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Notes from the Field: Student Perspectives on Digital Pedagogy

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This special collection on digital pedagogy features essays by student researchers within the Digital Pedagogy Network (DPN). DPN is an informal interdisciplinary training network formed to foster the transfer of Digital Humanities (DH) knowledge and skills and to build connections between Simon Fraser University (SFU) and University of Victoria (UVic) faculty, students, librarians, educational partners, and the public. Central to the network has been the participation and experience of students, who have shared their digitally-focused work in a series of showcases and symposia that have alternated between SFU and UVic. What emerged during these events were student perspectives on current pedagogical practices in Digital Humanities, both inside and outside the classroom, as well as for the degree and beyond. Our special collection builds on these perspectives, featuring student authors addressing issues that over the past five years have been central to their DH learning and training. These student perspectives gather into four topic clusters, namely 1) Collaboration with Galleries, Libraries, Archives, & Museums (GLAM); 2) Digital Doctorates; 3) Major Research Projects; and 4) Transforming DH Pedagogy.

Cette collection spéciale portant sur la pédagogie numérique consiste en des dissertations écrites par des chercheurs-étudiants dans le cadre du Digital Pedagogy Network (DPN – Réseau de pédagogie numérique). Le DPN est un réseau informel d'entraînement interdisciplinaire créé pour favoriser le transfert de connaissances et d'habilités liées aux humanités numériques et pour développer des liens entre les effectifs, les étudiants, les bibliothécaires, les partenaires éducatifs de l'Université Simon Fraser (SFU) et l'Université de Victoria (UVic) et le public. La participation et les expériences d'étudiants, qui ont partagé leur travail concernant la numérique dans une série de présentations et symposiums qui ont alterné entre SFU et UVic, ont joué un rôle primordial dans ce réseau. Ce qui est ressorti durant ces évènements étaient les perspectives d'étudiants envers les pratiques

pédagogiques actuelles dans les humanités numériques, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur des salles de classe, pour les programmes universitaires et au-delà. Notre collection spéciale tire parti de ces perspectives, incluant des auteurs-étudiants qui abordent les enjeux essentiels à leurs études et entraînement dans les humanités numériques. Ces perspectives d'étudiants présentent quatre thèmes regroupés, notamment 1) la collaboration avec des institutions GLAM ; 2) des doctorats numériques ; 3) des projets de recherche majeurs ; et 4) la transformation de la pédagogie des humanités numériques.

This special collection on digital pedagogy features essays by student researchers within the Digital Pedagogy Network (DPN). DPN is an informal interdisciplinary training network formed to foster the transfer of Digital Humanities (DH) knowledge and skills and to build connections between Simon Fraser University (SFU) and University of Victoria (UVic) faculty, students, librarians, educational partners, and the public. Central to the network has been the participation and experience of students, who have shared their digitally-focused work in a series of showcases and symposia that have alternated between SFU and UVic. What emerged during these events were student perspectives on current pedagogical practices in Digital Humanities, both inside and outside the classroom, as well as for the degree and beyond. Our special collection builds on these perspectives, featuring student authors addressing issues that over the past five years have been central to their DH learning and training and driving change in the field.

These student perspectives gather into four topic clusters, namely 1) Collaboration with GLAM institutions; 2) Digital Doctorates; 3) Major Research Projects; and 4) Transforming DH Pedagogy. Across these four clusters, familiar discussions within Digital Humanities emerge, including those on collaboration (Deegan and McCarty 2012), new skills and training (Ramsay and Rockwell 2012), innovative forms of dissemination (Jagoda 2014), and the distribution of labour (Anderson et al. 2016.; Boyles et al. 2018; Logsdon et al. 2017; Siemens 2009). This special collection's

experiential approach to digital pedagogy, in which students are provided with opportunities to guide their own learning through hands-on opportunities, foregrounds the complementary nature of in-class and extracurricular learning, as well as the variety of roles students inhabit in DH at various levels of study. The authors of the following essays are not just students enrolled in a degree program, but are collaborators, research assistants, mentors, project managers, and leaders of their own research projects. Their on-the-ground perspectives reveal the excitement that comes from having a sense of agency in their education and developing practical skills and professional connections, as well as a critical sense of the problems that can accompany the emergence of new structures and relationships. Each of our four topic clusters gathers these student perspectives and includes a response from another member of the network, among them faculty, librarians, and other students. As with our face-to-face events, our aim with this special issue is to foster dialogue among various actors working with Digital Humanities approaches and methods.

