An Introduction to Digital Humanities

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ABSTRACT

Digital Humanities is an area of inquiry and scholarship that combines the procedural methodologies from the Sciences with the reflection that is carried out in the Humanities. Although the scope of Digital Humanities is particularly difficult to define as the field is actively evolving, some of its defining characteristics have remained constant over time. These include its new forms of scholarship involving collaborative, transdisciplinary, and computationally-engaged research, teaching, and publishing.

KEYWORDS

Digital Humanities, tutorial, digital libraries

1 TOPICS COVERED

In this half-day tutorial, we introduce the concepts of Digital Humanities from the perspective of participants that are familiar with Digital Libraries. We focus on four core areas: concepts, the tools used, their implications, and the future of the discipline.

1.1 Concepts and Introduction

Digital Humanities has become a driving force in many universities across the world. In this topic, we will consider the question, "what are the Digital Humanities and how do they overlap with Digital Libraries?" From a topical point of view, the two areas overlap in many ways, but there also are areas of interest of interest primarily to one but not the other area. From an implementation point of view, delivery of digital libraries is often external to the institution while digital humanities are often central to the development of the identity of affected academic areas, indeed to the point of controversy.

We present examples of Digital Humanities projects that help to explain what is encompassed by the area and also to help motivate an understanding of what currently is considered to be inside and outside of the scope of Digital Humanities.

1.2 Tools

The tools and software used in the Digital Humanities are the result of a close collaboration between computer scientists and humanities scholars. This collaboration makes them unique in their use and their potential contributions. We present examples of the tools commonly used in the Digital Humanities and discuss the implications that are derived from their use.

In this topic we also highlight the work that is carried out by notable scholars and research groups currently active that are known for being at the forefront of the field. Along the same lines, we provide an overview of the current trending areas of interest, along with the major conferences and publication venues. To finalize this topic, we provide a survey of the proceedings of the Digital Humanities and the Canadian Society of Digital Humanities conferences.

1.3 Implications and Discussion

As with any other scholarly field, the Digital Humanities are not free from debates. In this topic, we provide an overview of the implications and ongoing discussions in the Digital Humanities. We provide this overview using five points.

First, we analyze whether the Digital Humanities are the natural evolution of the Humanities or a new field altogether. Second, we deliberate if it is more important to do coding or to do more introspective analysis; this ongoing debate is commonly known as "more hack, less yack". Third, we discuss the impact of computers on current research methods. Fourth, we analyze the current challenges. Finally, we address a more philosophical question: Who has the important knowledge? The humanist or the technologist?

1.4 Future

In this topic we provide an overview of the future of the Digital Humanities. First, we discuss where the current methods in the discipline are heading. Second, we consider what the next big area of interest will be in the Digital Humanities. Third, we discuss the current preservation strategies and the long-term use of digital projects. Finally, we consider Open Access Scholarship.

Open Access Scholarship is gaining interest in the community as a method for disseminating scholarship: it avoids copyright issues (the author usually retains ownership) and allows research to be distributed in a faster and more convenient way.

2 TUTORIAL OUTCOMES

We expect our tutorial to have two principal participant-focused outcomes. First, by the end of the tutorial the participants should be able to articulate some of the benefits and the drawbacks of using digital tools to approach the research questions in the Humanities. And second, the participants should be able to critically interrogate the way they use the Internet to get information, produce content and interact with others.

3 EXPECTED ATTENDEE BACKGROUND

Although we won't be doing computer programming or coding in this tutorial, some degree of digital literacy is expected from participants. Given the scope of the JCDL conference, we expect that the participants will have the required background to engage in the discussions.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS