

# Innovation of the Teaching Mode of History Courses in Colleges and Universities Based on Digital Technology

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## ABSTRACT

There are some problems in the teaching reform of history majors in some colleges. Not only are there deviations in teaching level and teaching methods, but there are also limitations in the implementation of reform methods that meet the reform objectives, which are closely related to the reform methods of each college and the characteristics of history major itself. On the one hand, with the complete integration and application of information technology and communication technology, history teaching is facing the upgrade from information-based teaching to digital teaching. This paper selects the innovation of history teaching mode in colleges and universities based on digital technology as the research topic, summarizes the present situation of history teaching from the current situation of history education and the problems in the process of digitalization, and analyzes the significance of the innovation of history teaching mode.

## KEYWORDS

Digitization, History Course, Model of Instruction, University History

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the pace of teaching reform in colleges and universities has accelerated gradually, and many new teaching achievements have been produced in the reform. The new development of discipline construction in colleges and universities, such as the construction of new liberal arts, has injected new impetus into the in-depth development of teaching reform in colleges and universities (Snyder & Raichle, 2012). With the rapid development of information technology, sophisticated technology is gradually applied to all fields of society (Rüegg, 2004). Now, we should (a) combine the characteristics of professional teaching content and fostering student growth, (b) make full use of digital technology, (c) explore effective strategies to promote teaching activities under the new situation, (d) realize the effective integration of “digitalization,” “intelligence,” “humanistic culture”

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and “specialization” in history teaching, and (e) meet the requirements of college teaching reform, especially the construction of new liberal arts.

Because of its own characteristics, history has become the focus of educational development in China. Higher requirements are put forward for the combination of digital technology and information. It is an important stage for college history majors to improve their academic literacy. Students are in the process of development of the times, and the knowledge they receive at school should also be reformed (Hildebrandt, 2010). Therefore, the development of history majors in colleges and universities is in a critical period in which opportunities and challenges coexist. The setting of the history major in Chinese universities is shown in Table 1.

As a descriptive science, history includes historical facts and logical construction. From the perspective of education, history is an effective way for students to understand and change the world from the perspective of history. In the new era, people have overcome the 19th-century view of history, broken the tendency of supporting cultural history with historical philosophy, got rid of the so-called “five stages” divided by the educational circles, and started the history discipline again (Curti & Carstensen, 1949). This paper takes the innovation of history teaching mode in colleges and universities based on digital technology as the research topic, starting from the current situation of history education and the problems existing in the digital process, summarizes the current situation of history teaching, analyzes the innovative significance of history teaching mode, and puts forward suggestions for the innovation of history teaching mode in colleges and universities.

## HISTORY TEACHING AND EXISTING PROBLEMS

### History Course Teaching Status

Modern history teaching aims at quality education, aiming at enabling students (a) to master the “view of history” based on historical knowledge through history education and (b) better to understand nature and human society through history study (Carter et al., 1996). At every stage of life, we should use historical knowledge and methods to establish our own world outlook and outlook on life. From practical experience, in the process of using various means to achieve the purpose of history teaching, it is necessary to analyze the specific hierarchical goals according to the analysis methods of general goals and hierarchical goals corresponding to the content of history teaching (Soffer, 1995). After the quality training and ability expansion of student perceptual aesthetic abilities, intellectual analysis ability, and rational thinking ability are completed, student cognitive abilities will be further cultivated according to the complicated contents of

**Table 1.**  
**Interpretation of history major**

Professional code	01, 0601
Award a degree	Bachelor of history
Courses	Main disciplines: Major courses of history—General History of China, General History of the World, Introduction to Historiography, Chinese History, History of Western Historiography, General Archaeology, Historical Geography, Ancient Chinese, Introduction and Selected Reading of Chinese and Foreign Historical and Cultural Classics, Chinese dynastic history, etc. The main practical teaching links: including visits, social surveys, and social welfare activities, etc., are generally arranged for about 10 weeks.
Similar majors	Archaeology, museology, ethnology, cultural relics protection technology
Training objective	This major trains historical professionals with certain basic Marxist theoretical literacy and systematic professional basic knowledge, and potential for further training, as well as applied and compound senior professionals who can engage in practical work in state organs, cultural and educational undertakings, press and publication, cultural and cultural archives, and various institutions.
Training requirements	Students of this major mainly study the basic theory and knowledge of historical science, are trained in the basic historical facts and historical research of Chinese history and world history development and have the basic ability to engage in professional work.

