

Reflective essay on Introduction to Digital Humanities classes of last week

This week's blog is about the last three week's classes of Introduction to Digital Humanities. In these weeks the topics covered in the class were Humanities Computing, the transition into Digital Humanities from Humanities Computing, Data and Collaboration in the field of DH and then a very brief Introduction to the software Slack. The first few classes of this period were on Humanities Computing, which can be seen as the precursor to what we now know as Digital Humanities. Humanities Computing involves using computational methods to address questions and problems that arise within the humanities disciplines. This approach includes activities like text encoding, building archives, and developing tools to assist with textual analysis. Therefore Humanities Computing laid the groundwork for the more expansive field of Digital Humanities. And that brings us to the next topic of how Humanities Computing transitioned into Digital Humanities.

This transition from Humanities Computing to Digital Humanities marks a significant broadening of the entire scope. This shift is not merely technological but rather conceptual, expanding what is possible in terms of research questions, methodologies, and outputs itself. It is clear that the transition to Digital Humanities represents a paradigm change. It is no longer just about using digital tools to support traditional research but about reimagining what research in the humanities can be. And among the different changes brought by Digital Humanities the most significant one is the emphasis on interdisciplinarity and collaboration. Unlike traditional humanities research, which often occurs in isolation.

The next few classes focused on the topics of Data, Collaboration, Laboratory, and Indian Digital Humanities. Particularly in the context of Digital Humanities, data serves as the foundational element upon which projects are built. It can range from digitized texts and images to a vast corpora of social media posts, oral histories, and metadata about cultural artifacts and many more. Data enables scholars to perform analyses that reveal patterns, connections, and insights that would be impossible to discern through traditional qualitative methods alone. These data are generally categorized into two sets, namely Smart data and Big data. In which Smart data often comes in the form of small and structured data, which is explicit and clean on the other hand Big data is mostly unstructured and messy, which will also be in a huge volume.

Moving on to the next topic, Collaboration. Unlike traditional humanities research, which is often solitary, Digital Humanities projects frequently involve teams of scholars from various disciplines, including computer science, linguistics, history, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary collaboration helps bring together diverse perspectives and skill sets. Collaboration allows for the pooling of expertise, making it possible to tackle more ambitious research questions. Moreover, collaboration fosters innovation, as scholars learn from each other and develop new methodologies and approaches.

And the next topic was about Laboratory, particularly Digital Humanities Labs. In the context of Digital Humanities laboratory is not a physical space filled with test tubes and microscopes, but rather a collaborative environment where digital tools and methods are developed, tested, and refined. It is a space for experimentation, where ideas can be explored and new methodologies can be created. This idea of a laboratory challenges the traditional view of the humanities as solely interpretive and solitary. Instead, it presents a vision of the humanities as experimental, collaborative, and engaged with the materiality of digital tools and data. And the final topic discussed in the class was about the current landscape of Digital Humanities in India, we discussed different courses and programmes in DH and also talked about the different pioneers of DH in India, and finally finished the class by talking about the various initiatives and conferences happening in the country on Digital Humanities. With that I'd like to conclude this week's reflective essay. Thank you.