Modern Italy (2026), **31**, 136–146
doi:10.1017/mit.2025.10111

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTEXTS AND DEBATES

Digital history, revisionism and antifascism: charting a course

Nicola Cacciatore and Igor Pizzirusso

Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri, Milan, Italy
Corresponding author: Nicola Cacciatore; Email: nicola.cacciatore@gmail.com

(Received 29 September 2025; revised 29 September 2025; accepted 6 October 2025; first published online 18 November 2025)

Abstract

Digital history represents an exciting avenue for scholars to both publish their findings and apply new research methodologies that include the public as a producer of historical knowledge. However, in the context of studies on the Second World War in Italy, and especially the antifascist Resistance, these types of productions remain rare. This situation is in stark contrast to the vast production of revisionist, pro-fascist or outright fascist materials produced by a plethora of non-scholar actors across the web. This contribution aims to present three different digital history projects tied by the theme of antifascism: the *Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste, IF – Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista* and *Memorie in Cammino*. Each of them covers a different timeframe or a different facet of the issue, but all are representatives of a new way forward in Italy concerning historical research and dissemination. This first part of the article focuses on the aforementioned issues and the first project, the *Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste*, while a second (to be published in the next issue of *Modern Italy*) will cover the remaining two.

Keywords: Resistance; antifascism; internet; Second World War; digital history; military history

Introduction

Digital history presents an enthralling frontier for the pursuit of historical research and production. The integration of digital tools has revolutionised research and writing habits, modes of publication, and interaction with the public. However, this does not mean that all historians have become digital historians. Using digital tools (taking notes on a laptop) or working with digitalised documents is not the same as making digital history (Burdick et al. 2012, 101), which instead refers to the use of digital tools to produce research outcomes that are only possible within the digital space. However, while this distinction is accurate, historians must recognise the transformative potential of digital tools in reshaping research approaches and, therefore, they need to confront what it means to be a digital historian in the digital age.

First, digitalisation has changed how research trips are organised and materials shared, sometimes even from the comfort of the researcher's home. While this has led to easier access to sources, scholars are working increasingly in isolation, and the gulf between wealthy institutions (those that can afford to pay the cost of digitalising documents) and poorer ones has widened, conditioning, in turn, the researchers' access to primary sources.

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Association for the Study of Modern Italy. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Moreover, many digital document repositories are locked behind prohibitively expensive paywalls, which work antithetically to the proposed 'democratic' ethos of digitalisation. Rather than a 'big sea' of knowledge open to historians, we risk creating a panorama of 'scattered silos' (Milligan 2022, 41). Furthermore, the reliance on tools such as Optical Character Recognition (OCR) during the analysis of digitalised documents has yielded mixed results. On the one hand, it has allowed scholars to conduct quantitative research like never before. Conversely, it has caused some issues tied to its level of accuracy in recognising the text – primarily the fact that, during the research process, OCR produces some false positives and, more importantly, some *false negatives*, meaning that it does not display some results and, as a consequence, scholars might come to the wrong conclusions (Jarlbrink 2020, 117–123).

Second, digital projects require an interdisciplinary approach and (often) a team of scholars working on them. This is especially true for projects aiming at quantitative analysis due to the sheer amount of data available and the different skillsets required. Digital technologies have made this possibility feasible because of the speed at which communication moves today (Burdick et al. 2012, 37). At the same time, historians are now required to expand their skills and work side by side with other professionals, such as designers, programmers and web developers (Klein Thompson 2018).

Finally, digital tools have reshaped our approach to publication and our interaction with the public. While academia is still tied to the monograph as *the* publication model, historians can now interact directly with their public. Social media, blogging and dedicated websites have caused a massive amount of knowledge to be disseminated through these 'unconventional' channels, reaching far more people than ever before. The change in support has caused changes in the way content is produced and edited, and historians are, like never before, public figures. However, we must not forget that platforms are not neutral and that they set the terms of what can be published and how (Burdick et al. 2012, 89–91). Even code should not be considered a neutral tool (Bianco 2012, 100).

