14 Pedagogy and advanced topics

This chapter provides additional material for teaching DH to students. While few students will become digital humanists, understanding these processes and methods will give them critical insight into the materials they encounter in other areas of their work and lives. In addition, this book closes by covering some advanced topics in DH, such as programming knowledge (e.g., Python and JavaScript, legacy data and re-use, integrating legacy systems, silos and consortia, designing custom platforms and tools, and other critical issues).

The historical richness of human culture does not diminish with time, and though platforms may look outdated, and functionality may be compromised, the same has always been true. We should not lose sight of the need to preserve the analog world and its precious legacy as well.

Digital assets are not archival, and the work done in this medium is more fleeting and vulnerable than in any previous format. Our investment in its production should be tempered by that realization. The real work of preserving a living environment might well be kept foremost in mind in this as in every other aspect of our ongoing commitment to humanistic research, scholarship, and pedagogy.

14a Pedagogy

Bonus content: an index or directory of digital research

No single register of digital humanities projects exists. Projects are created and hosted constantly on local servers, within small and large institutional contexts. They do not get listed in WorldCat or other online library catalogs, and to find these projects is often a matter of following a random search engine result or a trail of specialized in-crowd references. The hesitation about having library catalog entries for digital projects comes in part from their ephemerality, but also, their iterative quality. However, a complete index or directory, though a major undertaking, would serve a broad community interested in the contents of these projects, their intellectual labor and contributions, but also, their role in building a knowledge-base for how to think conceptually within the frameworks of digital platforms and tools.

Exercise 14.1: Thinking digitally

Consider a research project in which you are using information about social connections among a group of poets over a twenty-year period based on a collection of calendars and reading programs in a particular community's poetry newsletter. Your goal is to make a network diagram showing varying degrees of proximity and influence. You define the relations in a three-part data structure: object/predicate/object (person/knew/person). The outcome of the spreadsheet you create can be used to generate a network diagram. Now, take this a step further and reflect on the range of predicates/verbs that can be used to describe relationships. You return to your reading of the newsletter with an eye toward refining the term "knew" by adding "reviewed positively, reviewed negatively" and begin to see possibilities in analyzing the text of the newsletter that were not part of your analysis of the calendar programs when you made your first data set. In this example, the concepts that underpin the creation of a network diagram have become part of your research method. You are thinking about your primary materials and questions in terms that are informed by network diagrams. In the first part of your research, you created a diagram from your data. In the second stage, you shaped your data in accordance with insights about networking as concept. Can you imagine doing something similar with mapping? Information visualization? Text analysis? What about more advanced tools like AI-assisted image production, immersive VR/XR environments, or 3D modeling? What ways of conceptualizing research problems might become part of your work?

How-to example

Look at the portfolio (https://dunhamsdata.org/index.php/portfolio/visualizations) for the Dunham's Data project (https://dunhamsdata.org/) project. How do the different ways they visualize the data related to Katherine Dunham give you a different understanding of how she impacted dance history? For example, theflow chart (https://dunhamsdata.org/index.php/portfolio/visualizations/interactive-flow-katherine-dunhams-dancers-drummers-and-singers-check-ins) allows us

to understand the where and how long dancers, musicians, and singers were connected. The Space-Time Mapping visualization (https://dunhamsdata.org/index.php/portfolio/visualizations/katherine-dunhams-global-travel-1947-60) visualization allows for a better view of the locations the Dunham Company traveled over the years. Both provide valuable insights but emphasize different aspects of the data. It is important to identify the most critical conceptual aspects of your project and pick methods that allow for those key areas to shine.

Exercise 14.2: Designing a project with basic competencies

Using the outline of basic competencies, describe in a few phrases or sentences how you would make use of each of these in creating an online digital collection for a community organization with which you are familiar (a club, religious group, historical association, dance troupe, or other entity).

Recommended readings

Berry, David M., ed. 2012. *Understanding Digital Humanities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Risam, Roopika. 2018. *New Digital Worlds: Postcolonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Schreibman, Susan, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth. 2016. *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Smithies, James. 2017. *The Digital Humanities and the Digital Modern*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Resources

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- GeeksforGeeks. n.d. "What is Python? Its Uses and Applications." GeeksforGeeks. Accessed April 5, 2025. https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/what-is-python/.
- Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy.
- Morris, Scott. n.d. "Tech 101: Python vs JavaScript—What's the Difference?" Skillcrush. Accessed April 5, 2025. https://skillcrush.com/blog/python-vs-javascript/.
- SPARQL Tutorial – Data Formats. (https://jena.apache.org/tutorials/sparql_data.html)
- W3Schools JavaScript Tutorials. (https://www.w3schools.com/js/default.asp)