

The Importance of Pedagogy: Towards a Companion to Teaching Digital Humanities

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The need to “encourage digital scholarship” was one of eight key recommendations in *Our Cultural Commonwealth: The Report of the American Council of Learned Societies Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Unsworth et al). As the report suggested, “if more than a few are to pioneer new digital pathways, more formal venues and opportunities for training and encouragement are needed” (34). In other words, human infrastructure is as crucial as cyberinfrastructure for the future of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. While the Commission’s recommendation pertains to the training of faculty and early career researchers, we argue that the need extends to graduate and undergraduate students. Despite the importance of pedagogy to the development and long-term sustainability of digital humanities, as yet very little critical literature has been published. Both the *Companion to Digital Humanities* (2004) and the *Companion to Digital Literary Studies* (2007), seminal reference works in their own right, focus primarily on the theories, principles, and research practices associated with digital humanities, and not pedagogical issues. There is much work to be done.

This poster presentation will begin by contextualizing the need for a critical discussion of pedagogical issues associated with digital humanities. This discussion will be framed by a brief survey of existing undergraduate and graduate programs and courses in digital humanities (or with a digital humanities component), drawing on

the “institutional models” outlined by McCarty and Kirschenbaum (2003). The growth in the number of undergraduate and graduate programs and courses offered reflects both an increasing desire on the part of students to learn about sorts of “transferable skills” and “applied computing” that digital humanities offers (Jessop 2005), and the desire of practitioners to consolidate and validate their research and methods. We propose a volume, *Teaching Digital Humanities: Principles, Practices, and Politics*, to capitalize on the growing prominence of digital humanities within university curricula and infrastructure, as well as in the broader professional community.

We plan to structure the volume according to the four critical questions educators should consider as emphasized recently by Mary Bruenig, namely:

- What knowledge is of most worth?
- By what means shall we determine what we teach?
- In what ways shall we teach it?
- Toward what purpose?

In addition to these questions, we are mindful of Henry A. Giroux’s argument that “to invoke the importance of pedagogy is to raise questions not simply about how students learn but also about how educators (in the broad sense of the term) construct the ideological and political positions from which they speak” (45). Consequently, we will encourage submissions to the volume that address these wider concerns.

References

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