

**World History Center Annual Report for  
Academic Year 2022-2023**

*For Submission to the Dietrich School Dean's Office  
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**Ruth Mostern:** Director  
**Molly Warsh:** Associate Director and Head of Educational Outreach  
**Alexandra Straub:** Research Coordinator  
**Nathan Michalewicz:** Postdoctoral Associate

The World History Center is pleased to report a robust program of activities during the 2022-2023 academic year. During the year, the Center accomplished major goals related to the three Pillars of Pitt: Our People, Our Programs, and Our Purpose. The Center made Supporting People a cornerstone of its mission by supporting undergraduate and graduate students, early career scholars, and visiting and associated scholars and by encouraging all our affiliates to grow their professional interests and experiences. The Center Enhances Faculty and Student Connections through its working group initiative, its support for research, and its many public programs; and Increases Professional Success by funding excellent grant proposals and hosting workshops.

Numerous long-running programs hosted at the Center continued to flourish: the Alliance for Learning in World History, the Digital Atlas Design Internship, and the World Historical Gazetteer Project, which was awarded a \$350,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities this year. We held numerous 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.

**Major Accomplishments: People**

*By hosting working groups, awarding research and travel funding, and supporting graduate and undergraduate students, the WHC enables students and faculty to build channels for connection, collaboration, and professional success. In collaboration with the History Department, the WHC elected a new Associate Director and put into place a leadership transition with the outgoing Associate Director.*

The WHC hosts Working Groups composed of faculty and graduate students who explore shared themes 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 Trans/Anti-Imperialism Working Group held six meetings to explore the concept of Trans/Anti-Imperialism including an event with three invited guests from the Swiss Institute of

Technology. After a roundtable discussion on Imperial and Colonial Archives, the graduate students in the group decided to write up their discussion as a co-authored article for the American Historical Association Magazine *Perspectives in History*. Their pitch was accepted, and the article will be published in the September 2023 print issue.

- The [Challenges of Migration and Belonging: Interdisciplinary Perspectives Working Group](#) held meetings that brought together diverse interdisciplinary scholars from Pitt and outside institutions who conduct research and scholarship on the field of migration. The group held two events with invited guest speakers, Dr. Mae Ngai (winner of the 2022 Bancroft Prize in History) and Dr. Piro Rexhepi which were attended by both members of the working group and faculty and students in the Department of History.
- The [Transforming Systemic Racism: Historical Truth Telling and Reparations Working Group](#) works to promote more globalized understandings of the institution of slavery and its impacts as well as recent global efforts to advance reparations and transform systemic racism. This year the group collaborated with other institutions at Pitt and the broader Pittsburgh community to bring attention to the Inaugural session of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

By offering a [graduate student fellowship](#) and by hosting a graduate visiting scholar from China, the WHC offers the mentorship and sponsorship that graduate students need to succeed. Both initiatives enhance learning experiences and professional development for graduate students by supporting students working towards the completion of their degree while receiving mentorship from the WHC Director and Associate Director. This year's graduate student fellow, Krysta Beam, made significant progress towards her degree and conducted research as an intern at the Center for Research on Central American History at the University of Costa Rica. Raorao Su, a visiting scholar from Renmin University of China, gave two academic talks and co-authored a paper with Center Director Ruth Mostern. Under the guidance of Ruth Mostern, Raorao also created a dataset of settlements in the Jing River Basin over a 2,000-year period. The Center also supports graduate students by offering a works-in-progress seminar in which participants can present and discuss their writing. In Spring 2023, the seminar met three times.

