Project Title: Democratizing Politics: Mapping the Stories and Significance of the 1977 National Women's Conference

Institution: University of Houston

Project Director: Nancy Beck Young

Grant Program: Collaborative Research

"Democratizing Politics:
Mapping the Stories and Significance of the 1977 National Women's Conference"
Nancy Beck Young
Leandra Zarnow

Significance

This NEH Scholarly Digital Projects Collaborative Research Grant will support the critical expansion of "Democratizing Politics: Mapping the Stories and Significance of the 1977 National Women's Conference," the only comprehensive multi-institutional Digital Humanities (DH) project to analyze the 1977 National Women's Conference (NWC). Our initial open-access website launches in March 2021, and our fully-featured website will be complete by 2027, the NWC's 50th anniversary.

Congress created the NWC with bipartisan support, appropriating $5 million and mandating a diversity requirement for delegates to this conference that served as the US response to the United Nations International Women's Year (IWY) initiative. For this reason, the NWC stands out in US history as the most diverse and only federally funded convention of American women. In 1977, 2000 delegates, elected by 150,000 participants at 56 lead-up state and territory meetings, convened in Houston, Texas to outline 26 policy action areas to present to President Jimmy Carter. One of the greatest experiments in civic engagement, the NWC modeled democracy in action. The participants—predominantly women—offered an expansive agenda to make the nation more inclusive and equitable and US government more representative and responsive.

More than a symbolic highpoint for feminism, the NWC is a significant window into late twentieth century social, economic, legal, and political transformation. Issues debated at the NWC have defined US politics since: LGBTQ and racial civil rights; family planning and reproductive health; access to education and childcare; welfare and government spending; poverty and wealth distribution; environmentalism; foreign policy priorities; and sex discrimination in law, finance, and at work. Our project intervenes into scholarship centered on contemporary US politics and culture in three important ways: First, it shows how one group of reformers sought to actualize the promise of democracy for marginalized Americans. Second, it underscores the impact of democratizing on the participants themselves, who magnified their political and professional careers in the aftermath of the NWC. Finally, it reveals the NWC as an important bellwether to gage points of consensus and contestation among distinct American women—and Americans writ large—as they adapted to the shocks of globalization, the shifts of family and work structures, the strains of economic stagnation, the heightened demands of human rights, and the limits of government support. Looking at "what women wanted" at the NWC accents not only the social problems Americans faced, but their level of ingenuity in devising solutions.

IWY Commissioner Maya Angelou wrote a poem for the occasion, "To Form a More Perfect Union," that encompasses this sense of urgency. "No nation can boast of balance until each member of a nation is equally employed and equally rewarded," she observed, just as she encouraged, "we American women invent our future today." Her anthem highlights how squarely our project aligns with the NEH "A More Perfect Union" initiative. The NWC showcased American women's considerable political imagination for what democracy should be. Indeed, the NWC by design was more representative by every measure than Congress is today.

As the 250th anniversary of our nation nears, we are dedicated to bringing to light this example of democratic participation that has faded from our public memory. "Democratizing Politics" illuminates the myriad places, purposes, and possibilities brought together at the NWC, and gets at, for the first time, why being at the NWC, or its state and territory meetings, left an inedible imprint on thousands of

American lives. This scale of data analysis has not been attempted or achieved in traditional scholarship or public history projects on the NWC.

A driver of knowledge production, our project will be the first to collect, interpret, and visualize searchable demographical data, biographies, digitized texts, and oral histories of thousands of NWC delegates, reporters, staff, and domestic and international dignitaries. The site will also evaluate the NWC's legacy, including policy outcomes, networks created, careers launched, and institutions developed. The site will benefit from its vast national crowdsourcing web of researchers to amass a repository of material used to generate interpretive maps, timelines, and essays as well as peer-reviewed scholarship (notably a peer-reviewed journal special issue and trade press book). The end result will be a sustainable site (supported in DSpace) used by scholars, educators, students, archivists, interested public, and NWC participants with long-term maintenance by the University of Houston.

