

create a lesson

for the Ranke.2 teaching platform

May 2019

This handout explains the structure of the platform, why we chose this approach, and the basic steps that should be taken to create a lesson using the Ranke.2 platform.

1 Structure

Structure of the teaching platform

Ranke.2 is a teaching platform that offers lessons on how to critically assess and work with digital historical sources. Each lesson revolves around a particular type of source. To cater for a diverse range of teaching practices, we have opted for a modular approach. Each lesson consists of three modules that can be used separately, depending on the needs of the lecturer, the ability of the students and the time available.

S

Small

Max. 20 minutes

A short animation and quiz about the origin and digitisation of a historical source or collection.

M

Medium

9 to 120 minutes

A series of assignments covering historical topics and traditional and digital source criticism.

L

Large

Half-day to 1 day

A tutorial for a hands-on workshop

2 Approach

Why have we chosen this particular approach?

In our view, the best way to create accessible, low-threshold teaching content about digital source criticism for both students and lecturers is by:

A Offering different levels of complexity and amounts of time required.

Why?

- Because we want new teaching content to seamlessly fit into the diverse day-to-day teaching practice of lecturers
- Because teaching content should also be useful for lecturers with limited experience in digital history, digital literacy and digital humanities.

In this context we think it is advisable to make a distinction between:

- raising awareness about the specific characteristics of digital data; (small)
- enabling students and lecturers to actually apply digital source criticism to a variety of data types; (medium)
- providing a hands-on context that enables students to engage with digital data (large)

B Blending assignments about digital source criticism with assignments exploring the historical context of a source.

Why?

- An entire lesson about source criticism might not be an attractive option for lecturers, as there are many other topics that are deemed relevant to provide Bachelor's and Master's students with a broad variety of academic skills. Moreover, history is foremost about historical narratives and it is therefore more useful to blend different kinds of assignments

C Developing new lessons together with lecturers who are knowledgeable about a specific topic and have experience teaching about it

- Lecturers generally cherish their autonomy and enjoy using their professional skills to create their own teaching content. A good deal of patience and diplomacy is needed to encourage them to consider using material that has been created by others. Creating content with someone who draws on his or her own teaching experience offers a guarantee that the resource will actually be used in the classroom.

3 How to create a lesson

The description below sets out the various components and workflow for creating new teaching content for Ranke.2. The first step is to attract the attention of your audience and introduce them to the subject.

This involves creating an animation, podcast or video lecture about an interesting and appealing source or collection of sources that has been (partly) digitised. The following elements should be taken into account:

3.1 TOPIC

Choose a topic with telling and attractive features. Try to focus on its specific, unique value. This may be related to content, to an engaging narrative or to appearance (an appealing image, a huge volume of data, a compelling topic, etc.).

These are examples of the topics we chose for the animations that you can find on Ranke.2:

- *David Boder – From wire recorder to website*
The topic is compelling – interviews with concentration camp survivors that were originally recorded on steel wires are turned into an interactive website.
- *From the archival to the digital turn*
Colourful illustrations of attractive sources have been selected – how analogue historical sources are turned into digital sources and what this means for source criticism.
- *The Chronicle of Dalimil – a photogenic mediaeval manuscript*
The digital online representation of the manuscript is visually appealing – how the dynamics of the World Wide Web have led us to prioritise the aesthetic value of a mediaeval manuscript.

3.2 CORE MESSAGE

Think of 3 core messages that you want to convey to your potential audience: This is what we wanted our Bachelor students to understand in the lessons we created ourselves:

In David Boder:

- To be conscious of the interplay between media technology, history and the spread of knowledge
- To understand that the interactive website is entirely composed of computer code
- To understand the differences in materiality and form between the steel wires and the interactive website

In Archival to digital turn:

- To understand what source criticism is and what questions should be asked about digital sources online

In Dalimil the mediaeval manuscript:

- To understand that a manuscript that is dominant on the web is not necessarily the most relevant source from a historical viewpoint

Try to incorporate elements which you know you will later want to include in your assignments. Coherence and repetition are important to emphasise your core message.

3.3 STORYBOARD

Write a storyboard of maximum 750 words (about 6 to 7 minutes when spoken).

- [example David Boder](#)
- [example Archival to Digital](#)

Here are some tools that you could consider using to create your animation/podcast/animated slideshow:

For simple animations

- VideoScribe > [Website videoscribe](#)

For podcasts

- For Mac: Garageband > [Tutorial](#)
- For Microsoft and MAC: Audacity > [Tutorial](#)

For PowerPoint

- Slides with timing and recorded narration > [Tutorial](#)

3.4 QUIZ

Make a note of concepts and terms that you want to include in your quiz.

Creating a quiz might seem simple, but it requires more time than you think, as the answers cannot be ambiguous. If you want a set of realistic options in a series of multiple choice questions, you need to rethink your topic in depth.

Here are some pointers on how to create meaningful quizzes:

- [Trivatis.com](#)
- [Playposit](#)
- [Google slides](#)

3.5 ASSIGNMENTS

While the storytelling element and quiz represent the SMALL module (requiring no more than 20 to 30 minutes to complete), the assignments are part of the MEDIUM module. Depending on the level of complexity, they can be completed by intermediate or advanced students.

The assignments should consist of a mix of questions relating to historical context, method, technology, theory and reflection.

Each assignment should refer to one or more questions from context 1, 2 or 3 (see illustration above).

The first element is a brief introduction. This can also include a link to an existing clip that helps provide a general idea of the topic. Sections a, b and c of the assignment then follow. It is preferable to make a clear distinction between parts a, b and c, with the first being the most flexible and doable assignment that can be completed anywhere, individually. The rest of the assignment can consist of more complex options, requiring collaboration between students. Lecturers have the option of assigning just the “a” sections to students, avoiding issues of logistics and time constraints.

Link to an assignment on digitised newspapers, taken from the lesson From the archival to the digital turn. It indicates the pedagogical rationale behind the various elements of the assignment and can be used as a reference when creating assignments.

3.6 ANSWER TEMPLATE

Since evaluating assignments is the lecturer’s responsibility (there is no feedback structure available in Ranke.2), it is helpful to provide an answer template as it makes it easier to complete and evaluate assignments. Tables with categories that have to be completed are particularly helpful. It is a good idea to create the answer template in Microsoft Word so that the lecturer can change the content and adapt it to his or her own topic and needs.

For examples of answer templates, see the following links:

[Answer template David Boder](#)

[Answer template Archival to Digital](#)

3.7 RESOURCE CRITERIA

Criteria for selecting resources from the web and integrating them into the lesson.

The resources that have been integrated into the assignments of the existing Ranke.2 lessons were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Clear and accessible language and narrative (in the case of YouTube videos, for instance, we checked for automatic subtitles and translation features that allow multilingual access)
- Created by an authority in the field, preferably with a non-commercial background
- Open source – sometimes the free version of a commercial product is the best option (e.g. PlayPosit)
- Multimodal and/or playful – a blog, animation or video lecture with a combination of text/images/sound
- Short, max. 10 mins
- Durable and sustainable – we have tried to check whether the web resource still provides access to older materials and takes its archiving task seriously

Support

We realise that you may need some support and guidance and are happy to provide some assistance through one or more Skype meetings or by organising a workshop at your premises in return for a reasonable fee. You can contact either



Stefania Scagliola

stefania.scagliola@uni.lu



Gerben Zaagsma

gerben.zaagsma@uni.lu