

# Impact Report:

## Learn How Gale's Suite of Digital Humanities Tools Is Transforming Historical Studies

This Gale-CLGBTH Fellow Is Exploring How the Queer Community Reclaimed Cowboy Culture in 1970s Nevada



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Gale-CLGBTH Non-Residential Fellowship

### MEET THE SCHOLAR

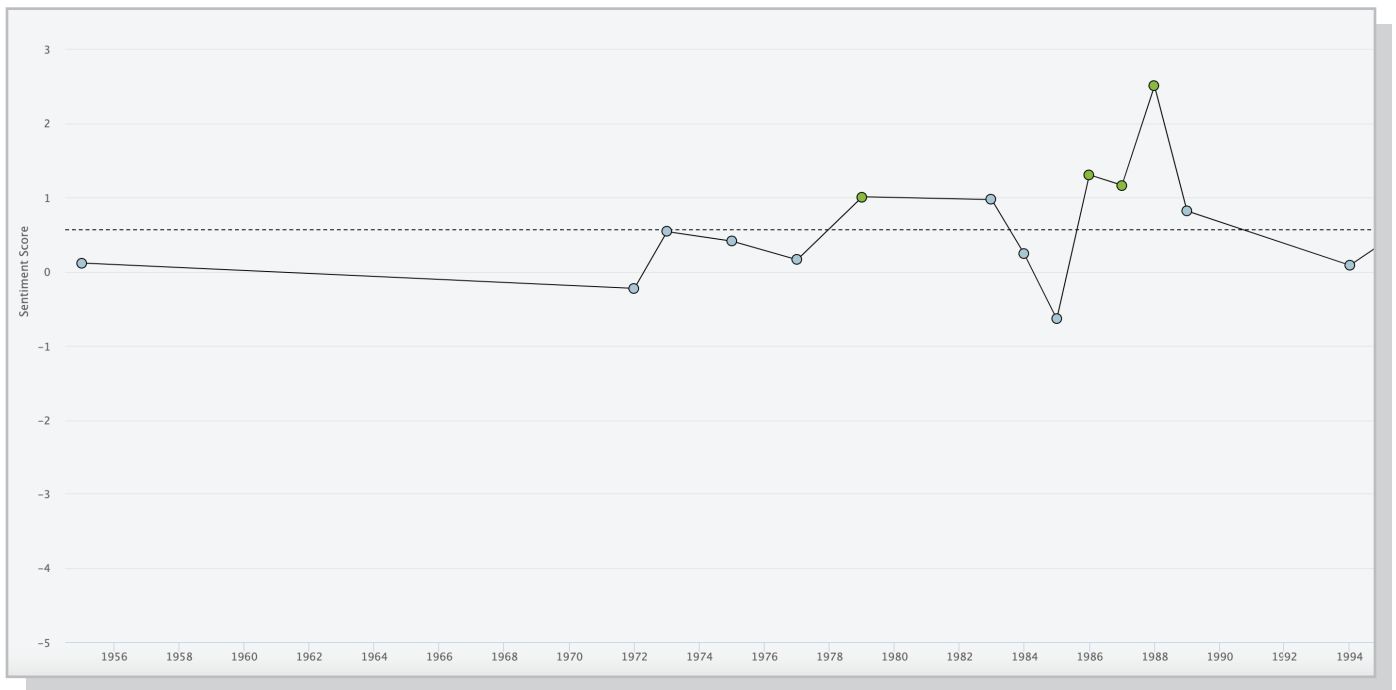
As one of five scholars awarded a fellowship from Gale and the Committee on LGBT History in 2022, Justin Salgado used digital humanities tools to enrich his research on the history of the Comstock Gay Rodeo in Reno, Nevada, which began in 1976. With his research, Salgado examined reactions to the rodeo as captured in newspaper articles.

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. *Gale Digital Scholar 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 the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* and advance their work using digital humanities methods. Read on to see how Salgado used this powerful cloud-based platform to understand how rodeo participants, concerned citizens, and businesses contested notions of "traditional" Western values and togetherness in the rural community.