Substance and Context

Over four days in Houston, Texas—November 18-21, 1977—the whole world watched as hundreds of reporters and international dignitaries on the scene witnessed what democracy looked like in the hands of American women. At the NWC, America's majority seized the opportunity to set a new national agenda with women at its center. After the first United Nations IWY conference, held in Mexico City in 1975, the US delegation returned stateside determined to model this women's rights vision. Capitalizing on this interest, IWY delegate Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY) and Rep. Patsy Takemoto Mink (D-HI) led thirteen congresswomen in drafting and lobbying for $5 million in appropriations for a federal conference. With 56 widely reported state and territory meetings conducted in the six months before the final gathering in Houston, the American public had never witnessed so many women—over 150,000—participating in the parliamentary process. One iconic image has endured: tennis star Billie Jean King passing the torch to three young runners—Black, brown, and white. This torch relay race that began in Seneca Falls, New York symbolically signaled that history would be made by NWC participants. Yet, the split screen of news broadcasts moving between the NWC and the anti-IWY counter-convention nearby highlighted how not all women believed the NWC to be their engine for change.

The NWC showcased both the tensions and promise of what a more fully representative American democracy might look like in all its messy and multifarious forms. Lofty goals were expressed, risks were taken—such as supporting disability rights or a sexual preference plank—and concessions were made. Conflicting viewpoints were aired, and floor debates continued after hours in hallways and hotel rooms. Ultimately, the majority of participants agreed to a shared national vision delivered to President Carter in 1978 as a proposed blueprint for action. Instead, Carter treated *The Spirit of Houston* as a final report, and, taking his cue, scholars have underexplored the NWC. Yet, how limited or capacious was the influence of the NWC, and can we measure the impact of this gathering not only on its participants, but its observers? Were some policy goals implemented more than others, and what unfinished business remains? What brought different groups or interests at the NWC together or apart, and can we track these crossings visually?

These questions have not yet been fully explored in traditional or digital scholarship. IWY Commissioner and sociologist Alice Rossi completed the first demographic study of NWC participants, *Feminists in Politics,* in 1982. This source has proven invaluable as we put together early stages of our demographic database. The 40th anniversary of the NWC served as an occasion for renewed public attention and reflection among former participants, leading former IWY staff Shelah Leader and Patricia Hyatt to publish their memoir, *American Women on the Move,* in 2017. That same year, historian Marjorie Spruill wrote the first study of the NWC and anti-IWY conference, *Divided We Stand*.

Spruill's work set the historiographical tone for scholarship on the NWC, leading with the interpretation that Houston served as a galvanizing force for "family values" politics and a seedbed for

current political polarization. Others who join her in this interpretation include Stacie Taranto, Matthew Lassiter, and Erin Kempker. A microcosm of America, intense debate about the role of the state, religious practice, personal privacy, and national security unfolded at the NWC. Neither at the conference nor in society at large could Americans agree on whether to retain inherited political traditions and cultural behavior or whether new political and cultural mores must be adopted. Accordingly, "Democratizing Politics" exhibits how this ideological diversity enlivened the NWC, tracing patterns of connection and points of discord in new, surprising ways. Critics of the conservative ascendancy argument highlight how a narrative focused on an ideological contest among predominantly white NWC participants and opponents diminishes the diversity of issues and actors at the NWC and its broader vision for change.

Scholars Doreen Mattingly and Jessica Nare drew focus to this inclusiveness and points of convergence and divergence among NWC participants in their article, "'A Rainbow of Women.'" Houston served as a meeting point for participants along identity and professional lines. Women held workshops for homemakers, attended women's health clinics, and created a network of Red Nation women. They swapped stories of building first credit unions for women, and strategized how to build careers in science and law. Indeed, activist-scholar Loretta Ross credits the NWC as the place where the coalitional term "women of color" was coined. Contributing to this call for reevaluation, biographers Leandra Zarnow and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu draw focus to the sweeping purpose of the NWC law and its unfulfilled goals in their respective biographies of Bella Abzug and Patsy Takemoto Mink (forthcoming). Essays in *Chicana Movidas* co-edited by Maria Cotera, Maylei Blackwell, and Dionne Espinoza on Latinx NWC participants, Wu's work-in-progress on Asian American and Pacific Islander NWC participants, and a forthcoming collection edited by Laura Lovett and Rachel Jessica Daniel on Black NWC participants will further point to the overlooked presence of women of color, queer women, and poor women among other groups who shaped the NWC. Our project will enlarge this view by drawing exhaustive focus to the myriad histories of NWC participants and the wide imprint of the NWC.

Public-facing projects focused on the NWC are minimal, and the absence of a comprehensive DH project is all the more surprising in this context. "Democratizing Politics" contributes a unifying site that brings together the scattered digital attention to NWC, centering researchers' focus while offering new sources and a fresh narrative on the NWC. Women and Social Movements in the US, a digital teaching resource published by Alexander Street Press, has a document project related to the NWC that the editors would like to revise and we are discussing greater collaboration. The University of South Carolina is digitizing and making available online around 700 interviews taken at the NWC in 1977. The University of Houston has also begun to publish open-access digital collections pertaining to the NWC. Alongside the US government's official archive at the National Archives and presidential libraries, individual archives throughout the United States have small collections on state or territorial meetings or the Houston conference often donated by participants. To date, no all-encompassing effort to document this event in the digital realm or through a far-reaching archival collection campaign has been launched.