This transformation of the way the public accesses history has led to an uptick in disinformation and revisionist theories. As historical knowledge no longer has a defined 'look', such as books and articles in specific journals (Burdick et al. 2012, 30), bad-faith actors are empowered to spread misinformation. This is precisely what we have witnessed in Italy as internet usage has become ubiquitous. The proliferation of social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and now TikTok) has compounded these issues. These platforms provide a space where anyone can 'publish' without entry barriers. This issue in Italy is compounded by a general 'shyness' of historians to engage directly with the public. Unlike the Anglo-American tradition, where historians are also often active popularisers of historical knowledge, in Italy this is often the role of so-called '*divulgatori*' (a word that lacks a direct translation in English), who are almost invariably journalists or other media-trained individuals. This has led to some much discussed results in the era of printed books (such as the controversial publications by Indro Montanelli and Gianpaolo Pansa), and prospects for the digital era appear concerning. The largest Italian YouTube channel dedicated entirely to history, *Nova Lectio* (run by a person who, as they say in their bio, is 'not a historian, let alone a journalist'), at the time of writing, boasts 1,380,000 subscribers and has amassed more than 300 million total views – numbers that historians struggle to even imagine for their publications. *Nova Lectio* is, fortunately, not aiming to disinform its audience (in the sense that this does not appear to be the aim of the channel); however, its lack of proper historical training has led to some faux pas.

Naturally, these issues become much more pressing with regard to those who actively seek to spread misinformation. This is especially true regarding neofascist groups and their recriminations directed against the Allies, against the Resistance, and against the republican institutions born out of it. Similar trends of 'revisionism' have been observed in recent

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

years, such as the *neo-borbonici* movement, which gathered its strength via Facebook groups. The collective Nicoletta Bourbaki (born in 2012 on Giap, the blog of the well-known Wu Ming collective) has toiled for a long time in this environment, discovering and debunking revisionist theories spread online, and has conducted a remarkable number of investigations into the neofascist infiltration of the Italian version of Wikipedia. Unfortunately, for a long time, there was no scholarly response to this deluge of disinformation. Academics were happy to remain inside universities and to debate in person or, at most, in the columns of newspapers. Action against disingenuous actors on the web was confined to personal initiatives or small organised groups. Recently, the publisher Laterza launched a 'history fact-checking' series (Falanga, Greppi and Gobetti 2023). However, even leaving aside the doubts one can have about the concept of 'fact-checking', the initiative is tied to the 'analogic' way of combating historical revisionism, as a series of printed books rather than a digital product.

Because of these concerns, we selected specific topics and contributions for this issue of 'Contexts and Debates' and for the next one. All three projects presented here are public digital history projects linked by the *fil rouge* of online antifascism. Specifically, they each illuminate a distinct aspect of Italian history during the period 1922–45. The *Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste* (Atlas of Nazi and Fascist Massacres), presented in this issue of *Modern Italy*, is an invaluable repository of all the massacres committed by Nazi–Fascist forces during the war. It provides a formidable tool for quantitative analysis of the phenomenon, but also gives the reader a sense of the level of violence unleashed by the Nazi–Fascists on the civilian population and the partisans alike. It is a chilling reminder that the massacres were not exceptional occurrences caused by extenuating circumstances but rather part of a deliberate tactic to control the territory and its people, and that Mussolini and his followers had little regard for the safety of the Italian population. The second, *IF - Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista* (Intellectuals Displaced from Fascist Italy), presented in the next issue, explores the stories of the intellectuals (the term is used here loosely to refer to anyone who was not involved in manual labour, not only scholars) who decided to flee from Fascist Italy to avoid persecution. This phenomenon also had a *longue durée* implication, as the brain drain caused by it affected Italian society and the scientific community for decades, even after the fall of the regime. The portal currently focuses only on Tuscany for the simple reason that the number of such stories is enormous, an indictment against those who perpetuate the idea that Mussolini's regime was benevolent and left people to mind their own business in exchange for a formal act of submission. Finally, the next issue will also present *Memorie in Cammino* (Memories on the Move), created by the Cervi Foundation. It is a database of events, people, places and even words connected to the Resistance, testifying to the vitality and size of the antifascist opposition, where different paths intersected and people came together in the name of freedom. It is a slap in the face to the notion, still peddled around the web, that antifascists were acting out their selfish desires, trying to destroy Italy with the help of foreign powers.

