group created a way for faculty and students at Pitt to connect with Pitt's global Black past.

Through a [graduate student fellowship](#) and [graduate student assistantship in public history](#), the WHC offers the mentorship and sponsorship that graduate students need to succeed. Both initiatives enhance learning experiences and development for graduate students (both within and outside of the History Department) by supporting students working towards the completion of their degree while receiving mentorship from the WHC Director and Associate Director. In Spring 2022, the GSA was awarded to Sociology graduate student Hanning Wang to work on a project related to competing narratives about the history of Hong Kong. Both History Department Graduate Fellows, Ana Fumurescu and Jim Sauls, made significant progress towards their degrees and toward incorporating global perspectives into their work. The Center also supports graduate students by offering a writing seminar for students to workshop a piece of writing in progress. In AY 21-22, the seminar met four times.

In Spring 2022, the World History Center awarded five [research and travel awards](#). This program provides sponsorship opportunities for faculty and graduate students. This initiative gives students and faculty the support needed to thrive in their academic pursuits and encourages innovative research based on professional interests. Grants were awarded to three graduate students and two faculty members, including one adjunct faculty member. Funds were awarded to three people, including two graduate students, who presented their research at conferences that provided a professional development opportunity and a contribution of research to a broader community of scholars. Two grants were awarded to recipients who plan to use the funds in projects with clear plans for publication thus following their work to a logical conclusion and sharing it with a broader professional community.

The World History Center worked closely with the History Department to rewrite a **procedure for the reappointment of the WHC Director**. This process strengthened governance policies within the Center and between the Center and the History Department. Through the improvement of governance procedures, this made WHC operations move effective, efficient, and agile.

Major Accomplishments: Programs

The WHC supports transformative events, teaching, learning, and research through its programs, and expands into communities and networks across the globe.

The [Digital Atlas Design Internship](#) continues to create a preeminent research experience for undergraduate students by prioritizing student skill development in data analysis, global competency, and communication. The course reached full enrollment in both Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, training a

total of 15 interns in digital history research methods. Students who have completed the internship have a high rate of success in winning internal Pitt academic awards, enrolling in highly competitive graduate programs, and earning prestigious international scholarships.

The [World Teaching History Credential](#) enhances learning experiences and career development opportunities for graduate students in the Department of History. Students can pursue the credential as part of their professional portfolio and in doing so identify their own strengths as world history educators. The credential is a measurable accomplishment that they can put on their CV and discuss in job interviews. This year, the WHC awarded two credentials to graduating doctoral students, **Matthew Plishka and Leonardo Moreno-Alvarez**. Both credential awardees graduated in 2022 and will continue to teach in the field of World History. Matthew received the three-year Collaborative Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship at Vanderbilt University and Leonardo will be a Visiting Lecturer in World History in Pitt's History Department.

The [Alliance for Learning in World History](#) continues to be the WHC's flagship education program, which supports global learning for educators at all levels. The program connects educators with world history resources through a strategic partnership with the National Humanities Center (NHC)'s [Humanities in Class Digital Library](#). Through an annual teacher's workshop, the program also leverages knowledge through teaching to offer K-12 educators professional development opportunities. In June 2021, the Alliance held a day long teacher's workshop about "Teaching Indigenous History as World History." The first part of the event had 46 participants. Twenty-five successful applicants to the workshop attended the second part of the day: this group included three middle school teachers, two graduate students, three educators from 2-4-year colleges, and seventeen high school teachers. On June 11, 2022 the Alliance for Learning in World History will host a professional development workshop about "New Approaches to Frontier History." By offering stipends for participants in the workshop, the Alliance incentivizes educators to continue their professional development.

The NEH-funded [World Historical Gazetteer Project \(WHG\)](#) is a large, collaborative, and multidisciplinary digital infrastructure project that creates preeminent teaching and research opportunities for teachers and scholars by collecting and sharing historic place name data. Through its use of linked open data, the project encourages scholars to create and share knowledge about their research. The University of Pittsburgh's project team works closely with numerous research teams from around the world, including the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), and other large projects including *Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade*. In March 2022, the WHG team held four Zoom meetings with collaborators and community partners, which included participants from over thirty non-Pitt institutions from around the world. The project fosters global research collaborations and networks. In 21-22 AY, the WHG partnered with Pitt's Asian Studies Center to create a "**Teaching with World Historical Gazetteer**" webpage. This feature expands the number and type of global and interdisciplinary learning opportunities and promotes the use of digital tools in the classroom. The WHG team shared its work with the broader community by presenting at conferences, including Linked Pasts 6, and publications including a peer-reviewed article about the project in

Programming Historian. In February of 2022, the project, for which WHC Director serves as PI, received the 2021 "Best DH Tool or Suite of Tools Award" from Digital Humanities Awards.

