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Lab and Slack. Situated Research Practices in Digital Humanities

CFP: Special Issue for the Digital Humanities Quarterly

Editors: Mila Oiva (University of Turku) and Urszula Pawlicka-Deger (Aalto University)

Although the concept of *digital* comes with an assumption of placelessness and detachment from physical space and geographical location, these matters still play a significant role in the way the digital humanities research is practiced today, and also in the future. The location, the surroundings and infrastructure open the questions of accessibility and equality: space shapes the opportunities for doing digital humanities research, both enables and hinders collaboration, and both unifies and divides scholars.

The purpose of this special issue is to examine the different aspects of **situated research practices** of the digital humanities covering two perspectives: **physical and virtual**. The physical places of research refer to the various digital humanities sites (laboratories, centers, departments) all over the world and more widely to the surroundings a location in a particular city, country, cultural sphere or continent affecting research practices. As virtual environments of digital humanities scholarship, we define the digital internet-based platforms, services, and tools that enable research and scholarly collaboration. The aspects that determine digital humanities research in both physical and virtual places are infrastructure (material and non-material), social interaction (communication and collaboration), and context (social, cultural, and political situatedness). The aspects influence each other and changes in one of them can affect the others. They have also impact on what is studied, the ways research can be done, and, in the end the results of our knowledge, what kind of knowledge digital humanities research can provide.

We seek a series of articles that address the following issues, but not limited to, organized in two thematic clusters: 1) Lab: Physical Situatedness; and 2) Slack: Virtual Situatedness.

Lab: Physical Situatedness

This cluster proposes:

- To look at digital humanities place from a pragmatic point of view to answer the questions of how to build a place for digital humanities within the university; what kind of institutional requirements need to be fulfilled and what type of obstacles stand in the way of development of the local field; and how a policy affects place, people, and research practices?

- To explore different sites of digital humanities, such as center, laboratory, department, and library in order to reflect upon infrastructural changes, differences, functions, and challenges.
- To consider people's sense of belonging to place of digital humanities and a way of establishing local digital humanities community through various activities and events. Place attachment made by policy, representation, and symbolic gestures is, however, accompanied by a negative side of place identity that is exclusion. Therefore, the question is whether a place of digital humanities creates a mechanism to exclude people from the place and thereby, from the field.
- To investigate digital humanities place from the local perspective, its social and cultural surroundings, and political conditions. How do the geographical location, the structure of national or international funding tools, proximity or distance to the (other) DH institutions, libraries, or IT businesses influence the ways digital humanities research is done in a particular place? How are the local DH communities being established, and what are the best ways for enabling collaboration and sharing of expertise, tools and resources?

Slack: Virtual Situatedness

This cluster aims:

- To explore the ways the digital collaboration and analysis platforms and software direct digital humanities research. As digital humanities often involves interdisciplinary collaboration and the research 'materials' are in digitally shareable form (data, code, visualizations), the research practices are also increasingly performing in a digital way. We discuss at Skype meetings, organize the workflow through Slack and Trello, share materials through Github and Dropbox, and co-write papers in Google Drive. Do we use these platforms because they are the best ones, or because they are marketed the best, and all the other use them as well? In what ways the algorithms of the virtual spaces direct the communication, collaboration, and the research findings of digital humanities?
- To analyze how utilization of virtual collaborative spaces tie us with other kinds of cultural and political dimensions. Being built by humans, the digital collaboration and analysis software contain cultural and spatial structures that enable one kind of activity and constraints the other. Does virtual collaboration enable crossing the physical, cultural, and language boundaries, or do the virtual spaces strengthen these boundaries, or construct new ones?
- To investigate the questions of ethics, accessibility, privacy and sustainability incorporated in the tools that we use for research.

Timeline:

Deadline for 200-Word Abstracts emailed to the Editors (milaoiv@utu.fi and; pawlickadeger@gmail.com): **October 15, 2018**

Decisions on accepted abstracts: November 1, 2018

Deadline for final paper sent to the Editors: **February 1, 2019**

Review and peer review: All articles will be reviewed by the Editors and then the publisher's peer reviewer. Finished versions of accepted works will be based on the peer review timeline of DHQ.

Please contact the Editors with any questions:

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About the Editors

Mila Oiva

Dr. Oiva is a postdoctoral researcher of Cultural History at the University of Turku. She works in transnational *Oceanic Exchanges* digital humanities project funded by the Trans-Atlantic Platform/Digging into Data. In 2017-2018 she worked at the KONE Foundation funded project "From a Road Map to a Roadshow" project collecting the best practices of facilitating digital history research in Finland, located in the History of Industrialization and Innovation (HIIVA) group at the Department of Mechanical Engineering of the Aalto University in Finland. She was a visiting Fulbright scholar at the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ISEEES) at UC Berkeley in 2014-2015, and participated in the Culture Analytics long program at the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IPAM) at UCLA in spring 2016.

She is author and co-author of several publications, for example Matres, Inés, Mila Oiva, and Mikko Tolonen. "In Between Research Cultures The State of Digital Humanities in Finland." *Informaatiotutkimus*, no. 2/2018; Johnson, Bruce, Mila Oiva and Hannu Salmi. "Yves Montand in the USSR. Mixed messages of post-Stalinist/Western cultural encounters." In *Entangled East and West: Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War*, ed. by Simo Mikkonen, Jari Parkkinen and Giles Scott-Smith, (forthcoming) and Oiva, Mila. *Selling Fashion to the Soviets. Competitive Practices in the Polish Cloth Export in the early 1960s*. In: *Competition in Socialist Society*, ed. Katalin Miklóssy & Melanie Ilic, Great Britain, Routledge, 2014.

Urszula Pawlicka-Deger

Dr. Pawlicka-Deger is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Media at the Aalto University and a member of Research Data Management Working Group at the Aalto. She

conducts research on infrastructural and conceptual transformations in the humanities with an emphasis on a laboratory place. Her last publication related to this topic includes a paper, titled *Data, Collaboration, Laboratory: Bringing Concepts from Science into Humanities Practice* released in “English Studies” (2017). Besides, she works on open science and research data management in the (digital) humanities. She presented her work at the following international conferences: “The Making of the Humanities VI” at the University of Oxford (2017), the American Comparative Literature Association’s Annual Meeting at Harvard University (2016), and Digital Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Victoria (2014). She was a visiting Fulbright scholar in Creative Media and Digital Culture at Washington State University Vancouver, US (2014/2015), and a visiting researcher in English Department at Stony Brook University (2015/2016). Over the years, she has published peer-reviewed scholarly articles (“English Studies”, “CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture”, and “Teksty Drugie”, etc.) and a monograph *Literatura cyfrowa. W stronę podejścia procesualnego (Electronic Literature: Towards Processual Approach*, Katedra 2017). <http://pawlickadeger.com/>