The second common trait of these projects is their nature as public history products. Public history is not simply the act of publication or of making the product accessible to the general public. It is instead the practice of involving the public in the research process, allowing it to intervene and (naturally, after vetting by historians) shape its outcomes. This collaborative dimension is evident across all three projects, in which content can be amended, reshaped and inserted based on the public's input, creating an iterative feedback loop. This is made possible by the digital medium, which allows for quick edits to the final output, something that would be impossible working with more traditional media. Therefore, digital and public history exist in a mutually reinforcing circle. While not all digital history products are also public history products, those that are (such as the

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

three presented here) effectively leverage the digital medium's advantages over traditional alternatives.

Moreover, even if the user is simply interfacing with the projects without taking part in their public elements, they show another advantage of digital publication by exploiting to the maximum the multilayered accessibility afforded by the digital medium. All the projects, in other words, can be considered 'database documentaries' characterised by a series of guided paths curated by the authors. However, each path has different points of entry as it is user-activated, and, therefore, the user can craft multiple 'storylines' by navigating the portals (Burdick et al. 2012, 54).

Projects like these contribute to a paradigm shift in how historical knowledge looks as it becomes increasingly visual (Burdick et al. 2012, 42) and in how it is perceived and transmitted. As we move towards a porous world of knowledge, where the boundaries between experts and the public are increasingly obfuscated, projects like this show how historians can produce scientifically grounded publications that interact and shape this new panorama rather than being passively conditioned by it. In this sense, as James Boyle wrote, 'failure', when talking about digital history projects, means failing to share them (Boyle 2008, 202–204) rather than failing to gate-keep them by strictly enforcing copyright laws or outdated notions about the 'elitarian' nature of knowledge, as projects become a co-operative effort with the public and push the front line against fake reconstructions of the past.

Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste

The *Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste* (Atlas of Nazi and Fascist Massacres) has been online since 6 April 2016, the day of its presentation at the Sala Aldo Moro of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, in Piazzale della Farnesina (Rome).

Funded by the Fondo Italo-Tedesco per il Futuro, under the direction of Paolo Pezzino, it is the result of a broad and detailed research project that has involved the network of Resistance institutions, the ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans), and around 130 researchers from all over the country.

From the outset, it attracted significant attention and a large number of 'visits'. The Atlas quickly became a 'public' tool, not only due to its wide diffusion through the web but also thanks to the desire to contribute to the project that emerged within families and local communities, eager to bring to light memories that had long been dormant or confined to the small circles of the areas where the tragic events had taken place.

Birth of the project

Although it is relatively recent, the Atlas is the product of a long-term research project. Its origins date back almost 20 years, when the topic of massacres committed by the Germans in Italy during the Second World War came back into the spotlight due to two significant events that both took place in 1994: the discovery of the so-called 'cupboard of shame' and the arrest in Argentina of Erich Priebke, one of the perpetrators of one of the most notorious Nazi massacres, that of the Fosse Ardeatine. The subsequent trial, which began in Italy in 1995 and received widespread media coverage, made the issue of German war crimes during the occupation of Italy from 1943 to 1945 even more relevant.

Riding this wave, various historiographical research projects began, particularly in those areas most affected by Nazi violence or where such violence manifested in particularly brutal episodes, in terms of both methods and the number of people killed. It is no coincidence that the first investigations emerged in the areas of the Gothic Line: the two regions of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany are where about 30 per cent of both victims and massacres

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

were concentrated, as well as where the two events with the highest number of victims overall took place (770 in Monte Sole and 391 in Sant'Anna di Stazzema).

However, it was not only in these areas that historians and researchers began their work. Campania, which suffered the first wave of violence between the armistice and the German retreat to the Gustav Line, also became an early focus of analysis, as did part of Piedmont, where one of the very first massacres took place (in Boves, in the province of Cuneo, where 21 people were killed on 19 September 1943).

When national research for the Atlas began in 2014, these preliminary investigations (Pezzino 2007; Fulvetti and Pezzino 2016) provided the foundation for creating the survey and census forms for the events, as well as providing the initial body of data to populate the database.