In September 2021, the WHC held a series of six meetings to discuss strategies for promoting and reviewing insights, methods, critiques, platforms, and content in the emergent field of world-historical information. These meetings were attended by 21 scholars from Europe, Asia, and North America who work in higher education, digital humanities, and research centers. These meetings promoted the possibility of advancing research through interdisciplinary partnerships in the field of world-historical information. They resulted in a plan to organize a conference panel to explore research collaborations, a section on the WHC website dedicated to world-historical information research, and the continuation of Ruth Mostern's informal consultation with the *Journal of World Systems Research*.

In July 2021, the WHC became the institutional base for the editorship of the *Journal of Early Modern History* when Associate Director Molly Warsh took over as Editor. The *JEMH*, founded at the University of Minnesota in 1997, is published by Brill in the Netherlands. It is the leading journal for historical scholarship on the global early modern world.

The World History Center puts on a robust **program of public facing events** all of which prioritized meaningful engagement with global scholarship and pedagogy. Events, including the 21-22 AY thematic series, *the Limits of Networks in World History*, featured experts from both within and outside of Pitt to expand the number of global learning opportunities for faculty and students beyond the classroom.

- 8/18/21 *World History Pedagogy Series* "Teaching World History." 12 participants from 3 Pitt departments
- 9/29/21 [The Limits of Networks in World History Series guest speaker: Dr. Sharika Crawford \(US Naval Academy\)](#). 22 participants from 2 Pitt departments 2 non-Pitt institutions.
- 10/13/21 [The Limits of Networks in World History Series guest speaker: Dr. David Iglar \(UC Irvine\)](#). 17 participants from 2 Pitt departments and 4 non-Pitt institutions
- 11/3/21 [The Limits of Networks in World History Series roundtable discussion on Ottoman histories](#). 23 participants from 5 Pitt departments and 6 non-Pitt institutions (6).
- 11/16/21 [GIS Day 2021 "World History, Historical Maps and GIS."](#) 25 participants from 9 Pitt departments and 8 non-Pitt institutions
- 1/12/22 *World History Pedagogy Series* "World History Syllabus Workshop." 9 participants from 3 Pitt departments.
- 3/16/22 [The Limits of Networks in World History Series guest speaker: Dr. Patrick Manning \(Pitt Emeritus\)](#). 21 participants from 6 Pitt departments and 6 non-Pitt institutions.
- 3/26/22 [Roundtable: Digital and Spatial Approaches to the History of Slavery Guest speakers Dr. Karl Grossner \(World Historical Gazetteer\) & Dr. Daryl Williams \(UC Riverside\)](#). 24 participants.
- 3/20/22 [Read & Discuss event The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity by David Graeber and David Wengrow](#). 25 participants from 7 Pitt departments and 4 non-Pitt institutions.

The WHC's affiliate program incorporates scholars from outside the University into the research, teaching, and programming of the Center. This year, the Center had three affiliates. Dr. Karl Grossner, the technical director of the World Historical Gazetteer project, developed two new teaching features for the WHG project. Dr. Ari Sekeryan developed his manuscript *The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire after the First World War (1918-1923)* and participated in a WHC sponsored roundtable about the Ottoman Empire. Katherine Hart brought her expertise in library science and geography to the Center and presented at the WHC's GIS Day event. Katherine is also heavily involved in the World Historical Gazetteer, sitting on its advisory board.

Major Accomplishments: Purpose

The WHC takes pride in supporting initiatives that tackle some of society's greatest and most pressing challenges such as systematic racism and environmental justice.

