Introduction to Digital Humanities

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Key Terms

In order to help you focus your reading and to serve as a mnemonic device, I have provided key terms for each week, which we'll collaboratively define in class on Wednesdays. You will need to know these terms for the final exam. Please note that the definition I will request is not the dictionary definition of the term, but an elucidation of the term as we have used it in the context of the class: in our discussions, in our readings, and in our project work. You will be expected to cite relevant authors (though not exact quotes or page numbers) as well as class discussions.

- Week One
  - digital humanities
  - humanities
  - multimodal scholar
  - archive
- Week Two
  - narrative
  - archive
  - community
- Week Three
  - humanities research question
  - metadata
  - data model
  - data type
- Week Four
  - ontology
  - mismatched ontology
  - data visualizationn
- Week Five
  - html
  - css
  - network graph
  - edge

Week One

Digital humanities

Archiving, digitizing, interpreting, and preserving the human record. The study of the intersection between technology and the human experience using digital tools. Using computing methods to do humanities research. There's a tension between working with a computer (binary, ones and zeroes) and humanities research (which wants to be more fluid and press the boundaries).
Burdick et al.: generative humanities = generative interaction between the digital and the humanities.
McPherson: emphasis on new capacities of multimedia. Contested!

Humanities

Using language as a medium to communicate certain aspects of the human experience. The study of human behavior. The pursuit of truth — but unlike science, we tend to make our judgments based on less tangible things, like our feelings or thoughts or experiences. Many possible truths and conflicting interpretations. Nuanced and malleable: truth can be changeable and relative, based on perspective.

Multimodal scholar

Someone who studies different disciplines and ties them together in one whole, where they interact. Expressed knowledge through visual, audio, many different ways of expressing conclusions. Synthesizes: uses many different methods to complement each other. Utilizes

peer-to-peer commentary so people are in dialogue with each other. Using technology as a platform, medium, and visualization tool.

Week Two

narrative

In this context, it's an explanatory story with a beginning, middle, and an end. We use them to contextualize and illuminate the data we're talking about. You could see it as a complement to the data you're analyzing; it adds the flesh to the bones. You have to take into account the events that are excluded and included, because so much depends on who's telling the story and what they leave in and leave out. A narrative is more of an experience than something that's factual; it involves emotions, biases, and personal filters. History is always politicized, depending on who's telling the story. Hayden White is the author of "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality."

archive

Collections of records. Persistent representations of human activity that travel across space and time. A focused collection. Can have specific topics or fields of study, rather than just a little bit of everything. An archive is a perfect source of data sets for doing digital humanities. Our new technological abilities allow us to expand or supersede the institutional archive with global sources. The web is an open space and allows everyone to contribute stories. "Archive" is often shorthand for the power to determine whose stories get lost and whose stories are remembered.

community archive

An independent, grassroots attempt for communities to document their own histories. A group of people that may not have been represented are given the opportunity to distinguish their identity and tell their story from their point of view. They're always political; they're always taking a stance on something, because archives are always a form of power. People from marginalized communities can contribute to the archive. Sometimes a way of giving things back to the community, allowing them to archive objects in the way they should be done. Community ownership and control is key because it reflects the language and priorities of the community. Digital archives also lets the archivists see and understand the affective impact of the archive. An opportunity for diverse communities to get to know each other directly. Symbolic annihilation: if a community is left out of the community or not being represented, they're excluded from history.

Week Three

humanities research question

Seeks to understand, broadly, and can't be answered with "yes," "no," or numerical data (or definitively at all). Taking specific data and begging a much bigger question. Investigates transformations in how people view (and produce) cultural artifacts. Utilizing records in order to answer questions about culture and the human experience.

metadata
Data about data. It describes and structures data. There are many metadata structures. Structures develop because people are interested in describing the phenomena they care about.

data model
The categories that describe a record in a dataset.

data type
Any individual column heading.

Week Four

ontology
1. The way information is organized.
2. The ideological and epistemological implications of that organization.

The thought process behind the way data is structured. How the viewer interprets the data. Depending on who's viewing the data, we may look for different specific things; so a different viewer could see a different thing. How you categorize the properties and relationships of information. It's subjective: everyone has their own ontological perspective (or groups might have their own ontological perspective). For example, the way that different cultures across the globe approach the same subject is probably very different. Or it might bring up different memories or relationships. You can have ontologies that work better or worse, but there's no "correct" ontology. The power to name is a political kind of power. Ramesh Srinivasan and Jessica Wallack. Duarte and Belarde-Lewis.

mismatched ontology
The categories that have been set out before don't match the ontology of the people who are trying to use those categories. It's important to be aware that what you're looking at is a construction of someone who had the power to name what you're looking at, and it may not be consistent with the ontology of what it's represented. Information loss results from the effort to translate between two ontologies.

data visualization
Graphical representation of data. We visualize data so that it's easier to notice aspects and features of the data. Our current moment is obsessed with data visualization, perhaps because we're moving so quickly that there's more information to sift through. It's also expected that we do more now, because we have these tools.

Week Five

html
Coding webpages. Markup language for coding webpages. A series of instructions or information about the text or image that's being marked up. Designed to be interpreted by a browser.

css
LaA graph to depict the relationship between nodes in a network. A visual representation of the relationship between nodes and their connections through edges. A network can be composed of any two kinds of things.

edge
Line connecting two nodes showing the relationship between them.

node
The entities that are being connected. Can be anything! Subject matter being represented in the network graph, or just within the network data.

bimodal network
A network that contains two different kinds of entities (e.g., actors and movies, books and authors). In traditional network analysis, bimodal networks are considered slightly less desirable than one-mode networks.

Week Six

page-rank
An algorithm devised by Google to determine a page's importance. In network analysis terms, it's a method for determining centrality. Takes into account number of visits to a page, but also how many times the page is referenced on other websites, plus how important those websites that refer to it are.

community
The group of people that you're analyzing, or sub-groups within the larger network.

network analysis
An analysis of the relationships among entities in some kind of connected community. Taking an in-depth look at a system's function. Looking at a system and understanding its inner workings and the relationships that constitute the network. It's a good way to see the strength of relationships. It's a way of using rules and logic to understand an otherwise confusing mass of actors. NA also considers the strength and direction of relationships.

map tile
The separate images that together compose a web map.

data layer
The separation of map data into discrete layers (which can be turned off and on).

Week Eight

Drucker-data
The world as it exists in all its complexity and contradiction.

Drucker-capta
That which can be captured and represented about the world (as computationally tractable information).

interface
The zone in which the human interacts with technology. The way that it's designed reflects ideologies or views. A user-friendly interface considers the needs of the user. For example, Apple Watches are simple, without many details to deal with. An interface is the place where a creator articulates his or her intentions for the user. Refer to

Week Nine

process-based question
A question that one explores through the process of building a 3D object.

product-based question
Questions that the 3D model itself can answer.