HISTORY AS "LEISURE PURSUIT": THE APPEARANCE OF HISTORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ERODED OF PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT - Shifts in technology, theory, and access make the past possible for anyone to reach. Those without training as historians can and do access "the past" often ingeniously without being too attached to "historian skills and historical methods." Technological improvements, funding changes, institutional changes and political intervention have all impacted sales and past packaging and presentation. Professional historians are no longer the only parties with the authority to convey the "true" past to the public. In this way, the boundaries between professional historians and other parties who access the past become increasingly blurred. Increasingly open access to various social media platforms means that everyone has the same right to reach out to the past and retell it. This article explores the presentation of history in mediums that professional historians generally ignore. Placing history as part of popular culture leads to the understanding that the way the public experiences history has changed. Therefore, how we sell, present, and convey history has changed. While professional historians are busy with themselves and with various theoretical debates, the public seems to be starting to regard history as a leisure pursuit. The public seems to be more interested in history presented more interactively and lightly by famous historians via social media rather than complicated history in history books written thoughtfully by professional historians.

Keywords: Historian, historiography, social media, digital era

ABSTRAK - Pergeseran teknologi, teori, dan akses membuat masa lalu menjadi mungkin untuk dijangkau oleh siapapun. Mereka yang tidak mendapat pendidikan sebagai sejarawan dapat dan berhasil mengakses "masa lalu" sering kali dengan cara yang cerdik tanpa harus terlalu terikat pada "keterampilan sejarawan dan metode sejarah." Peningkatan teknologi, perubahan pendanaan, perubahan kelembagaan dan intervensi politik semuanya berdampak pada penjualan dan pengemasan serta presentasi masa lalu. Sejarawan profesional bukan lagi satu-satunya pihak yang mempunyai otoritas untuk menyampaikan masa lalu yang "sebenarnya" kepada publik. Dengan demikian batas-batas antara sejarawan profesional dengan pihak-pihak lain yang mengakses masa lalu menjadi semakin kabur. Akses yang semakin terbuka terhadap berbagai platform media sosial membuat setiap orang memiliki hak yang sama untuk menjangkau masa lalu dan menceritakannya kembali. Tulisan ini bermaksud untuk menelusuri penyajian sejarah dalam medium-medium yang umumnya diabaikan oleh para sejarawan profesional. Menempatkan sejarah sebagai bagian dari budaya populer menuntun pada pemahaman bahwa cara publik menikmati sejarah telah berubah. Oleh karana itu cara menjual, menyajikan, dan menyampaikan sejarah pun telah berubah. Ketika sejarawan profesional sibuk dengan diri mereka sendiri dan dengan berbagai perdebatan teoretis, publik terlihat mulai menempatkan sejarah sebagai pencarian waktu luang. Publik nampaknya lebih tertarik pada sejarah yang dikemas secara lebih interaktif dan ringan oleh sejarawan popular melalui media sosial daripada sejarah yang rumit dalam buku-buku sejarah yang ditulis secara serius oleh para sejarawan profesional.

Kata Kunci: sejarawan, historiografi, media sosial, era digital,

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly developing digital era, social media has become the primary platform for disseminating information, including historical knowledge. It is undeniable that social media has provided broader access for people to learn and share historical information. However, this convenience comes with unexpected impacts, one of which is the erosion of the role of

professional historians. Before social media, history was often studied through textbooks, lectures, and seminars conducted by professional historians. The advent of the digital era has drastically changed this paradigm. Social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube have become the main sources of information for many people, including historical information (Jenkins, 2006; van Dijck, 2013; de Groot 2016).

There has been a paradigm shift in information consumption. The public now tends to seek instant information via social media rather than relying on in-depth studies conducted by experts, including professional historians. In the digital era, people demand to be entertained rather than merely informed, influenced by changes in media consumption patterns and communication dynamics. The internet and social media have enabled anyone to become a "historian" (Wineburg, 2004; Vaidhyanathan, 2011; Borgman, 2015; Nichols, 2017).

