Beyond the Big Tent

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"Big Tent Digital Humanities" is the theme of the Digital Humanities 2011 conference at Stanford University. It is a well-chosen conference topic given the current, often fairly intense debate about the scope and direction of the digital humanities, one also exemplified by the Modern Language Association (MLA) 2011 panel on "The History and Future of the Digital Humanities" as well as a number of concurrent online discussions. This debate has a disciplinary, historical, and institutional basis and is backdropped by considerable interest in the digital humanities from universities, funding agencies, scholars, and others. Moreover, there is a basic tension between a tradition invested in technology as a tool and methodology and a range of "newcomers" starting out from other modes of engagement between the humanities and the digital (Svensson, "Landscape"). A related point of tension has to do with the scope of the digital humanities. Arguably, much of the hope and interest currently invested in the digital humanities relates to an inclusive notion of the field and a sense of the digital humanities as a way of reconfiguring the humanities (Svensson, "Envisioning"). Hence the issue of the size of the digital humanities canalizes a range of important debates and future critical choices.

This chapter explores the contemporary landscape of digital humanities starting from the discourse of "big tent" digital humanities. What is it exactly that needs to be incorporated into the tent that was not there before? Does a larger tent come with expanded responsibilities? Why do we need a tent or a bounding mechanism in the first place? Is there place for private as well as public institutions of higher education in the tent? Is a very inclusive notion of digital humanities problematic? The chapter ends with a suggestion that the community may benefit from a "no tent" approach to the digital humanities and that "trading zone" (Galison) or "meeting place" may be useful, alternative structuring devices and ideational notions.

Sizing the Digital Humanities

There can be no doubt that the digital humanities have expanded in multiple ways over the last ten years. Indeed, ten years ago, the notion of digital humanities itself was an emerging one, arising out of a relabeling process within the humanities computing community (Kirschenbaum; Svensson, "Humanities Computing"). The perceived larger size would partly seem to be a result of having a more distinct and inclusive label, although there has also obviously been a real expansion as indicated by new book series, the number of positions advertised, funding available, the growing number of digital humanities initiatives, interest from policy makers and university leadership, increased visibility, and general buzz.

The digital humanities arose from a specific epistemic tradition or set of traditions (Knorr Cetina), and with the expansion of the field comes a higher degree of heterogeneity and inclusion of other epistemic traditions (Svensson, "Humanities Computing"). This is part of what makes the digital humanities a dynamic and, to some extent, indeterminate field. It is important to note that traditional humanities computing, as well as digital humanities, frequently have had an intersectional position. In other words, digital humanities institutions tend to depend on interaction with other institutions to a larger extent than most traditional departments and disciplines. This is evident in the idea of a methodological commons (McCarty), for instance; and it is also notable that the digital humanities have often been institutionalized as centers and institutes rather than as traditional departments. Indeed, such centers may be more institutionally akin to traditional humanities centers than departments. Examples include the Centre for Computing in the Humanities (CCH) at King's College, the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) at the University of Virginia, and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland. These centers obviously share some characteristics, such as a range of activities and strategies to do work with other parts of the humanities, as well as outside of the humanities proper. This liminal position is quite important, offering something that can be built on in order to facilitate digital humanities as a larger project. However, we also need to acknowledge that this necessitates the reassessing of traditions and possible interaction points between the humanities and the digital and allowing change not only in terms of size but also in terms of epistemic texture and institutional focus. An interesting question is whether the recent name change of the Centre for Computing in the Humanities to the Department of Digital Humanities indicates a difference in self-conception and whether it will result in a different institutional position.

Yale University: Inside or Outside the Tent?

The listed institutions all come from the humanities computing tradition. What's more, we are now seeing a range of new initiatives not anchored in this tradition as strongly, which sometimes leads to points of tension. A useful example is Yale University's relatively recent interest in digital humanities as manifested in a working group for the digital humanities started in 2009. On their website, the field is described as follows: "Digital humanities encompass an array of convergent practices that explore a world in which scholarship is not exclusively produced in print but is created and distributed through new digital technologies. This group will consider the expanding practices, vocabulary, and research methods germane to digital humanities across disciplines." This is a fairly inclusive definition, arguably compatible with a big-tent notion of the digital humanities. The discussion of Yale's interest in the digital humanities is presumably inflected by the fact that Yale is not just any newcomer but an Ivy League school and one arguably coming to the field from a different tradition (as evidenced by a close connection to media theory). In February 2010, the conference "The Past's Digital Presence" received considerable attention partly through *Humanist* editor Willard McCarty's description of it as a "watershed moment" (McCarty, *Humanist*). This gracious introduction of Yale University into the digital humanities was met with some resistance. In a subsequent *Humanist* post, University of Nebraska professor Amanda Gailey expressed some concern:

> I find that the "watershed" comment overlooks the work that many grad students have been doing at non-Ivy schools for several years now. . . . Importantly, many of us who did not attend Ivy League schools and who professionally defined ourselves as digital humanists before it became an MLA buzzword were arguably taking many more risks. . . . Frankly, I view the late arrival of the Ivies as a worrisome indicator that DH will soon be locked down by the same tired socioeconomic gatekeeping mechanisms that prevent many people with talent from succeeding at so many other academic disciplines. (Gailey)

Gailey reacts to McCarty's description of the workshop but also to the aspirations of Yale and other Ivy League schools to enter the digital humanities. There is a clear sense of pointing to the tradition of humanities computing as digital humanities here and the personal and institutional investment of digital humanists with a long-term engagement in the field. It should also be noted here that the list of readings for the Yale Digital Humanities Working Group includes pieces such as John Unsworth's 2002 paper "What Is Humanities Computing and What Is Not?" showing sensibility to the history of the field. There is probably some truth to Gailey's socioeconomic concerns (which obviously are shared by others in the community as evident in Katherine Harris's comment (Harris), although expansion would

inevitably seem to lead to more heterogeneity and hence presumably a larger socioeconomic spread. Maybe a stronger interest from elite universities could even help leverage the digital humanities as a project and the humanities as Yale (as suggested by Cohen in relation to discussing the Open Content Alliance)? Also, the creation of a working group at Yale does not in itself necessarily represent an institutionally strategic move. It could be argued that the working group indicates interest from faculty, graduate students, and technology experts. Of course, such interest cannot be entirely removed from institutional politics and the overall traction of digital humanities. The fact that the working group has the web address digitalhumanities.yale.edu carries institutional meaning, and the heading "Digital Humanities at Yale" on that web page indicates a strategic position. At the same time, the breadth of the digital humanities at Yale is indicated by a subsequent conference not organized by the working group but advertised on the digital humanities website: "Yale Media Theory and History Conference" (April 22–23, 2011). Internal priorities must also be considered; perhaps scholars interested in the digital humanities at Yale need support from the wider digital humanities (DH) community in order for their initiative to take off.

An important question here concerns who is the real gatekeeper. Gailey's reluctance to acknowledge Yale as a new addition to the field appears to be due to Yale being a privileged school that had not been part of the buildup of the field. It could be argued, however, that a big-tent notion of the digital humanities must be based on an open invitation and generosity rather than past hardships. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that expanding territory and, in particular, epistemic range is not unproblematic and that boundary making is integral to disciplinary formation.

