Research paper

One component of your grade for this course will be a research paper about the impact of computers on some specific thing that humans do. The paper will include descriptions of how that thing was done before computers, as well as how it's been done since computers have been around, and analyse the changes (or lack thereof), so your topic shouldn't be something that only exists in a computer context ("how we send email" wouldn't work, for instance)—you will have to explicitly frame your idea in terms of how we did things before computers.

There are a few intermediate deadlines listed in the syllabus, both to keep you from putting it off and to make sure your understanding of what's expected matches with mine. Submissions will be via the Canvas submission system, and are due at 11:59pm on the due date.

Paper topic and source list

The general topic of your paper needs to be some activity that predates digital computers in some form. It should be specific enough that its pre-computer form can be sufficiently described in 2–3 pages and that they can be adequately compared with more modern versions of the activity in a 4–6 page paper. Topics like "communication" or "music" are *far* too vague to be valid for this purpose. As you think about possible topics, I encourage you to discuss them with me, in person or via email, so that I can help you refine your idea and come up with something that will work well within the constraints of the assignment.

The submission for this phase of the assignment should include **the topic itself** as well as a **list of sources** that you plan to use. You're expected to include descriptions of the pre-computer ways things worked, so make sure that some of your sources cover this. Your source list should *not* include Wikipedia or any other encyclopaedia, although you may use such resources to help you find actual sources. Your source list *may* include websites, but only if they are reliable; "some guy's blog" would not, in general, be a good source.

Each reference in your source list should be in a format suitable for use on a References or Works Cited page; whether you are using MLA or APA or some other form, each web source should include a URL. After each source,

you should **write a sentence or two** indicating (broadly) what you will learn from that source and why it is an acceptable, reliable source. While you will not be prohibited from finding additional sources later, there should be enough in this list to cover many aspects of your topic, both pre- and post-computer.

Submit your topic and source list on Canvas by Monday, 6 February. (Note that this is a change from the date listed in the syllabus.)

RUBRIC

    5 Topic
        5 Workable and specific topic identified in full sentence(s)
        3 Topic might work but is vague or underspecified
        0 No topic
    5 Sources
        5 "Enough" sources, formatted, each with good annotation
        3 Poor or insufficient sources, or no annotation
        1 At least two sources but no formatting or annotation
        0 One or zero source listed

Paper 1: Before computers

To make sure you are on track for the final paper, I want you to submit a first paper, of 2–3 pages (about 600–800 words) plus bibliography, that explains your topic and describes how that particular human task was accomplished before digital computers were around to help. Aside from confirming that your topic works, this lets me double-check that you are writing in a suitable style—relatively formal academic prose—and using and citing sources appropriately. Make sure that you are doing that!

This paper should not discuss computers *at all* except perhaps to briefly indicate that it is describing a time before computers were used at this particular task. On the other hand, don't spend so much time on "ancient" history (before 1900 or so) that it will make it difficult to meaningfully compare with the computer era in the next paper. It should be able to stand on its own—don't abruptly end without a conclusion, for instance—but the bulk of this paper should be able to be reused in the next one.

Submit your first paper on Canvas by Friday, 24 February.

This submission is worth 30 points, and is graded on the ABCDF scale as noted in the writing rubric at `http://cs.longwood.edu/~dblaheta/writing.html`.

Paper 2: Impact of computers

The final version of the term paper will be an argument paper with a thesis of the general form "The way that humans _____ was/was not fundamentally changed by the introduction of computers." For most topics, I suspect that the "was" option, claiming that computers *did* fundamentally change how something was done, will be easier to argue, but the "was not" option will probably make a more interesting paper, if you can support the claim. (You don't have to phrase your thesis statement exactly like that, but the general meaning should be the same.)

This paper should be 4–6 pages in length not counting the bibliography (1200–1700 words). As noted above, the first submitted paper should already have covered the groundwork of explaining the task or topic and describing how it was done before digital computers, and this will form the core of the final paper (although you can, of course, edit it based on my feedback). The added material will include descriptions of how computers have affected the task and will make the case for the new way being either a fundamental change or only an incremental improvement.

Submit your final paper on Canvas by Friday, 7 April.

This submission is worth 80 points, and is graded on the ABCDF scale as noted in the writing rubric at `http://cs.longwood.edu/~dblaheta/writing.html`.

Formatting

The usual typographical instructions apply: use a 12 point font in Times or a similar serif typeface; set the page with one-inch margins and the lines to be double-spaced.

For the first assignment (source list), the bibliographical items will each be followed by annotations, but the other two submissions can omit the annotations. In all submissions, web sources should include the URL of the source.

Citations and sources should follow a standard format such as MLA or APA, but you can choose which one you use.

I don't need a separate cover sheet.