This paradigm shift in the production and consumption of information can be seen as progress because information and knowledge are no longer solely controlled by educated professionals. Moreover, educated professionals no longer hold all the knowledge. The public can challenge experts substantively. However, the internet is not only a repository of knowledge but also a source and driver of misinformation (Nichols, 2017). In a historical context, anyone can create historical content on social media platforms without formal education in history. While some content may be high quality, much of it is inaccurate or misleading

History as a scientific discipline often involves investigation, interpretation, and the preparation of narratives by historians. However, it is important to remember that historical narratives do not always have to be exclusively those of professional historians. Indonesian historian Sartono Kartodirdjo once said that the field of history is not a monopoly of professional historians, but the professionalism tied to principles, standards, and methodologies commonly applied in historical science must still be adhered to by everyone interested in historical research and writing (Kartodirdjo, 1982). History can arise from a multitude of sources, encompassing historical records, archival documents, artifacts, oral traditions, and personal experiences. While professional historians possess specialized skills and knowledge to meticulously analyze and interpret historical sources, we also witness history unfolding in family narratives, oral traditions, and personal diaries. Moreover, history finds expression through art, music, and popular culture (de Groot, 2016).

Nonetheless, historical narratives crafted by historians frequently establish the benchmark for comprehensively documenting and comprehending past events. Employing critical methodology and rigorous analysis, they construct precise, evidence-based narratives, thereby upholding the integrity and reliability of historical records. Hence, although historians wield significant influence in shaping historical narratives, history can also be encountered through various channels and diverse perspectives.

Building upon the aforementioned trends, this article opts to employ the term "history as a leisure pursuit" to illustrate the evolving dynamics in the production and consumption of historical knowledge. This phrase denotes public engagement in activities during leisure time dedicated to studying and enjoying history as a hobby or recreational pursuit. On one hand, this

engagement proves both intriguing and beneficial as history facilitates a deeper comprehension of our surroundings, elucidating the origins of culture, customs, and pivotal events that have shaped the contemporary world. Moreover, it enhances our grasp of the social, political, and cultural contexts. Additionally, it serves as an enjoyable method to sharpen cognitive faculties and foster intellectual curiosity. On the other hand, this phenomenon suggests a preference among the public for historical knowledge that is entertaining, accessible, and uncomplicated, rather than intricate and complex studies. Consequently, professional historians face the challenge of adapting to this digital era to sustain relevance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several books have delved into the transformations occurring in the consumption and production of historical knowledge and how historians have adapted to these shifts. One such work is Consuming History: History and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture by Jerome de Groot (2016), which explores the intricate relationship between history, cultural heritage, and popular culture in the modern era. This book scrutinizes how society interprets, represents, and engages with history and cultural heritage through various forms of popular culture, including film, television, music, tourism, and social media. A central focus of the book is the integration of history and cultural heritage into popular culture and contemporary consumption patterns. De Groot delves into how historical narratives evolve, are disseminated, and gain traction across different media platforms, influencing our perceptions of the past and our cultural identities. Moreover, the book examines concepts such as mainstream history, nostalgia, and the evolving significance of history over time. Through meticulous analysis of diverse forms of popular culture, the authors endeavour to comprehend how history is packaged, consumed, and reproduced in modern society. Additionally, the book delves into the impact of social media and information technology on our understanding of history and cultural heritage. De Groot explores how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube shape public engagement with history and how digital technologies empower individuals to participate as both producers and consumers of historical content on an unprecedented scale. Consuming History offers a comprehensive and pertinent exploration of the nexus between history, cultural heritage, and popular culture in the contemporary milieu. It provides valuable insights into how history and cultural heritage are perceived, enjoyed, and debated within today's society.

Next, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* is a book written by Tom Nichols, a professor of political science at the U.S. Academy of Sciences. Naval War College and renowned author and commentator. This book was published in 2017. In this book, Nichols observes the phenomenon where the authority and expertise of experts are increasingly ignored or even rejected in modern society. He highlights how the openness of information and dissemination of knowledge via the internet and social media often result in distrust of experts and knowledge supported by empirical evidence. Nichols argues that this decline in trust negatively impacts quality decision-making and influences political decisions, public policy, and societal debate as a whole. Nichols explores the various reasons behind this phenomenon, including a lack of information literacy,

ignorance, and a refusal to accept authority. He also highlighted the dangers of what he calls "post-fact narratives," where opinions and ideologies are often more influential than facts and empirical evidence.