Another type of reluctance is based on the type of digital humanities that Yale is seen as representing and its associated epistemic commitments. Many of the people active in the Yale working group seem to be "traditional" scholars interested in the digital more as a digitally inflected object of inquiry. In a polemic position statement from the MLA 2011 conference, Stephen Ramsay points to "coding" or "making" as a necessary criterion to qualify for the digital humanities, and in the discussion he brings in Yale (and some other schools):

> But what if Duke or Yale were to offer a degree in Digital Humanities and they said "no" to code and "yes" to text? Or "no" to building and "yes" to theorizing? Or decided that Digital Humanities is what we used to call New Media Studies (which is the precise condition, as far as I can tell, at Dartmouth)? You might need to know how to code in order to be competitive for relevant grants with the ODH, NSF, or Mellon. Maybe that means Yale's DH ambitions will never get off the ground. Or maybe Yale is powerful enough to redefine the mission of those institutions with respect to the Humanities. Most institutions, for the record, are not. (Ramsay)

This is an intentionally provocative piece written by a single person (Ramsay), and we should be careful not to draw overly far-reaching conclusions from it. However, it is quite clear that this is an example of gatekeeping based on epistemic traditions and commitments. Funding agency structures and programs, often seen as barriers in the humanities computing tradition (cf. Terras and Smithies), are used as a gatekeeping device.

Joining Willard McCarty in approval of the Yale event was John Unsworth, another established digital humanities representative. It is notable that both McCarty and Unsworth have secure institutional positions, while scholars critiquing the Yale event were less established in the field. McCarty and Unsworth represent the core of the community, and their praise hence comes from deep inside the discipline, which may help explain some of the intensity of the discussion. Unsworth (12–13) notes that graduate students organized the conference and lists the titles of PhD projects of these graduate students. These include "The Liberal Schoolmaster" and "Literary Souvenirs: Didactic Materialism in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Fiction." Unsworth asks, "How did these students get drawn into the digital humanities?" (13). This is a very interesting question, the answer to which demonstrates that even a big tent—enacted by Unsworth—can be coupled with epistemic predispositions:

> Finally, back to that remark Willard made, about the graduate students in the Yale conference—the remark generally overlooked in the dispute about watersheds. What he said was that "quite independently of the work us older ones have done for so long, these students see the possibilities now visible and question them as befits the humanities." This is perhaps the most interesting point, and the one on which I will end. Coming up behind Christy and Harris, Gailey, Ramsay, Bogost, Kirschenbaum, McCarty, Ayers, Stallybrass, and me, is a generation of graduate students who essentially learned to do research with digital tools; they aren't necessarily aware of the history that's implicit, just barely submerged, in the exchanges we've been considering here—they actually don't care all that much about the back-story. They're interested in grabbing these tools, using these new library services, and making their own mark, and they have some interesting questions to ask. (Unsworth, 18)

The Yale graduate students are "read" as coming to the digital humanities through having "learned to do research with digital tools" and being interested in "grabbing these tools." While the conference program to some extent was tool and encoding based, the PhD titles previously listed by Unsworth would seem to indicate analytical research of more traditional type, and the question is whether these students really came to the digital humanities (if they actually came to stay) through an interest in tools and library services. Again, the point here is that this is not just a question of the size of the tent but also about how the tent is epistemologically textured.

What Types of Digital Humanities?

The place of Yale University in the digital humanities tent can be partially related to how the relationship between the humanities and the digital is conceived. In traditional digital humanities (or humanities computing), technology or tool-related methodology often serves an instrumental function (Svensson, "Humanities Computing"). I have argued elsewhere that the interrelation between the humanities and the digital can be discussed in terms of different modes of engagement: the digital or technology as tool, study object, medium, laboratory, and activist venue (Svensson, "Landscape"). If big-tent digital humanities reaches across these modes of engagement, the tool-oriented approach is only one among several possible modes of engagements.

We can see the primary role given to tools in Unsworth's discussion or in the idea of a methodological commons as a core structural component of the field. In discussing the methodological commons, McCarty writes that humanities computing has been able to transcend disciplinary and institutional boundaries through a methodological commons "for all to draw on"; and, in his thoughtful outlining of the commons, it is quite clear that we are concerned with a particular model (118). For instance, it is based on introducing data types and a set of tools to manipulate the data, and the tools in turn are derived from formal methods (136). There is considerable complexity to this issue, and tools can be both instrumental and deeply integrated into humanistic research endeavors. This said, we should be careful not to see tools as neutral artifacts. In an enlightening discussion on digital visualization tools, Johanna Drucker maintains that graphical tools such as GIS, mapping, and graphs are based on underlying assumptions, which "are cloaked in a rhetoric taken wholesale from the techniques of the empirical sciences that conceals their epistemological biases under a guise" (Drucker). While tools themselves can be epistemologically predisposed, it could be argued that placing tools and tool-related methodology at the base of digital humanities work implies a particular view of the field and, within big-tent digital humanities, possibly an exclusive stance. One central question is whether the tent can naturally be taken to include critical work construing the digital as an object of inquiry rather than as a tool.

When Unsworth notes that the young Yale scholars have "some interesting questions to ask," the epistemic perspective is not so much seen in asking or not asking analytical questions but in how one gets to the questions. If tools and related mechanisms underlie an epistemic commitment, this would be evident in the questions either being asked through the tools or arising as a result of using the tools. One pertinent question, then, is whether there is room for research in the digital humanities that does not engage with tools, or "making" in Ramsey's fairly narrow sense, and whether that work can be accepted in its own right.

It is important not to overplay these differences while being sensitive to them and to the tensions that may arise from them. In general, it is easier to be inside than outside, and it would seem quite important to be inclusive and generous when one is part of the established core of a field or discipline. Language plays a significant role here, and what seems uncontroversial from an internal perspective can be exclusionary from an outside perspective.

The DH 2011 Call for Papers: Inclusionary or Exclusionary?

Conferences are important in the formation of disciplines and fields (Klein), and the principal conference for the digital humanities is the annual conference named "Digital Humanities." This conference series is grounded in the tradition of humanities computing; it goes back to at least the early 1990s and is currently organized by the Association for Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO). I have earlier discussed the 2009 Call for Papers for the Digital Humanities conference (Svensson, "Humanities Computing") as clearly representing a specific tradition of digital humanities rather than a more multivalent approach. As Stéfan Sinclair observes, the conference is quite competitive in terms of accepted proposals (34 percent in 2010), and there is a tendency to "push inwards toward the centre of recognized digital humanities research and practices." He argues that the conference can thus be seen to stifle growth and innovation and also points to it serving several disciplines and institutional contexts. Sinclair also notes that new conferences (such as Yale's "The Past's Digital Presence" discussed earlier) have helped to decenter the Digital Humanities conference. However, there can be no doubt that it is the main conference for the field (at least as traditionally conceived) and thus an important arena for negotiating a more inclusive notion of digital humanities.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the theme for the 2011 conference is "Big Tent Digital Humanities," a theme that makes it particularly relevant to look again at the Call for Papers (CFP) for the conference:

> Proposals might, for example, relate to the following aspects of digital humanities: research issues, including data mining, information design and modelling, software studies, and humanities research enabled through the digital medium; computer-based research and computer applications in literary, linguistic, cultural and historical studies, including electronic literature, public humanities, and interdisciplinary aspects of modern scholarship. Some examples might be text analysis, corpora, corpus linguistics, language processing, language learning, and endangered languages; the digital arts, architecture, music, film, theater, new media, and related areas; the creation and curation of humanities digital resources; the role of digital humanities in academic curricula.