History in the data

This preliminary phase, in which the work produced by researchers, especially those from Tuscany (notably Luca Baldissara, Michele Battini and Paolo Pezzino, who is also the scientific director of the Atlas), was examined, was absolutely crucial in understanding the form and meaning to give to the national research. This should be an essential and irreplaceable step in any digital history project that aims to provide a data analysis of a particular phenomenon, event or historical period; yet, it is a step that is too often overlooked or underestimated. The effectiveness of the Atlas (as will be seen later) is largely due to this kind of work, which, building on existing local research, precisely identified which data to search for in each individual episode, and how best to categorise, subdivide and label it.

First and foremost, the aim was to distinguish the massacres based on their origin, whether Nazi, Fascist or Nazi–Fascist. The latter definition is particularly tricky, yet also interesting. By using 'Nazi–Fascist', the intention was not to describe an action initiated by the Germans and carried out within their chain of command with the involvement of an Italian unit; rather, the term referred to cases in which Italians were actively involved, not only in committing the massacre but also in planning and deciding on it. For this reason, for example, the massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine is labelled as Nazi–Fascist: the role of the police commissioner, Caruso, in drafting the list of people to be executed was far from secondary or subordinate.

Other distinguishing criteria include:

- **perpetrators**, both individuals and military units (in the case of sub-units, efforts were made to trace their superior command chain);
- **victims**, categorised by gender, age and type (whether civilians, deserters, draft avoiders, antifascists, etc.);
- **methods of execution**, often not random (the public message left by a hanging is undeniably different from that of a gunshot fired in a remote mountain location following a requisition);
- **associated violence**, which is essential for assessing, for example, how often torture or mistreatment was carried out, goods were requisitioned or homes destroyed; and
- **types of massacre**, which represent the most interpretive aspect of the project, as they attempt to study and highlight the underlying goals that each massacre (and by extension, the entire phenomenon) manifested.

The idea, later confirmed by the research, was that collecting all this information would enable a clear understanding of the objectives, practices and immediate and long-term goals of German and Italian violence during the period 1943–5. Naturally, the interpretative

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

process involves making specific choices, which were wisely made from the early stages of the project's design. In this regard, two of the most innovative and, therefore, interesting decisions were the following:

1. **Including unarmed partisans among the victims:** Obviously, those who died in combat were not considered, but only those who were killed after capture or disarmament. These killings, often symbolic in nature, were part of the Nazi–Fascist policy of violence.
2. **Including individual killings:** Often, a steady stream of 'minor incidents' accompanies a specific chronological or geographical phase of violence or illustrates the practices of certain military units. Every single homicide represents a piece of a larger puzzle, and it is only by reconstructing and grouping these isolated cases that a comprehensive overall picture is produced.

As previously mentioned, the most complex interpretive effort involved identifying and defining the types of massacre, which are closely linked to the objectives of the violence.

For instance, reprisals and roundups (*rastrellamenti*) are certainly methods of carrying out a massacre, but they reveal very specific purposes. Although both are part of a policy of repression and the 'management' of an occupied territory (which is considered hostile), the former involves an action of intimidation, which undoubtedly aims to send a message to the population in an almost terrorist manner, while the latter stems mainly from military and strategic needs.

Clarifying this aspect also helped dispel persistent misunderstandings in public discourse. For example, what was commonly identified as a reprisal often had different characteristics and objectives, such as the immediate execution of individuals found with weapons or propaganda material. These incidents are more connected to the spontaneous violence of occupation dynamics and lack the methodical nature (and the characteristics described earlier) of reprisals, as well as their typical 'rituals' (such as the rule of executing ten partisans or antifascists for every German soldier killed).

Consulting the Atlas

The final product is a tool that can be accessed in four distinct ways:

1. **The map**, which provides georeferencing for each episode and allows navigation across the territory. This is the best method for using the Atlas when 'on site', almost like an app. From a technical perspective, it is interesting to note that the first tool chosen for its creation was Google Maps, but this was later abandoned due to cost and privacy issues and replaced by OpenStreetMap.
2. **Search by location or place name**, which is extremely precise and thus aimed at those who already know which place or massacre they are looking for.
3. **Simple search by location and date**, which is useful for outlining territorial patterns in either the short or long term.
4. **Advanced search**, which combines various search filters (the categorisations mentioned earlier) and allows for in-depth analysis, and is especially suited to historians and researchers.

