# Impact Report:

## Discover How Using Gale's Digital Humanities Tool Is Making New Inroads into Research

### This Gale-CLGBTH Fellow Is Tracing the History of Trans-masculine Community Building

**Elio Colavito**
Doctoral Student, History,
University of Toronto, Canada
Gale-CLGBTH Non-Residential Fellowship

## MEET THE SCHOLAR

As one of five researchers awarded a fellowship from Gale and the Committee on LGBT History (CLGBTH) in 2022, Elio Colavito used Gale's digital humanities tools to trace a history of trans-masculine mutual aid, activism, and community with ArcGIS StoryMaps, a digital mapping software. Colavito's project, "Mapping Transtopia: Trans-Masculine Mutual Aid and Community Formation, 1960-2005," retells the history of trans-masculine resource sharing and community care by focusing on and mapping out the various ways that trans-masculine people built infrastructures for living and surviving.

All Gale-CLGBTH Non-Residential Fellowship recipients were granted access to Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* and *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* (the *Lab*) for a six-month period of research. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* is the largest historical collection available in support of the knowledge of gender studies and sexuality, spanning from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The *Lab* is a cloud-based digital humanities tool that helps researchers tell impactful visual stories with data from Gale's archives.

Fellows received training on how to use the text and data mining tools available in the *Lab* to explore *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* and advance their work using digital humanities methods. Read on to see how Colavito used this powerful cloud-based platform to run meaningful analyses using digital humanities tools and quickly and efficiently map out community trends over time.

## GALE

"F2M Column." *Transgender Tapestry*, no. 79, Summer 1997, pp. 8+. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.

## ADVANCING RESEARCH DISCOVERIES WITH GALE DIGITAL SCHOLAR LAB

Without access to *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* and the robust capabilities of *Gale Digital Scholar Lab*, Colavito's research would have required several trips, hundreds of hours of manual research, and thousands of dollars. With Gale's powerful search tools, they were able to save time through streamlined access to thousands of documents, all housed in a single online research environment. This helped Colavito reinvest their time in a more productive manner, allowing them to focus on writing their dissertation.

The *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* gave Colavito ample material to construct their map, yielding 2,500 related results, and empowered them to quickly move from the exploration stage of their research to identifying and understanding broader trends. Through the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*, Colavito
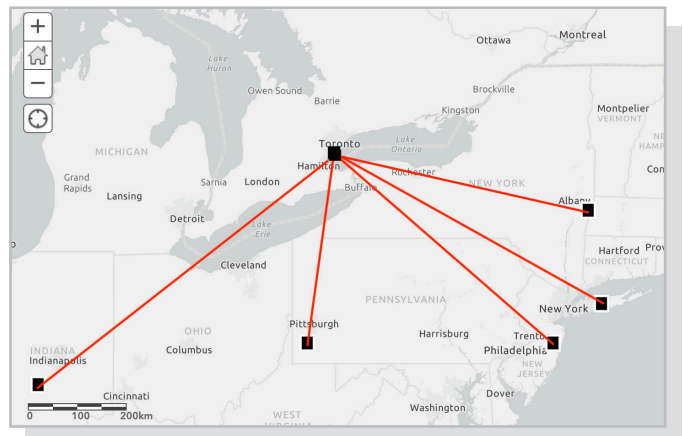


One of the map drafts created by Colavito on ArcGIS StoryMaps.

was able to access the National Transgender Library Collection, Allan Bérubé Papers, Jim Kepner Papers, and files from the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

"Many of the letters available in the collections detail the mutual aid, resource sharing, peer support, and organizing efforts of prolific trans-masculine activists and community members," shares Colavito. "In conversation with one another, they chart the mutual aid and resource sharing networks between trans men from across Canada and the United States from the 1970s to the early 2000s."

Helped by the *Lab*'s powerful capabilities, Colavito was then able to make significant discoveries that helped them to better understand how trans-masculine people used the gay and lesbian press. Colavito could demonstrate the geographic footprint of these letters by creating a digital map on ArcGIS StoryMaps, a digital mapping and storytelling platform.

"The map traces these letters from sender to sender and city to city to illustrate the vastness and complexity of late 20th-century trans-masculine community building, resource sharing, and identity making," Colavito explains. "This digital map serves as a digital humanities and public history approach to historical research and knowledge sharing."