> The range of topics covered by digital humanities can also be consulted in the journal of the associations, *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (*LLC*). (General Call for Papers, Digital Humanities 2011)

The call as a whole is definitely more inclusive than the 2009 CFP, which had a more pronounced instrumental and textual focus; but, even so, there can be no doubt that there is a particular scholarly tradition underlying the call. This may not be surprising given the history of the conference series, but the current state of the field and the theme would seem to call for a more clearly inclusive stance. Again, it is important to consider inside and outside perspectives. It may be that the call under discussion seems inclusive to the organizers of the conference, whereas it is seen as exclusionary by "outsiders" or newcomers to the field. For instance, most of the aspects listed could be said to represent tool-oriented and text-based research. Through talking about "humanities research enabled through the digital medium," the technology or medium is also given considerable agency. The long-standing humanities computing interest in cultural heritage work is evident through the focus on creation and curation of digital resources. The only aspect listed that can easily be seen as reaching outside of the tradition is the one focusing on "digital arts, architecture, music, film, theater, new media, and related areas." This is quite a significant inclusion, but it is worth noting that in contrast with the two preceding items on the list, there is no further elaboration. Rather, it could be argued that a number of internally heterogeneous "leftovers" have been subsumed under one bullet point. And while the list as a whole is presented as only suggesting examples of digital humanities areas, what is actually listed is quite important, not least to outsiders. If this is how the big tent is reflected among the suggested topic areas, it does not necessarily seem inviting, nor does it speak to those communities that do not share tool-oriented or text-based approaches to research.

In the introduction to the call, there is special focus on big-tent aspects: "With the Big Tent theme in mind, we especially invite submissions from Latin American scholars, scholars in the digital arts and music, in spatial history, and in the public humanities"("General Call for Papers," Digital Humanities 2011). It seems that this specification is narrower than the topic area just discussed and, to an outsider, somewhat arbitrary (although the local context at Stanford would seem to be an important rationale). For instance, a new media scholar interested in the digital humanities may not feel inclined to submit a proposal, particularly because new media is not included in the big-tent specification and is instead listed together with some fairly unrelated areas without further elaboration in the list of topics.

We would expect newcomers to be prepared to make an effort and learn about the context of the conference and tradition. However, sometimes what may be clear to insiders may not be accessible to newcomers. This can be exemplified with the reference to the journal *Literary and Linguistic Computing* in the Call for Papers.

It is said that the journal can be consulted about the "range of topics covered by digital humanities." Looking at the most recent issue of the journal at the time of writing (Volume 26, Issue 1, April 2011), the articles deal with comparing treaty texts, visualization as a tool for dialect geography, authorship attribution, computer scansion of Ancient Greek Hexameter, lexical bundles, extraction of syntactic differences, and a regressive imagery dictionary. If the new media scholar interested in digital humanities imagined earlier was not stopped by the text in the Call for Papers and followed the advice to look at the journal to find out more, it is very likely that he or she would not feel included or inclined to actually register for the conference.

However, the emphasis on this particular journal is partly institutional. It was started in 1973 and has been the journal of two of the core humanities computing associations, as well as for the journal of the Association for Digital Humanities Organizations (AHDO). Furthermore, it is part of a funding mechanism for ADHO (and its organizations), as members and member organizations pay their fees through subscribing to the journal. All this means that *LLC* has a special status but not necessarily that all members of traditional digital humanities (or humanities computing) see this journal as the primary voice of the field. To an outsider, however, this arrangement may not be particularly transparent. A very simple adjustment would be to also include the *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (also supported by ADHO) as a reference in the Call for Papers. It has a considerably broader scope than *LLC* and is open access. A more radical suggestion would be to also list a few journals outside the core tradition. This would clearly indicate a big-tent sentiment and pronounced interest in other traditions.

Big Visions

I have argued elsewhere (Svensson, "Envisioning") that contemporary digital humanities can be associated with an interest in change and that the field can be used as a means to imagine the future of the humanities. This is typically more apparent in new initiatives than in traditional digital humanities. Hence one interesting question is how these "big" visions relate to a big-tent digital humanities grounded in the tradition of humanities computing.

White papers produced to make a case for the digital humanities can act as a source of material for visionary discourse. These documents are typically part of a process of lobbying for the field and establishing a digital humanities center. This is a particular type of text—typically aiming to convince university management to prioritize a certain area—but also indicative of hopes and strategies associated with the field at particular sites. I have looked at three white papers from three American universities: University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW-Madison), University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and Texas A&M. While the documents are site specific, so to speak, there is considerable overlap. The wish lists presented

generally include space, technology, and strategic hires. Moreover, there is a common view of the digital humanities as a considerable force and "game changer" in all three documents.

The UW-Madison documents describe how the digital humanities "plugs directly into the media culture lived by our students, our peers, and our wider communities" and how the field, through its "interconnected and infrastructural dimensions," is the future of the humanities ("Enhancing Digital Humanities"). They also point out how the digital humanities currently offers a "strategic nexus through which faculty, students, and staff can analyze and direct how this future might unfold" ("Enhancing Digital Humanities"). This is an expansive vision that goes beyond affecting and changing the humanities. The UCLA white paper similarly extends beyond the humanities proper when it is argued that the field is "setting new intellectual agendas and priorities for the twenty-first century" ("The Promise of Digital Humanities"). Furthermore, emergent modes of knowledge formation and reaching new audiences for digitally inflected scholarship are emphasized. Again, we get the impression of a field that intersects with the humanities profoundly through multiple modes of engagement. The Texas A&M document presents two grand challenges for the center: "the need to investigate the relationship of computing technologies and culture, and the need to construct cyberinfrastructure for the humanities and social sciences" ("Texas Center for Digital Humanities and New Media"). The planned research—cultural records, systems, environments, and interactions in the digital age—is said to engage with one of most significant questions of our time: What does it mean to be human in the digital age? Presumably, tackling this question and the grand challenges requires a range of competencies as well as a broad engagement with the digital (and nondigital).

While we should exercise analytical caution given the genre of these documents, it seems clear that they attribute transformative power to the digital humanities and that the field and associated challenges require multivalent competencies including analytical work and engagement that may not necessarily involve digital tools, coding, or a textual focus. This would seem to suggest the importance of a broadly conceived digital humanities and the need for a larger tent than the one indicated by the Digital Humanities 2011 Call for Papers.

The Digital Humanities as a Trading Zone and Meeting Place

It may be difficult to recognize different epistemic traditions and support them within the framework of a digital humanities "tent" that may be stretched in some ways (but not others). Importantly, there is a risk that a wealth of traditions and perspectives are subsumed and conflated in a tent primarily keyed to one particular tradition. This is not merely a question of semantics and metaphorical systems but deeply concerns how we think of the future of the field. Given the foregoing discussion, the history of the field, and an inclusive view of the digital humanities,

I am suggesting an alternative model based on the digital humanities as a meeting place, innovation hub, and trading zone (see McCarty for an earlier discussion of humanities computing as a methodology-oriented trading zone). Such a notion highlights some qualities of the digital humanities—including its commitment to interdisciplinary work and deep collaboration—that could attract individuals both inside and outside the tent with an interest in the digital humanities. Arguably, such bridge building and the bringing together of epistemic traditions is not optimally done from the position of discipline or department. The liminal position of the field is thus not seen as a problem but rather as an important quality.

The notion of trading zones comes from Peter Galison and his analysis of physicists of different paradigms carrying out collaborative research despite belonging to different epistemic traditions. The concept can be used to describe "places" where interdisciplinary work occurs and where different traditions are maintained at the same time as intersectional work is carried out. We should be aware that the concept of "trading zone" is based on a trading and marketplace metaphor that construes knowledge production as trade and that comes from a scientific context.

Harry Collins, Robert Evans, and Mike Gorman point to the importance of interactional expertise (i.e., using the language of an expert community for interacting with members) for productive engagement in cross-disciplinary work. They suggest an evolution of trading zones in relation to interactional expertise, where the starting point may be a cohesive situation where different groups are encouraged to work together, while the other end of the scale represents cultures becoming more homogenous through the process of new disciplinary formation. The digital humanities can be seen as a fractioned (not homogenous) collaborative (not coerced) trading zone and a meeting place that supports deeply collaborative work, individual expression, unexpected connections, and synergetic power. The "digital," in a broad sense and in various manifestations, functions as a shared boundary object.