The [Transforming Systematic Racism Working Group](#) used the working group to build connections between the local community (including members of the Bethel AME church) and faculty, students and staff at Pitt and other universities in order to address systemic racism and find ways to bring reparations for past and ongoing harms from slavery and the slave trade. Members of the working group wrote a [white paper](#) about Pittsburgh's affordable housing crisis, translating research into conclusions and recommendations for problems of inequity in the housing sector. **This group will continue its work with the WHC in the 2022-2023 AY.**

In the fall of 2021, WHC [Graduate Student Assistant Chie Togami](#) released a podcast series about the history of steel and air pollution in the Pittsburgh region. In making the podcast, Chie collaborated with various local residents that have been affected by both the steel industry and air pollution. This created opportunities for traditionally underserved communities to tell their stories. Through a strategic partnership, local environmental group Group Against Smog and Pollution (G.A.S.P.) agreed to host the podcast and a podcast launch event. The event connected Pitt students and faculty with environmental activists and provided a venue to discuss goals and strategies to improve environmental quality for residents in the region.

- [Event: October 10, 2021, 7:00-8:30pm. "Community Voices: Pittsburgh, the United States Steel Corporation, and 120 years of extraction" \(43 participants including 19 community members & 24 Pitt/CMU\).](#)

The core mission to promote global history at the WHC is perfectly aligned with Pitt's purpose to create knowledge and expertise to tackle challenging problems in society. World History as a field and methodology reminds people that although pandemic, disaster, and oppression are common in human history, so too is recovery, resilience, and creativity. Through the Alliance for Learning in World History, the WHC supports this mission by extending insights about the past to K-12 educators. The Digital Atlas Design Internship trains undergraduate students to apply insights from the past to make the world a better and more equitable place in the future. The World Historical Gazetteer project helps students,

educators and researchers better understand place in history, an important concept for understanding contemporary contested political boundaries.

MAJOR GOALS/STRATEGIES PLANNED FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

GOAL 1: Advance Educational Excellence

The WHC offers co-curricular research opportunities, supports the educational mission of the History Department, and provides resources and opportunities for educators to engage in learning of impact. In the coming year, the Center will advance educational excellence by building programming and partnerships that personalize educational experiences of students at all levels, promote access and affordability, and enhance curriculum through innovative research and digital humanities projects.

The WHC will continue to offer **personalized educational experiences** in the upcoming year by mentoring and training undergraduate interns, one history department fellows, and one Graduate Student Assistant. The Center will continue to offer graduate students training through the Teaching World History Credential.

Through teacher's workshops and the publication of resources for the teaching of world history, the Center will **promote access and affordability in education**. As of May 2022, the Center has 100 free, open access world history resources published on the Humanities in Class Digital Library, a repository we plan to continue to grow in the coming year.

In the coming year, the World Historical Gazetteer project team will continue to create free teaching resources on the subject of digital humanities and spatial analysis. **These resources will enhance world history curriculum and teaching**. Through a partnership with the Asian Studies Center, WHG team members will also reach teachers directly through three planned workshops, including one during the **Summer Institute for Global Educators**, and a presentation at the 2022 **National Council for the Social Studies conference**.

GOAL 2: Engage in Research of Impact

A core mission of the World History Center is to conduct and support research that advances our mission of "promoting critical research and teaching about human communities in motion and the forces that have shaped our global past and present." The Center will engage in research of impact by fostering new global partnerships and through its involvement with two high-profile conferences.

The WHC will establish new partnerships and foster existing partnerships that will support research of impact. The WHC will continue to work with **UCIS Centers at Pitt including Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Center for Latin American Studies, and Asian Studies Center** on research projects related to the World Historical Gazetteer. **The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts**

and Sciences has agreed to continue to develop large scale historical data and work with the World Historical Gazetteer team to publish this historic place data. The WHG team will also actively solicit research data from scholars working on indigenous place names in the hope to form new research collaborations.

With the support of the Center, the Transimperial Working Group identified strategic research opportunities with scholars working on this theme at **Doshisha University, University of Erfurt, and the Free University of Berlin**. In the next year, the Center will again host the working group and offer staff and intellectual support to encourage this research collaboration. The planned outcomes of this strategic collaboration are conference presentations and a publication on the subject.

The University of Pittsburgh was chosen by the **World History Association to hosts its annual conference, an event that attracts approximately 300 scholars**. In the 22-23 academic year, WHC staff will be an integral part of identifying and engaging strategic panels and events that support world historical research and teaching.