By centering student perspectives, informed by concrete practical experience as well as critical approaches, this collection works to advance discussions of digital pedagogy in recent years. These have included practical guides (Battershill and Ross 2017), technical how-tos (The Programming Historian 2020), assignment and keyword repositories (Davis et al. 2020), as well metalevel critical discussions on the state of digital pedagogy (Gold and Klein 2016; Anderson et al. 2016; Stommel et al. 2020). We start from the position that pedagogical situations offer a place to create a scholarly community that welcomes a broad range of participants. At the same time, they offer a place to explore and address larger structural concerns in DH about interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaborations, contingent labour, and institutional limitations. Digital Humanities is a field that is grappling with how to create sustainable projects using limited resources, how to navigate relationships with different stakeholders, how to create a more accessible and inclusive scholarly community, and how to bring in political and cultural critique. Our collection reveals how students are engaging through practice and critique with the state of the art in digital pedagogy, and, in turn, advancing the field of DH. If pedagogy is a principal

concern of DH, as Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein note in the introduction to *Debates in Digital Humanities 2016*, then students at all levels need to be central in any such discussions.

Our first cluster, "Collaborating with GLAM Institutions," features three essays by students reflecting back on their experiences collaborating with GLAMs (short for galleries, libraries, archives, and museums). The collaborative digital curation and exhibits at the heart of these essays exemplify how digital pedagogy can connect students, faculty, and GLAM professionals working at the intersection of DH, archival fieldwork, and public humanities. Christina Hilburger, Donna Langille, and Melissa Nelson open this cluster describing their work on a digital exhibit for the Redpath Museum to earn credit for their McGill Information Studies course in Digital Curation. Alessandra Bordini, a Masters in Publishing graduate from Simon Fraser University, follows by discussing her involvement, first as a student research assistant and then as a project manager, digitizing and describing a collection of incunabula by the printer-publisher Aldus Manutius held at SFU Special Collections. Finally, Josie Ann Greenhill describes her experiences as an undergraduate student at UVic undertaking an extracurricular digital exhibit of Pre-Raphaelite books in collaboration with UVic Special Collections and the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab. Each essay foregrounds a different student experience (undergraduate and graduate), disciplinary perspective (Information Studies, Publishing, and Art History), and academic purpose (an assignment, a research project, and a practicum). Lisa Goddard and Rebecca Dowson, academic librarians from UVic and SFU respectively, summarize these perspectives through the lens of an emerging form of librarianship in which librarians take a more active role in teaching and research.

Together these essays highlight the importance of collaborating with GLAM Institutions to create public-facing digital scholarly resources. They confirm the pedagogy of building as a way of knowing, described, for example, by Stephen Ramsey and Geoffrey Rockwell. One epistemological gain from making these resources is an enhanced sense of the full digital life cycle of cultural artifacts as they move from creation to dissemination. Greenhill describes how digital curation

brings new attention to unique cultural materials, as well as the collection bias and cultural mediation that their curation brings. Bordini gains new appreciation for the analytical power of descriptive metadata in making the social processes of book production from the past discoverable to new publics. Hilburger, Langille, and Nelson turn their attention to digital preservation, not the usual concern of student projects. Their insights into the processes of digital cultural production and transmission importantly result in an enhanced sense of student agency. The authors of these essays emphasize how their collaboration with GLAMs enabled them to become decision makers and problem solvers in digital curation, while directing their own digital skill development and participating in scholarly production in ways that hold more meaning than the typical student assignment.

