

Implementing DH in university curricula: an undergrad's view.

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This paper wants to stress the point that the digital humanities should be implemented more extensively in university curricula to facilitate the kind of scientific thought needed for the development of DH in academic research. There is no clear consensus on whether an increased focus on the digital within the humanities is desirable. I argue that regardless of how one sees the goal and future of digital humanities, making it more prominent in university classrooms can only lead to positive results. By focusing on interdisciplinarity and the interplay between quantitative and qualitative methods in university courses, the hope is that these new approaches will increasingly be used by students and thus help further exploration of the possibilities of the digital humanities.

Researchers and professors point towards the unfinished, highly specific, buggy, and temporary state of digital tools, applications, and methods catered towards the humanities as a reason not to use them in classrooms. In their eyes the traditional methods and heuristics are better fit to teach students because of their reliability, detail, depth, and widespread application (Brier 2012). They aren't wrong. But digital tools and methods will never become as reliable, detailed, deep and widespread if they aren't introduced to students first. The ambiguity and uncertainty within digital humanities will only cease after it has been explored thoroughly by a broad group of academics. Regardless of if you see digital humanities as a transitional phase in scientific methodology or as an emerging auxiliary science, students and junior researchers must be made aware of its existence and its possibilities before it can take steps forward (Alexander and Frost 2012). The core of the problem lies with the absence of an ideological shift towards the inclusion of digital humanities as an alternative and innovative way of answering research questions. This can only happen if students and junior researchers adopt the different ways of thinking needed for digital humanities.

To map how digital humanities are applied within university courses at the moment, I went back and revisited all the courses I have had over the past four years in my history degree at Gent University. I tried to summarize where the digital humanities were mentioned, how they were mentioned, and the general view that the lecturer gave students of what digital humanities entailed. I found that in general, courses on quantitative methods, heuristics, and textual analysis could expand a lot more on the possibilities digital humanities have to offer. Statistics courses could give a much-needed introduction into the possibilities of quantitative research in the humanities. Paleography and primary source analysis classes could teach students the new ways in which text can be analyzed with digital tools, give technical guidance, and point towards the need of tool and digital methodology criticism. Classes on heuristics and secondary resource research could focus on how to use digitized sources, online databases, and ways to create meaningful advanced queries. Advanced

classes in higher years of study could stress the possibilities of interdisciplinary research coupled with the need for efficient project management.

All these examples center around the need to instill the new kind of scientific thought students require to include the digital humanities in their own research. This non-traditional way of thinking includes breaking up research questions into logical steps that can be understood by digital tools and input into programming scripts; understanding which research questions are best answered by quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, or mixed method analysis; realizing that research projects might benefit from an interdisciplinary approach by including other humanities, social or positive scientists; and recognize the possibilities of digital collaboration, crowdsourcing, and publication. Further possibilities after this paper include using the information gathered here to create or discuss a model of implementation of digital humanities in university courses, and sparking the debate on whether or not a bigger focus on DH in the university classroom is needed.

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