Arguably, the digital humanities needs to support and allow multiple modes of engagement between the humanities and the digital in order to touch at the heart of the disciplines, maximize points of interaction, tackle large research and methodology challenges, and facilitate deep integration between thinking and making. This perspective would seem to be compatible with the digital humanities as a trading zone and a meeting place. Similarly, the grand challenges identified in the white papers discussed would seem to require consorted efforts. Meeting places can make such efforts possible. Whether mostly physical or mostly digital, they can help channel dispersed resources, technologies, and intellectual energy. Furthermore, deep integration of toolmaking and interpretative perspectives requires very different kinds of competencies and work to happen in the same space. It could also be argued that there is value to unexpected meetings in creative environments in terms of expanding the digital humanities.

Digital humanities as a trading zone and meeting place also emphasizes the intermediary and facilitating function of the digital. The digital cuts across disciplines and perspectives; and, as Matt Ratto and Robert Ree observe in their study, digital media is not an industrial sector in its own right. Similarly, it could be argued that the digital humanities is not a discipline and that the intermediary role of the digital is useful to the digital humanities in multiple ways. For instance, it allows connections to all of humanities disciplines as well as to the large parts of the academy and the world outside. It is no accident that there is a growing connection between the public humanities and the digital humanities ("Digital Humanities at the University of Washington"). Also, the digital can be used as a way of canalizing interest in rethinking the humanities and the academy. This gives a strong incitement for institutions to support the digital humanities. More broadly, there is a niche to be filled in most institutions of higher education—that of intersectional meeting places. The humanities is a good place for such meeting places to emerge, and the digital humanities can thus unquestionably become a site for innovation, dialogue, and engagement with the future.

Conclusion

The digital humanities amply demonstrates that there is no one size that fits all. The heterogeneity of the field is in many ways an asset, and the current external interest and attraction presents a significant opportunity for expansion. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that there is a core community associated with the digital humanities and that the all-encompassing, inclusive digital humanities may not always seem an attractive option to it. Multitude and variation may be seen as diluting the field and taking away from a number of epistemic commitments. This is a very valid concern, and various initiatives are bound to tackle this challenge in different ways. It would seem, however, that a big-tent digital humanities should not be predominantly anchored in one tradition.

Even if the big-tent vision of the digital humanities gives the field a sense of openness and invitation, it does not necessarily remove institutional predispositions and thresholds or make the field into a blank slate. The alternative model suggested here, seeing the digital humanities as a trading zone and meeting place, places more emphasis on existing traditions and the intersectional work required to make "big" digital humanities happen. Furthermore, this model acknowledges the advantage of a liminal position and the digital as a way of connecting disciplines, perspectives, and methodologies. By seeing the field as a trading zone and meeting place, we can acknowledge disciplinary and methodological expertise, while approaching grand challenges, relating key disciplinary discourses, supporting multiple modes of engagement with the digital, and distinctly engaging with the future of the humanities.

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The Digital Humanities Situation

RAFAEL C. ALVARADO

Let's be honest—there is no definition of digital humanities, if by definition we mean a consistent set of theoretical concerns and research methods that might be aligned with a given discipline, whether one of the established fields or an emerging, transdisciplinary one. The category denotes no set of widely shared computational methods that contributes to the work of interpretation, no agreed upon norms or received genres for digital publication, no broad consensus on whether digital work, however defined, counts as genuine academic work. Instead of a definition, we have a genealogy, a network of family resemblances among provisional schools of thought, methodological interests, and preferred tools, a history of people who have chosen to call themselves digital humanists and who in the process of trying to define the term are creating that definition. How else to characterize the meaning of an expression that has nearly as many definitions as affiliates? It is a social category, not an ontological one.

As a social category, the term has a more or less clear set of organizational referents. Recently Matt Kirschenbaum reminded us that there is a peer-reviewed journal, a federal office, an annual conference, and an international network of academic centers associated with the term, not to mention an Oxford Companion ("What Is"). However the gap between the social and the ontological cannot avoid appearing as a kind of scandal. This is evident from the number of essays and blog posts that have emerged seeking to define the category, as well as from the playfully combative and defensive tone some remarks have taken. This anxiety of self-definition seems to indicate a new phase in the history of the field, one that may indicate the emergence of a territorial instinct in an environment of scarce resources—even as the language of the "big tent" emerges. After all, the shift from "humanities computing" to the "digital humanities" indexes a growth in the size and popularity of the community. With growth comes growing pains.

To many, the digital humanities feels like a small town that has recently been rated as a great place to raise a family. It is now inundated by developers who want to build condos for newcomers who are competing for resources and who may not

understand local customs. Identity crises emerge when tacit, unspoken understandings and modes of interaction are disrupted by external contact and demographic shifts. In the quest to defend old ways and invent new ones, in-groups are defined, prophets emerge, witchcraft accusations are made, and people generally lose what communal solidarity they once had. The digital humanities community has not gone this far, but one cannot help but notice the disparity between the Woodstock feeling of THATCamp events and what appears to be the Altamont of Digital Humanities 2011.

To be sure, all digital humanists share a common bond as *humanists*, scholars devoted to the interpretation of what the art historian Erwin Panofsky called "the records left by man [sic]" (5)—works of literature, art, architecture, and other products and traces of human intellectual labor. More specifically, the sorts of humanists who have been drawn into the fold of digital humanities have had a distinct preference toward textual remains, even if we entertain pleas to consider nonverbal channels as well (usually originating from nontraditional fields, such as media studies). It remains an implicit (if discomfiting) assumption among digital humanists that, as Tim Bray puts it (in the tag line for his website, Textuality.com), "knowledge is a text based application." Consistent with this view, the typical digital humanist is a literary scholar, historian, or librarian—all traditional fields concerned with the management and interpretation of written documents. Others, such as myself, come from other backgrounds; but I believe it is no accident that the recent buzz about the discipline was spawned by talks given at the Modern Language Association (MLA) meetings.

There are also many schools of thought under the sign who do share, within themselves, a more or less coherent set of methods and concerns. There is, of course, the old guard of humanities computing, trained in the markup of textual sources using the Text Encoding Initiative's guidelines and schema and versed in the theoretical implications of this mode of representation. There is a newer community who embraces the "spatial humanities" through the use of mapping software in relation to textual (and other) sources and who has shifted our attention toward visualization and human geography—an overlooked field that should rightly have its day. Alongside these there is a long-running group of statistical critics, extending from Father Busa and IBM to Franco Moretti and Google, as well as other computational humanists who have been at it since the 1960s and who believe that counting words, applying the methods of computational linguistics, and observing patterns in large corpora will produce insights unreachable by mere reading. One could also point to the Critical Code Studies group and other schools of thought that have emerged in this space.

Taken as a whole, however, there is little connection among these groups beyond a shared interest in texts and the use of computational technologies to explore and understand them (as opposed to merely creating or distributing them). But more important, none of these groups, either in isolation or as a whole, has successfully

demonstrated to the wider community of humanists that there are essential and irreplaceable gains to be had by the application of digital tools to the project of interpreting (and reinterpreting) the human record for the edification of society. To a disconcertingly large number of outsiders, the digital humanities qua humanities remains interesting but irrelevant. Anthony Grafton speaks for the majority when, in a recent *New York Times* piece (Cohen), he repeats the platitude that the digital humanities is a means and not an end. Given his stature in the field, not to mention his role as president of the American Historical Association (AHA), his recent remarks regarding his experience of a presentation on Culturomics at the AHA meetings in Boston (Grafton) may indicate a turning of the tide—but the conversion of other prominent scholars has not produced such shifts in the past.

Now, if we use the term digital humanities and cannot define it, maybe we are thinking of such definitions in the wrong way. Maybe the traditional way of defining disciplines in the academy is all wrong. Instead of saying that physics is the study of matter and energy, or history the study of what people have done in the past, maybe we should say that physics is the work of those who read Newton and Einstein, who use various branches of mathematics, and who know how to construct experiments in a certain way. Or history is the work of people who know how to navigate archives and read old tax records and diaries and other textual remains, whereas archaeologists are those who know how to manage digs and how to retrieve, classify, and interpret shards and bones.