"Democratizing Politics" has two exhaustive goals: one, collecting and analyzing all NWC participant histories using various modalities (demographic data, personal narrative, oral histories, biographies, text-based archives); and two, documenting and assessing the imprint of the NWC on policy outcomes, women in politics, and network and institution-building. What our initial research reveals is that the NWC served as a crossing point for campaigns, careers, and movements underway and laid the groundwork for more to come. This project will allow researchers to trace connection points among political careers. For instance, NWC participants currently in Congress include Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Rep. Sylvia Garcia (D-TX). And it will allow researchers to cast local ventures within a larger constellation of advocacy. For instance, the Houston Women's Center and Womynspace were both born out of the 1977 conference and part of wider anti-domestic violence and art movements. The result will be an interpretive framework that brings together political and social movement histories often disconnected. More so, "Democratizing Politics" will challenge scholars' assumptions about how politics looks and is

defined, unsettling the study of politics that tends to begin with elected office and end at the White House. Likewise, in drawing focus to NWC participants' debate of foreign policy alongside childcare, our project further punctures the idea that "women's issues" were and should be women's only political domain.

The interdisciplinary background of scholars involved in "Democratizing Politics" drawing from history, English, racial/ethnic studies, digital humanities, public policy, law, public history, anthropology, technology science, and women, gender, and sexuality studies suggests the range of fields our project targets as an interested research audience. This project is grounded in intersectional feminist DH practice of which project consultants Maria Cotera and Amy Earhart are pioneers. Cotera encourages that the digital archive is not static, but instead has an emancipatory potential by actively engaging silenced populations in the process of creation and knowledge production. Earhart, though, throws caution to the enterprise, highlighting how the Internet is governed by inequitable power structures that mirror and often augment our physical lives. "Democratizing Politics" sets out to model the former, while working against the latter, drawing greater visibility to a wider range of American women exhibiting democracy in action in digital space. By bringing disparate historical collections together while creating new sources to be mined and offering new interpretation, we are completing digital recovery work that Ricardo Puzalan calls "virtual reunification." Oral history and crowdsourcing components of this project require its research teams to call upon feminist and queer oral history practice emphasizing shared authority between researchers and subjects. Well versed in conducting participatory action research and co-curricular learning, project collaborators also draw on this practical foundation.

Methods and Execution

"Democratizing Politics" merges traditional research methods—archival research, use of library databases, and oral history collection—with digital research methods—data gathering, management, and interpretation—to achieve both a meta-analysis and micro-analysis of the NWC fostering a deeper and a wider appreciation of what happened in Houston in 1977. Specifically, we use digital tools to interpret the data amassed from traditional sources and develop new qualitative and quantitative data to comprehend civic engagement and the democratic process at the NWC. We employ these tools to gain a greater understanding into three critical questions about the NWC: Who were the participants and why were they compelled to participate? What political and professional trajectory did the participants follow after the conference concluded? And what was the federal legislative and institutional legacy of the conference?

The foundation for the demographic analysis we are completing was an overview report of findings from delegate questionnaires collected by NWC organizers and saved as part of the Marjorie Randal Papers digitized at University of Houston. We have worked with students in advanced research seminars for several years now to research the demographic data for each participant well beyond what was reflected in this archival document, assigning state delegations to research teams. To date, we have over half of all state and territory delegations completed, and this research, loaded in Excel spreadsheets, will be complete before this grant begins. Our database will be constructed in spring 2021 in conjunction with the launch of our initial website. Data cleaning and database completion, though, will not conclude until the first year of the grant, should we be funded. Our database contains over 240 unique datapoints, making possible both granular and macro analysis of the demographic background, education, work and career, political advocacy, volunteer activities, and involvement with the NWC for each participant.

