



Pictured: Dr. Patricia Brennan (left), Dr. Jeffrey Reznick (middle) and Dr. Kylie Smith (right)

In 2017, Virginia Tech teamed up with the National Endowment for the Humanities Office of Digital Humanities and the National Library of Medicine to explore the idea of ‘networks’ in the history of medicine.

Inspired by the work of Teresa McPhail and her work on “The Viral Network” and global responses to H1N1, Virginia Tech brought together a group of contributing scholars for a workshop on Viral Networks at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) in Bethesda in January.

The workshop brought together historians of medicine or health who were exploring the ways in which ‘networks’ helped them to understand their research question. Over three days, the scholars workshopped their draft papers and learnt how to use network analysis tools to make sense of complicated historical questions. Dr. Kylie Smith was chosen as one of the contributing scholars, and at the workshop she developed on her paper about the professional networks in the history of psychiatry in Alabama. Called “The Crippling Preoccupation with Race: Psychiatry and Civil Rights in Alabama 1966-1973”, her paper explores the ways in which doctors, nurses and lawyers responded to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the impact that segregation and integration had on African American patients in the asylums of Alabama. The papers being workshopped ranged from the way in which nutrition developed as a concept over time, the experience of the plague in medieval France, the influence of NIH statisticians, and the connection between mobile health units and communities in Cameroon.

During the workshop, participants attended a guest lecture by Dr. McPhail, attended by the Director of the NLM Dr. Patricia Brennan, and worked intensively with the Director of the History of Medicine division, Dr. Jeffrey Reznick. Participants also worked with representatives of the digital humanities office of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Historical Associations. Participants are now finalizing their papers for digital publication through Virginia Tech Libraries in May of 2019. This project is part of an on-going relationship between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Library of Medicine which seeks to actively use the humanities and history to understand the complex issues surrounding health care today.

[Click here](#) to read more about Viral Networks

[Click here](#) to link to the book *The Viral Network: A Pathography of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic* by Teresa McPhail