This may sound forced for the hard sciences, but it is eminently reasonable for the humanities and social sciences. For what are the real differences between history, sociology, economics, anthropology, and archaeology? Each claims to address the structure and function of society. The answer is that each has mastered a particular domain of data—its acquisition, organization, analysis, and interpretation. Sociologists do surveys and statistics, interviews and content analysis. Cultural anthropologists do fieldwork and thick description. Economists count indicators and develop equations to relate them. Historians are very good at converting old documents and archives into stories. When an archaeologist starts to read such documents, we say she is doing "historical archaeology." Document-reading anthropologists become ethnohistorians. And so forth.

Such a definition (which philosophers will recognize as a species of pragmatism) allows us to turn our attention to the practical and situated basis of the digital humanities. In this view, digital humanists are simply humanists (or interpretive social scientists) by training who have embraced digital media and who have a more or less deep conviction that digital media can play a crucial, indeed transformative, role in the work of interpretation, broadly conceived. Beyond this all bets are off. Because the category of digital media includes essentially everything afforded to the humanist by the presence of available computing—everything from crowd sourcing and social media to natural language processing and latent semantic indexing to gaming and haptic immersion—the digital humanities is in principle

associated with as many methods and tools as there are intersections between texts and technologies.

The complexity of the field is also multiplied by the modes of relationship that may characterize the intersection between computation and textuality in each case. Consider the difference between the practices of textual markup and the work associated with Critical Code Studies. The former subjects primary source texts to digital representation by means of code—XML, XSLT, and so on—whereas the latter treats code itself as text, seeking to apply principles of interpretation theory (hermeneutics, structuralism, etc.) to programming languages and, one hopes, markup languages as well. (One might include here Kirschenbaum's *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*, which treats hardware itself as text.) As Stephen Ramsay has argued ("Toward"), practitioners of the former approach can be curiously uncritical of their tools and methods, checking their postmodernist perspectives at the door of the lab.

Consider also the case of databases. On the one hand, many scholars supplement their research by using data management tools to organize notes and references. On the other hand, there is an emerging school of thought, initiated by Lev Manovich, that regards the database itself as an object of criticism in its own right (Manovich). The difference between the two approaches is like night and day, although one can imagine how one may profit from the other. Still a third mode of intersection is to regard technology as an allegory of textuality. For example, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun has employed the image of the fiber optic network as a frame for the interpretation of digitally mediated social interaction and text (Chun). So not only are there as many kinds of digital humanities as there are intersections between humanities and computation technology, but that number is at least tripled, in principle, by the kind of relationship that inheres in that intersection. To a humanist, any computational technology is potentially tool, text, and metaphor.

Given this surplus of extensional meanings, there is simply no way to describe the digital humanities as anything like a discipline. Just think of the curricular requirements of such a field! Not only would it require its members to develop the deep domain knowledge of the traditional humanist—distant reading notwithstanding—it would also demand that they learn a wide range of divergent technologies (including programming languages) as well as the critical discourses to situate these technologies as texts, cultural artifacts participating in the reproduction of social and cognitive structures. Granted the occasional polymath who may master all three, the scope of such a program is simply too vast and variegated. And in fact there has been no consensus among digital humanists about the basic elements of a curriculum, a problem we share with advocates of media fluency to define a curriculum for faculty development.

So if the digital humanities is neither in fact nor in principle a discipline, then what is it? Surely, with its growing army of followers and plethora of concrete institutional manifestations, it must have some basis in a reality other than its own

existence. In fact it does. The digital humanities, as both a broad collection of practices and an intense, ongoing interpretive *praxis* generative of such practices, is best thought of as having two very concrete but equally elusive dimensions. On the one hand, the digital humanities (conceived of in the plural) comprises something very much like a curriculum, an interrelated collection of subject domains and resources that, as a whole, contributes to both the construction of knowledge and the education of people. Although no one individual can master an entire curriculum, a curriculum nevertheless has a logic, a coherence, and even a center of gravity.

This leads to the second and more important dimension: that center of gravity is not a particular assemblage of technologies or methods but the ongoing, playful encounter with digital representation itself. It is the encounter that the digital humanist discovers and finds at once a revealing, satisfying, and ineffable source of fellow feeling with his colleagues. This encounter is not regarded merely as a means to an end but as an end in itself, in so much as the process of interpretation is often as rewarding as its products. I call this encounter the *situation* of digital representation, a stable but always-in-flux event space that is but a special case of the work, or praxis, of representation in general. Adult members of literate cultures for the most part have sublimated and forgotten this praxis, but it remains present to the minds of children and poets, who are always learning how to read and write.

This, I believe, is what Stephen Ramsay means by "building" ("On Building"). Or at least it is a charitable misreading (*misprision*) that retrieves the argument he makes when he suggests, essentially, that real digital humanists write code. In my rephrasing, real digital humanists are engaged in the play of representation, which profoundly involves putting things together, whether the vehicle of assembly be Lisp or Zotero. That marks a wide spectrum; but within it there is a common element of play, of productively mapping and remapping the objects and categories of scholarship onto the rapidly changing, intrinsically plastic but structurally constraining media of digital technology. Without this play—to the extent that the scholar has a standoffish, do-this-for-me attitude toward the medium—then, no, she is not a digital humanist.

Digital humanists are aware that in the current historical moment, as the older *mentalités* of print literacy continue to be displaced and reworked, the humanist has the opportunity to immerse herself in the transductive plasma of interpretation where ideas and their expressive vehicles can be mapped and remapped in a variety of forms and frameworks, a giddy play of praxis that not all generations have the good fortune of witnessing. This experience cross-cuts all the various discipline- and technology-specific instances of digital humanities work. To the extent that a common discourse is emerging to reflect on this experience across the disciplines, the digital humanities is real enough.

NOTE

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Where's the Beef? Does Digital Humanities Have to Answer Questions?

TOM SCHEINFELDT

The criticism most frequently leveled at digital humanities is what I like to call the "Where's the beef?" question—that is, what questions does digital humanities answer that can't be answered without it? What humanities arguments does digital humanities make?

Concern over the apparent lack of argument in digital humanities comes not only from outside our young discipline. Many practicing digital humanists are concerned about it as well. Rob Nelson of the University of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab, an accomplished digital humanist, recently ruminated, "While there have been some projects that have been developed to present arguments, they are few, and for the most part I sense that they haven't had a substantial impact among academics, at least in the field of history." A post on the *Humanist* listserv, which has covered humanities computing for over two decades, expresses one digital humanist's "dream" of "a way of interpreting with computing that would allow arguments, real arguments, to be conducted at the micro-level and their consequences made in effect instantly visible at the macro-level."[1]

These concerns are justified. Does digital humanities have to help answer questions and make arguments? Yes, of course. That's what the humanities are all about. Is it answering lots of questions currently? Probably not—hence the reason for worry.

But this suggests another, more difficult, more nuanced question: When? *When* does digital humanities have to produce new arguments? Does it have to produce new arguments now? Does it have to answer questions yet?

In 1703, the great instrument maker, mathematician, and experimenter Robert Hooke died, vacating the suggestively named position he occupied for more than forty years, curator of experiments to the Royal Society. In this role, it was Hooke's job to prepare public demonstrations of scientific phenomena for the fellows' meetings. Among Hooke's standbys in these scientific performances were animal

dissections, demonstrations of the air pump (made famous by Robert Boyle but *made* by Hooke), and viewings of prepared microscope slides. Part research, part ice breaker, and part theater, one important function of these performances was to entertain the wealthier fellows of the society, many of whom were chosen for election more for their patronage than their scientific achievements.

