

Understanding the 'Capacity' of the Digital Humanities: The Canadian Experience, Generalised

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- Meagan Timney, "Transitions: Emerging in the Field"
- Geoffrey Rockwell, "Cyberinfrastructure for Research in the Humanities: Expectations and Capacity"

Panel Description: In a recent report from Council of Canadian Academies, *The State of Science & Technology in Canada* (2006, p. 24; <http://www.scienceadvice.ca/documents/Complete%20Report.pdf>) humanities computing was identified as an "emerging field" with "significant strength," alongside several other science-oriented "transdisciplinary fields ... for which future prospects are seen to be more significant than currently established strength." Concomitant discussions with our chief research funding agency, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), yielded a need to understand, better, the 'capacity' of this community in Canada and beyond, in part to gauge the potential future impact of our interdiscipline which, itself, has been generously supported for a decade with dedicated programs such as SSHRC's Image, Text, Sound Technology program and research infrastructural programs such as the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI). Manifest in a report commissioned by SSHRC, our panel discusses the results of and reactions to the activity of attempting to understand our field's capacity, both within the national context that spawned the study and the borderless environment occupied by the field.

The panel consists of several very short presentations, followed by discussion. **Michael Eberle-Sinatra's** presentation will discuss specific aspects of the report itself, among them the field's history of interrelationship with supporting programs, societies, and initiatives; how the field presents itself to, and intersects with, the larger humanities community; the field's notable successes, notable contributions, and chief projects; and what is anticipated to be needed next to enable excellent and timely research across the humanities, from the perspective of the field – all through the lens of the fields enabling possibilities via methods, tools and cyberinfrastructure. **Lynne Siemens** will juxtapose the growing acceptance of digital humanities research and teaching methods, technologies and resources with a series of challenges that still face scholars,

Chair: Ray Siemens

Presenters (4-5 minute presentations):

- Michael Eberle-Sinatra, "Understanding Academic Capacity: A Charge from our Funding Agency"
- Lynne Siemens, "Developing Academic Capacity in Digital Humanities: Thoughts from the Canadian Community and Beyond"
- Ray Siemens, "DH Training Capacity: Established Curriculum, Institutes, Camps, and Beyond"
- Stéfán Sinclair, "Building from the Ground up: Training Digital Humanities Scholars as Developers"
- Susan Brown, "Hidden Capacity (in DH-impacted disciplines)"

especially new scholars, in developing their work in the field, via the results of a recent survey of digitally-impacted faculty, staff and students in the Humanities and Social Sciences (which yield a focus on funding, infrastructure and leadership). **Ray Siemens** discusses the crucial role of training, broadly construed, a point which will be picked up on and carried much further by **Stéfan Sinclair**, who acknowledges that the training of humanists with advanced programming skills is essential to the digital humanities' recognition of tool conception and development as first class scholarly activities, to the process of building as a way of exploring and understanding, touching also on important issues of peer-review and professional recognition for innovative work in tool-building. **Meagan Timney**, a postdoctoral fellow in digital humanities, discusses several issues specifically confronting emerging scholars in the field of digital humanities and **Susan Brown** will posit, from the position of someone at a university that has no formal digital humanities programs or even dedicated courses in the calendar, that there is considerable untapped capacity for digital humanities training in the Canadian, and other, higher education systems – highlighting the fact that there are many people with significant training or research experience in the digital humanities area teaching across the humanities where their work has as a matter of course included the impact of digital textuality but they would not identify with our field by its name, the result of underfunding of the traditional disciplines and lack of institutional resources to create new programs or organise existing offerings in new, pertinent configurations. **Geoffrey Rockwell** will close by asking "what is infrastructure in the humanities?" – presenting a model for the research computing infrastructure we should expect from our universities and suggesting the capacity at Canadian universities to meet this need as well as the politics of positioning computing as infrastructure.