history teaching, such as the spirit of the times, historical events, trend activities, economic development, culture and art, etc., so as to be consistent with their rational thinking ability and the actual contents of history teaching (Openshaw & Strasser, 1967). In addition, it should be noted that under the premise of setting hierarchical goals, we should scientifically select teaching tools, determine reasonable teaching methods, and then carry out history teaching. In 2022, the enrollment plan of history majors in 30 provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions) in China exceeded 21,000, an increase of 3% compared with last year. Ancient philology, archaeology, and other majors are relatively unpopular, and they are usually only offered in a few double-top universities (Enfield, 2013). The change range of the national enrollment plan for history majors from 2021 to 2022 is shown in Figure 1.

The current curriculum of history education needs to give full play to teachers' subjective initiative and guide students in carrying out exploratory learning actively. From the perspective of history textbook teaching, teachers should implement the systematic teaching of history teaching units in combination with the purpose of history teaching. From the perspective of general methods, teachers mainly formulate and design teaching plans based on the systematic knowledge structure of the history teaching method and unit teaching method. On the other hand, in actual history teaching, students need to accept the guidance of teachers and actively participate in history teaching, changing from passive learning to active questioning, discussion, and exploration (Richardson et al., 2003). The top ten rankings of history majors in public undergraduate universities in 2020 are shown in Table 2.

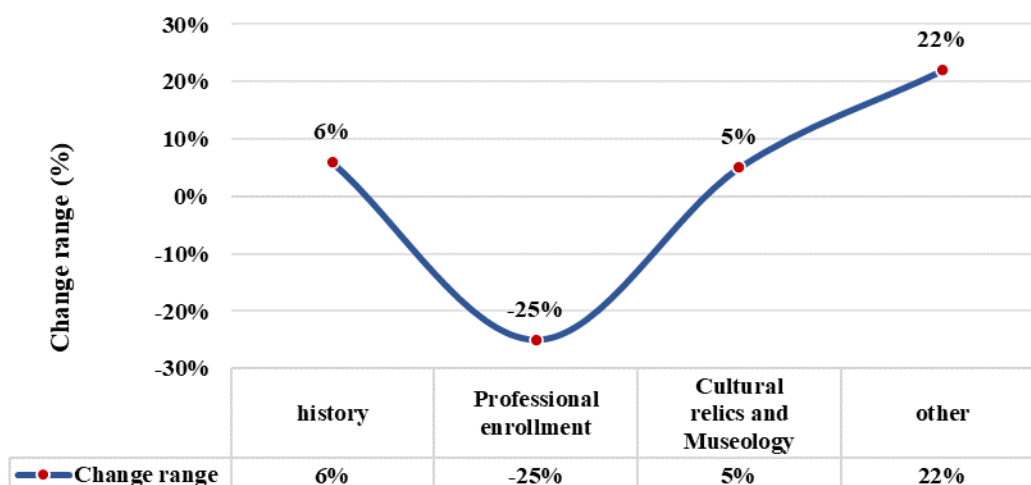
In the first-class discipline of world history, there are 31 universities with *doctor's authorization* in China, and 31 of them participated in this evaluation. Some universities with *master's authorization* also participated in the assessment. There are a total of 58 participating universities. The top ten rankings of the fourth round of world history evaluation are shown in Table 3.

In the first-level discipline of Chinese history, there are 48 universities with *doctor's authorization* in China, and 48 of them participated in this evaluation. Some universities with *master's authorization* also participated in the assessment. There are 82 participating universities. The top ten rankings of the fourth round of Chinese history evaluation are shown in Table 4.

### Problems of History Teaching in the Process of Digitalization

The level of application of digital technology by history teachers needs to be improved. The popularization of digital technology in the education field puts forward high requirements for teachers'

Figure 1.  
Changes of national enrollment plan for history majors from 2021 to 2022



**Table 2.**  
**Top ten rankings of history majors in public undergraduate universities in 2020**

Place in a competition	School name	Professional star	In the area	Regional ranking
1	Peking University	8 stars	Beijing	1
2	Beijing Normal University	7 stars	Beijing	2
2	Fudan University	7 stars	Shanghai	1
4	Sun Yat-sen University	6 stars	Guangdong	1
4	Renmin University of China	6 stars	Beijing	3
4	Nankai University	6 stars	Tianjin	1
4	Wuhan University	6 stars	Hubei	1
4	Nanjing University	6 stars	Jiangsu	1
9	Sichuan University	6 stars	Sichuan	1
9	East China Normal University	6 stars	Shanghai	2