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Sentiment analysis on documents related to the gay rodeo from 1955.

## EXPANDING THE GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF RESEARCH WITH A NEW APPROACH

Salgado applied to the Gale-CLGBTH Non-Residential Fellowship having already spent several years conducting research. After spending some time with the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*, however, Salgado quickly realized how much more there was to explore.

The project was a prime opportunity for Salgado to bridge the gap between traditional research methods and digital humanities. With his focus on the history of the gay rodeo in Reno, he was able to broaden the geographical scope of his work to understand national patterns.

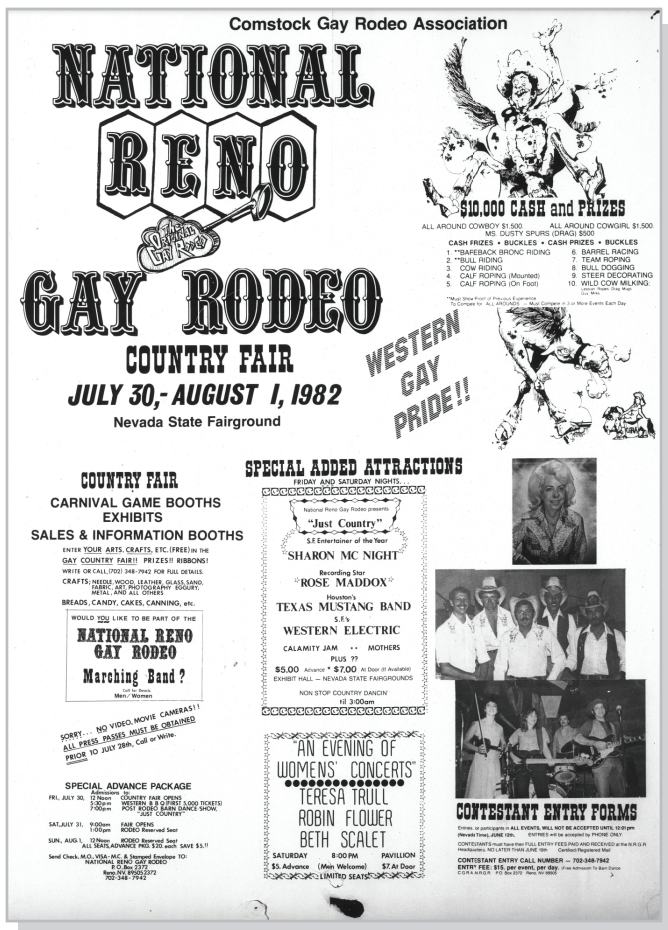
"I was able to combine these sources into specific data sets and run analyses, primarily of sentiment analysis, to get a better picture of themes through a more significant geographical lens," Salgado explains. "Using these resources helped me center national attitudes while using Reno as a case study, which was the primary goal of this project."

"The main benefit of using Gale's resources is that I can digitally access a more extensive collection of sources from many archives using the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*."



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The poster is for the National Reno Gay Rodeo, organized by the Comstock Gay Rodeo Association. It features a central illustration of a cowboy on a bucking horse. The text includes the event name, dates (July 30-August 1, 1982), location (Nevada State Fairground), and a list of rodeo events such as barrel racing, team roping, and steer decorating. It also advertises special attractions like a 'Just Country' concert and a 'Sharon Mc Night' performance. Ticket information and contact details are provided at the bottom.

National Reno Gay Rodeo Poster, 1982, The National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce Records, 1973–2000: Series VI. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.

## GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVE THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL, ANALYTICAL TOOLS

*Gale Digital Scholar Lab* empowered Salgado to expand his research by helping organize and analyze large content sets from sources that included records from the Golden State Gay Rodeo Association, the Canadian National Gay Rodeo, as well as advertisements, correspondence, and newspaper clippings from across the United States.