> "I ... applied for the fellowship because of the potential to use *Gale Digital Scholar Lab*. Access to Gale's materials and software was an exciting opportunity to develop proficiency as a digital public scholar, historian, and trans studies researcher."
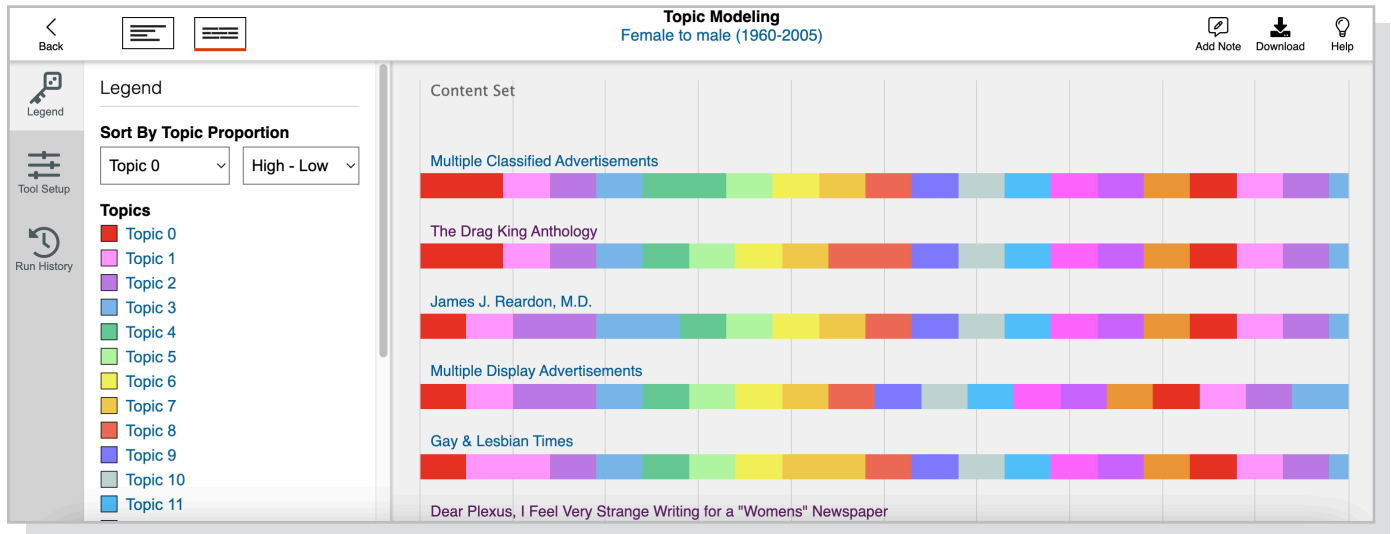
Topic modeling tool used by Colavito to help inform their organization of themes in the StoryMap.

## USING THE TOOLS IN THE LAB

As an instructor, historian, and researcher, Colavito sees tremendous power in the *Lab*'s suite of tools.

"The *Lab* was crucial to quickly sorting through documents with the keywords FTM, F2M, and female-to-male, which brought back 1,500 hits," Colavito says. "These documents had significant overlap in content and scope, and *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* aided me in finding trends amongst them."

This included separating results by time and place, helping Colavito easily group documents. They also cite the top modeling and named entity recognition tools as having significant potential for fellow researchers and students.

"I will continue to use both of these platforms as a researcher and a teacher," Colavito remarks. "They completely change the user experience, and therefore the learning and research experiences.

"I used *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* to sort and filter my search results, which allowed me to organize my data very quickly," Colavito continues. "The topic modeling feature was particularly useful; it presented different sub-themes from the research, which ultimately helped me make choices about how I would organize the themes in my StoryMap."

> "The Gale fellowship advanced my understanding of digital humanities research methods by introducing me to new data sorting and management tools."

| | Named Entity Recognition | | |
| | F2M (1960-2006) | | |

**Back** · **Legend** · **Tool Setup** · **Run History** · **Add Note** · **Download** · **Help**

- ☐ Geo-Political Entity
- ☐ Place
- ☐ Artwork
- ☐ Event
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Product
- ☑ Person
- ☐ Measurement
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Number
- ☐ Percentage
- ☐ Position
- ☐ Cultural Group
- ☐ Language
- ☐ Organization

| Entity ⇕ | Category ⇕ | Documents ⇕ | Count ⌄ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chapter Tri-Ess | Person | 13 | 26 |
| Waltham | Person | 19 | 24 |
| Lynda Frank | Person | 7 | 19 |
| Steve | Person | 8 | 18 |
| Linda | Person | 8 | 17 |
| Eugene | Person | 16 | 16 |
| Frye | Person | 1 | 15 |
| Treff Sachsen | Person | 7 | 14 |
| Marseille | Person | 7 | 14 |
| Kirk | Person | 3 | 14 |
| Vanessa | Person | 1 | 13 |

Named entity recognition tool used by Colavito to identify people across multiple documents.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO THINK ABOUT HISTORICAL SOURCES

Reflecting on their experience as a Gale-CLGBTH Fellow, Colavito says, "I had a really wonderful experience at every point of this process. The training was fantastic, and Gale was amazing at helping me find opportunities to showcase this important work."