These reflections reveal the variety of models of student-GLAM collaborations currently in practice as well as evolving student roles in public-facing digital scholarship. Such descriptions on learning-in-action, however, also expose the need for critical inquiry into the configurations and effects of these collaborations. As new roles for students, faculty, and GLAM personnel are rapidly being reconfigured, and arguably democratized, they also introduce the potential for ill-defined and unsustainable roles. If student agency is prioritized in these collaborations, more thought must be paid to how student agency continues and evolves over the lifespan of digital projects. Hilburger, Langille, and Nelson as well as Greenhill cast reflective glances back on finite projects that had clear endings, but Bordini's role has evolved from that of student researcher to project manager, highlighting the need to plan for changing student roles over the lifespan of a collaborative digital project, as well as labour practices more generally. The discourse of the "mutual benefit" derived from DH collaborations between student researchers and cultural institutions potentially masks the use of free student labour and other unfair labour practices that may detract from the achievements of these collaborations.

Collaborating with GLAM institutions is not the only way for students to gain practical experience with digital methods. Our second cluster, "Digital Doctorates," addresses curriculum design from the perspectives of MA and PhD students whose

capstone projects and dissertations integrate digital research methods. By asking how Digital Humanities projects might be accounted for in graduate programs, these essays explore the rewards, as well as the risks, of integrating digital research into degree requirements. Randa El Khatib opens the cluster with an argument in favour of a digital dissertation, which draws on the portfolio format common to science PhDs, which consists of six peer-reviewed articles or book chapters that draw on her research into the geospatial elements of Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Reese Alexandra Irwin uses her experience developing a diplomatic digital edition of the first print edition of Jane Austen's unfinished novella *Sanditon* to consider the institutional and administrative complications of integrating digital research into graduate programs. In her essay, she contends that the library is essential to supporting graduate student digital projects, but that to be effective it must be treated as a pedagogical partner by the student's home department. While both El Khatib and Irwin discuss digital projects that are central to their graduate work, Caroline Winter discusses a satellite project; her digital edition of Mary Shelley's Gothic tales complements a monograph-style doctoral dissertation. For Winter, the satellite project is an opportunity for graduate students to develop digital skills, explore different modes of research, and experience being part of a strong community of practice; however, participating in a satellite project can also increase the time to completion, putting students at risk of running out of funding.

The different strategies that these authors outline for incorporating DH projects into their graduate research rely on personal initiative, as well as supervisory and institutional support. In her response, Michelle Levy weighs the risks of the various approaches to digital projects outlined in these essays and concludes that the institutions that house these students must offer greater support by adapting to the changing and increasingly digital landscape of humanities disciplines. However, beyond practical questions about how best to support independent digital research in the context of a graduate program, this cluster also asks how supervisors, institutions, and hiring committees assess this research, which often takes non-traditional forms. Cumulatively, then, this cluster focuses on student research projects to demonstrate

their potential to expand learning and outreach, and also to present tactics for working with weaknesses in institutional support and assessment.

But not all student engagement with digital research is part of a curriculum, as our third cluster shows. With the increasing frequency of large-scale Digital Humanities projects, research assistant work has taken on a new form for graduate students in the humanities, often involving large teams. Our third cluster, which addresses student labour on "Major Research Projects," consists of two essays addressing how these kinds of projects offer the opportunity for students to take on new roles. Anna Mukamal, a past project manager for the Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP) and PhD student at Stanford University, begins this cluster by exploring the benefits for students for working on projects that collaborate across institutions. MAPP, a critical digital archive focused on early twentieth-century publishing history, involves a number of different processes and initiatives, and, as Project Manager, Mukamal was tasked with facilitating them. Mukamal's experience speaks to the professional and intellectual opportunities that come from working with a network of scholars based in institutions across North America and the UK, especially the rewards of intergenerational mentorship. Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren follow Mukamal, focusing on the role of unseen labour in major DH projects, in terms of both the amount of effort that goes into metadata collection and the affective labour that goes into managing a team, through reference to their work as editors of the Women's Print History Project (WPHP), a bibliographical database that seeks to account for women's involvement in print between 1750 and 1836. Moffatt and Sharren address the limitations of the records they use to recover the mostly forgotten women who owned printing and bookselling firms, exploring how collective forms of knowledge production, whether disseminated through eighteenth-century print or twenty-first century databases, privilege some actors and types of labour over others. In her response, MAPP co-Principal Investigator Claire Battershill reflects on the need for the directors of major digital projects to take into consideration the ways in which their project structures interact with existing social and institutional hierarchies.