There are also a fifth and a sixth method, related respectively to iconographic materials (still being implemented) and the specific units responsible for the massacres, for which it is possible to reconstruct a blood trail on the map.

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Some numbers: the results of the research

By using the advanced search in particular, it is possible to extract several significant data points, which confirm both the quality of the tool and the value of the aforementioned preliminary work.

The most evident achievement of the Atlas is that it has brought together, into a single comprehensive national framework, the various regional scenarios, ranging from those that have already been widely studied (such as Campania, Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany) to those that have received far less attention. This has revealed numerous continuities, common traits and overlaps in the Nazi and Fascist occupation, but, more importantly, it has also brought to light their profound differences. It has also prompted a re-evaluation of established theories, such as that of the so-called 'eliminationist' massacres identified by researchers of the Gothic Line – massacres that, upon closer inspection, were also tied to specific wartime and occupation-related strategies, rather than being the result of a purely indiscriminate drive towards extermination.

The Atlas has thus enabled the development of new theories, offering a more complete and rational view of Nazi violence and, crucially, as the database has made evident, of Fascist violence as well. One particularly striking result stands out for its clarity: 20 per cent of the massacres were perpetrated exclusively by Italians (a figure that rises to over 50 per cent in Lombardy). In another 20 per cent, Fascists played an active role. This further debunks, if any further proof were needed, the myth of the 'good Italians', though this time not in the context of a foreign occupation, but within the brutal reality of war waged on Italian soil.

Another notable finding is the predominance of roundups as a type of massacre, confirming that the logic behind much of the violence was often military in nature.

The dissemination of the project: digital history becomes public history

From its very first days online, the Atlas recorded a significant number of visits and accesses, a trend that has remained consistent over time. In its first month, the site received approximately 20,000 visits per week (over 80,000 in total), later stabilising around 30,000 visits per month. Considering fluctuations linked to the time of year (on 25 April, Italy's Liberation Day, traffic is always higher) and certain exceptional cases in 2020 (due to the pandemic and the publication of an article in *Wired* in August), the database currently averages around 350,000 accesses per year. These are impressive numbers, both within the digital projects of the Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri and for a digital history project on such a specific subject.

Naturally, these visits are not limited to scholars and researchers using the database for academic purposes. In fact, quite the opposite is true. As mentioned earlier, the topic of the massacres is closely tied to the memories and lived experiences of families and communities, where grassroots research by young historians or enthusiasts has long been active, along with local contexts that have reinterpreted the tragedy, and associations of victims' relatives. Over time, and still today, the Istituto Nazionale has received numerous reports and suggestions. These include requests for additions or corrections, not all of which are relevant, but those that are accepted become fundamental in correcting errors or inaccuracies, and help to restore a narrative (and a memory) that is as complete and faithful to the facts as possible, whether those facts concern individuals, families or entire communities.

All of this makes the Atlas a clear example of public history, in the strongest sense of the term. As an online resource, the database has a broad and potentially unlimited reach, making history accessible to a much wider audience. However, the Atlas goes beyond that:

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it enables the public to participate directly in the creation of historical content, with the careful and informed guidance of historians from the Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri. This is a form of production we might call 'social' in two senses: first, from a practical and digital one, as a form of co-operative production; and second, ethically, as it involves local communities and values their contributions, using a 'bottom-up' approach.

This virtuous process is made possible above all because, as already noted, the topic of the massacres is deeply connected to local and family memory and to specific territories. This is undeniably one of the greatest assets of all digital historical atlases, but it should not be taken for granted. Similar dynamics do not automatically emerge – not because of shortcomings in the tools themselves, but because not all historical subjects lend themselves equally to this kind of engagement.

Educational potential

The close connection between the Atlas and local territories also makes it particularly effective as a teaching tool. Its distinctly 'glocal' nature means that it is useful for both local (concerning towns or specific areas on the map) and broader regional or provincial investigations, which allows it to be integrated flexibly into classroom activities. Two examples of educational activities successfully carried out with lower and upper secondary school students help illustrate its potential.

