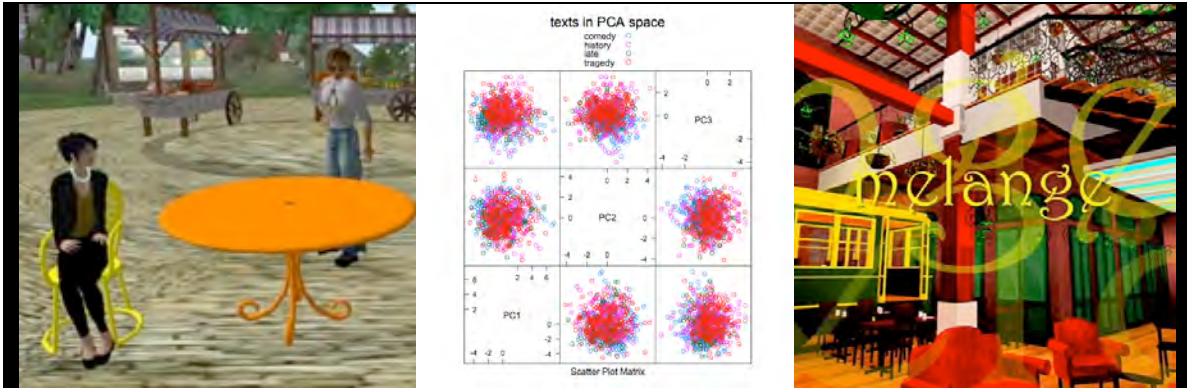


Enhancing Digital Humanities at UW-Madison

A White Paper



The Terrace in UW's virtual Second Life campus; Prof. Michael Witmore's scatterplot diagram showing generic and linguistic analysis of Shakespeare's plays; video animation still, *Nouvelle Mélange Restaurant*, Design Studies student Earl Serafica.

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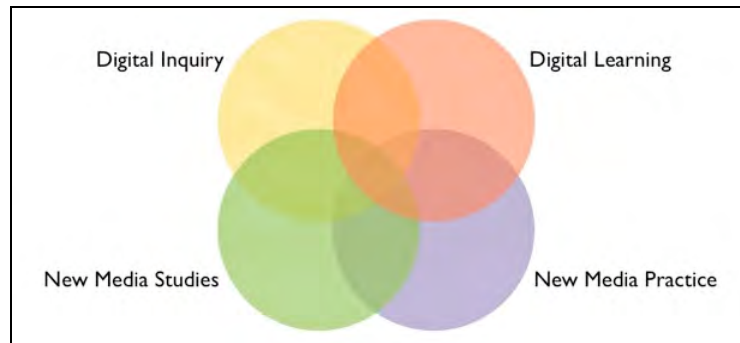
Special thanks to the sponsors of this seminar, the Center for the Humanities
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Goal — To make UW–Madison a world leader in digital humanities by assembling a Digital Arts and Humanities Network comprised of UW faculty, academic staff, and students, as well as librarians, technologists, and administrative staff, all supported by a robust IT infrastructure.

Defining Digital Humanities — Digital humanities (dighum) both extends traditional arts and humanities activities and facilitates the emergence of new methods, objects, and audiences of scholarly and creative practice. Dighum comprises four main areas of activity:



- *Digital inquiry*: the digitization of archival materials; use and evaluation of off- and online materials, tools, and services; and development of new research models, including quantitative methods, for research in any arts and humanities field
- *Digital learning*: the integration of IT within learning environments and educational curricula devoted to potentially any subject matter
- *New media studies*: research into the communities, expressive forms, and social practices associated with digital media and IT systems
- *New media practice*: lab- and studio-based research and training in the art, rhetoric, and techniques of digital cultural production

While these four areas can and often do overlap, each entails its own ensemble of people, technologies, and critical issues. For example, datamining and interpreting texts, images, and performances differs from effectively using new media in smart classrooms, both of which differ from conducting ethnographies of online communities or teaching students to collaboratively produce multimedia installations. At the same time, specific dighum projects or programs may combine some or all of these activities.

Properly speaking, digital humanities is neither a field nor a discipline. It is much wider than a field, as it potentially interconnects the arts and humanities in innovative ways, while also forging new relations to the sciences and professions. A digital inquiry team, for example, might include a literary scholar, linguist, visual artist, ethnomusicologist, game designer, statistician, programmer, copyright lawyer, and market analyst. Dighum is also much deeper than any one discipline or interdisciplinary team, for it connects directly to the emerging cyberinfrastructure of the academy and society at large. Indeed, *digital humanities plugs directly into the media culture lived by our students, our peers, and our wider communities*. It is perhaps no surprise that libraries and new

media industries have often been at the cutting edge of digital humanities, introducing faculty and students to tools and services that enable new ways of producing knowledge, creating art and design, and experiencing and shaping the world.