Beyond this demographic research, "Democratizing Politics" offers a collective, biographical picture of thousands of NWC participants, creating a group portrait that makes clear the value and impact of diverse representation and civic participation. Collaborators in this project are highly skilled biographers and oral historians and have led student research teams in drafting biographies of and conducting oral histories with participants that build on the demographic research detailed above. "Democratizing Politics" not only presents these stories, the site will invite researchers to contribute additional biographies and oral histories to this wide-scale crowdsourced project. Project directors will

coordinate these national research efforts. The initial site will serve as a clearinghouse for crowdsourcing resources complementing behind-the-scenes management of multi-institutional and community-based research teams. To assure uniformity and accuracy, UH graduate research assistants working in conjunction with project directors will vet all crowdsourced work before it appears on the site and is entered into the project's data repository. Researchers will also have easy access to templates, procedures, and standards for contribution on the site including guidelines for writing biographies and conducting oral histories, a list of sources to consult, our style guide, permissions forms, and how-to videos.

From its initial launch in 2021 to its full-featured completion in 2027, we envision that our site will be anchored by its mapping visualizations, while also inviting users to manipulate the maps through their own queries to our database (see the wireframe for our project in Attachment 6). To assist users in their exploration of the NWC, our website has four main parts: Discover NWC Stories, Why the NWC Matters, Mapping the NWC, and How to Contribute. The Discover NWC Stories pages will contain short biographical essays about conference participants, each no more than 500 words, links to oral histories participants have given, and sample archival documents and images that flesh out the story of each participant. Why the NWC Matters is a section dedicated to presenting our key interpretive findings while introducing users to the history of the National Women's Conference. Features to be included are an interpretive overview of the NWC and a visual timeline that details the passage of the NWC law, conference planning milestones, state and territorial meetings, the conference itself, and the delivery of and impact of the *Spirit of Houston* report. Mapping the NWC is the quantitative heart of this project, its centerpiece a geo-pinned map with all 2000 NWC delegates portrayed, their hometowns pinned, and searchable demographic data. At its debut in March 2021, the site will feature extended demographic analysis of the Texas state delegation and IWY Commissioners to showcase what will ultimately be accomplished for every state and territory and a range of other participants (staff and volunteers, domestic and international dignitaries, journalists, torch relay runners, and anti-IWY counter-convention participants). Finally, How to Contribute will address our various user categories—researchers, educators, archivists, NWC participants, and students—informing each how they might use the site and what they can contribute. For example, NWC participants can add their own oral histories while educators can volunteer to teach oral history and biography writing with their students.

We employ multiple DH tools to generate interpretive findings on our site alongside additional digital publications, a peer-reviewed journal special issue, and trade press book. Because participant journeys from across the United States to Houston is part of the NWC story, mapping anchors our site to tell a story of place alongside people. At this juncture we are experimenting with Neatline, QGIS, and StoryMapJS to see where we get the best results for our purposes. We are using D3.js and Tableau to construct visualizations of our demographic data. These data visualizations at the core of our research agenda allow us to examine the networks in which NWC participants worked and volunteered thereby expanding the definition of political action. Doing so not only tells us more about the conference itself but also grassroots organizing and political institutional development in the 1970s. Demographic data will be further contextualized through the layered curation of primary sources—digitized archival holdings and oral interviews—and secondary sources—biographies—presented for the first time on this site. Using this material, we will create interpretive essays, timelines, mappings, and other data visualizations to illuminate the connections and distinctions among NWC participants, what their participation tells us about US democratic engagement, and how the conference serves as a window into late twentieth century social, political, legal, and economic change. Offering robust "how to use the data" features, we will also encourage our users—scholars, educators, students, interested public, and NWC participants—to query the data themselves.

This wide-scale project cannot be executed successfully without the collaboration of a large, multi-disciplinary team of scholars and students, which is why we are launching our initial site in March 2021 to feature our first round of research and to invite others to join our collaborative project. Our

humanities-based project also depends upon the vital contribution of technology scholars with theoretical knowledge of computer science. The humanists on the project will have primary responsibility for the archival research, oral history collection, building historical timelines, and writing interpretive content, while technology scholars will oversee database maintenance, develop the GIS mapping of conference participants, create a range of data visualizations, and construct the website in collaboration with humanists.

We are partnering with two primary units at the University of Houston: the College of Technology, which will provide hosting and support to maintain our website, and the Digital Research Commons within the M.D. Anderson Library, which has the DH expertise to assist our efforts. The UH Libraries Institutional Repository—a DSpace based free and open online repository—will provide the infrastructure to sustain our project's preservation efforts. Our Special Collections will also support the project. This work will complement archival research to be conducted during this grant period to capture official NWC records at the National Archives at College Park, the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University, the Gerald Ford Library and the Bentley Historical Library both at the University of Michigan, and the Jimmy Carter Library. Such research coupled with our intellectual exchange with digital technology scholars is vital to our interpretive, analytical scholarship.

