Research

Metadata-Driven Gamification:

Exploring a New System for Crowdsourcing Antebellum History

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The North American Slave Trade is in full swing.

Technological advancements have made newspapers common throughout the Antebellum South.

These newspapers feature “runaway ads” where enslavers provide a detailed description of the enslaved with the hopes of capture.

Some ads offered a handsome reward. Others sought to set an example for those contemplating escape.

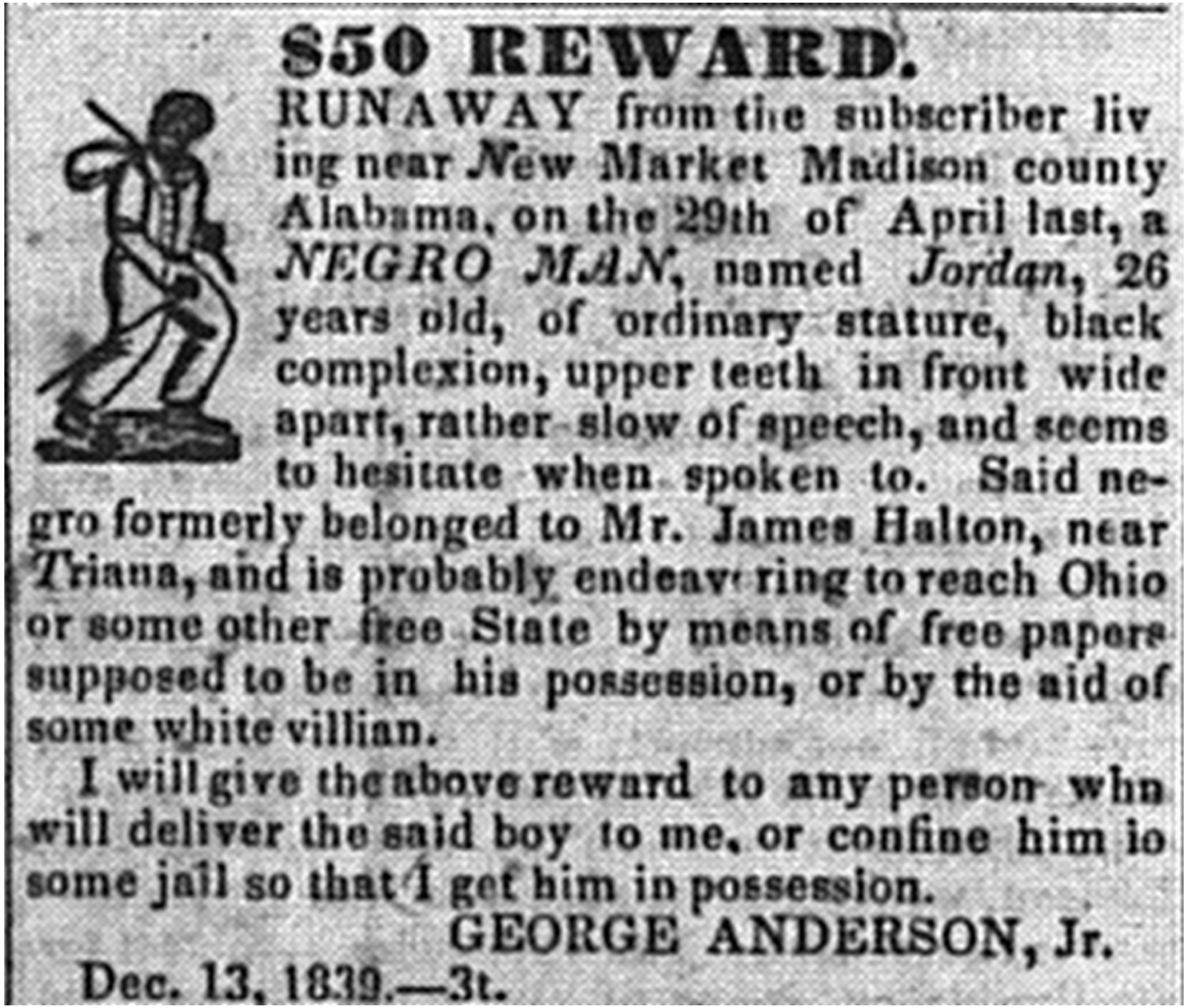
Today, we seek to compile, transcribe, and explore these advertisements.

Above all we want to trace…

Freedom on the Move

The Ads

- Description of the Runaway
  - The basics (height, age)
  - Speech patterns
  - Countenance
- Reward
- Imagined Destination
- Possessions
- External Aid



$50 REWARD.