The following literature is *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* written by Jose van Dijck (2013) which quite well presents a critical history of social media, exploring its cultural, economic and political implications. By examining the evolution of social media platforms and their impact on communication and information sharing, Van Dijck offers valuable insights into the role of social media in shaping historical discourse and its impact on professional historians. This book introduces the concept of "culture of connectivity" which refers to how social media shapes and is influenced by the culture in which we live. Van Dijck argues that connectivity is not just about technology but also about the social practices driven by the use of that technology. Van Dijck not only looks at social media from a technical perspective but also from a social and political perspective. He explores how social media have been used for political mobilization and social campaigns, and how they influence public opinion and democratic processes. The book ends with a discussion of the ethical implications of social media and speculation about the future of digital connectivity. Van Dijck called for the need for more regulation and transparency in how these platforms operate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative methods through literature study and content analysis. The literature study was carried out by collecting and reviewing relevant literature on the role of historians, digital technology and social media. A literature study, also known as a literature review, is a systematic and comprehensive research process for identifying, evaluating, and analyzing existing works related to a particular topic or field. The main aim of a literature study is to provide a theoretical basis and context for the research being conducted, as well as to identify gaps in existing knowledge that can be filled by new research (Machi & McAvoy, 2016).

Content analysis of posts, videos and other historical content that is widely distributed on social media. Content analysis is a research technique used to analyze and interpret the content of various forms of communication. This method is used to systematically examine text, images, media and other documents. Content analysis is used to understand patterns, themes, and meaning from the data analyzed (Krippendorff, 2018). This will include collecting and assessing the different types of historical content available on social media platforms. The research will focus on analyzing historical content presented on various social media platforms such as Facebook, (X) Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The content analysis carried out is very limited due to limited time and resources in collecting and evaluating historical content that is widely spread on social media. By using this methodology, it is hoped that this research will provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of history appearing on social media and its impact on the role of professional historians in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Growth of the Digital Society

In the digital era, people tend to demand to be entertained rather than just informed because of changes in media consumption patterns and communication dynamics. The internet and social media have provided unlimited access to various types of entertainment content, from funny videos, and memes, to content designed to entertain. Compared to informative content, entertainment content is often more interesting and attracts attention quickly. Modern society tends to look for instant experiences and get them quickly. Entertaining content is usually easier to digest and provides immediate gratification, while information that requires deep thought or reflection may take longer to process. Today everyone who is connected to electricity and the internet will get a lot of information from all directions whenever they want it. The problem then is not only that there is more information, but also that there is more interaction between the public and the information. The public is no longer made passive by waiting for newspaper or television news. Nowadays, the public is often asked for their opinion about information they have just obtained (Nichols, 2017).

In an increasingly busy and stressful environment, many people seek escape in entertainment to reduce the stress or boredom of everyday life. Entertaining content can provide immediate enjoyment and distract from existing problems or worries. Many digital media platforms adopt a business model based on the number of views or interactions, which encourages the production of content that is more entertaining and viral rather than content that is informative but may be less immediately engaging. Popular culture, such as movies, music, and celebrity culture, often dominates digital media and influences people's preferences and expectations for the content they consume. Due to the great popularity of popular culture, the content produced often follows currently popular trends and styles.

It is important to remember that although people tend to demand to be entertained, that does not mean that they are not interested in information. There is room for content that combines elements of entertainment and information in an interesting and relevant way, which can attract attention and provide added value to the audience. X (Twitter), Facebook. Instagram and YouTube have become streams of information from the crowd that convey news and gossip equally powerfully. No party can stop another party from selecting the information they want, no matter how high the quality of the other information available (Nichlols, 2017). During an increasingly rapid and diverse flow of information, digital society as consumers of information should continue to prioritize the assumption that content/news creators, whatever their shortcomings, know more about the issues they discuss than you do. Next, consuming information from a variety of media across political positions and multiple perspectives will make a reader wiser. Reducing your cynical attitude will open your mind to the fact that it is very rare for people to deliberately lie to you. Furthermore, consumers of information in the digital era should be more selective and prioritize searching for accurate information (Nichols, 2017).