Beyond the University of Houston, we are working with lead collaborators at the University of California, Irvine as well as our national advisory committee to help guide the national rollout of this project and to achieve its full completion by 2027. These scholars have been recruited from participants in our NEH Summer Seminar and presenters at the 40th anniversary conference to pilot our national crowdsourcing effort; with their students they are gathering oral histories and drafting biographies of participants from their regions of the country.

History of the Project and its Productivity
"Democratizing Politics" is a natural outgrowth of the NEH grant we received to host an NEH Summer Seminar in June 2017 and 40th anniversary conference in November 2017, efforts that gained international scholarly attention as the conference review by Amélie Ribieras in *Transatlantica* makes clear. This conference brought together former NWC participants, scholars, students, and interested public for two days of programming that fostered inter-generational and community-academic exchanges. Fortieth anniversary conference speaker and former IWY Commissioner Gloria Steinem—who calls the NWC "the most important event no one knows about" in her memoir *Life on the Road*—challenged the University of Houston to launch a social media initiative during the conference to gather NWC participants' memories. The seed for our project was planted in Steinem's public memory campaign.

What we were able to accomplish during the 40th anniversary conference, bringing together collaborative partners on our campus—including Special Collections, Center for Public History, Blaffer Art Museum—and off campus—Houston Women March and Texas Archive of the Moving Image are examples—reflects our capacity for interdisciplinary and community-driven collaborative research that will be extended in this project. That the National Museum of American History sent their leading political and women's history archivists to attend the conference, and our conference poster now is part of the Smithsonian holdings, attests to their assessment that what we accomplished was significant to scholarship and in history.

The 40th anniversary conference also reflected our commitment to powering this initiative with student researchers, who have helped shape the approach, form, and content of this project since its inception. Two examples were the student-run onsite Oral History Commons that collected oral histories for "Democratizing Politics," and the student-drafted "From the Archives" interpretive posts on our conference Facebook page. This feature drew from the University of Houston's major repository of NWC archival holdings including the Marjorie Randal Papers digitized for the NEH-sponsored Summer

Seminar (a contribution not funded by the NEH that Special Collections pledges to expand during this grant cycle). Likewise, first demographic data, biographies, and oral histories collected since 2017 at the University of Houston, and early partner institution University of California, Irvine, have been completed by undergraduate and graduate researchers who will be named contributors in our project.

At the University of Houston, we are fortunate to have a committed long term host for this site, and an internal advisory committee that reflects the level of cross-campus, interdisciplinary collaboration that our project encourages and from which it will benefit. We have received two starter grants from the Digital Research Commons at the University of Houston Libraries that helped provide research assistants as well as technical support for this project in its first few years of incubation. In March 2021, we will launch our site (please see wireframes in Attachment 6) that will showcase research already done on the Texas state delegation and presidentially appointed IWY Commissioners. We have centered on these two areas to highlight the breadth and depth of data that will be collected and publicly available on NWC participants.

Our initial site will: 1) refocus public awareness on the NWC; 2) introduce the site's interpretive argument about its historical significance; 3) provide initial visualizations of demographic data; 4) present initial oral histories, biographies, and related archival material of participants; and 5) provide users with guidelines to navigate the site and contribute to the project. Using our initial site as a recruiting tool, we will expand our web of national research teams significantly during the cycle of this grant. Crowdsourcing efforts are being piloted by our national advisory committee members. Our strategy is to target completing data collection and analysis by region (the territories, the West, and so on) while remaining open to contribution from other areas of the country simultaneously.

By the end of the grant cycle, we aim to have completed and posted or visualized all demographic data, biographies, and oral histories for national delegates. Partnerships with archives beyond the University of Houston will help us fulfill our connected goal of noting all NWC-related collections on our site and linking to digitized collections. While we expect to post the bulk of this information early in the building of our site, this aspect of archival reunification will be ongoing as additional materials are located and/or donated to repositories.

The most important aspect of our project that will not be completed during the period of the grant is the research into and visualization of the federal legislative legacy, the post-conference institution building legacy, and the participant career and networking legacy. While we will begin this work in year two of the grant, we expect to complete this aspect of the project in 2026. We plan to seek additional grant funding from sources such as the American Council of Learned Societies and the Guggenheim Foundation as well as relying on internal funding from the UH Digital Research Commons and Young's endowed professorship if needed to finish this project. As we further discuss in Final Product, we will complete our project by the 50th anniversary of the NWC in 2027. Finishing at this milestone will maximize public and scholarly attention to "Democratizing Politics," and, we hope, will encourage Americans to explore the vibrant tapestry of NWC participants and the enduring legacy of this unprecedented federal venture.