Through this experience, Colavito had the opportunity to think about historical sources in a new and innovative way. "I do not think that my research results could have been the same without the help of *Gale Digital Scholar Lab*."

"This fellowship made me a more curious scholar and advanced digital humanities specialist," Colavito shares. "Most importantly, the *Lab* made the process of sorting through such a high volume of sources fun and exciting. This is a fantastic fellowship opportunity, and I would recommend it to any scholar."

"*Gale Digital Scholar Lab* tools brought this to the foreground, allowing me to think about the utility of visibility-focused trans writing in the context of community and resource building. My digital humanities skills have been entirely developed outside of my program of study."
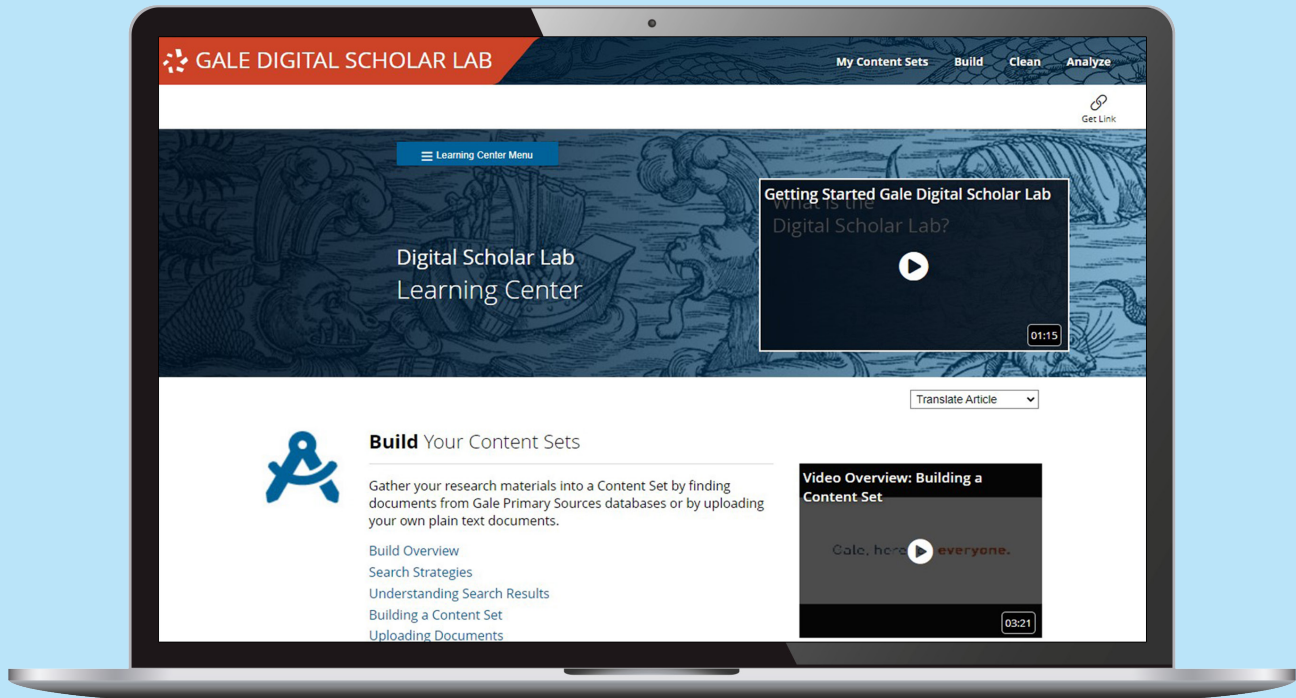
# GALE

# Get an Inside Look at Powerful Research Tools

Want to learn more about the resources Colavito used to enhance their research and develop their digital humanities skill set?

Discover the possibilities of *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* at **gale.com/digital-scholar-lab**

Find more information about *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* at **gale.com/primary-sources/ archives-of-sexuality-and-gender**

# Interested in learning more about the CLGBTH?

Find more details about the Committee on LGBT History (CLGBTH), including the society's initiatives and events, at **clgbthistory.org**