**Table 3.**  
**Top ten rankings of the fourth round of world history evaluation**

Serial number	School code	School name	Selection result
1	1, 1000	Peking University	A+
2	9, 1026	East China Normal University	A+
3	8, 1002	Capital Normal University	A-
4	5, 1005	Nankai University	A-
5	0, 1020	Northeast Teachers University	A-
6	7, 1002	Beijing Normal University	B+
7	5, 1006	Tianjin Normal University	B+
8	6, 1024	Fudan University	B+
9	4, 1028	Nanjing University	B+
10	6, 1048	Wuhan University	B+

**Table 4.**  
**Top ten rankings of the fourth round of Chinese history evaluation**

Serial number	School code	School name	Selection result
1	7, 1002	Beijing Normal University	A+
2	6, 1024	Fudan University	A+
3	1, 1000	Peking University	A
4	4, 1028	Nanjing University	A
5	2, 1000	Renmin University of China	A-
6	5, 1005	Nankai University	A-
7	1, 1051	Central China Normal University (CCNU)	A-
8	8, 1055	Sun Yat-sen University	A-
9	3, 1000	Tsinghua University	B+
10	8, 1002	Capital Normal University	B+

operation levels (Enfield, 2013). After investigation, it was found that some history teachers do not make full use of digital technology in teaching. On the one hand, teachers' mastery of information technology is relatively limited. Some historical events require the use of information technology in the classroom for "reductive presentation," which is difficult to achieve under the existing teaching conditions. On the other hand, the setting of teaching and training content in the school mainly addresses teaching methods, teaching management, and other aspects. The depth and breadth of information technology training are insufficient, which is not conducive to the promotion of digital technology level of history teachers.

The application of digital technology becomes a mere formality. In the teaching of history, digital technology is used most frequently in the process of data collection. Some teachers will organize historical data into animations in the form of slides so that students can watch them. However, in the process of application, influenced by many factors, it is more likely that education will deviate from the theme.

Digital technology is out of touch with traditional teaching modes. Please note that the use of digital technology does not mean completely ignoring the traditional teaching mode, but it means tapping the advantages of both and effectively integrating them together. The traditional teaching mode is very important for strengthening students' professional foundations and improving the moral quality of humanism. In the process of digital development, the advantages of traditional education need to be maintained and continued. Some history teachers' methods tend to "deliberately combine information technology," but in college history teaching, we should not only find an effective balance between them but also comprehensively use digital technology.

The National Smart Education Platform has played an important role in improving teachers' skills. The application of the national smart education platform promotes the digital transformation of the professional development of history teachers. Its characteristics and advantages are mainly reflected in the following two aspects: first, the national smart education platform promotes the integration and normalization of teacher research and training; second, the national smart education platform improves the efficiency of teacher research and training in an organized and large-scale way. The inclusive sharing of digital resources and the universal application of technical tools have facilitated the training of teachers to use relevant digital tools.

## **DIGITAL AGE HISTORY TEACHING METHODS**

### **Demand for Innovation**

History education in the information age will transform all learning materials into information and use computer and multimedia technology to improve the speed of data classification, collection, transmission, and use. However, under the background of information education, some problems in history education cannot be fundamentally solved. Therefore, in recent years, based on the reform experience of "Internet plus history education," some universities have put forward the reform method of changing from information education to digital education. Compared with information education, digital education (a) emphasizes the characteristics of history textbooks and databases of related educational textbooks; (b) fully displays the data commonness among historical education elements, historical education indicators, and historical education information; and (c) promotes the development of historical education (Seel, 2003). According to the research results of Marxism at this stage, the choice of methods essentially determines the acquisition of theoretical results. In particular, Marx himself paid great attention to the analysis of methodology in his early works, but in his later works, he focused on the application of methodology, put forward the theory of productivity and production relations, and the theory of surplus value, especially the application of mathematical tools in Capital, which ensured the logical rigor of analysis and discussion and the reliability of investigation results (Pizzini, 1989). Therefore, the equivalence of tools and methods is generally recognized in academic circles. In short, since the emergence of the syllogism (Aristotle's logic), Inming (Indian logic), and

Tanbian (Mohist logic), tools have actually become a part of historical research. Method innovation also takes tools as the necessary premise, and the two complement each other. Therefore, in the practice stage of digital education reform in the digital era, on the one hand, we should pay attention to analyzing the functions of various digital tools, and on the other hand, we should strengthen the research on how to apply them.