Despite this breadth and depth, digital humanities today appears to many as but a small subfield or special topic. Nonetheless, we believe that through its interconnected and infrastructural dimensions, *dighum is the future of the humanities and will eventually disappear into them*. For now, digital humanities offers a strategic nexus through which faculty, students, and staff can analyze and direct how this future might unfold.



College Library Media Studio

UW’s Digital Humanities Initiative — Over the past year, a digital humanities initiative has emerged at UW. Led by Prof. Jon McKenzie, it consists of faculty, librarians, and technologists committed to enhancing dighum at UW. Thus far, this initiative has accomplished the following:

- Establishment of the Media Studio in College Library, dedicated to supporting innovative uses of new media in the teaching of humanities by faculty, academic staff, and graduate student instructors
- Formation of the Working Group for Digital Inquiry headed by Prof. Michael Witmore and the creation of Digital Inquiry Lab in Memorial Library dedicated to exploring quantitative approaches to arts and humanities research
- Convening of this Faculty Development Seminar (FDS) in Digital Humanities, sponsored by the Center for the Humanities, the Institute for Research in the Humanities, with support from the General Library System and the Division of Information Technology
- Creation of a Digital Humanities Steering Committee to pursue issues and ideas raised in the FDS, including the recommendations listed below
- Formation of a partnership with the Center for the Humanities, which may include administrative support, outreach, and programming in digital humanities

Challenges — The challenges facing this initiative and its goal of making UW a world leader in digital humanities are many, ranging from disciplinary constraints to out-dated equipment to a cultural ethos that ranges from techno-frustration to techno-obliviousness to techno-phobia.

UW *does* have faculty, staff, and students doing cutting-edge work both on and in digital technology, and they should be recognized for this outstanding work, from ethnographies of online religious communities to educational game design to datamining Shakespeare to art crits in Second Life. But as our Faculty Development Seminar revealed, disciplinary boundaries often obscure their activities. Indeed, we frequently know little or nothing of one another's work, which forestalls both collaboration and the sense of belonging to a wider community. Also, the Libraries and DoIT offer a wide range of services that remain undiscovered and thus underutilized by faculty.

Within individual disciplines, hiring, tenure, and promotion criteria, as well as career trajectories, can create surprising generational divides. Many very senior faculty are understandably committed to traditional scholarly canons and methods. Graduate students likewise focus on learning these canons and methods in order to land that first job, and junior faculty concentrate on fulfilling long-established tenure requirements: in short, there is little incentive and often some career risk in exploring new media. Thus we find that mid-level, tenured faculty tend to be the most *formally* active digital humanists (i.e., they incorporate IT into their research and/or teaching and attend related workshops, symposia, and conferences), while undergraduate students are the most *informally* active (i.e., they use IT and create digital media but do so with little or no formal training and outside or alongside their coursework).

There obviously are exceptions to these general observations, from fully-wired senior faculty to graduate students pushing the discipline's media borders. However, programs and faculty that actively seek to incorporate IT and new media into their activities frequently face frustrating and sometimes embarrassing technical challenges. Faculty incorporating media into courses often must push antiquated media carts across campus to do so. General education classrooms, in particular, remain mired in the age of chalk and overhead transparencies, with digital technologies tacked on in ad hoc fashion. Departments hosting renowned speakers lack adequate presentation venues and equipment to handle even the most common media needs. And many faculty confess awe at the media-savviness of their undergraduates in comparison to their own experience with new media.

Confounding and underlying these challenges, the arts and humanities have lacked a well-funded, high-level IT group and, more importantly, an ethos of utilizing technologies analogous to those found in many science and professional programs. While DoIT's Academic Technology group provides excellent instructional support and the Libraries' staff offers specialized support for individual faculty research, new media and IT are not yet fully part of UW's wider arts and humanities culture. They are clearly part of our everyday communication and administrative activities and are utilized by individual scholars, but they are not fully integrated into the ethos of our research and teaching. Some faculty remain oblivious or in denial about both the promises and perils of digital media. Others focus only on the perils and thus resist engaging with IT. For many, "technology" equals computers, thereby naturalizing history's most powerful information technology thus far: the book. At the same time, our practical and evaluative models of cultural creativity and scholarly production remain largely modeled on Romantic painters and poets (individualism, originality, genius), whereas we could add models provided by contemporary hip hop turntablists and vjs (collaboration, mashup, DIY or do-it-yourself).