Historians in the Digital Era

History has always been an important part of human development. Professional historians have long been keepers and explorers of the past, reconstructing and interpreting information for subsequent generations. However, with the development of information technology, the role of professional historians has begun to erode with the appearance of history on social media. In this article, we will explore this phenomenon in depth, considering the implications and challenges faced by professional historians in the digital age.

A historian is a professional who systematically studies and analyzes various aspects of the human past, including events, social life, politics, economics, culture, and other developments. They use critical methodologies to examine historical sources, such as written documents, archives, artifacts, and oral sources, to construct an accurate, evidence-based narrative about the past. Historians are responsible for recording, analyzing, and interpreting historical data carefully, considering multiple perspectives and contexts of time and place. They play an important role in understanding how past events have shaped our world today, as well as in stimulating discussion and reflection about identity, values, and policies (Carr, 1961; Evans, 2002).

Professional historians are often seen as custodians of knowledge of the past, tasked with reconstructing and interpreting history so that it can be understood by subsequent generations. However, like other professions, the role of historians has also been the target of criticism from various parties. In this article, we will explore some of the criticisms levelled at professional historians and consider how they have responded.

One of the main criticisms of professional historians is their tendency to present biased or tendentious narratives. This criticism highlights that historians, like other humans, can be influenced by background, personal values, or pressure from certain parties. For example, Howard Zinn, in his book *A People's History of the United States*, (2005), points out that history is often written from the perspective of the victors, while the experiences and views of minorities are often ignored. Apart from that, historians are also accused of being too confined by certain paradigms or frameworks of thought in interpreting historical data. For example, in their article in the journal *The American Historical Review*, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen (1998) highlight that historians often stick to traditional methods in historical research, which may result in a limited or biased understanding of the past. Not only that, criticism has also emerged regarding elitism in the historian profession, where historians are often seen as a group that is too focused on academicism and rarely interacts with the general public. In response, historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis, in her book *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), emphasized the importance of historians expanding their audiences and speaking in language that the general public could understand.

However, historians do not just accept criticism without taking action. They continually strive to improve their practices and approaches to researching and presenting history. For example, historian Barbara Tuchman, in her book *The Guns of August* (2004), shows how important the use of primary sources is in constructing an accurate and comprehensive historical narrative. Apart from that, historians are also increasingly aware of the importance of realizing pluralism in historical research and presentation. They seek to integrate different perspectives, including

those of groups previously ignored in official history, such as women, minorities, or the working class (Zinn, 2005).

In the context of digital technology, historians must also be increasingly open to the use of new media in presenting history. They utilize platforms such as blogs, podcasts, and social media to convey historical information to a wider and more diverse audience. Thus, although professional historians are not immune from criticism, they continually strive to improve their practices and approaches to researching, compiling, and presenting history. By taking into account multiple perspectives and leveraging new technologies, they hope to produce a deeper and more inclusive understanding of the human past (Rozenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Zinn, 2005).

The digital era has brought a revolution in the way we access, present and share information. Social media, with platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, has become a major channel for the dissemination of information in various forms, including history. For example, the history that was previously only accessible through books and specialized publications can now be easily found in the form of blog articles, videos, and images posted by social media users (Rosen, 2006; Castells, 2011; van Dijck, 2013; Kelly, 2015).

In recent years, we have witnessed an interesting trend in the presentation of history on social media. Historical content presented in the form of videos, infographics and short narratives has become popular among social media users. This creates new opportunities for anyone to share historical information, gather followers, and influence public opinion (Rosen 2006; Gillespie, 2014; Guo et al; 2014; Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

Although the appearance of history on social media opens up wider access to historical information, it also poses challenges to the role of professional historians. One of the main challenges is the emergence of shallow or inaccurate historical narratives on social media. Much historical content on social media is created by individuals or organizations who do not have a formal educational background in history, which can lead to the presentation of incorrect or biased information (Rozenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Nichols, 2017; Wineburg, 2018).

