

What you think you know about the humanities is far from the truth. The community of programmers and developers that identify themselves as digital humanists often fall into the category of white male. Consequently, the information created by these white humanists often produce the same skewed bias, and they often use their digital tools to cover the same humanities topics. Minority groups and women have yet to establish themselves and use these digital tools in the field, silencing their unique and untold stories, depriving the public of the true depth and spectrum of the humanities.

Moya Z. Bailey examines the role of minority groups in the digital humanities in her 2011 article. Bailey finds that digital humanities work done from a minority lens often do not get acknowledged by mainstream academia. However, “as more diverse groups of people have entered... the field of digital humanities, the contours have been redefined”(2). In her 2016 article, Lisa Marie Rhody outlines how digital humanists utilize algorithms without “testing the assumed logic”(3) inherent in the algorithms. Rhody illustrates how taking a feminist approach to text analysis, can expose the deep seated ideologies that are intrinsic to existing text analysis algorithms. Kim Gallon also discusses the ideologies that are ingrained in the digital humanities in her 2016 article. Gallon argues that approaching the digital humanities from a black studies lens “disrupts the normative and racialized framework of the digital humanities as led by white scholars”(4). All three of these authors discuss how in the past, minority lenses have not been valued in the digital humanities, but they think it is necessary to work towards creating a more inclusive and diverse field.

Rather than the usual scientific paper, the selected texts are persuasive essays employing rhetorical analysis. In Bailey’s piece, her central argument concerning the codes of society and how they must be reexamined with minorities at the center, signals a Structuralist line of inquiry. Similarly, Gallon’s writing also employs a systems based approach, linking Black humanities as a solution to a digital humanities field racialized through a system of power. Rhody in contrast, uses a postmodernist lens with clear deconstructionist tendencies. A noted example is her critical attitude towards stopword removal in poetry after studying their importance, exposing the limits of traditional text analysis.

Bailey argues for greater minority diversification in the field of digital humanities, which she affirms is white male oriented, to explore new boundaries often forgotten by the common endeavors of the white male majority. She uses examples of successful feminist and black platforms like THATCamp Theory and Black Girls Code respectively to support her model. Yet, she warns against just adding, and suggests a deeper sense of celebration needed for minority members to truly break paradigmatic boundaries. Gallon tends to the idea of a recovery of specifically the black collective humanity using the computing power afforded by the digital humanities. Gallon gives popular hashtag examples such as “#BlackLivesMatter” in an effort to show the Black community’s desire to finally make their humanity evident and enter the field. She ultimately pushes for growth of the black community in the digital humanities, where she argues concepts like the racialization of humanity can be finally explained through having unique eyes in the digital world. Rhody argues directly that women must begin to enter the world of text mining. She found the American Academy of Poets storing 3 male poems to every 1 female, raising some discomfort as she puts it. This discomfort is something she finds to be crucial to advance the humanities and feels the inclusion of women in the industry can finally unsettle the patriarchal nature of “big data” today.

Gallon underscores Black digital humanities as key to dismantling our racialized perception of humanity. Bailey emphasizes it is imperative to make room at the established table of digital humanities for minorities already engaged in its work. Rhody stresses feminist literary studies are an excellent way of combating the male centric inclinations of big data. What these conclusions all have in common is their push for increasing accessibility to the field of digital humanities, to include those groups which were formerly marginalized. By calling on those in the field to change, these authors are actively seeking to broaden the field of digital humanities.

We find, to accurately represent the world we live in, we must include and make space for new people to join the digital humanities, allowing for a more well rounded examination of the human condition. This conclusion relates to Dr. Nan Z. Da’s article as she argues that the digital humanities need more regulation of the methods they employ from both the humanities and from the sciences. Including a wider range of people in the digital humanities

would bring more perspectives to regulate how research is conducted. Although Da is harsh in her critique of the digital humanities, we agree that complications can arise when a field of study is controlled by like-minded people.

Works Cited

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