**ENGL 877 Reading Response 5 by Tina Le**

This Reading Response comes from a course called ENGL 877 Advanced Topics in Digital Humanities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Spring 2023. Each week, we do Reading Responses engaging with ideas from the texts we read that week. This is the fifth Reading Response, along with a comment I left on a classmate’s Reading Response:

**Instructions for Reading Response 5:**

As we discussed in class today, I'd like you to use this week's reading response as an opportunity to revise and further develop the "manifesto" you created last week. In particular, I'd like you to do three things in your work: 1) Give it your own title. It is a "manifesto," "mission statement," or something else in your mind? 2) Update it so that it takes account of this week's readings on minimal computing. 3) Review the feedback your received from one of your colleagues last week and use that to improve your statement this week.

As always, after you submit your response, please read one of your colleagues' responses and write a short reply in which you offer some constructive feedback. Please choose an essay upon which no one has yet commented.

Specs

Undergraduates: 400 words + 100 words feedback

Graduates 500 words + 100 words feedback

**Honoring Labor: A Mission Statement**

When combining my manifesto from last week with the ideas discussed this week, the main thread tying them together is the theme of honoring labor. In the development of digital humanities projects, I am guided by the ideals of recognizing work that often goes unrecognized, amplifying marginalized voices, creating greater accessibility, and being critical of the technologies we use.

Collaboration is a core tenet of digital humanities (Arnold and Tilton), and honoring the labor of our collaborators is a way to uphold that tenet. The articles “What’s in a Name?” and “Intersectionality and Infrastructure: Toward a Critical Digital Humanities” both list people whose labor contributes to the success of digital humanities projects, but whose contributions might go unrecognized, such as “consultants, postdocs, or students” (Arnold and Tilton) and “contingent faculty, librarians, archivists, programmers, IT and edtech specialists” and many more (Boyles). Boyles explains that there is “an underrepresentation of women, of people of color, of folks who don’t identify with a heteronormative category in the Digital Humanities.” To make digital humanities more inclusive of traditionally underrepresented collaborators, we need to give recognition. Otherwise, only established DH scholars with notoriety receive funding for projects, reinforcing inequitable and exclusionary structures. In the conversation with Angela, Trey, and Arka, we questioned whether there exists any job or field that credits everyone involved. While we don’t have answers for that, we assert that our digital humanities work should challenge the notion of singular geniuses and narrow definitions of authorship. This week’s readings and discussions bring up the emotional labor that technical experts expend in order to support digital humanities scholars who are less tech-savvy. Dombrowski describes this as “shadow labor.” With Akua and Brett, we discussed how difficult it is for programmers to troubleshoot and fix code—which the scholar might not be aware of—as well as how steep the learning curve may feel for folks new to coding. Even with the shift to tech experts providing consultations like Dombrowski mentions, the emotional labor seems akin to writing center consultations, where the consultants assist others not just with technical skills but with how to manage emotions like frustration. Minimal computing can empower more people to sustain projects themselves, rather than relying on others’ labor.

Minimal computing also relates to amplifying marginalized voices because more people can create projects. Digital humanities projects have the potential to broaden what counts as worthy of being studied, beyond what academia has traditionally valued. In the discussion with Akua and Lyette, we talked about questioning the assumptions of default norms of how we define and view literature. The conversation with Trey, Angela, and Arka added on to this when we discussed how the term “literature” is exclusionary because it discredits modes like oral storytelling. In “Anglophone World Literatures,” Neumann and Rippl explains that the term “world literatures” helps to decenter European literature as being the implicit default. When we make the digital humanities field accessible to more folks who want to be involved in projects, that expands what is studied. Making our projects open access is one tangible strategy. In addition, we should consider how to break down the silos of academia and community and promote our work to broader communities, so more non-academic folks are able to start their own projects or become involved as collaborators if they want to. A strategy suggested by Dombrowski and Professor Wisnicki is to annotate the code in our projects, so the project can be sustained even after the original creators are no longer involved and others can learn from our process.

We need to be critical of the digital tools that we use in our digital humanities projects. For example, some tools might reinforce a culture of surveillance (Glass) or commodifying people as data (Boyles). When we discussed the ecological impact of electronic waste, labor ties in there as well—the responsibility falls on other people to deal with the waste and its negative impacts, and we should be cognizant of that. Brett, Akua, and I discussed that with choosing digital tools through the principal of minimal computing, we have to make sacrifices, such as sacrificing aesthetics, in order to create projects that can be sustainable and have longevity. When we are actively mindful about the digital tools that we are using in our digital humanities projects, that can help us and others be more responsible and critical about the impacts of technology in all areas of life, not just for academic purposes.

Works Cited:

Arnold, Taylor, and Lauren Tilton. “What’s in a Name?” People, Practice, Power: Digital Humanities Outside the Center. Edited by Anne B. McGrail et al., vol. 7, University of Minnesota Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.5749/9781452968346

Boyles, Christina. “Intersectionality and Infrastructure: Toward a Critical Digital Humanities.” People, Practice, Power: Digital Humanities Outside the Center. Edited by Anne B. McGrail et al., vol. 7, University of Minnesota Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.5749/9781452968346

Dombrowski, Quinn. “Minimizing Computing Maximizes Labor.” *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2022. https://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/16/2/000594/000594.html#

Erin, Lyette, Trey Hestermann, Arka Maitra, Akua Manieson, Tina Le, and Angela Thornburg. Personal communication. ENGL 882, UNL, February 2023.

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