“I was able to use keywords such as ‘cowboy,’ ‘western,’ and ‘horse’ to find trends and themes in the sources,” shares Salgado. “This analysis was especially beneficial because I could more or less map out the emergence of a clear and coherent reclaiming of cowboy culture within gay spaces and circles throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.”

The *Lab’s* powerful analysis tools offered new perspectives on the rodeo experience that invited new avenues of inquiry, particularly on gay tourism, that Salgado had not previously considered.

“*Gale Digital Scholar Lab* enabled me to manage the number of sources by creating and then examining the content sets ... to understand overarching themes and terms in a straightforward and accessible way.”

“Using sentiment analysis, I created large content sets of popular culture material in primarily LGBTQ+ publications. For example, I found that between 1968 and 1970, there was a dramatic uptick in the usage of the term ‘cowboy.’”



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the Golden State Gay Rodeo Association of San Diego	Place
the Golden State Gay Rodeo Association	Place
Rodeo	Organization
the Reno Gay Rodeo	Place
the National Reno Gay Rodeo	Organization
the National Reno Gay Rodeo	Place
the International Gay Rodeo Association	Organization
the Golden State Rodeo Association	Organization
IGRA Finals Rodeo	Organization
Gay Rodeo	Organization
the Arizona Gay Rodeo Association	Organization
Rodeo Association	Organization
Michigan Invitational Gay Rodeo Association	Organization
Gay Rodeo Association	Organization

Named entity recognition tool used to uncover gay rodeo associations.

## MAPPING THE GROWTH OF GAY RODEO THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

While Salgado homed in on Reno as the basis for his case study, it was also important to understand how the gay rodeo in Reno fit into broader nationwide trends. As part of his research, Salgado undertook a comprehensive mapping of the growth of the gay rodeo throughout the United States.

“For this part of the project, I used named entity recognition to identify various gay rodeo associations,” Salgado says. “What I found is: In 1976, Reno hosted the first rodeo. By 1979, there were two in Nevada and Utah. But by 1985, I found six rodeos in Arizona, California, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah. By 1995, there were a total of 25 gay rodeos operating in the United States. This information not only highlights the growth of the gay rodeo but its prominence and permanence in queer circles.”

Salgado was also able to identify that, at the same time as gay rodeo was expanding out from Reno, the volume of cowboy-related content in LGBTQ+

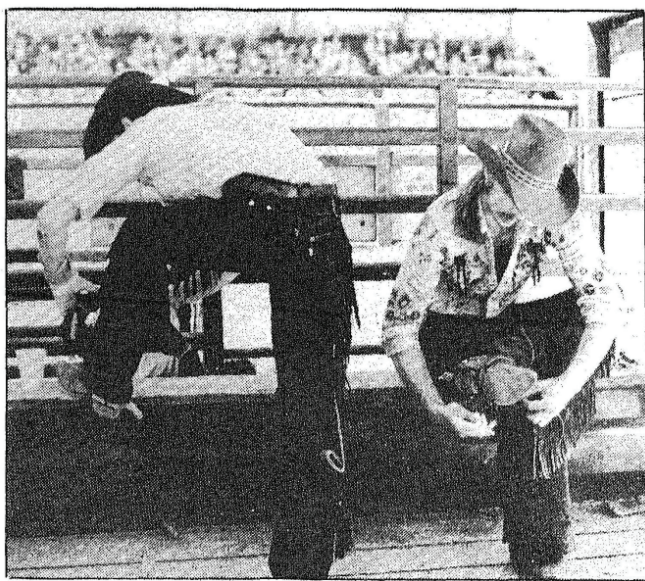
magazines was also expanding. He found that, in 1968, there were 14 publications discussing cowboys. This figure rose sharply to 95 in 1970.

“This information correlates strongly with the prominence of Western-themed films and music that grew dramatically in popularity in the late 1960s and early 1970s,” Salgado observes. “The founding of the gay rodeo in Reno occurred in 1976, and a guiding question here is: To what extent did the founding of the gay rodeo correlate with the emergence of cowboy culture in the mid-1970s?”