As Program Co-Chair of the 2023 annual meeting of the **American Historical Association**, WHC Associate Director Molly Warsh has also put the World History Center in a strategic position to make connections with both researchers and other institutions. Through these research conferences, we will promote world history as a global venture in which the Pitt World History Center is central to promoting world history research and teaching.

Center Personnel and Affiliates are highly research-active, and the Center will continue to support the research of its staff and affiliates. The WHC is looking forward to welcoming a new Postdoctoral Research Associate in Digital World History, Dr. Nathan Michalewicz, who will hold a two-year position beginning in July 2022. Dr. Michalewicz received his Ph.D. from George Mason University and is an active researcher with a focus on trans-regional and trans-religious social and political interactions between Europe and the Islamic world during the early modern period.

GOAL 3: Diversity

*The World History Center is dedicated to promoting **diversity and inclusion** in all of the programming, research, and educational activities that it does by situating multilingual and intercultural transregional and global connections in time and space.*

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the Center is planning a robust programming schedule around the topic of **The History of Global Slavery**. Through this initiative in collaboration with the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center will showcase the experiences of diverse and often marginalized people and cultures throughout global history.

The World History Center will support the [Transforming Systematic Racism Working Group](#) for a second year. The working group's aim is to galvanize conversations between the university and local

communities about racial equity and how to leverage expertise at Pitt to fight towards reparations and racial justice.

Significant Recognition/Accomplishments of WHC Faculty and Staff

World History Center Director Ruth Mostern:

- **Academic accomplishments:** Published *The Yellow River: A Natural and Unnatural History* (Yale University Press, September 2021); gave nine invited talks; published or submitted six new articles and book chapters; three articles or interviews about Dr. Mostern's work published.
- **Professional Awards:** Digital Humanities Award for the Best DH Tool or Suite of Tools for the World Historical Gazetteer, February 2022
- **Professional Service:** Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*; Chair, World History Association Dissertation Prize Committee.

WHC Associate Director Molly Warsh:

- **Academic accomplishments:** 2018 monograph *American Baroque: Pearls and the Nature of Empire 1492-1700* (Omohundro Institute/UNC Press, 2018) came out in paperback.
- **Professional Service:** Editor, *Journal of Early Modern History*; Co-chair, Program Committee of the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association; Chair, Jerry Bentley Prize committee for the best book in world history (American Historical Association); Chair, Alice Hamilton Award for the best article in environmental history published outside of the journal *Environmental History*, awarded every year by the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH).

WHC Postdoctoral Fellow Susan Grunewald:

- **Academic accomplishments:** six publications (four peer reviewed articles, one chapter in an edited volume, and one book review); book contract with Cornell University Press for monograph about German POWs in the Soviet Union.
- Susan Grunewald will be joining the Department of History at Louisiana State University as an Assistant Professor in fall 2022.

WHC Research Associate Alexandra Straub

- **Academic accomplishments:** two publications (one peer reviewed article, one for a popular audience).

WHC Graduate Fellows

- Ana Fumurescu (Fall 2021) academic accomplishments: made significant progress in dissertation writing; published peer-reviewed article in *History of Education Quarterly*; organized, chaired, and presented panel at the ASEEES 2021 conference.
- Jim Sauls (Spring 2022) academic accomplishments: submitted and defended dissertation prospectus; focused on Portuguese language training; received a Social Science Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for 22-23 AY.

WHC Affiliate Karl Grossner

- **Professional Awards:** Digital Humanities Award for the Best DH Tool or Suite of Tools for the World Historical Gazetteer, February 2022.

Challenges/Concerns

- While the WHC enthusiastically sponsors a robust agenda and engages in a variety of invitations for collaboration and other opportunities, it is constrained by limited funding and staff support and by a lack of predictability in funding on a yearly basis. An increase in operational funding would allow the WHC to expand its goals and continue to build the presence of the Center around the University. The Center would also benefit from multi-year budget projections that would assist us in pursuing multi-year endeavors.
- The new budget model presents concern for Center leadership as the WHC does not deliver undergraduate education and therefore cannot bring in revenue based on student enrollment. We seek assurance that the implementation of the RCM model will permit ongoing support for research centers like the WHC.
- One of the WHC's signature projects, the World Historical Gazetteer, is presently funded grant to grant despite being a high profile and globally visible digital humanities venture. We hope that the DSAS will partner with the WHC to identify sustainable institutional funding at Pitt.

