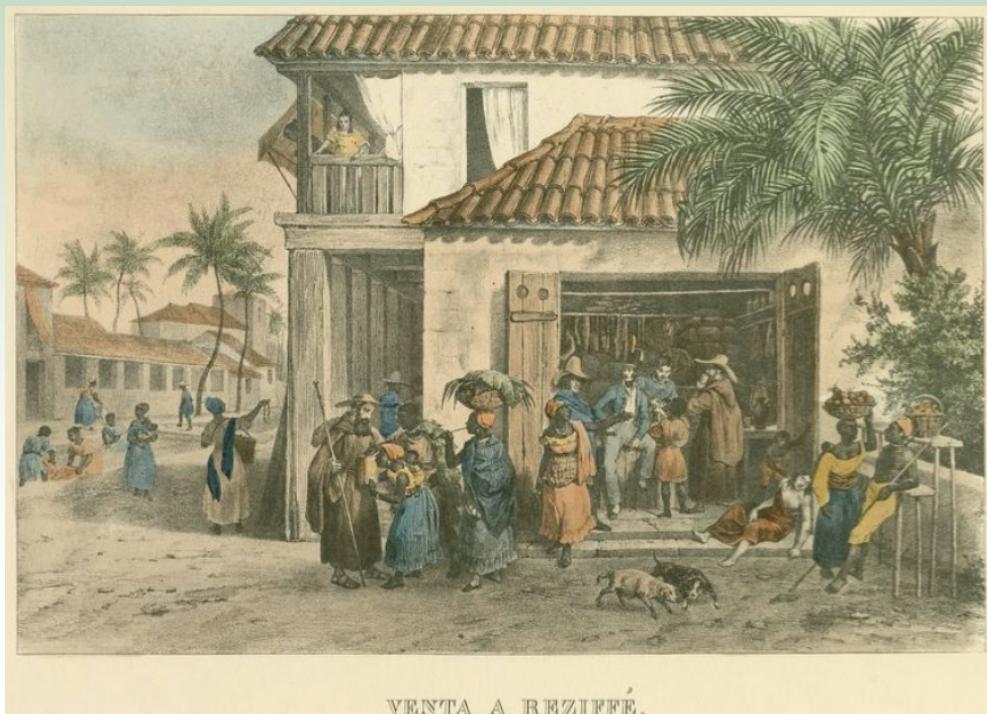# AI and the Future of Digital Databases on Slavery

Dr. Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez

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In recent decades, there has been significant growth in the creation of archival-based digital databases documenting enslaved populations across different regions of the United States and the broader Americas, as well as their forced maritime and overland transportation. These databases have provided invaluable evidence to rethink the broader phenomenon of bondage from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. However, they often present accessibility challenges due to the technical complexity of their digital infrastructures. This poses a significant barrier to non-experts. The emergence of commercial large language models (LLMs), or artificial intelligence (AI), offers a promising path to overcome these obstacles by allowing users to formulate questions to these databases using natural language. In this presentation, Dr. Felipe-Gonzalez will explore the potential of AI to enhance accessibility to slavery databases, using the case study of a prototype AI tool designed to mine and retrieve data from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database.

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Dr. Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Texas at San Antonio, specializing in the transatlantic slave trade, Caribbean and Latin American history, Public History, and Digital Humanities. Born and raised in Havana, Cuba, Dr. Felipe-Gonzalez is currently completing his first book manuscript, The Cuban Slave Trade: An Atlantic History, scheduled for submission at the end of this year. His work has appeared in The Atlantic, The New York Review of Books, and The Journal of African History. Since 2014, he has served as an editor and contributor to both the Transatlantic and Intra-American Slave Trade Databases. As a postdoctoral fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University (2019–2020 and 2023–2024), he has collaborated in digital initiatives, including the development of The People of the Atlantic Slave Trade project and the integration of AI tools into database infrastructure. Dr. Felipe-Gonzalez has taught extensively in both Cuba and the United States.