## **Innovative Teaching Strategies for the Digital Age**

“Model teaching” refers to integrating different elements in the learning process to create a more meaningful and effective learning experience. The history teaching method is a way to impart historical knowledge and is the basis and premise of model teaching. In history teaching, teachers need to use various methods and means, such as speech, discussion, reading, writing, etc., to help students fully understand historical events and figures, understand historical background and cultural heritage. After the introduction of digital technology as a teaching tool, in order to ensure the smooth operation of the tool application, the application method must be selected according to its function. Therefore, in teaching history in the digital age, the method innovation should choose diversified approaches. Based on the learning experience and teaching experience, this paper puts forward two strategies, (a) the method innovation caused by the change of teaching concept and (b) the method innovation caused by the introduction of digital technology and points out the method of creating a new teaching mode under this strategy. The innovation of the history teaching method is based on the change in teaching concepts. At this stage, new concepts need to be introduced. Through the change of teaching concept, the innovation can be completed, and a new education model can be produced.

For example, some colleges and universities have effectively integrated classroom teaching and extracurricular teaching and created an “online + offline” teaching mode of online thinking. In addition, the traditional teaching mode based on teacher explanations has been transformed into the teaching method of information interaction between teachers and students to meet the teaching purpose and needs of history teaching. Under the background of Internet-based thinking development and digital thinking mining, the “online + offline” teaching mode can be further deepened, and the teaching elements, teaching indicators, and teaching information in history teaching can be unified under the data standard. According to the collection, transmission, and preservation of past education information, increase data extraction and data analysis further, generate education data analysis report, and use the database provided in the report to adjust education curriculum plans and unit guidance plans reasonably.

## **The Significance of Digitalization**

*Digitalization* of the teaching field mainly refers to the products that use modern science and technology in teaching activities, namely multimedia and networks. In the process of teaching reform, the traditional teaching methods cannot fully meet the needs of teaching, so it is necessary to introduce new forms of teaching carriers, and use computers, mobile phones, multimedia, networks, and other carriers to inject new vitality and motivation into teaching (Harrison et al., 1985).

## ***Reform and Innovate the Teaching Mode***

Teaching methods have become richer and more diversified. Driven by digitalization, the carrier of history teaching in colleges and universities is transformed from the language description of books and teachers to the animation and 3D stereoscopic effects displayed by multimedia. At the same time, the content and process of teaching activities will be improved, and more teaching achievements will emerge, such as micro-courses and massive open online courses. The “digital plus” teaching method has an online teaching platform suitable for college history teaching, thus promoting the continuous innovation of teaching mode.

### *Enhance Interest in Learning History*

In most cases, teenagers are fanatics of digital products and an important consumer group of electronic products (Burton et al., 1984). In addition, many students choose digital products as learning tools to achieve excellent learning results. Therefore, the application of digital technology in college history teaching can make relatively boring learning more interesting and improve learning efficiency.

### *Continuously Improve the Construction Level of History Discipline*

In recent years, how to make effective use of digital technology has become the focus of university education research, and many academic achievements have been made in this research field (Braude, 1997). With the development of digitalization, the history education discipline of the university has changed from the language guidance of books and teachers to the 3D stereoscopic effect display of animation and multimedia display. At the same time, the content and process of teaching activities have also been improved, and online teaching platforms such as WeChat and Muke have been added.

## **INNOVATION STRATEGY**

### **Establish a Comprehensive Information Platform for “Internet Plus History” Teaching**

The extensive application of digital tools in the history field has changed the way of collecting, sorting, classifying, using, and communicating traditional history curriculum resources, and made history curriculum resources more widely developed and utilized in the form of digitalization. In the digital era, the emergence of multimedia and network means can organically combine various teaching resources such as text, pictures, audio and video, animation, etc., so that students can present historical problems by compiling video and collected data into stories. Active participation and information sharing are the unique charm of network media, which is different from other traditional media. Network media is a shortcut for students to obtain high-quality historical resources. According to constructivism, media and methods are equally important. Without proper media, it is difficult for students to explore freely and compile the collected information into stories. The role of web-based digital tools in history learning is irreplaceable.