Upon Hooke's death, the position of curator of experiments passed to Francis Hauksbee, who continued Hooke's program of public demonstrations. Many of Hauksbee's demonstrations involved the "electrical machine," essentially an evacuated glass globe that was turned on an axle and to which friction (a hand, a cloth, a piece of fur) was applied to produce a static electrical charge. Invented some years earlier, Hauksbee greatly improved the device to produce ever greater charges. Perhaps his most important improvement was the addition to the globe of a small amount of mercury, which produced a glow when the machine was fired up. In an age of candlelight and on a continent of long, dark winters, the creation of a new source of artificial light was sensational and became a popular learned entertainment not only in meetings of early scientific societies but also in aristocratic parlors across Europe. Hauksbee's machine also set off an explosion of electrical instrument making, experimentation, and descriptive work in the first half of the eighteenth century by the likes of Stephen Gray, John Desaguliers, and Pieter van Musschenbroek.

And yet not until later in the eighteenth century and early in the nineteenth century did Benjamin Franklin, Charles-Augustin de Coulomb, Alessandro Volta, and ultimately Michael Faraday provide adequate theoretical and mathematical answers to the questions of electricity raised by the electrical machine and the phenomena it produced. Only after decades of tool building, experimentation, and description were the tools sufficiently articulated and phenomena sufficiently described for theoretical arguments to be fruitfully made.[2]

There's a moral to this story. As I have argued in an earlier post, this kind of drawn-out, *longue duree*, seasonal shifting between methodological and theoretical work isn't confined to the sciences. One of the things digital humanities shares with the sciences is a heavy reliance on instruments, on tools. Sometimes new tools are built to answer preexisting questions. Sometimes, as in the case of Hauksbee's electrical machine, new questions and answers are the byproduct of the creation of new tools. Sometimes it takes a while; in the meantime, tools themselves and the whiz-bang effects they produce must be the focus of scholarly attention.

Eventually, digital humanities must make arguments. It has to answer questions. But yet? Like eighteenth-century natural philosophers confronted with a deluge of strange new tools like microscopes, air pumps, and electrical machines, maybe we need time to articulate our digital apparatus, to produce new phenomena that we can neither anticipate nor explain immediately. At the very least, we need to make room for both kinds of digital humanities, the kind that seeks to make arguments

and answer questions now and the kind that builds tools and resources with questions in mind, but only in the back of its mind and only for later. We need time to experiment and even, as Bill Turkel and Kevin Kee have argued, time to play.[3]

The eighteenth-century electrical machine was a parlor trick—until it wasn't.

NOTES

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1. Rob Nelson, "Audiences and Arguments for Digital History," *THATCamp CHNM 2010*, April 19, 2010, http://chnm2010.thatcamp.org/04/19/audiences-and-arguments-for-digital-history/; and Willard McCarty, "Reading," *Humanist*, May 9, 2010, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/humanist/Archives/Current/Humanist.vol24.txt.

2. For more on Hooke, see J. A. Bennett, *London's Leonardo : The Life and Work of Robert Hooke* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For Hauksbee and the electrical machine, see Willem Hackmann, *Electricity from Glass: The History of the Frictional Electrical Machine, 1600–1850* (Alphen aan den Rijn, The Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978); and Terje Brundtland, "From Medicine to Natural Philosophy: Francis Hauksbee's Way to the Air-Pump," *British Journal for the History of Science* 41, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 209–40. For eighteenth-century electricity in general, see John Heilbron, *Electricity in the 17th and 18th centuries : A Study of Early Modern Physics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) is still the standard.

3. Dan Cohen, Mills Kelly, and Tom Scheinfeldt, *Digital Campus Episode 56—Past Play*, MP3, http://digitalcampus.tv/2010/05/07/episode-56-past-play/.

Why Digital Humanities Is "Nice"

TOM SCHEINFELDT

One of the things that people often notice when they enter the field of digital humanities is how nice everybody is. This can be in stark contrast to other (unnamed) disciplines where suspicion, envy, and territoriality sometimes seem to rule. By contrast, our most commonly used bywords are "collegiality," "openness," and "collaboration." We welcome new practitioners easily, and we don't seem to get in lots of fights. We're the golden retrievers of the academy. (OK, it's not always all balloons and cotton candy, but most practitioners will agree that the tone and tenor of digital humanities is conspicuously amiable when compared to many, if not most, academic communities.)

There are several reasons for this. Certainly the fact that nearly all digital humanities is collaborative accounts for much of its congeniality—you have to get along to get anything accomplished. The fact that digital humanities is still young, small, vulnerable, and requiring of solidarity also counts for something.

But I have another theory: Digital humanities is nice because, as I have described in earlier posts, we're often more concerned with method than we are with theory. Why should a focus on method make us nice? Because methodological debates are often more easily resolved than theoretical ones. Critics approaching an issue with sharply opposed theories may argue endlessly over evidence and interpretation. Practitioners facing a methodological problem may likewise argue over which tool or method to use. Yet at some point in most methodological debates one of two things happens: either one method or another wins out empirically, or the practical needs of our projects require us simply to pick one and move on. Moreover, as Sean Takats, my colleague at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (CHNM), pointed out to me today, the methodological focus makes it easy for us to "call bullshit." If anyone takes an argument too far afield, the community of practitioners can always put the argument to rest by asking to see some working code, a useable standard, or some other tangible result.

In each case, the focus on method means that arguments are short, and digital humanities stays nice.

NOTE

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An Interview with Brett Bobley

MICHAEL GAVIN AND KATHLEEN MARIE SMITH

HASTAC, or the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory, is an interdisciplinary consortium committed to exploring the collaborative potential of the digital era. In February 2009, HASTAC scholars Kathleen Marie Smith and Michael Gavin asked Brett Bobley, director of the Office of the Digital Humanities for the National Endowment for the Humanities, his thoughts about "The Future of the Digital Humanities." The following interview originally appeared on the HASTAC website as one in a series of HASTAC Scholar Discussion Forums dealing with topics of interest to the digital humanities community.

1. What are the most interesting innovations happening right now in the field of digital humanities, and is it possible to predict or anticipate what will be most important in the future?

First, let me briefly explain what we mean by "digital humanities." I use "digital humanities" as an umbrella term for a number of different activities that surround technology and humanities scholarship. Under the digital humanities rubric, I would include topics like open access to materials, intellectual property rights, tool development, digital libraries, data mining, born-digital preservation, multimedia publication, visualization, GIS, digital reconstruction, study of the impact of technology on numerous fields, technology for teaching and learning, sustainability models, media studies, and many others. It became way too exhausting to recite that entire list whenever I spoke with someone, so "digital humanities" seemed to nicely summarize the issues. (Plus, it sounded better to me than "e-humanities," which is what I used to use!)

This long list of things related to digital humanities really reinforces why my staff is so busy—it is because the impact of technology on the humanities is so profound. As Tom Scheinfeldt has written, it is a game changer (Scheinfeldt). Some people wonder if game changing is an exaggeration, but let's put it this way: technology has radically changed the way we read, the way we write, and the way

we learn. Reading, writing, learning—three things that are pretty central to the humanities.

In terms of interesting innovations, I think a lot of them surround technology and how it helps you interact with humanities collections. At its heart, technology allows you to manipulate and interact with "stuff" in different ways. The stuff might be music; it might be video; it might be text; it might be images of objects. (It might even be people.) Before we look at humanities scholarship, let me throw out an analogy. Consider how, in a very short period of time, technology has changed popular music. Let's break music down to three key areas:

Access. Putting music in digital format has completely changed the access paradigm. I remember back when I was in college. I was the station manager for my campus radio station (University of Chicago, WHPK 88.5, "Cold kickin' it live!"). At the time, before the web and a few years before CDs came out, music was still remarkably regional. Whenever I was heading home to New York to visit my family, station DJs would ask me to buy records for them. Think about that for a moment—even in Chicago, one of the biggest cities in the country, there were many, many records you couldn't get your hands on. So in order to get the latest rap records coming out of New York or even a lot of imports from the UK, you had to fly to another city and bring vinyl back in your suitcase. The Internet completely and utterly changed that. Today, you can listen to a band from Australia as easily as one from your hometown.

