

Demystifying the Digital Humanities workshop series for 2012-13 academic year

Simpson Center for the Humanities Spring 2012 Grant Application

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Proposed events and resources

- **6 workshops** (2 per academic quarter), 3 hours each, on Saturday mornings of weeks 2 and 4 (pending availability), breakfast provided. Workshops will introduce attendees to the basic skills and literacies required in order to begin exploring the digital humanities (DH) on their own and begin a DH project. Each quarter's workshops are paired, so students should attend both in a single quarter -- but students may choose which quarters they attend. For example, a student with some previous experience coding might not find the winter workshops useful.
- **A showcase** in late September 2013, during the first week of Fall Quarter, when returning and incoming graduate students are established on campus. **This will allow workshop participants (and/or members of the UW DHSI contingent) to demonstrate their developing projects to the UW community.** The showcase will be structured as a poster session (similar to the DHCommons Digital Humanities Project Mixer at the 2012 MLA convention); and will continue the cohort-building work of the previous year.
- **Accompanying resource pages for each workshop. The resource pages are as important as the workshops themselves:** they become usable resources *because* they are introduced and framed by the workshop. Participants then have a resource they can refer back to for the workshop content, and which provides them with specific steps for **continuing their education independently.** These can be hosted at Paige's site, <http://www.paigemorgan.net>, unless long-term hosting on UW webpace can be arranged.
- **Video archiving of the content of each workshop:** with basic indexing so that viewers can jump to a specific part of the video to hear discussion of a particular topic. In contrast to the resource pages, the videos will allow attendees to quickly refresh their memories regarding specific topics covered in the workshops themselves.

- **Assessment:** At the end of each quarter's workshops, we will conduct an assessment using Catalyst to determine response to the workshops. We will provide the Simpson Center with a written report of our findings at the end of the year, so that the outcomes of this series may be used to develop further curriculum in the digital humanities for UW students at all levels.

What is "Demystifying?"

The workshop series will present a **guided introduction** to the points of intersection between traditional and digital humanities, including **how traditional humanities approaches and questions are used or translated** in DH studies, and identifying major DH subfields and their goals. Workshops will clarify what skills and competencies are (and are not) necessary in order to get started in DH. They will provide a guided tour to major resources available for self-development, and how to evaluate and choose between them.

Why teach entry-level skills?

Currently, the UW does not offer **introductory courses** in digital humanities scholarship for graduate students. It is increasingly clear, however, that **knowledge of and ability to work with digital scholarship and in digital contexts is a basic and necessary requirement for graduate students in humanities fields**. Competence in the digital humanities has a major impact on professionalization and success on the job market. Yet the dynamic (and skill-oriented) nature of the emerging DH discipline means that it is **perceived as a field that is uniquely difficult to enter**. Although resources exist online, we should not assume that all humanities graduate students naturally have the sophisticated net literacy that is needed to make use of those resources. Additionally, few resources exist that are specifically intended to provide a non-threatening starting point for DH self-development.

Target audience

This workshop series will be aimed at members of the UW community who are interested in the digital humanities, but lack experience and/or familiarity with the available resources. Our **primary intended audience is graduate students in the humanities departments on campus**, and recent graduates of UW Humanities Ph.D. programs. We see this as a great opportunity to involve more people in a rapidly-developing field which will only benefit from increased diversity of voices beyond those people who self-select as technologically-oriented.

Recruitment & publicity

We intend to publicize these workshops heavily both to incoming graduate students, and through departmental placement committees, as well as through related courses, such as Brian Reed's ENGL 593: Hypertext course. Information will be sent out on mailing lists in campus-wide humanities departments (including UW-Bothell programs). Our publicity materials will include a series of posters designed for each quarter's workshops. **Attendees will register in advance through Catalyst.**

Objectives

In proposing this workshop series, we plan to continue implementing the recommendations made in the needs assessment conducted by Jentery Sayers and Sasha Welland in October of 2010 during the HUM 597 micro-seminar taught in conjunction with THATCampPNW. Specifically, we seek to address the recommendations to provide additional workshops and research on the position of digital scholarship in current job markets; and to increase attention to cyberinfrastructure and interoperability at and beyond the UW.

