Graduate Workshop in the Digital Humanities

Friday, March 7, 1-3PM
Room 406, Alexander Library

<u>Agenda</u>

1:00 – 1:20PM – **Introductions and Additional Questions**

1:20 – 1:40PM – **Thinking Across DH Categories**

- What do we have to gain from immersing ourselves in DH interests and practices not unique to our disciplines or research backgrounds?

1:40 – 2:20PM – **Breakout Sessions**

- The plan is to split into two groups: one that is organized around digital text markup, topic modeling, and DH as a tool for literary and cultural analysis; and another group that is focused on mapping histories, ethnographic fieldwork in the virtual realm, collaboration with community-based partners, and DH as a tool for public engagement.

    (I realize that this goes against the stated intent of the previous agenda item, to get us to work across disciplines, but we will reconvene when all is said and done!)

2:20 – 2:40PM – **Reports from the Breakout Sessions**

2:40 – 3:00PM – **Moving Forward and Community Building**

- We'll devote the last twenty minutes to discussing what resources graduate students would like to see made available, what collaborations might be possible, and how the DH Steering Committee can help to support graduate-led initiatives moving forward. In addition, we'll use this last portion to discuss the place of DH in relationship to academic and higher education job markets.

QUESTIONS AND INITIAL THOUGHTS (in no particular order):

What local institutions outside of Rutgers should we also look to consult with and/or gain work experience? **(Zach)**

I am so new to thinking about Digital Humanities that I am mostly interested in learning more about it so that I'm better equipped to think about what possibilities it presents for my work. Right now I am working on a project about the Fresh Air Fund, which is an organization that

sent impoverished kids from NYC to rural areas around the Northeast and one idea that occurs to me is having some kind of map that linked where kids came from to where they went (providing I can figure this out.) So, maybe some information about ways to use maps would be great, along with other ways of presenting information visually. **(Marika)**

Most of my digital humanities work so far has focused on issues related to remediation, esp. from the angles of organization and representation. I've been interested in understanding how the meaning of an object or text is transformed when we create and display a digital surrogate. Or, what do we learn about our conventions of ordering and categorizing knowledge when we mark up texts, or approach humanities works as "data" and store them in/as "databases"?

For this workshop, I would like to learn about the tools and processes used by humanists to dig deep into texts, esp. natural language processing and topic modeling. I have no hands-on experience in either of these. I am interested not only in the results they may yield, but also in interrogating the conceptual assumptions and limitations inherently built in to these technologies and techniques. **(Natalia)**

What methodologies exist for aggregating and examining searchable online data that require some level of grammatical interpretation? Specifically, I'm interested in gathering and assessing data on the pairings of "new" authors—that is, authors with limited amounts of literary capital—with "old," or more established, authors for the purposes of determining whether "new" authors can boost their own prestige by generating associations with "old" authors. To date I've examined such data by manually searching Google, the MLA International Bibliography, Book Review Index Plus, and publisher descriptions on Amazon.com, reading the text linked to the resulting hits, and determining whether it was the "new" author herself or a critic, scholar or reviewer who compared the "new" author favorably to an "old" author. Are there digital strategies that could help facilitate this laborious process, or is the interpretation of grammatical constructions beyond the ability of current DH tools?

A different but related question is how might one quantifiably measure something as intangible as prestige? **(Miranda)**

Topics I'm interested in having addressed:
- While I am interested in cultivating nuts and bolts skills, I am really at a point where I require exposure to any and all digital humanities projects so as to become better attuned to the possibilities for my own work.
- Community engagement – with the people whose histories I research, as well as with a wider community with whom I may potentially share those histories – is high on my list of topics I'd like to address at the DH workshop.

- Given my interest in place, and the centrality of neighborhood to my previous research, mapping seems invaluable for my allowing new analytic possibilities to surface in my research, as well as for producing compelling and accessible histories. **(Amy Zanoni)**

In my current position as Special Collections Assistant at Princeton University, I've developed an interest in the digital humanities through my work at the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology as well as through my participation in various digitization initiatives. These interests have also been present in my work as a current MLIS candidate at Rutgers University.

This semester I am undertaking an independent study with my colleague Natasha in linked open data and the semantic web. This experience and course of study has exposed many of the complex and nuanced challenges of making linked data useful and interoperable. This study has also highlighted the types of meaningful research questions that may be asked of this kind of data. I'm interested in unexpected audiences for digitization initiatives as well as potential copyright impediments to digital scholarship and open access. I also have an interest in how digital humanities initiatives can be implemented institutionally, specifically the debate regarding whether it is best to have a decentralized approach with various disciplines working independently, or should scholarship be centralized in a formal collaborative DH center. Further, how can one leverage digital collections in a library context so that they may be accessible and actionable for digital humanities scholars from various disciplines.

Questions:

How can digital humanities be implemented institutionally?

How can topic modeling be applied to digital collections? **(Danielle Reay)**

As a PhD student and graduate instructor, I am increasingly making use of digital resources in the classroom (as well as preparing to teach fully online), and also consider Internet Studies to be one of my fields of inquiry. My current research looks at the taking, posting, and online circulation of "selfies" as evidence in areas of conflict both in historical and contemporary contexts. I have also attached a copy of my CV for further information.

I would particularly be interested in discussing:

--The pros and cons of tool adoption--How can I ensure that pedagogy "keeps up" with technology in the classroom?

--Looking at web participation in relation to the job market and tenure--Is it useful or not useful to have a blog, for example? Will my twitter feed factor into my job market performance?

--Best practices for digital research--I am increasingly looking at sites like Instagram in my research and feel kind of stymied both by the breadth of information and what methods might be most useful here from a humanities perspective?

--How digital is the digital humanities? (This is kind of an anxiety question, but I would really love to have a candid conversation about what "counts" as digital humanities and what "valid" participation might be for someone who, like myself, does not have a coding background etc.) **(Jenna)**

I'm a graduate student in the English department. Since taking Richard Miller's Summer Immersive workshop last year, I have been interested in the ways academic work (both research and teaching) is slowly adapting towards the tenets of a new digital environment. While my dissertation project is not a digital one, I have been trying to work on honing my digital footprint in ways that show that I care and value the ways of producing, engaging and disseminating academic research in non-traditional means. In hopes of experimenting with effective ways of engaging with the media literacy twenty-first century students bring to the classroom, while mining my own interdisciplinary research work, I am teaching a course in the Creative Writing program entitled "Introduction to Multimedia Composition: Cinema Appreciation in the 21st Century," this spring. Within the broad umbrella of cinema appreciation (including snap judgments on Twitter, Youtube mashups, video essays), the course is designed to encourage students to produce work that uses the critical skills they have amassed from composition and English courses in innovative media projects that fall outside the traditional purviews of "college writing." You can check out the ongoing site for the course [here](#).

As for a question I hope the workshop will cover, I'd love to hear about people's experiences trying to frame digital scholarship and new media teaching in job materials and in the process of the job market. **(Manuel)**

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1. DH tools for cyber ethnography (If possible, a specific focus on ethnography of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube would be very helpful.)

2. DH tools for designing creative assessment techniques in online classes. **(Nafisa)**

What are ways digital humanities approaches can be applied to creative writing work and creative writing pedagogy? **(Gregory)**