The first activity is rooted in the local dimension. It focuses on urban elements found in the towns or cities where the schools are located. Starting from 'memories carved in stone', such as memorial plaques, monuments, museums or street names that commemorate the massacres, students can then move towards the Atlas, complementing their exploration with digitised archival sources. This process leads to the integration of these local memories into the broader historical context of the Second World War. Alternatively, the process can begin with the Atlas, using its search tools to identify massacres associated with specific places or municipalities. From there, students can trace the events to their physical markers in the territory, thus creating a direct and tangible connection to the past.

The second activity operates on a national level and is particularly well suited to upper secondary school. In this case, the class is divided into groups, and each group is assigned a different area or region to analyse using the data available in the database. After completing their analyses, the groups present and compare their findings. Through this comparison, students are able to identify both common features and regional differences. The overall synthesis of these findings is then shaped by the guidance and mediation of the teacher or a professional historian.

The objectives of these activities develop on multiple levels, but the most prominent is the cognitive one. Students are encouraged to deepen their understanding of a historically and emotionally complex chapter in Italian history, to better understand the impact of Nazi and Fascist violence, and to learn how to place these events within the broader framework of the war. At the same time, they acquire both general and specialised digital skills by learning how to navigate and make use of a digital tool, which has a high value for knowledge transfer. They also begin to understand, albeit often passively, the methods and instruments used by historians, acquiring the basic foundations of the discipline.

Equally important is the development of digital literacy. The Atlas is a prime example of the kind of online resource that students should learn to seek out and consult to access reliable information. It can serve as the first step in a broader educational journey, helping students learn how to navigate the internet thoughtfully and responsibly. It teaches them

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

what precautions to take, how to assess sources critically, and how to adopt best practices in online research.

The Atlas, the web, and everything else

With the rise and consolidation of what is known as Web 2.0 or the social web, the internet has become populated with tools that allow for participatory and co-operative content production by users. These users operate within true digital community ecosystems, which today primarily take the form of wikis and social networks. This shift, combined with the progressive miniaturisation of internet-access devices, has radically transformed how information is consumed, including historical content.

The topic is vast and complex, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, we can point to two of the most pressing challenges that have recently emerged: information overload and disintermediation. In today's most popular digital environments, content is produced prolifically but often without specific expertise or the validation of what is commonly called 'expert knowledge'. This dynamic is clearly visible, despite all the necessary precautions and safety mechanisms, in what is arguably the most widely used general knowledge tool online: Wikipedia.

The Atlas initially struggled to gain visibility within this digital ecosystem. Until just a few years ago, several Wikipedia entries on Nazi–Fascist massacres committed in Italy between 1943 and 1945 did not even cite the database in their bibliographies. Over time, however, and thanks in part to the creation of a dedicated Wikipedia entry for the project (https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlante_delle_stragi_naziste_e_fasciste_in_Italia) during an edit-a-thon with experienced Wikipedians held at the headquarters of the Istituto Nazionale, the Atlas has established itself as the primary reference source on the subject. Today, it is increasingly rare to find related articles where the Atlas is neither mentioned nor consulted. The self-correcting nature of the encyclopaedia allows for immediate intervention whenever such omissions are identified.

Moreover, when consulting Wikipedia, researchers often come across additional information derived from local studies that are otherwise difficult to find in libraries or mainstream academic sources. Wikipedia, in this way, has also become a tool for identifying gaps in the Atlas, encouraging further research and the addition of new or corrective content.

That said, the journey is far from over. The average user will likely continue to reach Wikipedia more easily than they will the Atlas. For this reason, two things become essential. First is education, starting from the school system. Second is the need for collaboration with the Wikipedia community itself, so that users who land on the encyclopaedia are guided towards discovering the existence of the Atlas.

From online onwards

For this process to succeed, the Atlas must continue to be updated and maintained, something that is far from guaranteed in the field of digital history. All too often, once a digital tool is published online, there is a mistaken belief that the work is finished. Nothing could be further from the truth. First, creating a digital resource only makes sense if its content remains current; otherwise, one might as well have produced a printed edition. Second, the digital world evolves rapidly (although not as frenetically as in the past), and consistent technical upkeep is necessary to ensure that websites and databases remain accessible and functional over time.

When considering future developments, the Atlas is particularly well suited for inclusion in metaportals, platforms that allow users to consult multiple digital tools simultaneously.