The key theme in this cluster is how student labour is used in large-scale digital projects, particularly for students whose work may be adjacent to their research interests but does not necessarily advance their degrees. As Christina Boyles et al. have argued, DH initiatives involving large teams can rely on the labour of early career researchers in temporary positions who are called on to perform administrative duties and support the work of faculty in ways that may detract from their ability to pursue their own research agendas. Graduate student research assistants experience this precarity in heightened ways; often, the positions they occupy are informal, less clearly defined, and dependent upon intermittent funding. Although work on major digital projects can fund graduate degrees and provide the opportunities to develop skills and networks that are otherwise not part of their programs, it also runs the risk of distracting graduate students from their degree requirements. In the case of this cluster, all of the authors are involved in projects with feminist aims, both in terms of the data they make available and the structures of the projects themselves. As feminist projects, they outline a strategy for robust documentation practices that capture the full spectrum of labour that goes into projects such as MAPP and the WPHP and make the significance of that labour visible to those outside of the project.

Our final cluster closes with two essays by students and faculty collaborators seeking to transform the field of Digital Humanities by rethinking pedagogical practices and spaces. Nadine Boulay discusses the design and development of a teaching resource game that shows the experience of transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming youth. Underlying the development of this game environment is a carefully articulated theory of intersectionality "wherein categories such as race, gender identity, sexuality, and class cannot be understood as separate axes, but as mutually-constituting and interconnected." Ashley Morford, Arun Jacob, and Kush Patel similarly focus on the importance of pedagogical spaces for developing an anti-colonial DH pedagogy and transmitting this work via citational practices and networks. They emphasize the significance of UVic's Digital Humanities Summer Institute, as well as other digital spaces, as sites for developing and teaching a theory

of inclusive and activist digital pedagogy that is explicitly intersectional and socially inclusive.

Each essay reveals the importance of pedagogy in bringing social justice to the Digital Humanities. By integrating anti-colonial and intersectional practices into digital pedagogy, they help drive the field of DH toward social innovation. Taken together, these essays demonstrate that transforming DH into a politically engaged, socially just, and inclusive field involves ongoing critical attention to pedagogical spaces and practices. Kimberly O'Donnell responds to these papers as a graduate student and Digital Fellow at Simon Fraser University, offering her own perspective on the importance of bringing cultural critique and intersectional approaches to digital pedagogy.

COVID-19 struck just as we finished writing this introduction. Amidst widespread disruptions and shifts to online and remote teaching, what has emerged is the extent to which face-to-face interactions and engagement with material objects remains, in many cases, an essential component of digital pedagogy, whether students are digitizing and curating exhibits of holdings in a GLAM institution, working with librarians to develop a digital project, building a research team for a major project, or developing and facilitating workshops. While one of the frequently cited goals of DH is to make materials and knowledge accessible to a wider range of people via digital technologies, the digital turn does not mean that all DH work can be completed digitally. Indeed, the fundamentally collaborative and material nature of many of the projects and initiatives described in the following essays reveal that much of DH scholarship is fundamentally rooted in immediate social and geographical relationships -- relationships that have been rapidly overturned during the pandemic. After all, this collection emerged from the in-person symposia and showcases we held in Victoria and Vancouver to celebrate student achievement and foster connections. Digital pedagogy often focuses on questions of tools and methods, but our present situation reminds us that we must attend to the social and cultural processes that condition their use. The student-centered experiential and critical insights advanced in the chapters that follow do just that, by bringing attention to issues of

collaboration, degree requirements, research training, and social justice activism in DH – all the more pressing during our present public health and social crises. Our hope is that this special issue will help students, faculty, librarians, and academic administrators critically navigate this new pedagogical landscape amidst powerful pressures to go rapidly digital and adapt online.

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Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Author note

Authors are listed alphabetically.

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