RUNAWAY from the subscriber liv ing near New Market Madison county Alabama, on the 29th of April last, a *NEGRO MAN*, named *Jordan*, 26 years old, of ordinary stature, black complexion, upper teeth in front wide apart, rather slow of speech, and seems to hesitate when spoken to. Said negro formerly belonged to Mr. James Halton, near Triana, and is probably endeav ring to reach Ohio or some other free State by means of free papers supposed to be in his possession, or by the aid of some white villian.

I will give the above reward to any person who will deliver the said boy to me, or confine him io some jail so that I get him in possession.

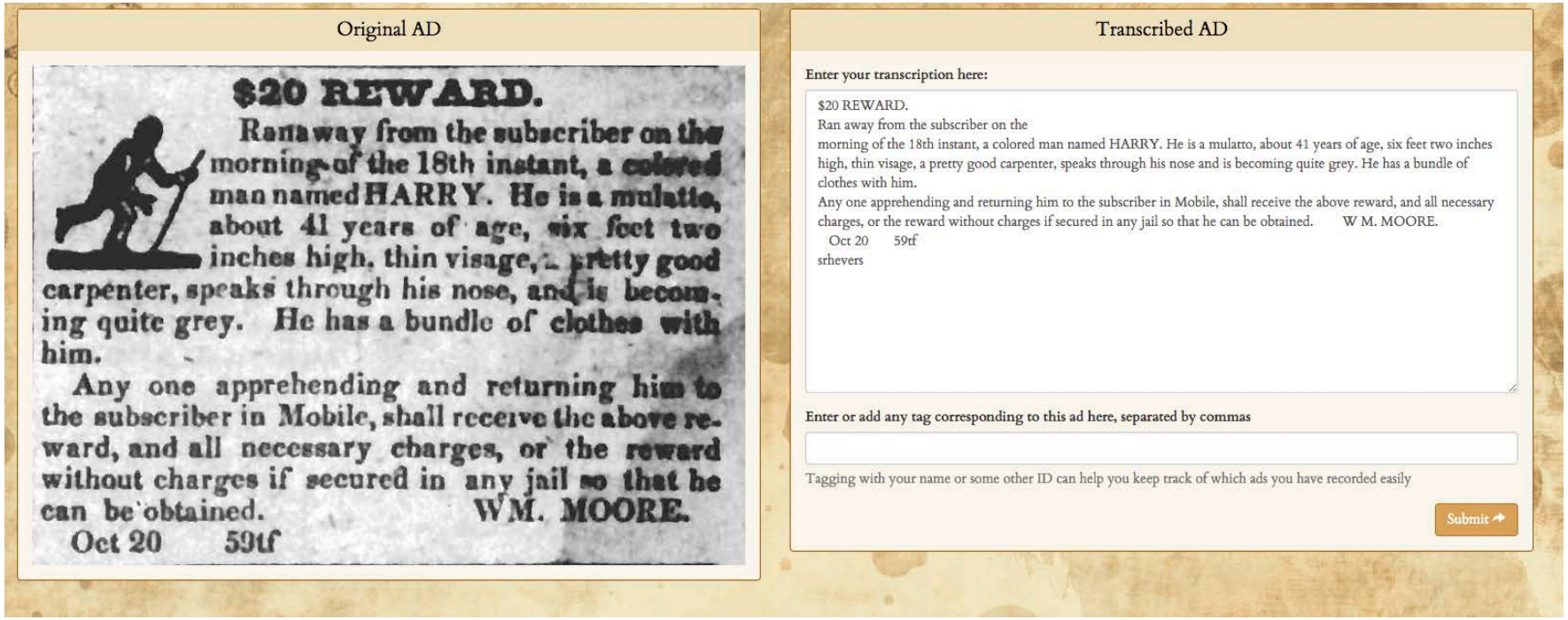
GEORGE ANDERSON, Jr.

Dec. 13, 1839.—3t.

Nashville Union, December 13th, 1839

Crowdsourcing

- Transcription
- Digesting
  - Runaway vs Individual
- Sharing



Our Beta Testers

- We have had Freedom on the Move tested at educational institutions, museums and government organizations.

- Bethel College
- Colorado College
- Cornell University
- Davidson
- Georgetown University
- Loomis Chaffee
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- NYU
- Savannah College of Art and Design
- The Northwest School
- University of Alabama
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- University of New Orleans
- University of South Carolina
- Whitney Plantation

What our current users say

- We have received some great feedback from a recent beta run at Colorado College that I would like to share.
  - Huge thanks goes out to Amy Kohout for sharing Freedom on the Move with her students and having them provide feedback.
  - Amy shared the project with her Civil War & Reconstruction course.