“The tools provided by the fellowship have given me the distinct opportunity to frame my research questions in a way that offers quantifiable information, which has helped broaden not only the geographical scope of my article but also created a more inclusive and diverse data set to analyze that is much more representative of the community that I am discussing in my work.”







## RENO'S 'NATIONAL GAY RODEO' DRAWS 15,000 & GOOD PRESS

Associated Press Wires Positive Story to Straight Dailies; Constitution Bites  
Reno, Nev. (Gazette Community News) —

that he regretted that "members of your community" had been unduly hassled during the police "sweep," and that the ordinance used in the police operation needed closer examination.

In response to questions, both candidates expressed their support for the idea of a Civilian Review Board to hear and mediate individual complaints of consistent police harassment and selective enforcement against lesbian and gay citizens. Davis, in addition to promising support of such a Board, pledged her assistance in drafting legislation "that can pass the Council." Foster felt the proposed Civilian Review Board ordinance now being prepared by First Tuesday Association is basically adequate, and said he will support it if elected.

Ted Binkley, one of the owners of the popular Crazy Ray's restaurant and bar in Ansley Square, asked Davis to comment on two proposed ordinances she has sponsored to regulate nude dancing in nightclubs. Davis said she would work with Binkley to see to it that the ordinances would not have any adverse affect on the city's gay entertainment palaces. In response to another questioner, Davis said the regulation of nude dancing in association with the sale of alcohol was aimed at protecting unwary conventioners who are persuaded to spend huge sums buying "champagne" for dancers who come into the audience following their performance.

In closing, Davis said she had "produced" over the last four years, and would continue to "produce." Foster said he is "not happy with what has happened in this city over the last four years," and pledged to work to "make all the citizens of this city first-class citizens."

"The rodeo rode into town over the weekend, in rip-snorting Western fashion.

"Cowboys and cowgirls, dressed in jeans and checkered shirts, cowboy hats and boots, were moseyin' around. There was country music, a barbecue and an old-fashioned barn dance." So started an Associated Press wire service news story that was picked up from the wire and printed in the Monday, August 3, edition of the generally anti-gay *Atlanta Constitution*.

The story continued for thirteen paragraphs without a single slur, degrading remark or "fairy joke" to mar the excellently written report; an achievement observers consider a surprising new high in journalistic professionalism on the part of the daily.

"But this rodeo was different from others," continued the AP story. "The sign on the front gate said, in part: 'If it will bother you to see two men (or) two women together... please do not bother to buy tickets.'

"The National Gay Rodeo was in town."

The story went on to quote Phil Ragsdale, director of the sponsoring Comstock Gay Rodeo Association, as saying that the event began six years ago as an attempt by Reno's homosexual community to "change the stereotype of what a gay is supposed to be."

He said rodeo participants ranged from amateur cowboys to semi-pros—all of them homosexual. He also said all proceeds from the event will be turned over to local charities.

As reported in a previous issue of *Gazette*, not everyone was happy with the rodeo.

Earlier this year, the rodeo's contract with the Nevada State Fairgrounds was threatened when Washoe County Commissioner Belie Williams complained about the event. Lt. Gov. Myron Leavitt said he was "strongly opposed to queers using public property."

The dispute ended when the state attorney general's office said the contract couldn't legally be discontinued.

## CHARTING THE FUTURE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH WITH DIGITAL HUMANITIES

The Gale-CLGBTH Fellowship deepened Salgado's appreciation for the power of digital humanities to elevate his research.

"I could use humanist-based research questions and the tools offered by *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* to obtain some raw data and results," Salgado explains. "By data mining large sets of source material, I could better grasp larger patterns and themes in my study, which helped me think more comprehensively about the project."