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A first experiment in this direction has already been implemented on the website guerrainitalia.it, although currently this is limited to filtering by location and date. A more ambitious and valuable step would be to design a query system based on the same principles that enables cross-referencing the Atlas data with other databases, such as those on deportations managed by ANED (National Association of Former Political Deportees) and the CDEC Foundation (Centre of Contemporary Jewish Documentation). This would allow researchers to identify overlapping episodes and thematic links between massacres and deportation events. Another possible development involves enabling simultaneous name-based searches across the Atlas and other similar digital collections, such as Ultime lettere di condannati a morte e di deportati della Resistenza italiana (https://www.ultimelettere.it/) and Combattenti della guerra di Spagna (https://www.antifascistispagna.it/). However, since the Atlas currently lacks a comprehensive index of victims, this possibility is technically more challenging.

Competing interests. The authors declare none.

References

Bianco, J. 2012. 'This Digital Humanities Which Is Not One'. In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by G.K. Mattew, 96–112. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Boyle, J. 2008. *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Burdick A., D. Johanna, L. Peter, P. Todd and S. Jeffrey. 2012. *Digital_Humanities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Falanga G., G. Greppi and E. Gobetti. 2023. 'The Italian Historiographical Debate and the Fact Checkers Movement'. *Modern Italy* 28 (4): 344–362.

Fulvetti G. and P. Pezzino, eds. 2016. *Zone di guerra, geografie di sangue. L'atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste in Italia (1943–1945)*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Jarlbrink, J. 2020. 'All the Work that Makes It Work: Digital Methods and Manual Labour'. In *Digital Histories: Emergent Approaches within the New Digital History*, edited by M. Fridlund, M. Olva and P. Paju, 113–126. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

Klein Thompson, J. 2018. *Interdisciplining Digital Humanities: Boundary Work in an Emerging Field*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Milligan, I. 2022. *The Transformation of Historical Research in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pezzino, P. 2007. 'The German Military Occupation of Italy and the War against Civilians'. *Modern Italy* 12 (2): 173–188.

Nicola Cacciatore holds a PhD in History from the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow). His work focuses on the relationship between Allied forces and the European Resistance to Nazi–Fascism during the Second World War. He has worked as a fixed-term researcher at the Universities of Florence and Padua. Currently, he is a researcher at the Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri, working on a project mapping the presence of Allied prisoners of war in Italy during the Second World War and their relationship with the Italian Resistance.

Igor Pizzirusso works at the Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri, where he has been involved in digital history, public history and teaching since 2006. Among his research projects are those related to the Ultime lettere di condannati a morte e di deportati della Resistenza italiana, and the Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste. Since 2019, he has expanded his research scope to include Wikipedia as a tool of public history and games as an effective method of public engagement, designing and creating, together with Giorgio Uberti, the urban game Milano45 and publishing several essays, including a contribution on games and cultural heritage in *Public History Weekly* and a reflection on video games and public history in the journal *Italia contemporanea*.

Italian summary

La storia digitale rappresenta un filone innovativo per gli storici, sia per pubblicare i propri risultati sia per applicare nuove metodologie di ricerca che coinvolgano il pubblico come produttore di conoscenza storica. Tuttavia, nel contesto degli studi sulla Seconda guerra mondiale in Italia, e in particolare sulla Resistenza antifascista, queste tipologie di produzione restano rare. Questa

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press

situazione contrasta nettamente con l'ampia disponibilità di materiali revisionisti, filofascisti o apertamente fascisti, realizzati da una moltitudine di soggetti non accademici sul web. Questo contributo si propone di presentare tre diversi progetti di storia digitale accomunati dal tema dell'antifascismo: *L'Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste, IF – Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista*, e *Memorie in Cammino*. Ognuno di essi copre un periodo storico o un aspetto diverso della questione, ma tutti fanno parte di una nuova direzione per la ricerca e la divulgazione storica in Italia. Questa prima parte si concentrerà sulle questioni sopra menzionate e sul primo progetto: *L'Atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste*.

Cite this article: Cacciatore, N and Pizzirusso, I. 2026. 'Digital history, revisionism and antifascism: charting a course.' *Modern Italy* 31: 136–146. https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111

https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2025.10111 Published online by Cambridge University Press