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What are the Digital Humanities?

Øyvind Eide
Unit for Digital Documentation

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Outline

1. Introducing DH through an example

2. DH organisations' self-definitions

3. Organisational issues

4. DH curricula

5. Some current debates in DH

6. Conclusions and consequences for UiO

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A digital humanist

- Math, computer science, general literature
- Libraries
- Digitisation
- Computer systems for collections, research and education
- Text encoding
- Text modelling and mapping

alt-ac

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Why digital?

- More than using a computer
- Keywords:
  - modelling
  - visualisation
  - programming
  - co-operation

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Why humanities?

- Interesting area of application for computer science
- But for me the real reasons are the usual arguments for the humanities, including:
  - culture
  - values
  - why
  - meaning of life

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Conferences and journals

- Digital Humanities (was: ALLC/ACH)
- Regional and thematic conferences

- LLC: The Journal of Digital Scholarship in the Humanities
- DHQ (Digital Humanities Quarterly)
- Digital Studies / Le champ numérique
- Other journals, near and further away

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Example topics

- What are people actually doing?

- The values of the DH community as it is displayed through bursaries and prizes.

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Busa Prize

- 1998: Father Roberto Busa
- 2001: John Burrows
- 2004: Susan Hockey
- 2007: Wilhelm Ott
- 2010: Joseph Raben
- 2013: Willard McCarty

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Zampolli Prize

- 2011: Chad Gaffield

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Fortier Prize

- 2010: Maciej Eder (Poland): "Does Size Matter? Authorship Attribution, Small Samples, Big Problem."
- 2011: Scott Weingart and Jeana Jorgensen (USA): "Computational Analysis of Gender and the Body in European Fairy Tales."
- 2012: Marc Alexander (UK): "Patchworks and Field-Boundaries: Visualizing the History of English"

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DH conference bursaries 2012

- ASCII literature
- Network analysis of Hanzi
- Images of the vampire
- Cross-gender authorship verification
- Linguistic change (Serbian)
- Caribbean DH

- Modelling gender in novels
- Network analysis in archaeology
- Historical linguistics (English)
- Email archives
- Text visualisation

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ADHO, ALLC, EADH, ACH, CSDH/ SCHN, aaDH, JADH, centerNet, etc.

- One global umbrella: ADHO
- Regional organisations: Europe, USA, Canada, Australasia, Japan
- centerNet
- National/language based organisations

- Neighbours: thematic organisations

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Language vs. country

- An organisation for Germany or for the German language?

- Spain or Spanish?

- France or French? (the Canadian CSDH/ SCHN is fully bilingual)

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DH Norway? DH Nordic?

- Norway: 5 million people
- Nordic countries: 25 million people
- Scandinavia: smaller, but easier language situation. However, strong ties with Finland and Iceland
- Nordic + Baltic?
- National or Nordic, not both

Nordisk nettverk for edisjonsfilologer

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What should we call DH in Norwegian?

Suggestion:

- Humanistisk informatikk
  - in the computer science department
- Digital humaniora
  - in the arts faculty
- Humaniora
  - when we want to focus on tradition

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But what is it, really?

- Material from the humanities and tools from computer science
- Material from the humanities and methods from computer science
- Methods from the humanities and methods from computer science

Encircling through examples

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Research, curriculum, and DH

- The English Department case

- Centre or department?

- Faculty of arts or computer science

- From Digital Humanities to Digital History, Digital Musicology, …

- Infrastructure vs. research and education

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Example: what everyone needs

- Scripting and coding
- Programming, need to *make* something
- Databases
- Collaboration
- XML family
- Assessment
- User-oriented design

- Project management
- Game design
- Sustainability
- Accessibility
- Writing
- The difference between information and knowledge

2013-06-14   (THATCamp 2010 Session on DH teaching/curriculum)   19

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Example: English department syllabus

- Humanities is already digital, but:
- Use the computer to do something only it can do?
- Read every book published in the 19th century?
- Visually break down and compare the language in two volumes of poetry?
- Laying out a novel in geographical space?
- What would it mean to read a book as a distributed crowd?

2013-06-14   (English 389 Intro to DH, Emory U., Brian Croxall)   20

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Example: DH and Cultural Informatics

a) Transformation of the study of the humanities by digital technology as a critical and reflective component of DH at the heart of the proposed course
b) Digital record-keeping and data processing, engage with new forms of textuality
c) Practical skills in electronic archiving, processing, editing and presentation of cultural material
d) Train students to apply principles of textual, editorial and communication theory to technical situations

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Example: KCL intro to DH goals 1

- recognise questions for which computing is appropriate and match them to digital methods
- apply these methods creatively and assess the results
- find online resources efficiently and evaluate their applicability to your work
- construct and publish your own web pages

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Example: KCL intro to DH goals 2

- use electronic tools to analyse the content of a text
- use software to visualize and analyse humanities data
- design and construct a simple database to manage and explore humanities data
- understand the possibilities and limitations of computing as it is commonly used

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Current debates

- Controversies flourish, especially the last five years
- A sign of strength
- Jockers, Moretti
- Nature 2007: "Quantifying the evolutionary dynamics of language"

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DH types I and II

I.   A community of people around TEI, ALLC, ACH, CCH from the early nineties, with roots back in time. Humanities computing, multi-disciplinary, set of practices. Building things.