Collaboration
Directors
      Nancy Beck Young is the Moores Professor of History at the University of Houston (UH), Faculty Affiliate of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and director of "Democratizing Politics." She specializes in twentieth century US political history and has written on Congress, the presidency, first ladies, and public policy history. She brings to this project vast experience with archival research, oral history, biography, and NEH training in digital humanities through a Doing DH Summer Institute at George Mason University in 2014. For this project, she is lead scholar for researching NWC participant

demographics and the legislative legacy of the conference. She has written the project's codebook for data cleaners and computer programmers. Young will devote 20 percent of her time during each academic year (UH faculty are expected to devote 40 percent of their time in each academic year to teaching, 40 percent to scholarship, and 20 percent to service) and 60 percent of her time in the summers to the project.

Leandra Zarnow is Associate Professor of History and Faculty Affiliate of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Faculty Affiliate of Jewish Studies at UH, and co-director of "Democratizing Politics." She is a specialist in twentieth century US women's, political, and legal history. She has published work on women in politics, suffrage history, feminist media, the craft of biography, and legal feminism. Like Young, Zarnow has broad experience with archival research, oral history, and biography as well as collaborative writing and project management. In courses, she has introduced students to intersectional digital humanities, guided students in design brainstorming sessions, and worked to incorporate their vision for the site. She leads the biographical and oral history components of this project, and manages its crowdsourcing and community outreach efforts. Zarnow will devote 20 percent of her time during each academic year and 60 percent of her time in the summers to the project.

Collaborators
Peggy Lindner, Ph.D., is technical project lead and oversees the web development and deployment of the website and data, as well as supervising the web development Research Assistants. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Information & Logistics Technology at UH. While Lindner's background is in engineering, she has built her career around data science education and digital humanities and has a keen appreciation of the importance of making data free and accessible to everyone. Her Ph.D. research explored the management of applications from science and engineering in heterogeneous grid environments. Trained in High Performance Computing, she infuses all her projects with higher expectations for quality and stability, while her expertise in data representation has made it possible to think about larger and more integrated data projects. She has extensive experience with students as a co-director of the Data Analytics in Student Hands (DASH) project. She serves on the Advisory Council for the Digital Research Commons at UH. Lindner will spend 3 percent of her time on this project in years one and two and will continue advising and oversight in year three.

Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, UCI Professor of Asian American Studies, attended the NEH Summer Seminar that Young and Zarnow organized in 2017, and is now writing a book on the Asian American and Pacific Islander women at the NWC. Wu previously recruited students to crowdsource the research for this project, something that this project also seeks to do. In addition to collaborating with Zarnow on oral history and biography work, Wu will recruit participants for this project from the University of California Consortium for the Study of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality History, which she co-established. Wu is co-editor of *Women and Social Movements* (WASM), an online database and journal, that is interested in collaborating with the "Democratizing Politics" project. WASM will provide summer GSR funding for 2022, and the student could also undertake work related to the "Democratizing Politics" project. Wu will devote 15 percent of her time during the academic year and 30 percent of her time in summers to this project.

Consultants
Maria Eugenia Cotera is an associate professor in the Mexican American and Latino Studies Department at the University of Texas-Austin. She is an award-winning scholar on women of color feminism, Latinx Studies public humanities and digital humanities. Her edited volume, *Chicana Movidas* has triggered national dialogue about Latinx biographical and digital practice. Professor Cotera is currently the P.I. on the *Chicana por mi Raza* Digital Memory Project, an online interactive archive of oral histories and material culture documenting Chicana Feminist praxis from 1965-1985. She is lead curator for two public history exhibits: *Las Rebeldes:* Stories of Strength and Struggle in southeast Michigan (2013) and *Chicana Fotos:* Nancy De Los Santos (2017). Cotera has extensive disciplinary

service and will provide critical feedback for this project regarding issues pertaining to women of color feminism and DH theory.

Amy Earhart is Associate Professor of English and affiliated faculty of Africana Studies at Texas A&M University. The recipient of grants and fellowship from the NEH, ACLS, and the Mellon Foundation, Earhart has been involved with digital humanities scholarship since 2003. Her work examines infrastructures of technology and their impact and replication of "race," builds infrastructure for digital humanities work, embeds digital humanities projects within the classroom, and traces the history and futures of dh, with a particular interest in the way that dh and critical race studies intersect. Her digital projects are constructed to expand access to Black humanities materials: *The Millican Massacre, 1868,* DIBB: The Digital Black Bibliographic Project, and "Alex Haley's Malcolm X: 'The Malcolm X I knew' and notecards from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*" (a collaborative project with undergraduate and graduate students published in *Scholarly Editing*).

