In the late 1960s, Casablanca used to play every semester during finals week at the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge. Harvard students would recite the dialog along with the characters, hiss and boo the Nazi general, and enthusiastically sing the "Marseillaise" as if they were the patrons of Rick's place in the film. I remember a group of undergraduates in the front row standing up and opening a bottle of champagne as the resistance hero Victor Laszlo, played by Paul Henreid, raises his arms to strike up the anthem.

Decades after its premiere in World War II, Casablanca had found an enthusiastic audience among postwar baby boomers, who responded to this timeless story of wartime heroics and romance in the midst of an era that was deeply suspicious of both. Even today, in an age when divorce has lost its stigma and adultery its shock value, the mutual renunciation of Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman remains a romantic ideal.

Now the Georgia Institute of Technology and the American Film Institute (AFI) are producing a digital critical edition of Casablanca, which will bring together the famous lines, the script changes, production notes, and background materials to create a searchable educational tool for studying the film. Casablanca is the epitome of the Hollywood studio film—a melodramatic, topical story adapted from an unproduced stage play. It was hastily and repeatedly rewritten by several hands, and was still incomplete on the last day of shooting.

Humphrey Bogart had mostly played hoodlums before he landed the lead role and he had never carried a movie as the sympathetic romantic lead. Ingrid Bergman was under contract to another studio when casting began. The original script was read at Warner Brothers on the day after Pearl Harbor and purchased within the month. The film premiered less than a year later in November 1942. It was a rushed production, made more difficult by wartime shortages and security curfews on the West Coast.

And yet the film works: the love story and the political adventure blend together in a single satisfying plot. The audience cares about the characters and believes in their peril, their passion, and their courageous sacrifices. Despite its formulaic elements and hurried production, Casablanca is a masterpiece of American filmmaking, which provokes and rewards close study.
There is a wealth of material available about the film. Warner Brothers has preserved the shooting script, memos, production reports, and outtakes, some of which can be seen on existing DVDs. Aljean Harmetz has written a production history of the film. The Italian semiotologist Umberto Eco has written about its mythic structure; Robert McKee has made it the centerpiece of his scriptwriting course; film critic Roger Ebert has created a second sound track commentary. But none of these critical resources—library archives, essays, books, lectures, or even DVDs with production materials and simultaneous running commentary—permit the detailed examination that is taken for granted in the criticism of literary texts.
With print works, specific passages and annotations can be set side by side with the text. The reader can move easily from focusing on the work of art to focusing on the critical commentary. Film scholars have long made use of videotape and digital technologies to examine films and to present them in the classroom, but the copyright situation of films has made it impossible to distribute these segments as part of a scholarly or educational work. As a result, film criticism is forced to rely on still images and cumbersome verbal descriptions of passages that should be cited as moving images and sound. Because a segment of a film is worth thousands of dollars per minute when licensed to a television show, scholars are prohibited from cutting and pasting such segments. As one film industry attorney once privately joked, "As far as Hollywood is concerned, there is no such thing as fair use."

The American Film Institute has been able to help reconcile the conflicting demands of scholarship and the industry because of its standing with studios, scholars, and public audiences. With a grant from NEH, the Digital Media Program of the Georgia Institute of Technology is collaborating with the AFI to lay the foundation for a series of digital critical editions that will combine copies of American films purchased from the copyright holders (currently on DVDs) with Web-based educational resources delivered within a single interface. A common information design standard and an online authoring tool will allow scholars to create and link Web-based resources such as commentaries, outtakes, and scripts to one another and to specific moments within the DVD copy of the film. Viewers will be able to see the copyrighted materials only if they have already purchased or licensed a copy of the film. Warner Home Video has given permission to make a prototype of the system, using Casablanca as its focus. When the prototype of Casablanca is completed, it will form the basis for a new approach to film study.

