

Why projects?

Projects are both nouns and verbs: A project is a kind of scholarship that requires design, management, negotiation, and collaboration. It is also scholarship that projects, in the sense of futurity, as something which is not yet. Projects are often pursued in teams, with collaborators bringing complementary skill-sets and interests to conceptualize the research questions being investigated and design possible trajectories for them to be answered. Hence, projects are projective, involving iterative processes and many dimensions of coordination, experimentation, and production.

Who is involved in Digital Humanities projects?

Digital Humanities projects typically involve multiple circles of researchers, from faculty and staff to students and community partners. A project's complexity and scale generally implies the involvement of multiple strata of personnel from within and across institutions of learning.

Projects can involve partner institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives as well as members of the community, alumni, and members of interested virtual networks such as collectors, amateur historians, and the like.

Partnerships with corporations, in particular media and technology companies, are also possible, with a caveat that corporate and academic cultures may be different in their goals and values.

How are Digital Humanities projects organized?

Projects are usually faculty-, staff-, or student-initiated. They are often built around a research question and/or a university collection or archival repository. Many take place outside the classroom; others involve a research project that is anchored in a recurring course.

A Principal Investigator (or, PI), co-PIs, project advisors, staff, interns, and students are all part of the project team. It is the responsibility of the PI to organize the project team, establish timelines for deliverables, and assess the project at each stage of development.

What is the difference between Digital Humanities projects and Big Humanities projects?

Digital Humanities projects come in all sizes: big, medium, and small. Some of the defining early Digital Humanities projects, however, as well as prominent contemporary work have assumed the form of Big Humanities projects, which are realized over many years, with many contributors, developers, and funders involved at various stages of development. Big Humanities projects are built along the lines of Big Science. They involve large-scale, long-term, team-based initiatives that build big pictures out of the tesserae of expert knowledge. The researchers and team members, from historians to technologists to designers, may number in the hundreds.

Little or "lowercase" Digital Humanities projects are typically carried out by individuals or small teams in consultation with experienced staff. As standard platforms and protocols have emerged, editing, exhibit-building, network analysis, and repository development require less one-off investment.

The bulk of Digital Humanities projects fall in between the two ends of the spectrum.

How is the Digital Humanities continuous with traditional forms of research and teaching in the humanities?

Like traditional humanities-based research and teaching, Digital Humanities work involves practices of analysis, critique, and interpretation; editing and annotation; historical research and contextualization. It examines the formal and historical properties of works of the imagination, the interplay of self and society, the history of ideas and of material culture. It attends to qualitative and non-quantifiable features of the human experience: complexity, ambiguity, medium specificity, and subjectivity. It builds on traditional approaches to the study, preservation, and classification of cultural corpora.

Though the range of media with which Digital Humanities works extends beyond the textual, its core commitments harmonize with the long-standing values of the humanistic tradition: the pursuit of analytical acuity and clarity, the making of effective arguments, the rigorous use of evidence, and communicative expressivity and efficacy. Digital Humanities then melds hands-on work with vastly expanded data sets, across media and through new couplings of the digital and the physical, resulting in definitions of and engagements with knowledge that encompass the entire human sensorium.

Both the traditional classroom and solitary study remain key features in the landscape of Digital

Humanities learning. At the same time, many precedents for collaborative work in communities of letters and knowledge networks are enhanced by digital platforms in a fabric animated by opportunities for hands-on, project-based learning. Since antiquity, the dominant models of humanistic inquiry have favored an understanding of intellectual labor as solitary and contemplative, cut off from—and even superior to—manual labor and the realm of making or doing. Digital Humanities re-embeds these models in an augmented model of pedagogy that emphasizes learning through making and doing, whether on the level of the individual or the group.

How is the Digital Humanities discontinuous with traditional forms of research and teaching in the humanities?

For nearly six centuries, humanistic models of knowledge have been shaped by the power of print as the primary medium of knowledge production and dissemination. Rather than rejecting print culture or embracing the simple pouring of print models into digital molds, Digital Humanities is engaged in developing print-plus and post-print models of knowledge. Both involve more than an updating of the knowledge delivery system. They entail the cognitive and epistemological reshaping of humanistic fields as a function of the affordances provided by the digital with respect to print. They also respect the increasing role teamwork and collaboration play in humanities research and training.

How does the Digital Humanities function in the print-plus era?

Print typically offers a single viewing angle, linear organization, a research output characterized by finitude and stability, and a scale of documentation and argumentation that has to respect the physical proportions of the book. The digital print-plus era, in contrast, allows for toggling back and forth between multiple views of the same materials. It allows for fluid scale shifts, for “zooming” from the macro- to the micro-level, and for the interweaving of data sets (such as source materials, notes, and correspondence) into research outputs. The screens and augmented spaces of the print-plus era allow for the faceting, filtering, and versioning of corpora; for the coexistence of multiple pathways within a single repository; for multilinear forms of argument. It is extensible in the double sense of allowing for seemingly unlimited scale and of being process- rather than product-based. When a book goes to print, it stabilizes in an edition that has to be reissued in order to be revised; a digital artifact can be altered

or revised on a rewritable substrate that supports rapid refresh rates. The same digital artifact can lead multiple lives on multiple platforms, with multiple authors. It can undergo remixing by others before, during, and after its “completion.”