While using information technologies such as the Internet and big data, history majors in colleges and universities should be committed to building a comprehensive teaching information platform that integrates many technologies. The role of building this platform is twofold. First, scientific and reasonable comprehensive use of digital technology to present the latest achievements of digital technology in teaching activities. The second is to arrange the history teaching materials reasonably and quickly so that students can learn knowledge clearly and clearly and save time. Besides, when building a platform on the Internet, we should focus on the following parts (Maitland, 1898).

1. **Basic knowledge:** In this section, students can quickly understand and master the basic theoretical knowledge of history. In order to enable students to quickly remember historical knowledge, big data technology can be used to establish a database, and students can click the search engine to find the required content. Use the computer to build a knowledge structure map to sort out the historical knowledge at a certain stage and guide students to “learn by looking at the map.” In addition, digital tools can be used to automatically sort according to time clues, so that students can understand history from a vertical and horizontal perspective (Agran et al., 2000).
2. **Scientific research:** The focus of this part is to let students know the important content and direction of current historical research, show cutting-edge professional research results, and encourage students to find the key points of scientific research accordingly (Gillis, 2018).
3. **Historical horizon expansion:** This section will show the historical events related to each chapter of the university history textbook, not only showing the panorama of the original historical

appearance but also taking some historical events with rich research results as important materials to expand the historical horizon, so that students can absorb their contents in a short time (Agran et al., 2006).

4. **Practice:** The history major has a strong foundation not only in theory but also in practice.
5. **Test:** This section will focus on testing whether students understand what they have learned through various forms of tests. Review past lessons, and then learn new things. The digital information platform is divided into a network version suitable for use on computers and a more convenient and flexible mobile application version. By using the Internet and mobile applications, users can log in before, during, and after class, so that the test form should be as interesting as possible according to the situation, and it can be effectively used continuously to improve learning efficiency.

## Innovate the Teaching Methods of Applied History

History teachers in universities should make use of digital technology, innovate teaching methods, and combine them with the teaching mode of digital intelligence (Burton et al., 1984). For example, the scientific application of the “flipped classroom” teaching method. Using the flip classroom teaching method can stimulate students’ spontaneous learning consciousness, train students to achieve university teaching objectives, integrate digital technology into history teaching, realize digital teaching, extend the teaching chain forward and backward, and give students full “rights” to “return” the classroom to students (Wehmeyer et al., 2000). The teaching steps include:

1. Ask students to preview the course content first. Before entering each chapter, teachers of history majors must assign questions related to the course to students, so that students can learn and master what they have learned. They also need to apply digital multimedia and other technologies flexibly. In addition, students can search for relevant materials through traditional paper books and new electronic media, and view the materials collected by multimedia in classroom teaching (Hanke, 2008).
2. Use the “flipped classroom” teaching mode to teach. That is, in the actual teaching process, teachers treat students as the center and subject, divide students into groups, and let students teach other teachers and students on the spot from the perspective of teachers. Students can not only exert their expressive force but also absorb and output knowledge, fully understand knowledge, and display their works in various forms such as videos, e-books, and self-made creative courseware.
3. In the after-class review session, use the form of “flipping the classroom” for learning feedback. Students should also play the role of “flipping the classroom” after class, and exchange research experiences between classes in time. Make every aspect of teaching activities clearer, and teachers play an inspiring role in it. At the same time, the innovative application of digital technology brings flexibility to the classroom.

The scientific application of the “micro-curriculum” teaching method has brought great advantages to college teaching. Applying digital technology to innovate teaching methods, while realizing the combination of digital technology and professional teaching, systematic professional knowledge is divided into special sections, which helps to integrate students’ scattered knowledge (Wehmeyer et al., 2012). History teachers need to do the following three things when applying micro-lecture.

1. Record the “micro-lecture” video.
2. Use digital technology to make short animation or photography works of “micro-lecture,” and then use digital media to demonstrate knowledge and teaching materials. For example, when explaining the historical content of “Braving the East,” we can explain the theme of this historical immigrant more intuitively by playing slides, animations, big data, and other forms.



3. Select the media for playing the “micro-lecture” video. Upload the “micro-lecture” video program list within the specified time. You can choose the desired video from the “micro-lecture” video program list. For example, teachers can open “micro-lecture” micro-lecture to students through the media, such as the class WeChat group.