Having an edition of film in digital form enables students to reference small segments and analyze their content, to follow the collaborative process of filmmaking, and to see the contributions of the individual artists in detail. For example, viewers can find every place in the film where Max Steiner's score incorporates excerpts and variants of the melodies of "As Time Goes By" and "Marseillaise" into the background music. They can trace the creative contributions of producer Hal Wallis by comparing his extensive memos and editing notes to specific moments in the film. Viewers can compare the dialog as it appears in the finished film with the shooting script, which is full of crossed-out typescript lines and handwritten changes and additions, or they can examine outtakes side by side with the final scene. There is even footage of a scene that never made it into the film, in which Rick visits Laszlo in jail. The outtake does not have a sound track but the text of the scene can be found in the shooting script.

The film is divided into 813 component shots that are linked via a relational database to the resources, so the film scholar or fan can follow themes (such as war or
1997

_Divided Highways_ explores the byways of the auto.

_Isamu Noguchi: Stones and Paper_ traces the sculptor’s life.

First volume of _The Papers of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cody Stanton_ published.

_Liberty!_ recounts the American Revolution.

_TR: The Story of Teddy Roosevelt_ wins Emmy.


_The Richest Man in the World_ portrays Andrew Carnegie.

EDSITEment, a resource for humanities teachers, is launched.

William Blake Archive goes online.

1998

_Porgy and Bess_ tells the making of a breakthrough opera.

_The U.S. Mexican War_ airs.

_Africans in America_ traces a transatlantic legacy.

“Gold Fever!” marks 150th anniversary of the gold rush.

“Barn Again!” begins touring the country.

First volume of _The Oxford History of the British Empire_ published.

De Anza Project goes online.

“Wrapped in Pride” explores kente cloth and African American identity.

sacrifice), techniques (such as close-ups or dissolves), or repeated lines of dialog (“Here’s looking at you, kid,” “I stick my neck out for nobody”) throughout the film.

An addition to the digital archive is the text of the original play _Everybody Comes to Rick’s_ by Murray Burnett and Joan Allison. The play script, which has never been published, was donated by Adrienne Burnett, the widow of the principal author. Murray Burnett was a New Yorker who wrote the play after a terrifying 1938 trip to aid Jewish relatives in occupied Vienna. By putting the script into the database-driven system and linking it to parallel scenes in the film, the digital edition shows which elements of the original play survived into the final screenplay. This produces some surprises.

It is usual to attribute the success of the film to the four screenwriters who adapted it. Julius and Philip Epstein are widely recognized for contributing witty dialog such as this exchange between Rick and the corrupt French police captain Louis Renault about Rick’s mysterious past:

**RENAULT.** And what in Heaven’s name brought you to Casablanca?

**RICK.** My health. I came to Casablanca for the waters.

**RENAULT.** Waters? What waters? We are in the desert.

**RICK.** I was misinformed.

Howard Koch sharpened the political plot, adding touches such as Rick’s background running guns to Ethiopia and fighting against the Fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Although he did not receive a writer’s credit, Casey Robinson deepened the love story, filling out Ilse’s relationship to Victor and building up the piano player Sam’s role as the witness to Rick and Ilse’s passion.

But it is surprising how much of the plot itself and even Rick’s cynical manner of speaking are present in the original play script. The original scene between Rick and Annina, the refugee bride who is under sexual coercion by the French captain, contains this revealing exchange:

**ANNINA.** M’sieur, you are a man. If someone loved you … very much, so that your happiness was the only thing in the world that she wanted and … she did a bad thing to make certain of it, could you forgive her?

**RICK.** No one has ever loved me that much.

**ANNINA.** But, M’sieur, if he never knew … if the girl kept this bad thing locked in her heart … that would be all right, wouldn’t it?

**RICK.** _Harshly._ You want my advice?

**ANNINA.** Oh, yes, M’sieur, please.

**RICK.** Go back to Bulgaria.

This scene is little changed in the final version, and it marks one of the few moments where Rick loses his cool. The tough-romantic line “No one has ever loved me that much” is unchanged in the shooting script, although Bogart gives it a more colloquial phrasing: “Nobody ever loved me that much.” Looking at the play, the script, and the finished film one can trace the ways in which the core of Rick’s character and the
allows them to let Rick get away with murder while maintaining plausibility and a consistent ironic tone. But there was still the question of what would happen next to Louis and Rick, who had placed themselves beyond the framework of the political situation and also of their previous relationship.