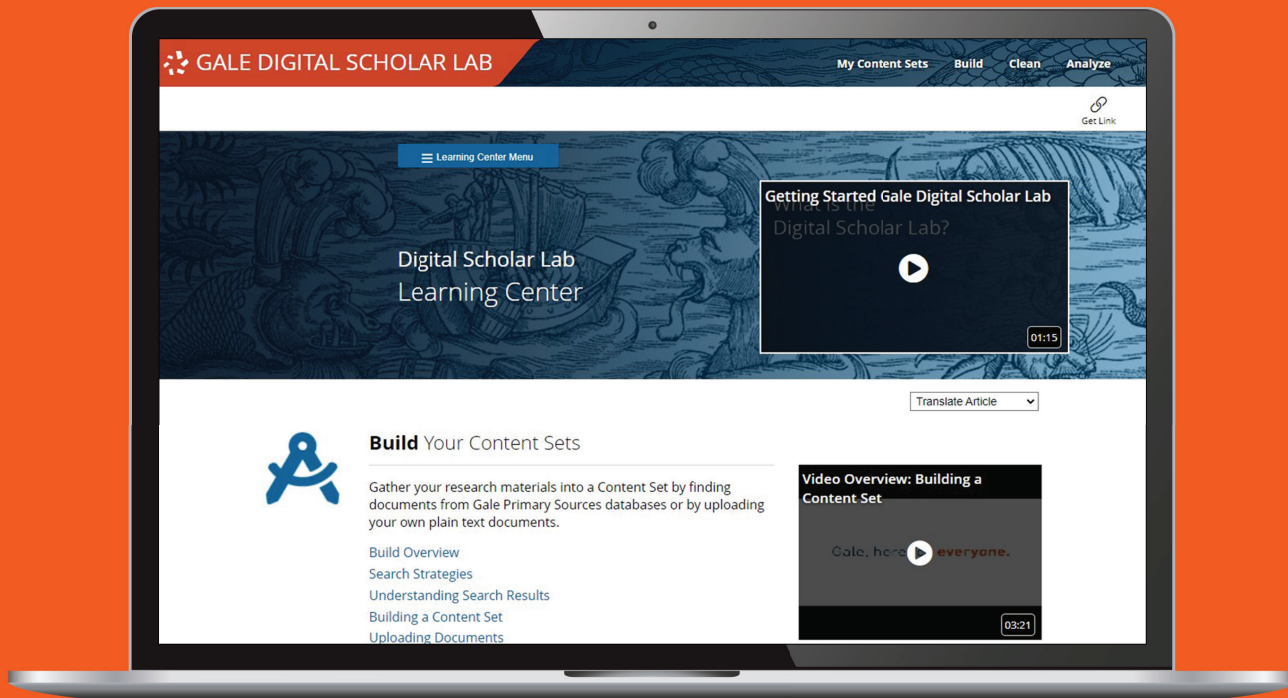
"I intend to recommend *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* to colleagues and students," the Ohio State doctoral student shares. "This fellowship allowed me to learn new methods that are the future of historical research. Now that I am entering the next stage of my doctoral program, primarily the research and writing stage, I intend to use *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* to help me gain a distinct perspective on my project."

Regarding potential application for undergraduates, Salgado adds, "With this program, students especially will be able to gain a new perspective on primary sources, which I strive for in my classes. The analyses they will be able to run can be catered to their specific interests, which is beneficial in helping to promote critical thinking and engaged learning in the history classroom."

"The Gale Fellowship advanced my understanding of digital humanities research methods by helping me better comprehend the theoretical linkages with its practical analyses."

"Reno's 'National Gay Rodeo' Draws 15,000 & Good Press." *Gazette* 2, no. 32 (Aug. 6-12, 1981), *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.





## Deepen Your Research and Widen Your Scope

Curious to explore the tools Salgado used to expand his research and develop his digital humanities skill set?

Discover the possibilities of *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* at [gale.com/digital-scholar-lab](https://gale.com/digital-scholar-lab)

Find more information about *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* at [gale.com/primary-sources/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender](https://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](https://clgbthistory.org)