For the 2012-13 series, our priorities are:

- To provide attendees with **a practical introduction to the digital humanities** that helps them feel comfortable enough to explore/learn further on their own -- **an introduction that builds interest, rather than intimidation**, in the field
- To create a **local** resource for **starting** DH self-education
- To encourage interest in UVic's DHSI, and **promote the Simpson Center's goal of having a strong contingent at future DHSI events**
- To serve as an introduction to DH since no formal graduate seminar currently exists
- To build interest in having such a seminar in order to promote enrollment

We wholly agree with the spirit of the 2010 assessment, however, many of the recommendations are predicated on a vibrant and fast-growing community of digital humanities scholars. At the University of Washington, this community is still nascent. Growing excitement about digital research and pedagogy is coupled with student anxiety about lack of preparedness and uncertainty about how to acquire necessary skills. Our hope is that with these workshops, we can ease tension, and help humanities graduate students transition to new ways of thinking about topics and approaching data.

Context and existing programs

The Simpson Center is already pioneering in creating new opportunities that support digital humanities research, **increasing the reputation and credibility of the UW humanities students who are already engaging in DH scholarship**. The 2011 Digital Research Summer Institute brought together students and faculty from a wide range of departments, and the DRSI Fellows benefited from being able to engage in **collaborative problem-solving** and **project development**. The Demystifying DH workshop series aims to create a similarly productive environment with a diverse audience of people who are pre-project. We see these workshops as participating in a larger conversation occurring at the University of Washington and beyond. This dialogue is already taking place in the context of the following resources:

- **ENGL 593: Textual Studies: Hypertext:** Part of the UW Textual Studies Program, this course provides a valuable introduction to digital humanities in the context of textual theory, but it is theoretical, and not intended to provide practical experience.
- **DXARTS 511: Applications of Digital Technology to Humanities Research:** This course allows students to workshop a specific project over the course of a single quarter while learning about on-campus resources for technological and copyright issues. While this class is practice-based, it is infrequently offered, and may be intimidating to students who have little or no technological skill already.
- **THATCamp:** THATCamps model ways of bringing people together, and generous cooperative education, but they are most attractive to people who are already actively engaging in the digital humanities. While THATCamps are valuable spaces for brainstorming, discussion, and morale-boosting, they are not non-threatening participation spaces -- for people who feel new to the digital humanities, THATCamps come with a high intimidation factor.
- **Women Who Rock: Oral history archiving project:** The Women Who Rock Community has offered instruction and experience in narrative collection and curation to members of the UW community.

The Demystifying the Digital Humanities workshop series will complement these resources by providing practical skills-based instruction similar to workshops currently being offered on a regular basis at Stanford University, the University of Buffalo Digital Humanities Initiative, and the Emory Digital Scholarship Commons.

Session topics

Autumn Quarter: The Digital Humanities and You

One of the biggest hurdles to getting involved for those new to the digital humanities is its scope and varied definitions: is digital humanities a discipline? A methodology? A toolset? What does it allow that traditional humanities does not, and do digital and traditional scholars need to be at odds? The first set of workshops aims to introduce attendees to the uses and affordances of digital humanities and show them how to gain a foothold in an unfamiliar conversation. We will highlight major differences between digital and traditional humanities that may not be obvious to those just starting out, including the emphasis on iterative project development and the autodidactic impulse.

In the second session, we will discuss how the rise of social media has created numerous questions about the role of the internet in self-presentation. We will address the importance of developing both **professional and collaborative identities**. A collaborative identity is the face one presents as an ongoing participant, actively engaged in public conversations about project development with other members of the community. The field of digital humanities values transparency and reporting on the learning process, with both successes and failures considered instructive. Public reporting and discourse allows other members of the community to learn from each others' projects. However, this style of self-presentation is substantially different from traditional identity management. The Simpson Center is already encouraging the creation of collaborative identities through its sponsorship of the DHCommons. This workshop will support further participation through a frank conversation with participants about what steps are involved in identity creation and curation; and will provide a space where they can ask questions and make strategic choices about their next steps.

Session 1: What is DH and Why Does It Matter?