Elizabeth A. Rodwell is the project's usability (UX) lead. She specializes in design production/research, technology studies, and anthropology. Her forthcoming book, "Push the Button: Interactive Television and Collaborative Journalism in Japan," examines interactivity in Japanese television. After finishing her Ph.D. in 2015, Rodwell worked in the business world as a senior usability researcher where she explored how social scientific methods could enhance technological development and create broadly engaging experiences. With six years teaching accessibility in design, she joined UH in 2019 as Assistant Professor of Digital Media in the Information & Logistics Technology Department. Rodwell will consult on user testing and deploy students in her senior-level UX course to assist in evaluating NWC site usability.

Marjorie J. Spruill, project consultant, is Distinguished Professor Emerita of History at the University of South Carolina. Her areas of specialty are US Women's and Gender History, US political history, and the history of the American South. Her publications focus on the woman suffrage movement and modern feminism and antifeminism, which she assessed in her pathbreaking book, *Divided We Stand*. Of particular relevance for this project, she spent almost two decades while completing this book researching the NWC, the Pro-Family Rally that conservative women organized in protest, the events that led up to these 1977 conferences, and the political impact. She also partnered with oral history specialists to preserve and transcribe oral histories conducted in 1977. As a consultant she will provide background information about the events and their significance, contacts with participants, and information about major oral history and archival sources to be included in the project.

Claude Willan, Ph.D, project consultant, will assist with all aspects of data management. While pursuing his Ph.D. in English at Stanford University, he collaborated with the Mapping Republic of Letters team from 2009-2016. He spent two years at Princeton as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Princeton's Center for Digital Humanities. Now Director of Digital Humanities Services at the University of Houston's Libraries, he also offers Introduction to Digital Humanities courses through the English Department while helping to develop UH's portfolio of digital research projects. Willan brings his expertise to the project in sitemap design, project management, and establishing procedures for gathering, cleaning, organizing, and visualizing data on the site.

Work Plan for Democratizing Politics

Jan-June 2022
• Young, Lindner, Willan, and College of Technology (COT): begin data organization and preparation.
• Zarnow, Wu, and UCI RA: coordinate US territories oral history/biography research teams.
• Young and Rodwell: construct historical interpretive timeline and test usability.
• Young and Zarnow: archival research on the NWC at Schlesinger Library.

July-Dec. 2022
• Young, Lindner, Willan, History RA, COT RA: finish demographic data cleaning/coding for all NWC delegates/alternates.
• Lindner: finalize database (in progress) to house NWC demographic data.
• Zarnow, Wu, History RA, UCI RA: coordinate western US oral history/biography research teams.
• Young, Lindner, History RA, COT RA: complete GIS mapping of western states.
• Young, Rodwell: complete historical interpretive timeline, test usability, launch.
• Young and Zarnow: archival research at NARA.

Jan.-June 2023
• Zarnow, Wu, History RA: coordinate northeast/midwest US oral history/biography research teams.
• Young, Lindner, History RA, COT RA: complete GIS mapping of northeastern and midwestern states.
• Young: archival research at Jimmy Carter Library.
• Zarnow: archival research at Gerald Ford Library and Bentley Historical Library.
• Young, Rodwell, Willan, History RA, COT RA: construct and test interpretive, topical visualizations.
• Young, History RA: research federal legislative legacy of the 26 planks.
• Young, Zarnow: recruit authors for special issue of an academic journal.

July-Dec. 2023
• Zarnow, Wu, History RA: coordinate southern US and all other participant category oral history/biography research teams.
• Young, Lindner, History RA, COT RA: complete GIS mapping of southern states, territories, and all other participant categories.
• Young, Willan, Rodwell, History RA, COT RA: construct and test interpretive, topical visualizations.
• Young, History RA: research federal legislative legacy of the 26 planks.
• Young, Zarnow: begin drafting journal introduction and edit solicited articles.

Jan.-June 2024
• Zarnow, Wu, History RA: coordinate remaining work for oral history/biography research teams.
• Young, Rodwell, Willan, History RA, COT RA: finish topical visualizations and test usability.
• Young, History RA: research participant legacy re: political careers, networks, institution building.
• Young, History RA, Willan, Rodwell, COT RA: finish researching legislative legacy, begin visualizations, test usability.
• Young, Zarnow: finalize journal introduction and individual articles.
• Young, Zarnow: secure contract for trade press book.