### **The Cooperative Teaching Mode of “School Historical Memorial Hall”**

Taking the ongoing study and education of the history of the Communist Party of China (CPC) as an example, the study and education of its history are closely related to the teaching of history majors in colleges and universities. Its focus is on the history of the CPC in the history major, which has the advantage of academic resources, so it should be promoted in an effective digital form. For example, when teaching the content of the May 4th Movement, students can use digital mobile devices to learn about the May 4th Movement. Let students use digital technology to make digital models of the cities involved in the May 4th Movement, connect important historical events in series in the models, and display the models made on the Internet, so that students can more vividly realize how the working class developed and grew (Sheared, 1994). However, at present, in the construction of some colleges and universities, students studying history can also attract social resources through the way of the school–enterprise alliance, thus increasing the effectiveness and practicality of educational activities. For example, the operators of historical memorials need to visit universities regularly to encourage students to participate actively in the work of historical memorials. The university regularly visits the historical memorial hall, investigates the historical materials in detail, and provides teaching details.

Online, teachers can use digital technology to display historical buildings. For example, in the classroom, the staff of historical monuments can talk and explain to the students in the class through mobile devices, so that the students can indirectly participate in the actual work of the historical monuments. In addition, students can carry out professional practice while completing professional research. In addition, universities can hold online academic seminars on historical topics. Students will serve as “online propagandists and lecturers” of the memorial hall, so that theory and practice can be well combined.

### **Teaching Evaluation That Combines Tradition With Modernity**

The teaching of history majors in colleges and universities needs scientific evaluation standards. On the one hand, we should attach importance to absorbing the advantages of traditional evaluation methods; on the other hand, we should highlight the use of digital evaluation mechanisms, that is, classroom evaluation combining tradition with modernity. First, we need to quantify the evaluation criteria. When evaluating teachers and students, history majors in universities need to define evaluation criteria and quantify various evaluation indicators. For example, according to the student curriculum and professional abilities in a given semester, the evaluation is scientifically quantified by “lecture results + specific cases” to ensure that the evaluation of quantitative professional ability construction is concrete and appropriate. Secondly, through the investigation and classification of big data, a database of evaluation content is established, which changes from one assessment at the end of the year to a regular assessment, so that students’ learning status can be grasped regularly. In addition, university history majors need to provide timely feedback to teachers and students on the evaluation results.

At this time, we can use the WeChat application; that is, both teachers and students can confirm the test results at any time by logging in to WeChat. Teachers and students can make adjustments according to the evaluation results to catch up with the next step of teaching management and learning methods. In order to make more effective use of the evaluation results, we should also establish a teaching evaluation information platform. By using digital technologies such as big data and the Internet to establish an assessment and evaluation information platform for teaching activities, paperless and integrated offices and assessments can be realized. By establishing the daily management system of the platform, scientific management of assessment can be realized.

As a new way of learning, digital tools provide students with a rich resource platform and a novel and convenient information acquisition and processing mode to promote students' absorption and mastery of historical knowledge. At the same time, relying on the digital platform, students will gradually form effective information analysis ability from the aspects of information collection, information understanding, information processing, and information expression, so as to promote history education in the digital era. First of all, teachers guide students to learn and use the research methods of social science, such as field surveys, questionnaire surveys, data statistics, etc., for information analysis and then use digital tools combined with experience, discussion, inquiry, and other teaching methods to guide students to learn independent cooperation, inquiry learning, understanding, processing and expression of information. During this period, student participation in interviews, data collection, and other activities is also a process of independent learning, self-perception, and self-education. Using digital tools to analyze historical problems actively is not only based on student cognition and development but also can help students excavate and make full use of digital history curriculum resources to complete learning tasks. At the same time, it is conducive to the integration of history education into the digital era.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper expounds on the importance of digitalization in history teaching in colleges and universities, analyzes the main problems in the application of digitalization in history teaching in colleges and universities, and puts forward the following strategies for the reform of history teaching in colleges and universities based on the perspective of digitalization: establish an integrated information platform of "Internet + history" teaching; innovate the teaching methods of the application history major; carry out thematic practice activities based on the application of digital technology, establish the cooperative teaching mode of "school + history memorial hall," and establish a digital professional teaching evaluation mechanism combining tradition and modernity. With the application of digital technology, the teaching reform of history majors in colleges and universities will continue to present new ideas. Teachers and students should explore ways and strategies to improve teaching and learning effects in digital technology, and constantly promote the intelligent, digital, and scientific development process of the history major in colleges and universities.

## **DATA AVAILABILITY**

The figures and tables used to support the findings of this study are included in the article.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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