The Center strives to enrich undergraduate student experiences in a variety of ways. In January 2023, the Center sponsored the attendance of [four undergraduate history majors](#) at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Attendance at the national conference offered these students the opportunity to learn and grow as historians and professionals and make connections with others working in the field of history. During the academic year, the Center employed two undergraduate students to assist in the planning of the World History Association Annual Conference and plans to hire up to ten more to work during the conference. Both these initiatives enrich student experience by creating opportunities for professional development. The Center also supports undergraduate students by holding events that create connections with new people and ideas. In April 2023, the Center co-sponsored a roundtable (featuring four undergraduate speakers) about benefits and challenges that undergraduates who combine STEM and humanities majors face during their college careers. Students noted that they found the event helpful in that it created an academic space in which to share ideas. The panel was moderated by Associate Director Molly Warsh and Prof. Dan Bain from the Geology Department.

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 co-wrote the successful grant to the National Endowment for the Humanities to support the World Historical Gazetteer and continued to serve as the technical director of the World Historical Gazetteer project. Katherine Hart brought her expertise in library science and geography to the Center and consulted with WHC graduate students about Library of Congress Collections. In collaboration with the Transforming Systemic Racism working group, Randall Taylor conducts community-based collaborative work to advocate for affordable housing solutions in Pittsburgh. Through his work, he connects the University to the broader Pittsburgh community.

The Center supports early career scholars by supporting a Postdoctoral Associate and a Research Associate. This year, Postdoctoral Associate Dr. Nathan Michalewicz taught the Digital Atlas Design Internship, contributed to various Center initiatives such as the WHG, and made substantial progress on his first manuscript. He also successfully obtained a permanent faculty position at Queens University of Charlotte, where he will be serving as Assistant Professor of History in Fall 2023. Center Research Associate Dr. Alexandra Straub coordinated logistics for all Center activities, acted as a liaison between the Center and the World History Association for the upcoming World History Association Annual Meeting, and continued to work on her own research agenda. Alexandra also stepped into the role of Managing Editor of the World Historical Gazetteer Project (WHG) and has developed content, curricula, and project management routines for the WHG. By bolstering mentorship and sponsorship, the Center ensures early career scholars will thrive.

In Spring 2023, the World History Center granted seven [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 five graduate students in the Departments of English, History, History of Art and Architecture, and Film and Media Studies; and to two faculty members in the Department of English. Of these, funds were awarded to three graduate students to present their research at conferences, which provided professional development opportunities and allowed the students to contribute research to a broader community of scholars, while the other four grants were awarded to recipients to conduct research. All seven awardees have plans for publication, thus following their work to a logical conclusion and sharing it with a broader professional community.

Center Director Professor Ruth Mostern received the Joseph Levenson award from the Association of Asian Studies for her 2021 book *The Yellow River: A Natural and Unnatural History*, and she also serves as Principal Investigator and Project Director of the World Historical Gazetteer Project. Professor Mostern promotes the work of the World History Center through active service on boards and committees at Pitt and around the world. Among her roles, she serves as Executive Committee member and Dissertation Prize Chair of the World History Association, as Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*, and at Pitt as a member of the Humanities Council, the

Global Studies Center Advisory Board, and the Advisory Board of the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation.

Associate Director Professor Molly Warsh continues to serve as the Editor of the Journal of Early Modern History, the country's leading journal focused on our global early modern past. As Editor of the JEMH, she has successfully expanded the editorial board and increased their engagement in journal activities; created and grown the journal's social media presence; and successfully commissioned and launch a new journal cover for the first time in the journal's 26 years of existence. She concluded her 3-year term (serving as Chair) on the Jerry Bentley Prize given by the American Historical Association to the best book in World History. She also served as an international Adjudicator for the University of Cambridge's (England) Prince Consort and Thirlwall prize in March 2023. She served as co-chair for the American Historical Association's annual conference in Philadelphia in January 2023 and has also been deeply involved in all aspects of the organization of the World History Association's annual conference taking place at the University of Pittsburgh in June 2023. She is an active member of numerous pedagogy related boards (such as the OER Project and the H/21 Project). In reflection of her national reputation as someone deeply committed to world history scholarship and pedagogy, she was approached in Spring 2023 by a representative from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) in Washington, D.C., requesting her assistance in reassessing their world historical social studies curriculum as a part of their efforts to update K-12 social studies standards for District of Columbia students. Although Dr. Warsh is concluding her term as Associate Director this June 2023, she will continue to run the Alliance for Learning in World History (ALWH) and to be an active and enthusiastic support of the World History Center through her ongoing activities as a world historian at the University of Pittsburgh and through the various world historical initiatives in which she is involved.