July-Dec. 2024
• Zarnow, Wu: coordinate remaining work for oral history/biography research teams.
• Young, Rodwell, Willan, COT RA: research participant legacy re: political careers, networks, institution building and test usability.
• Young, Rodwell, Willan, COT RA: Finish visualizations of federal legislative legacy and test usability.
• Young, Zarnow: draft site essays to accompany data visualizations.
• Young, Zarnow: edit journal articles from other authors.
• Young, Zarnow: begin drafting trade press book.

Final Product and Dissemination

We plan to disseminate "Democratizing Politics" in multiple streams to maximize our reach: our website about the NWC, a special issue of a scholarly journal, and a trade press book. We are also deeply committed to ensuring maximum discoverability of our project among a variety of users and sustaining its longevity well beyond the site's completion in 2027.

Most important will be our robust DH website, which joins our digital scholarship about the conference together with an uncurated, reunified archive of materials related to the NWC. The core of the archive will be the massive dataset of oral histories, biographies, demographic data we are compiling about all NWC participants, and the policy and political advocacy data we are amassing regarding the legacy of the 26 plank National Plan of Action. The result will be a vehicle that both makes a scholarly intervention into debates about American politics, democratic culture, and the status of women in the late twentieth century and also functions as a searchable repository for researchers interested in studying topics addressed at the NWC and its history. Each major part of the website will have interpretive essays that we, students, and other scholars write. These solicited essays will meld the strengths of traditional print scholarship with the methodological vibrancy of the digital platform.

Our fully-featured site's completion in 2027 is timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the National Women's Conference, but will continue to evolve dynamically and will enjoy long-term institutional support and maintenance at the University of Houston after 2027. Although beyond the scope of this grant, it is notable to mention we expect to hold a 50th conference not unlike the one we hosted in 2017 that will draw national participants and many DH project contributors to Houston in 2027 to discuss both the NWC's continued significance and the findings of "Democratizing Politics." As our 40th conference achieved, the 50th conference will bring together numerous academics, advocates, former NWC participants, students, and the interested public. And unlike the 40th anniversary conference, we will center focus on the site and incorporate a virtual component into the 50th anniversary conference. As we did before, we will complete outreach using traditional and social media, and academic and community networks, working with technology specialists to ensure the greatest search optimization of our site.

Another avenue to draw researchers to our site will be our plans for a special journal issue presenting multiple scholars from history and related humanities fields in dialogue with multiple technology scholars. We are looking at a peer-reviewed, digitally published, open-source journal like *Digital Humanities Quarterly* or a print journal like the *Journal of American History* that will commit to publishing a digital companion. In an opening roundtable, scholars will discuss their engagement in the project as it evolved. In individual or co-authored essays, they will write longer articles that mix disciplinary perspectives with historians writing about their new findings regarding politics in the 1970s and technology scholars writing about the DH breakthroughs that result from our project.

Because we believe peer review is essential to credible scholarship, we are building layers of reviewing into our project. Our steering committee will regularly offer feedback about what is working and what needs revision regarding all aspects of our site. To further cement the reviewing utility of the steering committee, we plan in 2021 to create a separate historical and digital humanist review panel that will not participate in the construction of the site or crowdsourcing of material and whose only role will be to review and critique. Finally, once the site is completed in 2027, we will seek to have it reviewed in academic journals, perhaps the most important public form of peer review.

We aim to expand our public footprint through publishing a trade press book as a companion to our website in 2027. This book will introduce the NWC—and "Democratizing Politics"—using compelling participant stories paired with historical documents and artifacts to invite readers to explore more. The book will point readers to features on the site, just as it will offer site users another avenue of discovery by delving deeper into the history of selected participants profiled in this text. Chapters will also carry the story of the NWC forward, assessing the scale of progress agenda items outlined in 1977 including those still on the table.

We want to ensure as many users as possible are directed to our site and that it will continue to evolve well beyond the life of the grant. We plan to utilize Google Analytics—a free, industry-standard service for monitoring and analyzing visitor traffic—as we roll out the site using monthly data collected

in its first 12 months especially to assess user interest and site discoverability and accessibility. Our outreach and publicity strategy will be shaped by this analysis as well as changes to context and design of the site to enhance traffic. We will continue this analysis of site usage throughout the life of the project. Our team has considerable experience in the development and deployment of scalable web applications. The University of Houston College of Technology (COT) through their IT support team is committed to hosting and providing technical support for our site long-term.