Production and Distribution. Just a few years ago, it was nearly impossible for an unsigned band to get their music to a wide audience. Trust me, as the former head of a college radio station, most bands couldn't even make a demo tape that didn't sound horrible. But technology allows anyone with a home computer to record their music, and the web allows them to distribute it to anyone in the world.

Consumption (Listening). Digital files have enabled people to have much, much larger collections of music than they could physically store before. (Piracy helped, too, but that's another, related issue.) I carry my entire music collection on an iPod. This changes the way you listen, what you listen to, and the way you share music with others.

Now let's look at these three areas again (Access, Production, and Consumption) but in the context of humanities scholarship. What do humanists do? Well, a big part of what they do is study cultural heritage materials—books, newspapers, paintings, film, sculptures, music, ancient tablets, buildings, and so on. Pretty much everything on that list is being digitized in very large numbers. The change in access may not be quite as far along as it is for music, but it will be soon. Like with music, you'll have access to materials from all over the world. You won't have to send a book via airmail from New York to Chicago because you'll have instant access to it on your PC (or your mobile device). If you want to study materials in China, you'll be able to view them (or, for that matter, find out about them) using the web.

On the production side, we're already seeing more and more scholars producing their work for the web. It might take the form of scholarly websites, blogs, wikis,

or whatever. But as with music, a scholar (even an amateur, part-time scholar) can make her work available to the entire world at very low cost of production. After all, scholars still have to eat and so be compensated for what they do best—the analysis of scholarly materials and being part of the larger scholarly conversation (so production and transmission of knowledge). Plus, keep in mind that the entire production cycle uses technology (collecting, editing, discussing with others) before the final product is created.

On the consumption side, people get their materials in all kinds of new ways. Reading has changed with the web. It has changed from a technology perspective, of course—thinking of e-readers and laptops and mobile devices (and some of the now-starting-to-get-obsolete tech products like microfiche machines). But the changes are more profound than that. The way we read is changing—bits and pieces of varied content from so many places and perspectives.

If I had to predict some interesting things for the future in the area of access, I'd sum it up in one word: scale. Big, massive, scale. That's what digitization brings—access to far, far more cultural heritage materials than you could ever access before. If you're a scholar of, say, nineteenth-century British literature, how does your work change when, for the first time, you have every book from your era at your fingertips? Far more books than you could ever read in your lifetime. How does this scale change things? How might quantitative tech-based methodologies like data mining help you to better understand a giant corpus? Help you zero in on issues? What if you are a historian and you now have access to every newspaper around the world? How might searching and mining that kind of data set radically change your results? How might well-known assumptions in various disciplines fall once confronted with hard data? Or, perhaps, how might they be altered or reenvisioned?

2. How do you see digital technology transforming work in the disciplines of the humanities? Are there disciplines in which digital technology will have less of an impact?

In my earlier answer, I spoke about how access to large collections of digitized cultural heritage materials will transform the humanities. So let's also talk a bit about digital research tools and methodologies and their impact.

More and more scholars are starting to take advantage of digital research tools. Let me note that pretty much every scholar uses a digital tool for her work: namely, a word processor. And I'm sure there must be all kinds of interesting papers about how a word processor and its ability to edit and reedit on the fly has changed scholarship. But we don't even talk about a word processor as a digital tool anymore. But that's really the point here. What might seem novel at first can become accepted even by "regular" humanities scholars over time. There are all kinds of interesting tools and methodologies. I've been seeing a lot of really interesting uses for GIS—mapping places and events, over time, in a geographical space to help gain new

insight. Visualization is another technique that I think will become a great deal more common in the humanities. Scholars have always consumed materials to gain insight into why an event happened (or why the artist drew a painting that way, or why an ancient temple was constructed, etc.). Visualization may prove to be another technology that can help scholars see their materials in a new way.

There are many, many digital tools that scholars use every day to collaborate, to organize their work, and to publish it to the community. I suspect that many of these digital practices will become the norm. The tools will change (many will die out), but useful methods will stick. By the way, for a nice list of digital tools for the humanities, see Lisa Spiro's DiRT Wiki (Spiro).

Digital technology may impact some disciplines more than others. But frankly, this is hard to predict. Obviously, subdisciplines like game studies are very tech heavy. But who would have guessed that classics would be one of the most digitally savvy disciplines?

3. What roadblocks are scholars in the digital humanities encountering, and what advice do you have for graduate students and junior faculty?

The roadblock issue is much discussed. It seems like every conference I go to there is discussion of promotion and tenure issues, so this is certainly a big topic. Let me preface this by saying that I'm not a scholar myself; I'm a government grant maker and technologist. I say this because I want to make it clear that I can't speak authoritatively about how P&T (promotion and tenure) works on your campus. That said, my impression is that on some campuses, graduate students and junior faculty are strongly encouraged to steer away from digital scholarship and instead to write about "traditional" topics and publish "traditional" monographs. On the other hand, I do hear about more and more campuses where digital scholarship is highly valued and counted toward promotion.

I have a few thoughts here. First, I think it is important for people throughout the humanities community to understand that digital scholarship doesn't have to mean nontraditional. In other words, to get back to my word processor issue, have you ever heard someone say to a young philosopher, "Oh, you better not write your book about Aristotle using a *word processor*! Someone will think you're one of those crazy digital humanists and you won't get tenure!" This example seems silly, but keep in mind that it wasn't all that long ago that a word processor was newfangled technology. My point is that you can tackle "traditional" humanities topics and questions while still using the latest digital tools if you find it adds value to your work. Maybe you used data-mining techniques to see how Aristotle influenced other philosophers. That's great, but the focus of your book should be the results (the scholarship) and not necessarily the techniques you used.

One issue I'd like to see graduate programs tackle: more training in digital tools and methodologies for humanities scholarship. In the sciences, graduate students

learn how to use digital tools for research and analysis. But how many graduate humanities programs include classes on using GIS, 3-D modeling, data analysis, or other methods of scholarship? I suspect the number is fairly low. I wonder if this isn't an area more graduate programs should be exploring.

4. How will digital technology in the academic system in general (for example, in the changing role of textbooks in the classroom, open-access databases, or publishing requirements for tenure) affect the way research is performed and shared?
I think research will change a great deal over the next twenty years. We have already seen this in the sciences where mining "big data" has changed the way scientists do their research (Anderson). Imagine a future where we have huge digital libraries of far more material than you ever had access to before. Now imagine automatic language translation for those documents, which greatly increases your ability to study documents from around the globe.

Let's face it: sometimes scholarship is constrained by seemingly mundane hurdles like copyright, travel costs, or language barriers. Let's take art history for a moment. If you're an art historian and you want to write a book about French painters and you get the rights to reproduce the paintings of Renoir but not Monet, which artist will you choose to focus on? You'll probably write a lot more about Renoir for strictly practical reasons. What if you're a political philosopher and you can read English, French, and Greek but not Chinese? Might there be incredible literature in Chinese that would help you understand how ideas moved through cultures and across languages? But if you can't read it, you probably won't focus on it.