The World History Center worked closely with the History Department to elect a new Associate Director of the World History Center. This process is a reminder of the strong governance and procedures that underly the World History Center. Processes such as the appointment of new leadership underscore the Center's effective and efficient operations. Dr. Raja Adal will join the World History Center as Associate Director for a 4-year term starting in September 2023. Dr. Adal is an Associate Professor of History with an expertise in World History with a focus on East Asia and the Middle East.

#### **Major Accomplishments: Programs**

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

In 2023, Center Director Ruth Mostern was awarded a three-year \$350,000 Digital Humanities Advancement Grant for the [World Historical Gazetteer \(WHG\) Project](#). The grant is co-funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The 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 on the global scale. The NEH/IMLS grant will allow the project to improve data-driven research infrastructure in the humanities and develop a plan for sustainability of the project. The grant

will also allow Center staff to enhance its global connections to facilitate research on historic place names. 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*.

WHG creates more preeminent teaching and learning experiences through its ["Teaching with World Historical Gazetteer"](#) initiative aimed at K-12 educators. Center staff presented in two summer workshops for educators, "University of Pittsburgh Diversity Forum" (34 attendees) and "Institute for Global Educators" (12 attendees). During the fall 2022 semester, Center staff held two workshops with seven K-12 educators in association with Pitt's Asian Studies Center. The workshops resulted in the publication of five lesson plans on the "Teaching with WHG" section of the website. The Teaching with WHG initiative expands the number and type of global and interdisciplinary learning opportunities for K-12 educators and promotes the use of digital tools in the classroom.

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. In 2022-23, the course trained a total of 12 interns in digital history research methods. The internship encourages not only rigorous research but also student creativity as students complete their own ArcGIS Storymap combining images, maps, and narrative into a public and professional finished project. 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 [Alliance for Learning in World History](#), Directed by WHC Associate Director and Head of Educational Outreach Molly Warsh, continues to support global learning for educators at all levels. Through a strategic partnership with the National Humanities Center's [Humanities in Class Digital Library](#), the program connects educators with world history resources. Through an annual teacher's workshop, the program creates professional development opportunities for educators at all levels. In June 2022, the Alliance held a day long teacher's workshop about "New Approaches to Frontier History." The keynote lectures had 41 participants. Twenty successful applicants to the workshop attended the second part of the day where they revised a lesson plan with experts in world historical pedagogy. This group included eight high school and five middle school teachers and seven educators from 2-4-year colleges.

On June 23 and 14 2023 the Alliance for Learning in World History will host a professional development workshop about ["Teaching Energies in World History"](#) in conjunction with the World History Association Annual Meeting. By offering stipends and subsidizing travel costs for participants in this in-person workshop, the Alliance incentivizes educators to continue their professional development.

The Center continues to be the institutional base for the editorship of the *Journal of Early Modern History* for which Associate Director Molly Warsh has serves as Editor since 2021. 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.

In June 2023, the Center will host this year's annual meeting of the World History Association, a professional organization of scholars, teachers, and students organized to promote world history through research, publication, and teaching. During the 22-23 academic year, Center leadership and staff planned a series of sessions, excursions, and social events for the conference. Hosting the conference at Pitt will create learning, scholarship, and research experiences for faculty and graduate students.

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 held during the 22-23 AY featured experts from both within and outside of Pitt to expand the number of global learning opportunities for faculty and students beyond the classroom.

