

ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN DIGITAL HUMANITIES

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Abstract

The notion 'digital humanities' (abbreviated as DH), is also known as 'Humanities computing.' It's tempting to assume that whoever asked the inquiry did not search for an answer very thoroughly. People who claim that the computer revolution's final battles have been fought and won in English departments have no idea what they're talking about. If there is a unifying theme in our contemporary use of computers in English studies, it is basic experimentation. We are still learning how to live with computers as a profession, only starting to incorporate these devices effectively into writing- and reading-intensive courses, and just beginning to examine the consequences of the multi-layered literacy connected with computers. The present paper introduces Digital Humanities and explores how it is closely connected to English language and literature. MLA eighth edition has been used for documentation and citation.

Keywords: colloquia and symposia, seminars, DH, electronic texts, data mining, distance reading, etc.

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‘Digital Humanities’, initially began as ‘a term of consensus’ among a small group of researchers, is now backed on a growing number of campuses, academicians by a level of funding, infrastructure, and administrative commitments that would have been unthinkable even a decade ago. Even more recently, I would argue, the network effects of blogs and Twitter at a moment when the academy itself is facing massive and often wrenching changes linked to both new technologies and the changing political and economic landscape have led to the construction of “digital humanities” as a free-floating signifier, one that increasingly serves to focus the anxiety and even outrage of individual scholars over their own lack of agency amid the turmoil in their institutions and profession. This is manifested in the intensity of debates around open-access publishing, where faculty members increasingly demand the right to retain ownership of their own scholarship - meaning their own labour and disseminate it freely to an audience apart from or parallel with more traditional structures of academic publishing, which in turn are perceived as outgrowths of dysfunctional and outmoded practices surrounding peer review, tenure, and promotion.

The notion ‘digital humanities’ (abbreviated as DH), is also known as ‘Humanities computing.’ It's tempting to assume that whoever asked the inquiry did not search for an answer very thoroughly. Essays like “What are digital humanities?” are already part of a genre. For years, Willard McCarty has contributed papers on the topic and a monograph, too. John Unsworth advised on “What Is Humanities Computing and What Is Not.” under the previous mark. Furthermore, Patrik Svensson has lately published a series of well-documented studies on many facets of DH, including the lexical change from humanities computing to digital humanities. Besides, Cynthia Selfe points out in an ADE Bulletin in 1988, “Computers have been a part of our professional lives for well over two decades.” In contemporary scenario, digital humanities has

accumulated a strong professional status that is probably more rooted in English than any other departmental home.

The contours of these professional devices are easily discoverable. An organization named 'The Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations' hosts a well-attended annual international conference called 'Digital Humanities.' It grew out of an earlier annual series of conferences, hosted jointly by the Association for Computers and the Humanities and the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing since 1989. Besides, there is Blackwell's Companion to Digital Humanities. There is a book series from the University of Illinois Press, which includes the topics in the Digital Humanities. Yet, there is a refereed journal called Digital Humanities Quarterly, one of several that serve the field, including a newer publication, Digital Studies/Le champ numérique, sponsored by the Canadian Society for Digital Humanities.

However, the Digital Humanities Summer Institute is held each year at the University of Victoria to train young academics in the field of digital humanities. There are digital humanities centres and institutes; possibly over a hundred worldwide, some of them established for a decade or more with dozens of people. There have been manifestos and FAQs for digital humanities i. e. colloquia and symposia, seminars and special sessions, call for papers and proposals, strategic plan and curriculum development document, recruiting request, and so on that uses the phrase includes a gloss or explanation of the term; besides the topic has been brought up on electronic discussion boards, blogs, Facebook walls, and Twitter feeds, with all the flaming and exhortations, celebrations, and screeds infinite times, one could want to read. However, when we simply 'Google the question, Digital Humanities?' Google takes us to Wikipedia, and what we find there is:

The digital humanities, also known as humanities computing, is a field of study, research, teaching, and invention concerned with the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities. It is methodological by nature and interdisciplinary in scope. It involves investigation, analysis, synthesis and presentation of information in electronic form. It studies how these media affect the disciplines in which they are used, and what these disciplines have to contribute to our knowledge of computing. ("Digital Humanities")

The growth of the digital humanities has been aided by literature. With open access publishing, open access resources, digital archives, and other initiatives making scholarship and pedagogy more accessible to the public, digital humanities plays a critical role in the study and teaching of

literature. The origins of many digital humanities projects can be found in English departments. Data analysis, data mining, databases, visualisation, and text archiving are only a few examples. Text analysis techniques can be used to look for recurring words, patterns, or themes in novels. Researchers can look at changes in different editions of a work and see what was added or changed in each edition to see why those changes were made at the time. To replicate the region of that time, some efforts map locations to sites mentioned in texts. Web-based programmes may digitally map and graph data from books.

In his article “What is Digital Humanities and What’s It Doing in English Departments?” appeared in ADE Bulletin in 2010, Mathew Kirshenbaum mentions the following reasons why literature and digital humanities are closely connected:

- It is easier with the help of computers to manage text data more than images, audio, video, or other data forms.
- Data mining makes it easier for literary scholars to study texts and generate new information.
- Computers and composition have been associated together for a long time.
- It is easier to create electronic archives and electronic editions of texts.
- Literary projects involving hypertext and other electronic forms are more diverse and vibrant.
- English Departments are more open to cultural studies where computers and other digital resources are used heavily for analysis.
- With the proliferation of e-book devices and the interest in e-reading, it is easy to perform data mining and ‘distance readings’ of millions of books at a time.

However, Digital Humanities is also a collaborative and social effort. It houses networks of people who have been interacting for years, sharing research, debating, competing, and collaborating. ‘The Text Encoding Initiative’ for example, is largely completed before the current wave of interest in digital humanities began. Nonetheless, a number of remarkably particular factors may be connected to the rapid and astounding emergence of digital humanities as a word.

Digital humanities had evolved from a word of convenience used by a group of researchers who had already been working together for years to something akin to a movement in just over five years. Digital humanists, or DH’ers, are now commonly self-identified by academics. Events like

the Day of Digital Humanities, organised by a group from the University of Alberta, demonstrate an uncommonly strong feeling of community and common purpose. Its second annual iteration drew approximately 150 people (up from over a hundred the first year), who blogged about their workdays on a shared site, posted photos of their workplaces and screens, and mused on the nature of their business.

Being an associate professor in the department of English, and having more than two decades standing in UG and PG classes, I can think of many reasons why English language and literature have historically been hospitable settings for this kind of digital discipline. First, after numeric input, text has been by far the most tractable data type for computers to manipulate. First, after numeric input, text has been by far the most tractable data type for computers to manipulate. Unlike images, audio, video, and so on, there is a long tradition of text-based data processing that was within the capabilities of even some of the earliest computer systems and that has for decades fed research in fields like stylistics, linguistics, and author attribution studies, all heavily associated with English language and literature. Second, there is a long association between computers and composition, almost as long and just as rich in its lineage. Third is the pitch-perfect convergence between the intense conversations around editorial theory and method in the 1980s and the widespread means to implement electronic archives and editions very soon after. Fourth, is a modest but much-promoted belle-lettristic project around hypertext and other forms of electronic literature that continues to this day and is increasingly vibrant and diverse. Fifth is the openness of English literature to cultural studies, where computers and other objects of digital material culture becomes the centrepiece of analysis.

Today, the field is dominated by mark-up languages such as 'ML' in HTML, SGML, UML, and XML the meta-language used to 'tag' writing for machine processing and the crucial new dimension of textual information in the 21st century. However, content, is the real object of mark-up. Mark-up language is also closely related to 'scripting,' the specialized form of programming by means of which text operations is typically carried out on computers and Web pages are made to be interactive. Thus mark-up languages have become the means for an essentially new form of writing in which the medium and the message are more intimately and intricately interconnected than ever before, for literature and film, for language study, and for commercial applications.

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