Creating Programs in a Digital World: Key Ideas & Resources

- **Set goals and center your audience when planning programs.**
  When designing a program, in-person or digital, start with what you want it to achieve and what you want the audience to take with them. This approach will help guide decisions, both in terms of content (Whose voices do I feature? What are the narrative points? What images should I use?) and delivery system (What format should the program be? Should there be a Q&A? How long should it last?).

- **Start with what is essential.**
  Social distancing limits our ability to gather as we usually do, but that doesn't mean we can't still connect with each other. When planning digital programs, start with the foundational aspect or feeling that you want your audience to come away with. Figure out what is logistically impossible, what is philosophically non-negotiable, and use those parameters to navigate a path forward.

- **Understand what you can about your audiences.**
  When conducting programs in-person, you are able to gain a sense of who is in the audience, and their body language and verbal cues can show their level of engagement. This type of audience assessment can be harder with digital programs. Set expectations about the intended audience at the beginning of online programs. Consider using the chat box or an audience Q&A to help identify who is in the "room."

- **Keep up momentum and stay relevant.**
  Without the ability to visit your site in-person, it can be harder for audiences to feel connected to your organization. Maintain a presence on social media and other platforms used by your audiences. Be transparent about what your organization is up to during this period.

- **Adapt to a digital format.**
  Screens can be exhausting to look at and contribute to waning attention spans. In creating digital programs, pay special attention to programs' duration and ways to make them lively and engaging. Checking in with your audience throughout the program can help keep them engaged.

- **Seek out collaborative partners.**
  Consider ways to pool resources and align efforts by reaching out to preexisting or new partners. You may find that your professional peers are facing similar hurdles and seeking similar opportunities.

- **Consider accessibility.**
  Digital programs allow some to participate who would previously be unable to, whether due to physical disabilities, financial limitations on travel, or other reasons. Still, digital programs can be less accessible—for instance, for those with low vision or hearing or without access to internet. Keep accessibility in mind when planning programs, just as you do in planning historical interpretation: Who is included? Who is excluded?

- **Ask for feedback.**
  Whether via a follow-up email or a more formal survey, program participants may have valuable ideas about what worked and what didn't.

- **Be aware of safety and legal considerations.**
  The digital world comes with special considerations. Spend some time researching reproduction and copyright regulations. Keep in mind the privacy and safety of your audiences, especially minors.

- **Plan ahead.**
  Eventually, audiences will return to in-person programs, though likely with new practices and expectations in place. Begin planning now for what in-person programs will look like then. How will you make them accessible? How will you make staff, volunteers, and audiences comfortable? Now is a great time to experiment, and you can take lessons learned from digital programs into physical spaces as well.

Resources

- **Technological Tools**
    a. **Zoom** is great for virtual meetings, but consider using it to make videos too. Create a PowerPoint presentation using animation and transition features between slides and then schedule a solo Zoom meeting while sharing the screen of the PowerPoint and speaking into the computer. Record that meeting, and Zoom can create a video.
    b. **Canva** is a free cloud-based graphic design tool. Non-profits can apply for free access to the Pro version, which means you can create logos with transparent backgrounds and access clipart and stock images. Canva also has templates that are pre-sized for posts on all social media platforms.
    c. Use **Issuu** to publish PDFs of exhibitions on your website. You can ensure they are protected from being downloaded or printed.
    d. Use **Vimeo** to post password-protected videos.
    e. Consider using **Google My Maps**, a feature of Google Maps that allows you to create maps with customized pins.
    f. To create a puzzle online, try **jigsawplanet.com**.
- **Tips and Ideas**
    a. Tips for creating accessible virtual meetings: **https://www.deafhhtech.org/rerc/accessible-virtual-meeting-tips/**
    b. Blog post on virtual event ideas for every art form: **https://www.infullcolor.org/post/virtual-event-ideas-for-every-art-form**
    c. Storytelling tools from Northwestern University Knight Lab, a suite of open-source, adaptable, lightweight tools for media makers: **https://knightlab.northwestern.edu/**

Contact Information

Chase Jackson
Bayshore Center at Bivalve
programs@bayshorecenter.org

Gigi Naglak
New Jersey Council for the Humanities
gnaglak@njhumanities.org

Izzy Kasdin
Historical Society of Princeton
izzy@princetonhistory.org

Madeleine Rosenberg
New Jersey Historical Commission
madeleine.rosenberg@sos.nj.gov