How are Digital Humanities projects funded and sustained?

Because they cross over boundaries between disciplines; between theoretical and applied knowledge; and among the humanities, library science, information technology, and design, Digital Humanities projects typically require support structures that cut across conventional department and school organizational lines. Private foundations, public granting agencies, and industry partners have all provided monies for projects at every scale.

Funding for research in the humanities is far more limited than in the science and engineering fields, but the scope and innovative character of the Digital Humanities have led many projects to successfully garner external funding. In order to attract and sustain such funding, it has proven essential for projects to receive internal support during a period of incubation so that they may prove their worth by successfully reaching an initial set of benchmarks.

Sustaining such projects requires that faculty and students who assume leadership positions need the support and recognition that this work is a combination of research, teaching, and service.

What are the prevailing crediting and attribution conventions and authorship models for Digital Humanities projects?

Traditional authorship and crediting practices in the humanities are based on single authorship. Although practices of attribution are still fluid in the Digital Humanities community, the emerging model recognizes that many, if not most, Digital Humanities projects are analogous either to natural science laboratory projects or to the collaborative attribution system used in the performing arts.

No standardized crediting system for Digital Humanities projects has been embraced universally. But the dominant trend is toward the differentiation of roles such as principal investigator, researcher, designer, programmer, modeler, editor, and the like.

Project-based scholarship exemplifies contemporary Digital Humanities principles. It differs from traditional scholarly publication in being team-based, distributed in its production and outcome, dependent on networked resources (technical and/or administrative), and in being iterative and ongoing, rather than fixed or final, in its outcome. It necessarily involves many dimensions of conception, design, coordination, and resource use that build extra layers of complexity onto the traditional approach to humanities research. The following list is useful to the creation of a grant proposal or research plan for project-based work and reflects best-practices standards (with the caveat that debate persists).

Contribution to knowledge

The project should meet the criteria of any scholarly work through its contribution to knowledge in a discipline or field. How is the project in dialogue with an issue or topic in a given disciplinary field and how does it move the discourse forward in an innovative way? Does the project contribute to and advance the state of knowledge of a given field or fields?

The model of knowledge

How is the knowledge shaped and modeled: as an argument, a presentation, a display? What can be taken from the project as a theoretical principle, method, or information that is useful for other scholars, including those who are not engaged with Digital Humanities research? How does the project model and embody new knowledge?

Research questions and digital media

Digital environments allow for different approaches for relating and processing materials and this should be demonstrated in the research plan. Simply putting something online is not digital research. The litmus test is to ask what is being done that could not be done in print-based or traditional scholarship. How has the research project been formulated from within the affordances of digital methods?

Tools and content

Many digital projects involve innovative recombining and reconfiguring of existing tools toward the formulation of new knowledge. Is this a tools-based project or

a content-driven project and how do these intersect? How can the intellectual labor of the design and development of the “tool” be assessed in tandem with the “content”? To what extent are they inextricable and why?

Methods

Does the project have a thesis or guiding methodological principle? How did the digital platform allow it to be explored, tested, argued, demonstrated, or even refuted?

Born digital and/or digitized artifact

Digital projects often combine analog materials that have been scanned or digitized and elements that are born digital—analysis, research, processing, or newly authored files. Elements of information structure are also born digital. How are each of these elements understood and what role do they play in the overall project?

Collections-sharing and licensing

The future of humanistic learning and the level of societal impact that humanities scholarship can achieve depend upon unrestricted access to cultural and historical repositories; accordingly, the least restrictive licenses should be the norm. What kinds of licensing and intellectual property issues will the project encounter? How can the work be accessed and used by the scholarly community and public-at-large?

Interface as knowledge representation and content-modeling

The interface of a project expresses an argument in its design. Does it offer a snapshot of the contents of the project, or a set of entry points for activities that can be performed? Understanding the ways the interface is structured, how it embodies the ideas of the project, and how it supports the engagement with the project is essential.

Team, collaborative, and project management

Knowing who will take responsibility for each part of a digital project is crucial for development and design. Each participant's role should be spelled out in documentation: project conception, research plan, technical analysis, Web development (infrastructure), Web design (interface), content development, database design, and so on. Some account of the percentage of effort in the project as a whole should be indicated.

Credit for intellectual contributions/authorship

Project teams have to work collaboratively, and the research activity unfolds within the implementation; it is not separate from it. But the responsibility for the research question and the intellectual contribution of each participant should be made clear in documentation. This should include a description of how the project was shaped by design decisions, discipline-specific knowledge, and technical expertise.

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