5. Many of the NEH's programs involve collaboration with other institutions. What does the NEH need from administrators and researchers to make successful programs?
In the Office of Digital Humanities, we're looking for really cool projects to fund! Of course, being the government, I can't exactly make the peer review criteria "coolness factor" and expect the lawyers to be OK with that! In all seriousness, though, we're looking for innovative projects that demonstrate how technology can be brought to bear on a humanities problem and, ultimately, yield great scholarship for use by a variety of audiences, whether it be scholars, students in a formal classroom setting, or the interested public.

Administrators and researchers who are interested in applying to the Office of Digital Humanities should definitely check out the projects we have already funded. (They are all easy to find on our website; check out our Library of Funded Projects at http://www.neh.gov/ODH.) It is also important to understand how to work collaboratively. So many of today's digital projects involve teams of people from various disciplines. Each member of the team brings different strengths to the project. We often see humanities scholars teaming up with computer scientists, librarians,

social scientists, and others. And the projects are richer for it. If you are developing a tool or methodology, we're very interested in broad applicability. Does this method just help your scholarship? Or can others benefit as well? Make sure you perform an environmental scan to find out what similar projects may already be under way. Also, check out Meredith Hindley's nice article on how to prepare your NEH application.

Lastly, I suggest getting out there and communicating. Use new media tools like blogs, wikis, and social networks. Go to conferences when you can. Talk to people in your field and other fields to find out what is possible and what needs to be done.

NOTE

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Day of DH: Defining the Digital Humanities

A Day in the Life of the Digital Humanities (*Day of DH*) is a community publication project sponsored by the University of Alberta under the direction of Geoffrey Rockwell. Each year, it brings together digital humanists from around the world to document what they do on one day, March 18. The goal of the project is to create a website that weaves together the journals of the participants into a picture that answers the question, Just what do computing humanists really do? Participants document their day through photographs and commentary in a blog-like journal. The collection of these journals with links, tags, and comments makes up the final work that is published online.

In advance of the *Day of DH*, participants are asked, How do you define humanities computing / digital humanities? The following selection of definitions was culled from 2011 answers to that question, which are posted publicly on the *Day of DH* website.[1]

> Using computational tools to do the work of the humanities.
>
> —*John Unsworth, University of Illinois, United States*

> I think of digital humanities as an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of digital work in the humanities: development of multimedia pedagogies and scholarship, designing and building tools, human computer interaction, designing and building archives, and so on. DH is interdisciplinary; by necessity it breaks down boundaries between disciplines at the local (e.g., English and history) and global (e.g., humanities and computer sciences) levels.
>
> —*Kathie Gossett, Old Dominion University, United States*

> A "community of practice" (to borrow Etienne Wenger's phrase) whereby the learning, construction, and sharing of humanities knowledge is under-

taken with the application of digital technologies in a reflexive, theoretically informed, and collaborative manner.

—Kathryn E. Piquette, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany

A name that marks a moment of transition; the current name for humanities inquiry driven by or dependent on computers or digitally born objects of study; a temporary epithet for what will eventually be called merely Humanities.

—Mark Marino, University of Southern California, United States

I view the digital humanities as a collaborative, open, and emerging field of inquiry. A state of mind, a methodology, and theoretical approach to knowledge, it forces us to reconceive our practice. In my own work, I embrace curation as a means of reweaving and reintegrating theory and practice in history. I seek to interpret space, place, and identity in a multisensory way. I fail more often than not. But the digital humanities is like jazz in that it is about process, as well as outcome.

—Mark Tebeau, Cleveland State University, United States

I think digital humanities, like social media, is an idea that will increasingly become invisible as new methods and platforms move from being widely used to being ubiquitous. For now, digital humanities defines the overlap between humanities research and digital tools. But the humanities are the study of cultural life, and our cultural life will soon be inextricably bound up with digital media.

—Ed Finn, Stanford University, United States

A term of tactical convenience.

—Matthew Kirschenbaum, University of Maryland, United States

It is both a methodology and a community.

—Jason Farman, University of Maryland, United States

When I'm asked, I like to say that digital humanities is just one method for doing humanistic inquiry.

—Brian Croxall, Emory University, United States

The Digital Humanities is both a field with a discernable set of academic lineages, practices, and methodologies and a vague umbrella term used to describe the application of digital technology to traditional humanistic

inquiry. Ultimately, what sets DH apart from many other humanities fields is its methodological commitment to building things as a way of knowing.

—Matthew K. Gold, New York City College of Technology and CUNY Graduate Center, United States

Digital Humanities is the integration of sophisticated, empirical techniques utilizing tools and technologies typically associated with practical sciences into the study of traditional humanities questions. It represents a more exploratory and less quantitative approach than social sciences in the use of such tools, but it also represents ambitious attempts to model nuanced human wisdom in ways that, like early flying machines, are beautiful, quite impractical and often fail.

—Elijah Meeks, Stanford University, United States

The use of digital tools and methods in humanities study and dissemination.

—Geoffrey Rockwell, University of Alberta, Canada

DH is inquiry enabled by digital methodologies or modes of research, dissemination, design, preservation, and communication that rely on algorithms, software, and/or the Internet network for processing data.

—Tanya Clement, University of Maryland, United States

The scholarly study and use of computers and computer culture to illuminate the human record. (BUSA Remix)

—Ernesto Priego, University College London, United Kingdom

Digital Humanities is a critical investigation and practice of the methods of humanities research in the digital medium.

—Julia Flanders, Brown University, United States

Digital humanities is a metafield, a set of coevolving new knowledge and best practices expanding from traditional humanities disciplines into born-digital research and teaching methods. Digital humanists study all objects and practices of concern to analog humanities, plus those made possible by the digital age. Digital humanists also build tools that make it possible for themselves, their students, and the world at large to engage critically with our cultural heritage.

—Vika Zafrin, Boston University, United States

I don't: I'm sick of trying to define it. When forced to, I'll make the referent the people instead of the ideas or methods—Digital Humanities is the

thing practiced by people who self-identify as Digital Humanists. It's helpful to have a name for the field chiefly for institutional authority. Though granted I think it does involve coding/making/building/doing things with computers, things related to, you know, the humanities.

—Amanda French, Center for History and New Media, United States

Digital Humanities is a way to ask, redefine, and answer questions with a more intelligent set of tools.

—Lik Hang Tsui, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

I think it's a convenient label, but fundamentally I don't believe in it. There are people who haven't yet attempted to come to grips with how digital tools and methods can change research, teaching, and outreach in the Humanities, and those who have. The latter are Digital Humanities types. But it's all Wissenschaft.

—Hugh Cayless, New York University, United States

The digital humanities is what digital humanists do. What digital humanists do depends largely on academic discipline but also on level of technical expertise. Each discipline, with varying degrees of intensity, has over the years developed a set of favored methods, tools, and interests that, although shared with other disciplines, remains connected to the discipline. The task of the digital humanities, as a transcurricular practice, is to bring these practitioners into communication with each other and to cultivate a discourse that captures the shared praxis of bringing technologies of representation, computation, and communication to bear on the work of interpretation that defines the humanities.

—Rafael Alvarado, University of Virginia, United States

I think digital humanities is an unfortunate neologism, largely because the humanities itself is a problematic term. The biggest problem is that the tent isn't big enough! I have participated in a number of DH events and they are strikingly similar to things like Science Online.

With that said, DH is at its best when it embraces the digital not simply as a means to the traditional ends of scholarship, but when it transforms the nature of what humanists do. The digital allows for scholars, librarians, archivists, and curators to engage much more directly with each other and the public. Further, it allows them not simply to write for each other, but to build things for everyone.

—Trevor Owens, Library of Congress, United States

NOTE

1. For the full range of 2011 definitions see http://tapor.ualberta.ca/taporwiki/index.php/How_do_you_define_Humanities_Computing_/_Digital_Humanities%3F. The Day of DH homepage can be found at http://tapor.ualberta.ca/taporwiki/index.php/Day_of_Digital_Humanities.

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