The final lines of the movie required several revisions. As the ending was originally shot, the film ends with Louis suggesting that Rick go to the Free French garrison at Brazzaville until things die down:

RENAULT. If you’re interested, I might be induced to arrange your passage.

RICK, smiles. My Letter of Transit? (His eyes following the plane, which is now receding into the distance.)

I could use a trip... But it doesn’t make any difference about our bet, Louis. You still owe me the ten thousand francs.

Penciled under this final typed dialog line is another handwritten line:

RENAULT.— that ten thousand should just about pay our expenses.

This was the final line of the film when shooting ended on August 3, 1942, but it was considered inadequate and the writers continued to work to come up with the additional dialog to superimpose over the visuals of Renault and Rick walking away together.

There is a script page in the Warner Brothers archive with three rather wordy versions of a final exchange between Rick and Renault, and an August 7 memo from producer Hal Wallis that reduces them to two pithy alternatives for Bogart alone to record:

RICK. Luis [sic], I might have known you’d mix your patriotism with a little larceny.

(alternate line)
RICK. Luis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

It is not until August 21 that Wallis sends a memo with the final version of the last line:

RICK. OUR expenses — (pause) — Luis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

The filmmakers’ difficulty in bringing the film to a close and placing Rick on the same side as the French captain parallels the evolving political situation of 1942. The change in Rick’s attitude from isolation to renewed idealism and heroic engagement is often compared to the change in American policy and in public opinion after the attack on Pearl Harbor. A digital edition can trace both the production history and the historical background, linking them to specific scenes and documents.

The aim of a digital critical edition is not to distract the viewer from the experience of watching a film such as Casablanca, but to deepen the engagement with it, to make clear the artistic, cultural, and social context of the film. Viewers can watch the film with no critical apparatus, and then on reviewing can turn on alerts for related outtake, commentary, and other materials. They can choose to enter the edition through the commentaries or the documents, and to go from there to the associated shots in the film. Scholars can make use of a separate interface to add commentaries to the edition, and to access the complete database, which identifies each shot by dialog, characters, setting, fictional time, framing, camera movement, and editing technique.

The great capacity of the digital medium and its increasing accessibility cry out for standardized information formats. Because film is a collaborative medium and subject to strict copyright restrictions, American cinema has so far resisted attempts to capture in a single location the kind of analysis that this art form deserves. The digital medium has the potential to contain and organize multimedia information and to present it in a manageable form.

Casablanca, as the quintessential classic Hollywood movie whose impact only seems to grow with the passing decades, is the ideal test case for reinventing the critical edition. It will no doubt continue to challenge us as it continues to captivate us, as time goes by.

Janet H. Murray is a professor and director of graduate studies of the School of Literature, Communication and Culture at Georgia Institute of Technology. She is the author of Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace.

The Georgia Institute of Technology received $200,000 from NEH to design and produce a digital critical edition of Casablanca in collaboration with the American Film Institute. The AFI project team is headed by Nick DeMartino, senior vice president for Media and Technology.
THE ON-SCREEN LOVE STORY WAS DEVELOPED BY WRITER CASEY ROBINSON FROM A PLAY THAT WAS NEVER PRODUCED ONSTAGE.

2002
The Book of Kings: Art, War, and the Morgan Medieval Picture Book begins touring the country.

Ralph Ellison portrays a creative life.

Benjamin Franklin follows the inventor and statesman.

"Magnificenza! The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence" opens.

Save America's Treasures begins restoring historical places, documents, and artifacts.

2003
"Coming of Age in Ancient Greece" reflects on childhood.

"Elizabeth: Ruler and Legend" traces a forty-five-year reign.

"Heroes of the Sky" follows the Wright Brothers.

"The Art of Rice: Spirit and Sustenance in Asia" opens.

2004
"Lewis and Clark" follows an intrepid party west.

"Asian Games" traces mind-bending competition.

Do You Speak American? explores our speech.

Landmarks of American History workshops begin for teachers.

Broadway: The American Musical recreates an era.

2005
Mary Pickford portrays a star turned producer.

The Fight pits Joe Louis against Max Schmeling.

Compiled by Laura Harbold and Sarah Kliff.