- Types of questions asked, and their stakes
- Values: transparency, open access, iterative development
- Can I be a digital humanist even though I don't know programming? (Yes!)
- Can digital humanities enhance my current research specialties? (Yes!)
- How to start learning about **one** area of DH without feeling like you have to learn about **everything**
- Resources available on and off-campus for further training and support, i.e., UW Libraries IT workshops and Digital Initiative, DHCommons, DHAnswers, etc.
- Spotighting digital scholarship in which current and recent UW students are engaged

Session 2: Managing and Professionalizing Your Online Presence and Identity

- Theoretical and practical issues of identity management
- Avenues for participating online, i.e. tweeting at conferences
- Finding an online cohort: how online cohorts differ from mailing lists
- Using available UW-supported resources for identity development (what the Student Technology Fee pays for, i.e. bandwidth, Wordpress)
- Learning about the alt-ac and ed-tech fields: resources for exploring these fields, and finding connections between them and your areas of specialization

Winter Quarter: The Role of Code in Digital Humanities Project Development

The majority of humanities graduate students have little or no experience or training in programming languages. The prospect of learning a new programming language is daunting because of confusion regarding the various purposes that different languages and platforms serve. The first workshop will provide attendees with an overview of major programming languages and their roles; and an introduction to fundamental characteristics of code syntax. It will prepare attendees for the second winter quarter workshop, as well as equip them to explore learning to code independently.

The second workshop is designed to provide a hands-on introduction to formatting and publishing text and images on the web. It is intended to build confidence by allowing participants to experiment in a setting where help is available. Building a website from scratch is only one of many ways to publish texts on the web -- the advantage is that doing so provides basic but vital experience in working with multiple tools such as text editors, FTP servers, and browsers in conjunction with each other. Being comfortable with multiple tools, and understanding how they work together, is a threshold skill for more advanced digital humanities work.

Session 1: Understanding What Websites Are Doing (How to Read Code Before You Can Write It):

- Why you would want to learn to read code
- What you can learn about a website from looking at its source code
- How to recognize which programming language(s) are being used
- Understanding what is -- and is not -- possible for a website to do

Session 2: A Crash Course in Coding: Syntax & Lex in HTML and CSS for Humanities

Scholars:

- How to put things on websites: text editors and FTP
- How to copy/paste code and troubleshoot it
- Embracing the “hacker ethos” of DH and understanding when and how to modify existing code to create a new product
- Practice projects to work on, in order to develop skills further
- Basic principles for providing metadata
- What markup language does: the difference between HTML and TEI

Spring Quarter: Current Tools and Projects

These workshops will teach people to perform basic experiments with currently existing tools, and familiarize them with the projects that are already in existence. The purpose is to show them what people are doing (what questions and goals they start out with, what constraints they have to work with, etc.), and offer an opening for attendees to begin developing their own projects. Both sessions will be hands-on: attendees will begin by exploring available data sets to use in Wordle and IBM’s Many Eyes as a demonstration of the possibilities of open-access data analytics and its value in developing a larger project. In the second session, attendees will arrive with a data set and explore how to use it with a variety of tools. Following these sessions, attendees will have enough experience and familiarity with the possibilities of digital humanities to begin designing projects suited to their particular research interests.

Session 1: Introduction to Text Manipulation and Visualization

- Finding and preparing a dataset to work with
- Devising simple experiments and permutations
- Writing an abstract, or an invitation to collaborate, for a DH project
- Understanding IP/Fair Use law, and researching the legality of specific texts

Session 2: Available Tools: Free, Cheap, and Premium

- What’s available, and how to decide whether it’s worth paying for
- Evaluating user interfaces
- Defining “streams” of data
- Major tools and tool repositories: Bamboo DiRT, TAPoR, Juxta, MALLETT

- How to get involved in other people's data projects (as beta-tester, proofreader, contributor, etc.)
- When and whether to make your project/iteration public

Summary

The Demystifying the Digital Humanities workshop series aims to enhance the Simpson Center's existing work in promoting the digital humanities at the University of Washington by facilitating entry into DH scholarship for members of the UW community who may be interested but uncertain where to begin; as well as showcasing existing DH projects within the UW community. **While we cannot turn attendees into digital humanities scholars in six sessions, we intend to provide them with enough basic information to allow them to start exploring the possibilities of the digital humanities on their own, while simultaneously building a vibrant scholarly cohort at the University of Washington.** As scholars whose own digital investments have been immeasurably bolstered by the support of the Simpson Center, it is our obligation to reciprocate by contributing to the development of a **UW-based digital humanities curriculum** and expanding the conversations that have begun with the Simpson Center's help.