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ENGL 877

Reading Response 2

This week's reading and subsequent discussion raised a lot of interesting questions and possibilities.  As I stated in class, I think the most important aspect of this chapter was the author's positive outlook in what appears to be a quite bleak surface level problem.  For my individual response, I am choosing to focus on the first of three myths regarding digital technology for those who choose to study, teach, and participate in the field of digital humanities.  The "there is nothing to worry about" myth starts and ends in academia, whether we want to admit it or not.  The idea that professionals can simply say "this is a big deal, but not a big enough deal for me to actually do something about it" is frustrating, but fixable.  Simply dismissing the impact of one professor, one student, one class, one institution, is silly.  There is so much that can be accomplished by actively pursuing changes that can make for a more just and safe digital world.  As an educator of more than a decade, I found it particularly fascinating that the author referenced the work of Paolo Friere.  I think by requiring digital humanities scholars to familiarize themselves with texts such as 1968's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, we can begin the truly important work towards dispelling the first myth and combatting ignorance.  There is strength in numbers and passion, and what better place for this type of work to happen than an institution for higher learning?  I always tell students in my freshman and sophomore leadership classes that college is the best time of their lives for the main purpose of being surrounded by likeminded and goal-oriented folks who are actively choosing to learn things in order to better themselves, better their lives, and better the circumstances of others.  Even the most problematic of college student is still first and foremost an extension of the "lifelong learner" the K-12 schools have promised to send out into the world, which is an invaluable soldier in the war against ignorance.  Surveillance without permission, competitive lack of funding around every corner, and the inherent classism/racism/sexism of academia are barriers to individuals, but can be overcome with constant work towards social justice.  I think it's super important to at least try to do this as soon as possible.  I truly do believe that there are institutions who seek to keep their pupils and workers and constituents passive and uninformed, but for every complacent person in the world, it has been my experience that there are a dozen curious ones.  And curiosity is a powerful motivator.  I personally have hope that this generation is going to solve many of the previous generation's problems when the opened Pandora's box and made the internet easily-accessible and not just a thing for the wealthy and the elite.  We would be foolish not to try and get students excited about the opportunity to do a full-scale course redirect.