- 7/05/22 [Irish & World Histories: A Special Issue of the Radical History Review](#) (virtual) 36 participants.
- 8/24/22 [World History Pedagogy Series "History & Archeology in Dialogue,"](#) 11 participants.
- 8/29/22 [World History Center Coffee Hour](#), 14 participants.
- 9/07/22 [Historical Zomias: Centering Margins in North and South Asia from the 10<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries](#) (virtual) 16 participants.
- 9/08/22 [Difficult Cartographies: Race, Power, and Resistance in Pittsburgh and Rio de Janeiro](#) 18 participants.
- 10/3/22 [World History Center Coffee Hour](#), 11 participants.
- 10/24/22 [The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics](#), 14 participants.
- 10/31/22 [World History Center Coffee Hour](#), 14 participants.
- 11/7/22 [Climate Fiction Reading Group: Entanglement](#), 5 participants.
- 2/8/23 [World History Pedagogy Series "History & the Arts in Dialogue,"](#) 15 participants
- 3/13/23 [Read & Discuss: The Future is Degrowth: A Guide to a World Beyond Capitalism](#), 7 participants.
- 3/21/23 [Galleys chasing pirates, galleys rowed by pirates: the Venetian navy and crime at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century,](#) (cosponsored by the Atlantic History Seminar), 26 participants.
- 4/5/23 ["Nothing to Lose but Your Chains: Convict Resistance in Colonial Australia 1788-1860"](#), (cosponsored by the Atlantic History Seminar & History Department), 15 participants.
- 4/6/23 [Book Discussion: White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route](#),
- 4/11/23 [Technologies in Context: A Discussion with Dr. Vandana Singh about Global Pasts, Presents and Futures](#), (virtual) 8 participants.
- 4/19/23 [It's Not Either/Or! Combining a STEM and Humanities Major](#), 13 participants.

## Major Accomplishments: Purpose

*The WHC takes pride in supporting initiatives that aim to improve the lives of people both at the University and the beyond.*

The World History Center creates opportunities for leadership to collaborate with different learning communities to translate innovative world historical research and pedagogy into the K-12 classroom. You might edit this slightly to reflect what I added to my section above: Associate Director Molly Warsh worked with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) in Washington, D.C to reassess their world historical social studies curriculum as a part of their efforts to update our K-12 social studies standards for District of Columbia students. In doing so, Dr. Warsh leveraged the Center's expertise in world history to the benefit of communities of teachers and students in the Washington, DC region. Director Ruth Mostern is consulting with the Social Studies Director of KIPP New York on curriculum design and teacher training in world history.

The Center's [Transforming Systematic Racism Working Group](#) uses the working group to build connections between the local community 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. This year, the working group collaborated with university and community organizations to host Dr. Justin Hansford, representative to the United Nations Permanent Forum of People of African Descent (UNPFPAD). Dr. Hansford participated in various events on campus and in the Pittsburgh community, including an event coordinated by the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations. Through its work, the working group strengthens University partnerships with the local community to prompt discussions about building equity in the region. 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.

Randall Taylor, who became a Center affiliate in the fall of 2022, conducts community-based collaborative work to advocate for affordable housing solutions in Pittsburgh. Randall helped to form the Penn Plaza Support and Action Coalition, which has been a leader in Pittsburgh's Housing Justice Movement. He continues to work not only to prevent gentrification and displacement, but to advocate for affordable housing solutions in Pittsburgh.

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 departmental fellow, a Postdoctoral Associate, 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 2023, 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. The World Historical Gazetteer Project also creates and shares free teaching resources for educators that promote the use of digital tools in the classroom.

Although Molly Warsh will transition out of the role of Associate Director of the Center, which she has held since 2016, she is committed to continuing to work closely with the Center on educational initiatives. Through her work with the Alliance for Learning in World History and with organizations that support the teaching of world history such as the OER Project and the H21 Project, Dr. Warsh will continue to **enhance world history curriculum and teaching**.

### 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 expanding the research and publication tools of the World Historical Gazetteer Project and by supporting graduate student and faculty research in a variety of ways.*

The National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Humanities Advancement Grant will ensure the Center can support and engage in research of impact through the World Historical Gazetteer Project for the next three years. The WHG is an invaluable tool in the digital humanities infrastructure and is becoming central to many digital humanities research projects. The WHG also supports research by serving as a publication tool and platform for researchers. During the grant period, the WHG will



enhance and refine tools to support its research and publication tools. The overarching goal of the grant is to determine the best strategies for long-term sustainability of the project.

Through the WHG, the Center will establish new partnerships and foster existing partnerships that will support research of impact. The WHG has numerous and close links with Pitt’s University Center for International Studies (UCIS), and collaborates directly with the Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, and Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies Centers. We will continue to grow partnerships and research projects with international partners such as The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Pelagios Network, a global association devoted to creating and sharing historical geodata.

In the coming year, the Center will continue to host working groups which offer graduate students and faculty intellectual support to encourage research collaborations. The Center will also continue to offer research and travel grants to faculty and graduate students who engage in research of impact and have a clear plan for disseminating and sharing their research with broader scholarly communities.

Center Personnel and Affiliates are highly research-active, and the Center will continue to support the research of its staff and affiliates including the dissertation research of its incoming graduate student fellow Sharon Zhang. The WHC is looking forward to welcoming a new Postdoctoral Associate in Digital World History, who will hold a two-year position beginning in July 2023. In addition to working on Center initiatives, the Postdoctoral Associate engages in their own research agenda.

### 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.*

Although the Center is currently in its planning stages for a robust programmatic schedule for 2023-2024, Center leadership considers how best it can promote diversity and inclusion in its calendar of events and initiatives. Center staff prioritizes attracting attendees of different backgrounds for center functions by making strategic connections with different offices and organizations at the University to share information.

A goal of the World Historical Gazetteer Project has always been to “decolonize historic place names.” The NEH DHAG grant will allow Center staff the support to focus on this goal and showcase the experiences of diverse and often marginalized people and cultures throughout global history in the platform. Center staff will identify partners working in historically marginalized fields and make strategic connections to work with them to acquire place name data. Center staff has already begun this work by working with datasets including the *Native Lands Digital Project* and *Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade*.

## Significant Recognition/Accomplishments of WHC Faculty and Staff

### World History Center Director Ruth Mostern:

- **Academic accomplishments:** World Historical Gazetteer: Toward a Digital Epistemology of Place (Award Number HAA-290373-23), National Endowment for the Humanities, Digital Humanities Advancement Grant, \$349,797 plus \$50,000 institutional match; published or submitted eight articles; gave eighteen invited talks; three articles or interviews about academic work published.
- **Professional Awards:** Winner, Joseph Levenson Book Prize from the Association for Asian Studies for the best book about Chinese history before 1900 published in 2021
- **Professional Service:** Associate Editor, *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*; Chair, World History Association Dissertation Prize Committee.

### WHC Associate Director Molly Warsh:

- **Fellowships:** Faculty Fellowship, University of Pittsburgh Humanities Center; Keck Foundation Fellowship at Huntington Library.
- **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), Adjudicator, University of Cambridge's (England) Prince Consort and Thirlwall prize.

## Challenges/Concerns

- As the World Historical Gazetteer transitions from federal grant funding and toward long-term sustainability, and as the World History Center continues to maintain a position of national and global leadership in digital history, we are significantly constrained by Pitt's low investment in research computing resources for the humanities and social sciences.
- There are few written DSAS documents concerning governance for research centers, and DSAS does not offer opportunities for center directors to meet collectively with one another and with DSAS leadership to discuss common governance challenges. This means that significant governance events, such as this year's transition in the Associate Directorship, transpire in a climate of information deficit, which makes it difficult to develop best practices, learn from peer centers or understand DSAS expectations.
- 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. 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.