

Introduction: A Portuguese-language Special Issue of DHQ[pt]

Luis Ferla <ferla_at_unifesp_dot_br>, Universidade Federal de São Paulo

Cecily Raynor <cecily_dot_raynor_at_mcgill_dot_ca>, Universidade McGill

Following the Spanish and French editions, we present the special edition of Digital Humanities Quarterly in Portuguese. This initiative forms part of a broader effort by the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO), the entity which publishes DHQ, to bring greater diversity and multilingualism to the debates surrounding Digital Humanities, typically recognized to be centered in the Anglo-Saxon world (see Gil, 2016, and O'Donnell et. al., 2016). Within this organization, actions taken by Global Outlook::Digital Humanities (GO::DH) are ostensibly aimed at “(...) helping to break down barriers to communication and collaboration between researchers and students in the areas of Digital Arts, Humanities and Cultural Heritage in high, middle and low income economies.” Thus the “perspectives of the Global South are vital to shaping the future of digital humanities.” The premise is that the digital humanities can only fully assume its desired identity, namely that of the valuation of knowledge sharing and the freedom to produce and circulate that knowledge, if they effectively question the current geopolitics of the academic and scientific world which dictate the practices of the communities they encompass.

However, the breakdown of cultural hierarchies is more complex than simply the supposed recognition of good intentions or beautiful ideas. Technological infrastructures, for example, are not easily and readily transformed to better conform to notions and mindsets that are more egalitarian and democratic. The tensions resulting from these incompatibilities can be productive if they contribute to the transformation of said infrastructures in emancipatory directions or can be negative if they limit the viability of progress. NASA's recent postponement of the first all-women spacewalk in history due to the lack of female astronautic attire is both an anecdotal and metaphorical example of this phenomenon.^[1] The explanation of the incident exposes the gap between egalitarian intention and technological infrastructure: “Spacesuit design has long been biased toward men's physiques, both due to technological constraints and the fact that NASA preferred male astronauts throughout most of its lifetime.” In the preparation of this special edition, setbacks have emerged that have illustrated the same substantive issue. In December of 2018, the Open Journal System (OJS), a valuable initiative in itself given that it makes possible editing and circulating open access journals, upgraded its platform to a supposedly more modern and functional version. However, since the migration the platform no longer recognizes the “special characters” of the Portuguese language, such as those present in “globalização” (globalization) and “contradições” (contradictions). Thus, the articles, opinions and correspondences of our team and authors became functionally illegible. Many were affected by this issue, and a topic about this was opened in the discussion forum of OJS/PKP (<https://forum.pkp.sfu.ca/search?q=special%20characters>, accessed on the 8th of December 2019). However, the problem of coding texts has not been solved thus far, and the difficulty of reading languages that make use of “special characters” such as Portuguese persists. In the digital humanities environment, this topic is not new and has been tackled for quite some time. As Fiormonte et al (2015) affirm, “(...) apparently ‘neutral’, ‘technical’ decisions, as can be observed in Unicode, TEI or other organisations, tend to oversimplify and standardise the complex diversity of languages and cultural artefacts.”

Taking this into consideration and after many unsuccessful attempts, we decided to continue with the editing workflow in a parallel system, resorting to email exchanges and storing files in digital repositories external to the OJS platform. In the end, the Portuguese edition reached its programmed destination, albeit late, but with all of the accents and cedillas intact.

