I did find it useful to stick things in a Google folder that everyone had access to; it meant there were fewer requests for keeping track of papers and abstracts than in previous years and it was easy for folks with large files to upload their work directly to the folder. I had one respondent who acted essentially as a participant, rather than presenting a formal response to the group, and for something our size--I think we ended up with 6 or 7 participants?--that structure worked well.

Welcome letter:

October 13, 2016

Dear SAA seminar participants,

Welcome to "Material Texts and Digital Embodiments"! I'm looking forward to talking with you about the myriad issues of the intersections between the material and digital in the resources we use to study and teach early modern texts.

To refresh your memory, I've copied below the seminar blurb that appeared in the Bulletin:

> This seminar considers the relationship between materiality and digital presence. What can a material approach to digital tools teach us? What can be gained by exploring the physical attributes of a textual object through a digital interface? What happens when we think of digital facsimiles as objects in their own right, rather than as providers of transparent access to texts? How do the material conditions of creating a digital project shape its use?

The longer description I wrote when I was proposing the seminar might be of interest as well, and you can find a copy of it in our Google Docs folder. (More on that in a moment!) My own interest in these questions comes in part from my experience teaching a hands-on early modern book history in a special collections library and in thinking about how digital representations of books creates different opportunities for how we can explore early modern print and manuscript. Most of what gets attention in the US are projects about text—transcribing and tagging and mining large bodies of work. But while I love reading and thinking about texts, what really gets me excited is the manifestation of texts, whether through pen and ink or pixel and bits. I write a lot about the production and use of digital collections on [my blog](#), so for the bored, that will explain more about why I'm interested in these questions! (I've also written about these matters in my piece on digital First Folios for Emma Smith's Cambridge Companion, and have included that in our Google Docs folder.)

Since we are fortunate enough to be a small group, we have a chance to really delve into these questions. To this end, I would like for you to take a position paper approach to this work, producing exploratory and bold pieces that asks questions about digital resources, even if you don't have answers to your queries. These brief position papers could take a range of forms, including

- critiquing current digitization projects and how they convey material features;
- exploring some of the more experimental approaches to digitization and considering what they offer to early modern studies;
- writing material cultural histories of digitization projects;
- proposing new ways of thinking about how objects are digitized or how digital interfaces work;
- imagining new digital tools, even if you don't have the coding skills to create them;
- considering how digital facsimiles are distributed and used;
- or any other questions that nag at you or work that you're curious about at the boundaries of where material objects and digital tools meet.

What follows are the deadlines for our seminar:

- **October 20**: Respond to this initial email confirming that I have the correct address for you or providing an additional or alternative one.
- **November 10**: Send a short email to the seminar introducing yourself and suggesting what you might be interested in exploring with us.
- **January 10**: Email to the group an abstract for your position paper.
- **February 10:** Distribute your finished paper to the seminar. As per SAA guidelines, folks who do not meet this deadline will not be listed in the SAA program as seminar participants. Papers should be no longer than 3000 words; if you're writing about a digital project that is not open access, please include copious screenshots so that folks without a subscription can still understand your work.
- **March 10:** Circulate written responses. More details on this once we've settled on what folks are writing about, but anticipate on providing written feedback to two other seminar members.
- **April 6-8:** We meet in person in Atlanta! I should hear about the exact date we're scheduled for in late winter, and will pass that information on to you as soon as I have it.

Now some logistics: I've created a Google Docs folder so that all the various things associated with our seminar can live in one place. If you want to use that method to circulate your position papers, that would be great. (The simplest method was for me to make the folder and its contents visible to anyone who has the link, but please respect the privacy of your fellow participants and do not share the link beyond our group.) In there now is a list of readings and projects that I find useful in thinking about the questions raised in the seminar. Please feel free to add your suggestions to the document! And if there's a reading on there that you don't have access to, let me know, and I'll be happy to share it with you.

That's it for now! I look forward to our discussions and exploring these issues with you–
Sarah.

Responses letter:

February 28, 2017

Hi, folks!

We now have everyone's paper in our Google drive folder, so our next step is to provide written feedback to each other. Since we're such a small group, basically each paper has taken its own approach to the questions the seminar has asked. Rather than try to create thematic groupings, I've embraced the opportunity for all of us to stretch ourselves and respond to different approaches. I've semi-randomly organized the group so that each person has 2 papers to respond to (and I'll respond to everyone as well).

Please email your feedback by March 20 as below and cc me on your responses.

I know that a couple of you indicated that you had sent us placeholder drafts. I think everything that's been circulated is suitable for discussion and can stay as is, but if you did want to update your work, please do so by the end of this week.

If you've any questions, let me know!

best,
Sarah.