One of Amy's Students shared..

"It was very interesting to see first-hand the types of advertisements that were created for finding and re-capturing runaway slaves. What really stuck out to me was how **vague** a lot of these advertisements were, it helps **promote the ideology** that anyone who looks like a slave can be seen as one."

They go on to say…

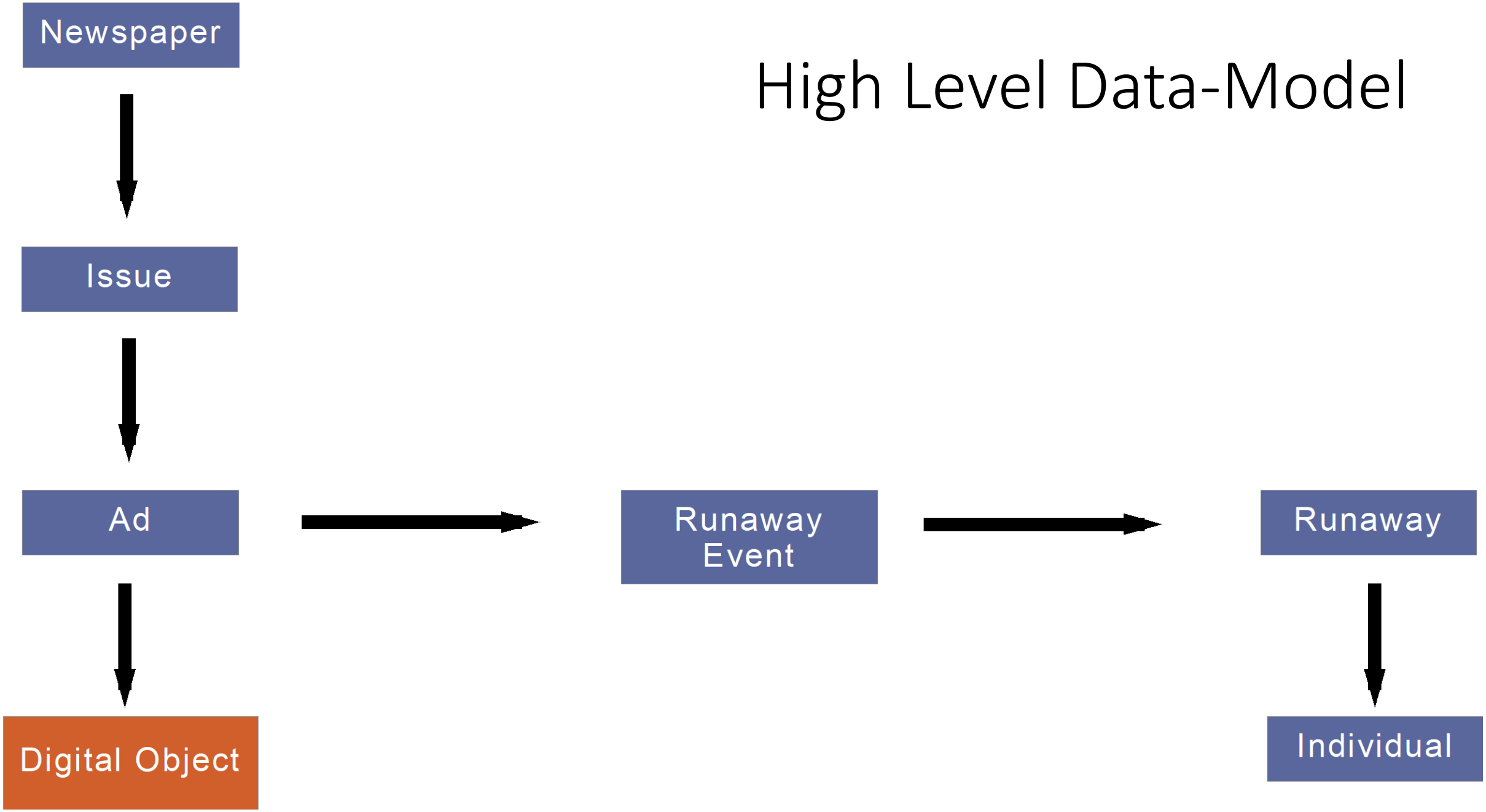
"These advertisements help add a face to the overall problem of slavery, they **introduce emotion**."

Looking to the Future

- We want to continue to provide an engaging experience
  - Tool for Researchers and Laypeople alike.

