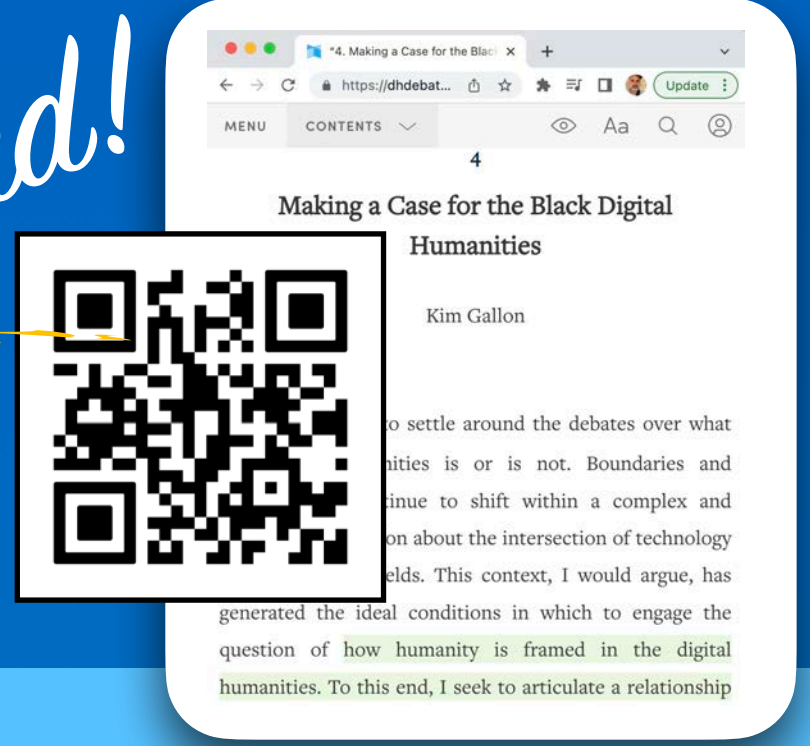


Expanding Digital Access to Literature by Black Canadians



Benjamin Walsh, University of Toronto Libraries

10 minute read!



Why is this so important?



- The printed word is no longer the primary medium of knowledge production or distribution
- Digital tools increasingly used to study human culture and society require rich digital collections
- In the United States [and Canada], Black writing is underrepresented in digital collections
- The digital humanities are unable to equitably serve Black studies or interpret Black experience

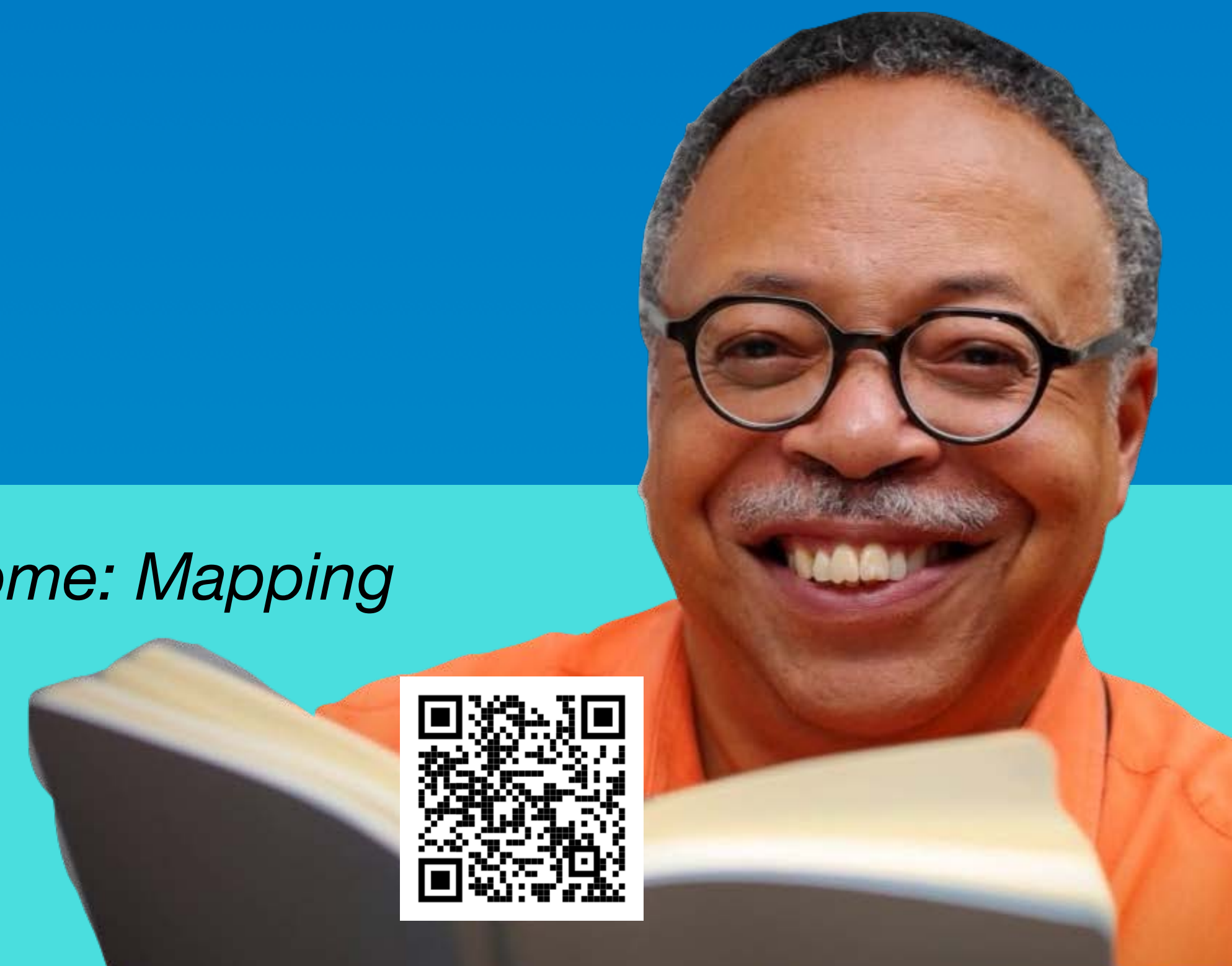


“...the project of recovering lost historical and literary texts should be foundational to the black digital humanities.”

Kim Gallon, Associate Professor of History at Purdue University

Where did we begin?

- Identified most authoritative bibliography of literature by Black Canadians: *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (George Elliott Clarke, 2002)
- Extracted data from Clarke (2002) using open source bibliographic parsing platform anystyle.io
- Uploaded data to citation management tool zotero.org where title list was constructed



George Elliott Clarke
Poet & Professor of English at the University of Toronto

Project Phase One

- ▶ Identified missing titles
- ▶ Purchased if possible

Project Phase Two

- ▶ Identified key publishers
- ▶ Outreach for partnership

Project Phase Three

- ▶ Negotiated digitization
- ▶ Digitized & distributed

Where are we now?



- 172 missing digital titles were located and purchased from commercial vendors
- 200 missing digital titles were acquired through five backlist digitization partnerships with Black-owned presses in Canada
- University of Toronto Digitization Unit prepared titles for expanded access via Scholars Portal e-book platform serving 21 universities in Canada
- Discussions underway with three additional Black-owned presses in Canada including Spolrusie Publishing (spolrusie.com) founded by d'bi.young anitafrika to publish works by artists of African descent as well as work emerging out of The Watah Theatre
- Next step: Expand title list to account for work published post-Clarke bibliography (2002)

d'bi.young anitafrika
Poet, Scholar, & Artistic Director of Watah Theatre



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