Jeremy Raymond

DH Directed Reading

Professor Shawn Graham

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**Reflection on My Work on the DH Primer with Professor Shawn Graham**

This reflection summarizes the key lessons I drew from the project: the value of scaffolded learning in pedagogy, the challenges and rewards of teamwork, the importance of selecting effective communication tools, and the broader insights I gained about English and Digital Humanities as intersecting disciplines. Working on the Digital Humanities (DH) Primer was a formative experience that allowed me to reflect on pedagogy, collaboration, and my own position within the field of DH. Despite an extremely busy summer, a platform change (from the Tangent desktop application that required a download to a one-click link to a website), and my own challenges with coding, this experience was extremely valuable, and I would like to thank Professor Shawn Graham for this opportunity.

Working on the DH Primer provided me with insights into pedagogy that my prior TAship did not fully develop. By examining how each week’s topic in Digital Humanities built upon the previous one, I gained a deeper understanding of scaffolded learning. Each lesson was designed not only to introduce a new concept but also to ensure students applied what they had already learned, creating a cumulative and interconnected learning experience. This is best demonstrated, especially in the early weeks of the modules of the “online” version of the course. This approach highlighted for me the importance of careful course design, where knowledge acquisition is incremental and reinforced through practice. Unfortunately, the course’s content got exceeded my computational skill level, especially once I attempted the “Advanced” modules. Despite seeing great uses for accessibility (such as sonification, for example) and interdisciplinary applications (Image and audio analysis), my coding background was not strong enough to fully comprehend these modules.

Beyond the content itself, this project sharpened my teamwork and professional collaboration skills. We relied on Trello for task management, which, while visually clear and organized, did not always meet our team’s communication needs due to limited notifications and input options. I discovered that synchronous communication through Zoom and detailed written instructions were far more effective for ensuring clarity and accountability. Discord also served as an important tool for maintaining quick updates and check-ins, especially during a summer when everyone’s schedules were very busy.

While working through each week's modules, communication was key to indicate mistakes or issues with the content or its deployment. Given my lack of knowledge surrounding coding, I was not able to indicate many issues, but the ones I did indicate I included in my notes section. One of the most practical lessons I learned was the importance of choosing the right tools for the right purposes, especially when in comes to team communication.. Trello worked well for laying out the big picture of tasks, but it was not a substitute for more immediate and dynamic communication. Zoom allowed us to align our understanding quickly, while written instructions provided a reliable reference point. Discord, though less formal, kept the sense of community intact and enabled us to stay connected in a more flexible way. I wish I had joined the Discord earlier, as this seemed to be the optimal form of team communication. Together, these tools underscored the value of adaptability in collaborative projects. I would have felt that more frequent or scheduled Zoom meetings would have helped me and others stay on track and with a clear project direction. With that being said, despite a busy summer and not being in person, our collaboration was valuable.

Overall, my experience with the *DH Primer* was both personally and professionally enriching. I deepened my knowledge of Digital Humanities pedagogy, improved my collaborative skills, and reflected critically on communication methods in team-based projects. These lessons will inform not only my future academic work but also how I approach teamwork, teaching, and project management in broader professional contexts.

At the same time, this project also made me reflect on the position of English Language and Literature within the broader field of Digital Humanities. At times, English felt somewhat on the outskirts of DH work, and entering the field with limited coding knowledge was intimidating. However, through coursework, the *Coding for the Humanities* workshops at the library, conferences, and peer-led lessons, I gained confidence and began to see how coding could extend literary study. While English DH often emphasizes text analysis, sorting, and word counts, my work on beta testing the *Digital Archaeology* course opened my eyes to the wider applications of DH coding. It also sparked ideas for blending English-based DH research with other disciplines, including my earlier BA in Film Studies.

In this sense, working on the *DH Primer* felt like the culmination of my MA year. It brought together my explorations of pedagogy (via my work TAing), interdisciplinary DH practice, and collaborative work into one cohesive experience. Contributing to the DH Primer while learning about coding at the same felt like an extremely “meta” experience. Most importantly, however, it reinforced my understanding of Digital Humanities as not only a toolset, but also a flexible and interdisciplinary framework for academic learning.