- Reach out to the community for suggestions
  - I’d like to now briefly share the direction we are heading.
  - I’m no metadata expert. If you have experience with tying provenance & user engagement let’s chat!

High Level Data-Model

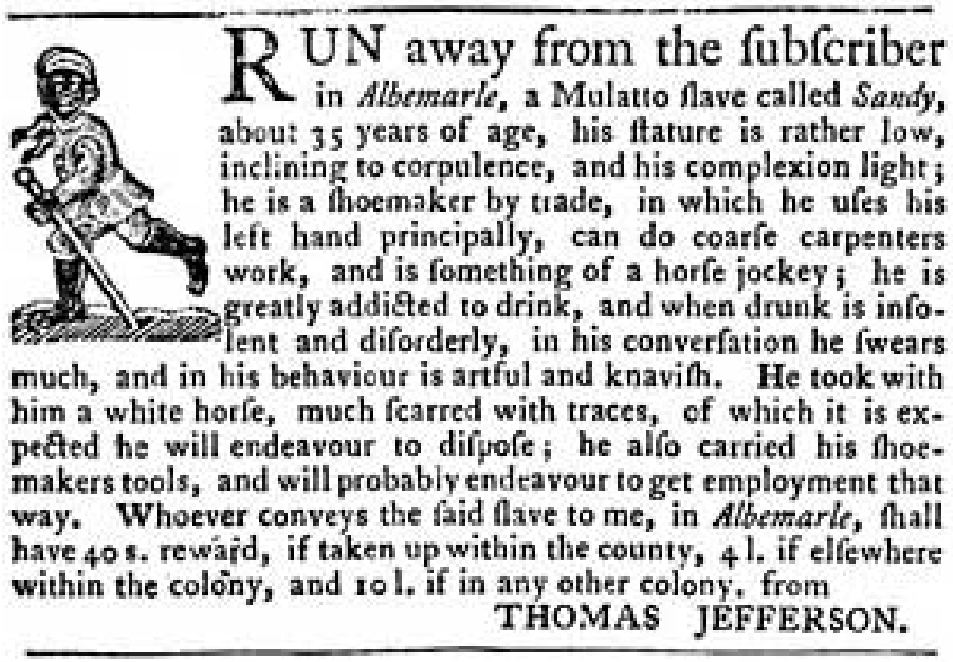


The Digital Object

- Filename & File type
- Optical character recognition (if present)
- SHA Checksum
- Provenance
  - Load Date
  - Organization
  - Contributions (Crowdsourcing)

Leveraging Provenance

- Having an engaging experience benefits all facets of the project
- Reward / Recognize users
  - Badges / Awards in FoTM Profile
  - Bring laypeople into the world of Research
    - Students within a class project
    - ”Citizen Historians”
      - Drew inspiration from Lab of Ornithology
    - Stand alongside experts while exploring
- Maintain a change log
  - Retrace as history unfolds



RUN away from the ſubſcriber in *Albemarle*, a Mulatto ſlave called *Sandy*, about 35 years of age, his ſtature is rather low, inclining to corpulence, and his complexion light; he is a ſhoemaker by trade, in which he uſes his left hand principally, can do coarſe carpenters work, and is ſomething of a horſe jockey; he is greatly addicted to drink, and when drunk is inſolent and diſorderly, in his converſation he ſwears much, and in his behaviour is artful and knaviſh. He took with him a white horſe, much ſcarred with traces, of which it is expected he will endeavour to diſpoſe; he alſo carried his ſhoemakers tools, and will probably endeavour to get employment that way. Whoever conveys the ſaid ſlave to me, in *Albemarle*, ſhall have 40 s. reward, if taken up within the county, 4 l. if elſewhere within the colony, and 10 l. if in any other colony. from

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

The Historians

Edward E. Baptist
Cornell University

Molly Mitchell
University of New Orleans

Joshua Rothman
University of Alabama

Rest of the team

- Bill Block
  - Director, CISER
- Janet Heslop
  - IT Director, CISER
- Jason Kovari
  - Metadata Services, Cornell University Library
- Brandon T. Kowalski
  - Software Engineer, CISER
- Michelle Paolillo
  - Digital Scholarship and Preservation Services, Cornell University Library

Questions / Comments

The floor is open!

Thank You!

- Feel free to reach out.
  - Project page: FreedomOnTheMove.org
    - Info sheet for the project
    - Has contact information for historians and other collaborators.
  - Again my email is kowalski@cornell.edu
    - Please reach out if you have comments or suggestions. Would love to chat.