Recommendations — Toward our goal of making UW a world leader in digital humanities, we offer for discussion and consideration the following recommendations, broken into three sections:

Academics

- Build a website to formalize a Digital Arts & Humanities Network that functions across different UW arts and humanities contexts and that connects to such national organizations as Project Bamboo; the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO); and the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC)
- Create a campus-wide, multi-year focus on digital humanities *as an intellectual concern*, drawing on the Graduate School, L&S, SOE, SOHE, the Center for Humanities, the Institute for Research in the Humanities, the Visual Culture Center, the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, UW Libraries, DoIT, and other relevant groups
- Establish two innovative research areas that could help put UW at the cutting edge of digital humanities: 1) Humanities Visualization, devoted to the study and use of maps, graphs, diagrams, timelines, photographs, illustrations, and other visual materials by humanist scholars—this should be done in collaboration with the Visual Culture Center; and 2) Humanities and Technology Studies, devoted to the wider study of both historical and contemporary uses of technologies by artists and humanists—this should be done in consultation with Science and Technology Studies
- Review and revise the Arts & Humanities Division’s tenure and promotion standards to reflect issues created by new forms of scholarship emerging from IT and new media, e.g., electronic publications, collaborative authorship, and the use of quantitative methods
- Raise the profile and support of existing media research programs and associated labs and studios at UW, including the Digital Inquiry Group and Lab (Memorial Library), the Digital Media Center (DoIT/Center for Biology Education/Biotechnology Center), the Games, Learning, and Society group (Curriculum and Instruction), the Hamel Family Digital Media Lab (Communication Arts), the Media Studio (College Library), the NewsLab (Political Science), as well as faculty and labs in the Art Department, Design Studies, Visual Culture, the Writing Center, and many other areas
- Raise the visibility of UW's overall IT/new media infrastructure to enhance the hiring and retention of faculty and the recruitment and education of graduate students
- Restore UW's legacy in distance education by developing a full array of media-rich online courses (as proposed by Prof. Jeremi Suri in History)
- Expand courses and other content for UW’s iTunes U and its Second Life virtual campus
- Use digital humanities to enhance links with the sciences and professions on campus and assure a representation for humanities perspectives within their research and teaching, working closely with the Holtz Center for Science and Technology, the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, the Law School, the School of Medicine and Public Health, and the School of Business

- Reestablish a New Media Center for interested humanities faculty and graduate students to learn innovative approaches to research and teaching and to network with one another
- Secure long-term funding for a dighum fellow at the Institute for Research in the Humanities
- Creative incentives for new media collaborations across generations of faculty and students
- Reestablish the graduate student Tech Fellows Program (see Appendix I)
- Create a PhD minor in digital humanities (see Appendix I), perhaps leading to a PhD program
- Reestablish the InterArts & Technology program (IA Tech)
- Enhance the teaching of information literacy in Comm A and Comm B courses
- Create an undergrad certificate in new media, perhaps leading to the creation of a general education requirement in digital literacy (e.g. "Comm C")
- Create incentives such as faculty buy-back and staff support for developing and offering courses stressing information literacy, technology literacy, and/or media literacy
- Create similar incentives to enhance research-related engagement with digital technologies
- Create a cluster-hire of faculty in digital humanities and arts, with both senior and junior-level faculty lines dedicated to building a vibrant, interdisciplinary program
- “2nd Interest Hires” —separate from cluster hires, make the use or study of digital technology a crucial faculty hiring criterion, secondary to their primary research interest

Technology Services

- Secure a campus-wide commitment and funding to drastically increase the number of smart classrooms and presentation spaces available to the arts and humanities
- Build a broader network of associated research and instructional spaces (studios, labs, classrooms, performance/exhibition spaces, archives) devoted to digital humanities
- Because most arts and humanities faculty work within the College of Letters and Science, establish a college-wide Humanities Technology Interest Group comprised of relevant deans, faculty, students, and IT staff from the college, Libraries, and DoIT
- Since arts and humanities faculty also work *outside* L&S, create a campus-wide Humanities Technology Interest Group comprised of relevant faculty, students, and staff from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Letters and Science, Division of Continuing Studies, Division of International Studies, Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, Law School, School of Business, School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Human Ecology, School of Medicine and Public Health, as well as staff from Libraries and DoIT

- Encourage and support the creation of departmental technology committees to enhance communication and support between arts and humanities departments and the various IT units at UW, including the Humanities Technology Interest Groups recommended here
- Develop ways to better leverage graduate and undergraduate students' experience with IT and new media, both at UW and in their everyday lives
- Create a comprehensive online portal of UW digital services for faculty, staff, and students
- Develop a campus-wide Web 2.0 infrastructure for online interaction and intellectual networking
- Develop an infrastructure so that every student can create their own online portfolio
- Create and/or expand mobile technology centers (hotspots) with wi-fi interconnectivity geared to collaborative engagements with curriculum presentation and outcome

Library Support

- Purchase of commercial digital resources, databases, and corpora, whose expense and multidisciplinary nature will require collaboration between various collection developers
- Licensing of the above, including craft licenses and usage agreements, with a view toward meeting the needs of future researchers via multi-institutional access
- Participate and provide funding for text-creation partnership projects to create library collections useful for dighum researchers
- Identify library staff with experience and skills to support dighum projects, including adjustment of position descriptions
- Encourage librarians to be active participants in campus-wide and multi-campus dighum support initiatives (e.g. Project Bamboo)
- Educate library staff about the types of dighum projects in various departments and clusters that might require support, particularly Library subject specialists and department liaisons
- Develop a network of spaces devoted to exhibiting student projects that present research and/or class projects in multimedia formats, including installations, videos, podcasts, posters, and performances

