

Digital Humanities in Practice

WEEK 1b: WHAT IS DH?

We'll examine what the term 'digital humanities' means (hint: there's no single definition!), and you'll carry these thoughts with you as you work through the process of creating a corpus of data, curating it and then analyzing it. You'll present the results of your work by building a digital narrative as your final project.

Paige Morgan, 'What Digital Humanists Do', Demystifying Digital Humanities workshops, 2013

Maria Popova, Digital Humanities Spotlight: 7 important digitization projects, 2011

Melissa Dinsman, The Digital in the Humanities, LA Review of Books (read a selection of interviews)

Refresh <https://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/> to see a range of definitions.

LECTURE ONE

www.youtube.com/embed/Xu6Z1SoEZcc

Panel at Columbia University, 2011.

Panelists:

Daniel J. Cohen, Assoc. Professor of History and Director of the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University.

Federica Frabetti, Senior Lecturer in the Communication, Media, and Culture Program at Oxford Brookes University.

Dino Buzzetti recently retired from the Dept. of Philosophy at the University of Bologna.

The transcript is available on YouTube. Please focus on Cohen's section of the presentation.

LECTURE TWO

www.youtube.com/embed/LF8duSp2geo

A brief history and overview of the discipline of digital humanities.

EVALUATING DH PROJECTS

Before class on Wednesday, review the following:

Miriam Posner, '[How did they they make that?](#)', blog post, 2013

Watch Miriam Posner's lecture [How did they make that?](#)

With the proliferation of digital humanities projects, tool building and research in recent years, it's often hard to establish a simple yet comprehensive set of criteria for evaluating and assessing digital scholarly work. You've now read a number of articles exploring potential methods and standards for evaluation. You've also watched Miriam Posner's video 'How did they make that?' Now it's your turn to assess a selection of projects, and post your findings to the Discussion Board by the Sunday of Week 1 at 11.59pm, and then respond to three of your classmates' posts by the Tuesday of the second week at 11.59pm.

You'll begin your evaluation by considering:

SOURCES what is the collection and purpose of site?

PROCESSING i.e. how are the sources made machine readable?

PRESENTATION

- Is there an intentional and appropriate organization of information?
- Does the project use accepted standards for web design, metadata, and encoding?
- Is there a thoughtful balance between design, content, and medium?
- Overall, how intuitive is it to navigate the website?

Extend your evaluation to consider the following:

- Issues of community, scholarship, digital infrastructure, values embodied in the language, practices, and organization of the component parts.
- Documentation describing the project's data management plan, and plans for **long term sustainability and digital preservation**.

- Who is the project team? Who are the funding partners? Is this a collaborative effort between institutions or individuals?
- What are the fields of expertise of its members? If you're technically-minded, maybe you're looking for information about the technical methods and standards applied. Can you find this? How about the code?

DOCUMENTATION

Remember you are evaluating a scholarly resource. The ideal digital resource should keep documentation and make it available from the project website, making clear the extent, provenance and selection methods of materials for the resource. For textual projects, there should be a description of the editing protocols, for example. **Why do you think it's important to have this type of information? Do you find it all websites?**

WORKLOG POST

Due Week 1 Sunday 11.59pm

1. Referring to at least 3 items from the introductory reading and viewing you have completed, describe 2-3 interesting or unexpected aspects of digital humanities that you would like to explore further.

Write at least 200-300 words, and include appropriate citation for the material you reference.

2. The 'Evaluating Digital Humanities Project' overview and in-class work provide the framework for this Discussion Post.

Choose THREE projects to evaluate from this list:

[Mark Twain Project](#)

[Pleiades](#)

[Perseus Digital Library](#)

[Arachne](#)

[Railways and the making of modern America](#)

[Nomisma](#)

[Regnum Francorum Online](#)

[Willa Cather Archive](#)

[Inscriptions of Israel/Palestine](#)

[Papyri.info](#)

[Digital Mitford](#)

[Darwin Online](#)

[Moore Archive](#)

[CLAROS](#)

[The Griffith Institute](#)

[TIMEA](#)

[Walt Whitman Archive](#)

[Melville's Marginalia](#)

[Meketre](#)

[OCRE](#)

[Europeana](#)

[ORBIS](#)

[MJBC](#)

[ISAW Papers](#)

[Shelley Godwin Archive](#)

[Archives Unleashed](#)

[SAWS](#)

[Trismegistos](#)

[Ancient World Mapping Center](#)

Here is a SAMPLE EVALUATION to give you an idea of the type of information to include:

1. Project Name & URL

Google Ancient Places <https://googleancientplaces.wordpress.com/> (Links to an external site.)

2. Purpose of Site

GAP uses ancient world places as target information to find and visualize while solving the problem of discovery and usability.

3. Sources *The ideal digital resource should keep documentation and make it available from the project website, making clear the extent, provenance and selection methods of materials for the resource*

Hyperlinks of references/sources are attached to the relevant blog posts. The books which are geotagged are listed on the site that the data visualization is found on. The extent of their usage is clear (scanned for geographical references) and while unstated, the likely method of selection was the likelihood of the books to contain useful geographical references.

4. Processing *i.e. how are the sources made machine readable?*

Raw text from various texts that reference historical places is fed into Edinburgh Geoparser to categorize and georesolve.

5. Presentation *Is there an intentional and appropriate organization of information? Does the project use accepted standards for web design, metadata, and encoding? Is there a thoughtful balance between design, content, and medium? Overall, how intuitive is it to navigate the website?*

The organization of the information as described in text seems to be intentional and effective, with clear meaning and accessibility to tags. However, the presentation itself does not publicly function.

6. Design/Functionality/Accessibility *The ideal digital resource should be designed for a wide variety of users, and include information to help the non-expert to understand the resource and use its contents*

The GapVis interface was their medium for visualization, but it's not functional as it doesn't load. It may need different tests on browsers. The tabs (Home, About, GapVis, etc.) were helpful towards the design though. Overall, it did seem like a lot of information to digest and read through, so design could be improved.

7. Documentation *The ideal digital resource should keep documentation and make it available from the project website, making clear the extent, provenance and selection methods of materials for the resource. For textual projects, there should be a description of the editing protocols, for example.*

The sources are listed and thoroughly documented, as is the extent and reason of their usage. Some details of the data usage is not present (such as whether input into the database is programmatic or manual). While the preliminary sources are documented, the data after being filtered to any degree is no longer available, so details are unavailable on documentation within the visualization.

8. Data Management *Is there a plan describing the project's data management plan?*

They used the Pelagios system, which describes machine identification of certain tokens in 9 books. They plan on having data being public domain.

9. Sustainability *What are the project's plans for long term sustainability and digital preservation?*

GAP has formally ensured that the digital information of continuing value remains accessible and usable. This has been achieved by using a public domain and taking references from Google books etc.

10. Project and Funding Partners *Who is the project team? Who are the funding partners? Is this a collaborative effort between institutions or individuals? What are the fields of expertise of its members?*

GAP is run by a variety of researchers from a range of institutions (Independent study, University of Southampton and so on).

You can cut and paste the blank template below into your discussion post and complete the details.

1. Project URL

2. Purpose of Site

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REPLIES

Due Tuesday of Week 2 11.59pm

Aim to write 100-150 words per reply.

Choose THREE of your classmates' evaluations, and explore the digital project they have referenced in their discussion. Do you agree with their assessments? What additional analysis can you contribute in each case?