II. The recreation of the humanities itself after some technological event horison. Humanistic inquiry that in some way relates to the digital. Understanding things.

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Three orders of DH

1. Laboratores: those who work. Interested in practical aspects, leading to concrete results.

2. Bellatores: those who fight. Defence of DH, politically and intellectually. Give DH their own separate disciplinary status, providing academic careers.

3. Oratores: those who pray. Non-practising believers interested by the phenomenon and enthusiastic, but not involved in any practical aspect.

2013-06-14   (Marjorie Burghart)   26

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Open tent? A house without a roof?

- If use of a computer is the criterion, then DH=humanities.
- Level of integration with the tools is the scale we are discussing
  - use?
  - understand?
  - modify?
  - make?
  - conceptualise?

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Cross-disciplinary humanities

…with a touch of computer science.

Is it all really just an excuse to cross disciplinary boundaries?

And if so, why not?

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Language issues, cultural issues

- How to be international?
  - translate CFP?
  - accept presentations/papers in many languages
- Or is it something more complex
  - Understanding differences in scholarly argument
  - Which English do we use? Restricted to simple, understandable, "poor" language?
- What is an international language?

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Or something much simpler?

- UK PhD student scholarship ("fully funded"):
£ 14,000/year
- Norwegian PhD researcher salary: NOK
365,000 or more/year.

- From the Global Outlook::Digital Humanities
discussion: "500 usd for an 20 pages essay
is a tremendous amount of money in Cuban
Standard"

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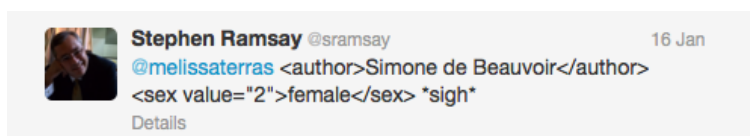University of Oslo

It's just a tool, get over it

- Tools use vs. tool critique
- XML represents an ordered hierarchy of
content objects—the problem of overlap
- Criticise it or work around it?
- Need a variety of tools
- Tools used by the marginalised
- Tools developed by the marginalised?

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Marginalisation, representation, change

> Stephen Ramsay @sramsay   16 Jan
> @melissaterras \<author\>Simone de Beauvoir\</author\>
> \<sex value="2"\>female\</sex\> *sigh*
> Details

"the TEI Council meeting in Brown, 2013-04, we agreed to change the datatype of person/@sex, personGrp/@sex and sex/@value from ISO 5218 to data.word, so as to allow the use of locally defined values or alternative published standards to be used in these attributes."

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Being a reindeer herder

- A historian who is also a war gamer has a certain set of knowledge and skills
- An anthropologist who grew up as a reindeer herder can and know certain things from the inside
- A humanities researcher who is also a programmer knows techniques, methods and has skills.

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From margin to headline

- When the alt-ac becomes professor, she is no longer marginalised
- Now digital humanities professors are attacked for being imperialistic, power centric, and focused on the Anglo-American scholarly world.

This is fine

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How open are we?

- The whole ADHO system is funded by members and institutions through the OUP journal LLC.
- Is open data, open results, and free research publications a nice goal or a prerequisite for acceptable scholarly work?
- If the latter is the case, then the DH organisations must change their ways

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Working together

- DH is usually based on co-operation in projects
- Different skills
- Different knowledge
- Respect. Not both ways, but all ways.
- The programmer and the librarian
- Helping hand or partner

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Conclusion and the UiO case

1. DH cannot be defined, but it can be exemplified and encircled
2. It will develop here and there at UiO-HF
3. There are DH centres at UiO-HF
4. Should 2 and 3 be connected?
5. EDD can take part in a coordinated effort
6. EDD have a long project track record and an under-utilised potential for teaching

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Thank you!

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Appendix: links 1

- DH conference: http://dh2013.unl.edu/
- LLC: http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/
- DHQ: http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/
- Digital Studies / Le champ numérique: http://www.digitalstudies.org/ojs/index.php/digital_studies/
- DH prizes and bursaries: http://adho.org/awards/
- ADHO: http://adho.org/
- ALLC/EADH: http://www.allc.org/
- ACH: http://www.ach.org/
- CSDH/SCHN: http://csdh-schn.org/
- aaDH: http://aa-dh.org/
- JADH: http://www.jadh.org/
- centerNet: http://digitalhumanities.org/centernet/

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Appendix: links 2

- THATCamp 2010 Session on DH teaching/curriculum: http://tinyurl.com/lspacdj
- English 389 Intro to DH, Emory U., Brian Croxall: http://www.briancroxall.net/dh/syllabus/
- One-year PG Diploma Course, Jadavpur University: http://sctrdhci.wordpress.com/
- KCL intro to DH:
  http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/ddh/study/ugmods1213/4AAV1003.aspx
- "Quantifying the evolutionary dynamics of language":
  http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v449/n7163/abs/nature06137.html
- Stephen Ramsay's type I and II: http://stephenramsay.us/2013/05/03/dh-one-and-two/
- Marjorie Burghart's three orders: http://dhiha.hypotheses.org/817
- Global Outlook::Digital Humanities: http://www.globaloutlookdh.org/
- Melissa Terras on the second sex:
  http://melissaterras.blogspot.co.uk/2013/05/on-changing-rules-of-digital-humanities.html

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