The texts of this special edition can be separated into two groups: three articles rooted in the discussion of research projects identified with digital humanities that then develop more general reflections; and three others that analyze what surrounds and conditions the research and work of the digital humanist, addressing both theoretical and methodological issues, as well as thematic strongpoints and institutional trends. In the first group, it is noteworthy that the three studies use geotechnology as their primary instrumental support, thus affirming the general perception of an increasing

appreciation of the spatial dimension in humanities research [Bodenhamer et al. 2010]. Two of these projects deal with history: Patricia Ferreira Lopes utilizes Geographic Information System (GIS) to study road networks in the 16th century Iberian Peninsula, and Maria João Ferreira dos Santos employs this same technology to reconstruct the history of natural conservation efforts in California, covering the period between 1850 and 2010. Although they stem from the fields of architecture and biology respectively, Patrícia Lopes and Maria dos Santos end up corroborating the impression that past researchers preferred GIS technologies [Gregory and Ell 2007]. Sarita Albagli, Hesley Py and Allan Yu Iwama compose the third team of researchers whose article is dedicated to geotechnology, in this case addressing an experience of social intervention on geographical territory. The project in question discusses the development of a “platform prototype for open access geospatial data [LindaGeo Platform] as part of an open science action-based research project conducted by the Municipality of Ubatuba on the Northern Coast of the State of São Paulo, Brazil.” Here we also reaffirm some of the main identities that are typically associated with the digital humanities, focused on the ethics of collaborative production and the free circulation of knowledge [Greenspan 2016] [Spiro 2012].

In the second block of articles, Luís Corujo, Jorge Revez and Carlos Guardado da Silva explore a topic whose importance has yet to be sufficiently recognized: digital curation and its costs. The authors advocate not only for greater diligence in data management planning, but also the dissemination of more transparent and reproducible practices in order to increase access to the results of scientific production. In the second article, Claudio José Silva Ribeiro, Suemi Higuchi and Luis Ferla attempt to give a panoramic examination of digital humanities in Brazil, paying particular homage to the experience of the First International Congress on Digital Humanities in Rio de Janeiro in April of 2018. To close the special edition, Maria Paixão de Sousa provides a reflection on the radical resignification of writing and reading in the technologized environment of the present day, which, in her perspective, “profoundly alters the traditional work of the humanities” and establishes “a new discursive conformation for the field.”

In closing, the editors would like to thank everyone who has made this special edition of DHQ possible, starting with the authors themselves as well as the invited reviewers, whose intellectual capacity, scientific knowledge and stubborn patience were indispensable to this issue. To Alex Gil, for the initial invitation and his support since then. And to Rhian Lewis and Kate Bundy, consecutive assistants throughout the process, both of whom were tireless in their efforts and who met hardship with great fortitude and ease. They are the true “special characters” of this edition.

Notes

[1] The walk, originally scheduled for March, ended up happening in October 2019. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/05/science/NASA-female-spacewalk.html>, accessed on the 6th of December 2019).

Works Cited

- Bodenhamer et al. 2010** BODENHAMER, David J; CORRIGAN, John; HARRIS, Trevor M. (Ed.). *The spatial humanities: GIS and the future of humanities scholarship*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Fiormonte et al. 2015** FIORMONTE, Domenico; SCHMIDT, Desmond; SCHMIDT, Paolo; SORDI, Paolo. “The Politics of code. How digital representations and languages shape culture”. *Proceedings of ISIS Summit Vienna 2015 — The Information Society at the Crossroads*, 2015.
- Gil 2016** GIL, Alex. “Interview with Ernesto Oroza; e Fiormonte, Domenico. Toward a Cultural Critique of Digital Humanities”. In: GOLD, M.; KLEIN, L. (eds). *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- Greenspan 2016** GREENSPAN, Brian. “Are Digital Humanists Utopian?” In: GOLD, M.; KLEIN, L. (eds). *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 393-409. 2016.
- Gregory and Ell 2007** GREGORY, Ian; ELL, Paul. *Historical GIS: Technologies, methodologies and scholarship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- O'Donnell 2016** O'DONNELL, D. P.; et al. “Only Connect: The Globalization of the Digital Humanities”. In: SCHREIBMAN, S.; SIEMENS, R.; UNSWORTH, J. (eds). *A new companion to Digital Humanities*. Malden: Blackwell, 2016.
- Spiro 2012** SPIRO, Lisa. “‘This is why we fight’: defining the values of the digital humanities”. In: Gold, Matthew K. (editor). *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 16-35. 2012.