In facing this challenge, professional historians have provided mixed responses. One of the main responses is to increase their presence on social media. Many historians are active in creating historical content on platforms such as Twitter, where they can provide a deeper understanding of a particular topic, debunk incorrect information, and interact directly with the public (Vaidhyanathan, 2011; Weller, 2013; Smith et al, 2015).

Professional historians have also improved their digital skills to stay relevant in this age of social media. They learn to use new tools such as data visualization, text analysis, and content management platforms to present historical information in an engaging and informative manner (Hargittai, 2010; Berry, 2012; Bod, 2013; Borgman, 2015).

Content Creator as Historian; Historians as Content Creators

In the ever-growing digital era, the role of content creators has become increasingly important in disseminating information and influencing public opinion. One area that has been penetrated

by content creators is history. Through social media platforms, content creators are starting to play the role of modern "historians" who present history in a way that is engaging and easy for their audiences to understand.

In recent years, content creators have begun to play a significant role in popularizing historical knowledge. They present history through a variety of formats, from humorous short videos to in-depth documentary series. Through the use of technology and their creativity, content creators have succeeded in making history more interesting and accessible to various groups, especially the younger generation who tend to be more connected to digital platforms (Jenkins, 2006; Rosenzweig, 2011; Burgess & Green 2018).

One of the main strengths of content creators as historians is their ability to reach a wide and diverse audience. Compared to traditional approaches to presenting history, content creators can create content that is more dynamic and relevant to today's interests and preferences. For example, they can use animation, interesting visuals, and a distinctive narrative style to make history more interesting and understandable for audiences who may not be interested in conventional methods of presenting history (Jenkins, 2006; Burgess & Green 2018).

In addition, content creators as historians also have the freedom to explore various points of view and narratives that may not be covered in the traditional history curriculum. They can discuss controversial topics or tackle lesser-known stories in innovative ways. This can help bring a diversity of perspectives to the understanding of the past, which may not always be represented in official historical narratives (Jenkins, 2006; Rosenzweig, 2011; Burgess & Green 2018).

However, as with every role, content creators as historians also have their challenges and considerations. One of them is the credibility and accuracy of the information conveyed. Due to the freedom in creating content, there is a risk that some content creators may sacrifice accuracy to achieve hype or popularity. Therefore, content creators need to conduct thorough research and ensure that the information they convey is based on verified facts (Nichols, 2017; Wineburg, 2018).

Apart from that, the role of content creators as historians also faces challenges in maintaining a balance between entertainment and education. While entertaining content can attract attention, too many entertainment elements can obscure the true historical message. Therefore, content creators need to pay attention to accuracy and balance in presenting historical information (Nichols, 2017; Wineburg, 2018).

Thus, content creators have great potential to become agents of change in conveying history to modern society. With creativity, technology and the courage to explore different points of view, content creators can help popularize historical knowledge and maintain interest in our cultural heritage. However, to achieve this, content creators need to prioritize accuracy, integrity, and a balanced approach between entertainment and education in presenting history to their audiences (Jenkins, 2006; Rosenzweig, 2011; Burgess & Green 2018).

In Indonesia, several content creators create a lot of content about history, although they may not be as popular as international content creators. Some of these include:

- 1. Historia Indonesia which presents informative and interesting Indonesian historical content. They discuss various topics of Indonesian history, ranging from political events, and culture, to historical figures, with various creative delivery styles.
- 2. Indika Historia is a media platform that specializes in presenting Indonesian history content through articles, podcasts and videos. They discuss various aspects of Indonesian history from prehistoric times to the present, providing in-depth and accurate insights.
- 3. Warisan Budaya Indonesia is a YouTube channel that focuses on Indonesian historical and cultural content. They cover various topics of Indonesian history, including culture, traditions, architecture and influential historical events, with interesting narratives and interesting visuals.
- 4. Kisah Klasik, although it doesn't exclusively talk about history, the Classic Stories YouTube channel often presents stories from the past that include historical aspects. They discuss Indonesian legends, mythology and traditional stories with an interesting narrative style and beautiful visuals.
- 5. Sejarah dengan Cak Dun is a YouTube channel managed by Cak Dun, a history activist who presents Indonesian history content in an easy-to-understand and entertaining format. He discusses various historical topics, including historical figures, important events, and Indonesian culture, in a relaxed and friendly storytelling style.
- 6. One of the *celebgram* who often creates historical content via Instagram and Facebook is Hallo Historia. Hallo Historia is a social media account that presents historical content with an interesting and informative approach. They often share interesting facts about historical events, historical figures, or ancient cultures through interesting pictures and short but informative descriptions. Their content also often includes inspirational quotes from famous historical figures. Hallo Historia is active on Instagram under the username @hallohistoria and also has the same Facebook page with similar content. They have a large following on both platforms and often get positive interactions from their followers.
- 7. "Ngariksa" is a YouTube channel that focuses on Indonesian historical and cultural content. This content is managed by historians and historical content creators, who aim to present Indonesian history in an interesting and easy-to-understand manner for various groups. "Ngariksa" aims to educate the public about Indonesian history through engaging and research-based narratives. The content covers a variety of historical topics, from important events, and historical figures, to local culture and traditions. Even though it is presented entertainingly, "Ngariksa" is committed to maintaining the accuracy of the information presented. They rely on in-depth research and credible references to ensure that the content produced has a solid basis. Apart from presenting videos, "Ngariksa" also often interacts with the audience through comments and social media. This creates a more lively dialogue and allows the audience to participate in historical discussions. Overall, "Ngariksa" is a great example of how content creators can play an important role in popularizing history and culture through digital media.

They show that with the right approach, history can be presented in an interesting and relevant way while maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the information.

8. One channel that is quite active in informing about ancient Indonesian history is the Asisi YouTube channel. This channel has been quite successful in reviving public interest, especially in Indonesian classical history, especially in temples around Central and East Java. Asisi often presents historical content covering a variety of topics, from major events in world history to more specific and lesser-known classic Indonesian historical stories. One of the distinctive characteristics of Asisi's content is the creative use of animation and visualization to convey information. They often use colourful animations, illustrations, and engaging graphics to explain complex concepts engagingly and memorably. Asisi sometimes collaborates with experts or specialists in certain fields to gain deeper insight into the topics they discuss. This helps ensure that the content presented has a strong knowledge base and is accurate. Overall, Assisi brings an approach that combines education and entertainment. They strive to create content that not only provides new knowledge to the audience but also entertains and inspires them to continue learning and exploring the world. With its varied content and innovative approach, Asisi has managed to build a large fan base and become one of the most popular YouTube channels among viewers interested in history and culture.

Even though it may not be as popular as the content created by international creators, the content created by Indonesian history creators has the potential to continue to grow and make a significant contribution to popularizing and preserving Indonesian history among local and international communities.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of history on social media has presented new challenges for professional historians. However, with the right responses and improved digital skills, historians can remain relevant and make valuable contributions to enriching our understanding of the past. By continuing to collaborate with social media platforms and utilizing digital technology wisely, historians can play an important role in maintaining the integrity and accuracy of historical information in this digital era. To keep professional historians or history graduates as prospective professional historians competitive in today's digital era, several areas need to be developed in the curriculum and learning approach, including Strong digital skills where they need to understand information and communication technology, including the use of software and applications relevant to the field of history, such as historical databases, GIS (Geographic Information Systems), and data analysis software. In an era where social media plays an important role in disseminating information, history graduates need to have good social media literacy. They need to understand how social media works, how to use these platforms to disseminate historical information, and how to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate information. Historians and history graduates need to be able to develop digital content that is interesting and relevant to modern audiences. They can use various media such as blogs, podcasts, videos and images to convey historical stories in an interesting and easily accessible

way to the public. In the digital era, access to historical sources online is increasingly easy. History graduates need to have skills in conducting **effective online research**, including the ability to evaluate the reliability and authenticity of digital sources. **Digital communication** is becoming increasingly important in many fields of work, including history. History graduates need to be able to convey information effectively via various digital platforms, including email, instant messaging, and social media. **Integrating history with other disciplines** such as computer science, digital arts, or multimedia can help create a more holistic approach to understanding and presenting history in a digital context.

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