Digital Humanities at Berkeley: Capacity Building and Integration

Our next Research IT Reading Group will provide an overview of the new Digital Humanities at Berkeley program, which focuses on capacity building and integration. We hope to further facilitate some of these connections through the collaborative research grant program, which requires one participant affiliated with a nonacademic unit (e.g., a library, museum, research centers and labs, or campus IT organizations). During the consultation period for this grant program, we have met with a wide variety of researchers and uncovered a number of digital humanities projects on campus seeking technical collaborators or consultation. We will be inviting some of those researchers to attend this reading group. We look forward to discussing opportunities for campus organizations to get involved in supporting digital humanities research.

This week’s reading is an excerpt from the $2M grant proposal for digital humanities at Berkeley that was recently funded by the Mellon Foundation.

When: Thursday, January 15 from noon - 1pm
Where: 200C Warren Hall, 2195 Hearst St (see building access instructions on parent page).
Event format: The reading group is a brown bag lunch (bring your own) with a short ~20 min talk followed by ~40 min group discussion.

Discussion and presentation will be lead by the Digital Humanities at Berkeley team: Quinn Dombrowski (Research IT), Claudia von Vacano (Division of Arts & Humanities), and Camille Villa (Research IT).

Please read/review the following in advance of the 1/15 meeting

UC Berkeley: Capacity Building and Integration in the Digital Humanities
DH at Berkeley Request for Proposals

Attending:
Charlotte Cabasse (BIDS ethnographer)
Nick Adams (D-Lab)
Cathryn Carson (History)
Aaron Culich (Research IT)
Quinn Dombrowski (Research IT)
Mary Elings (Bancroft)
David Fulmar (School of Social Welfare)
Sharon Goetz (Library - Mark Twain Papers)
David Greenbaum (Research IT)
Chris Hoffman (Research IT)
Barbara Hui (CDL)
Rick Jaffe (Research IT)
John Lowe (Research IT)
Brendan Mackie (History)
Steve Masover (Research IT)
Scott Peterson (Library)
Aron Roberts (Research IT)
Yairamaren Roman-Maldonado (Spanish/Portuguese)
Alex Saum-Pascual (Spanish and Portuguese)
Patrick Schmitz (Research IT)
Francesco Spagnolo (Magnes Museum)
Ronald Sprouse
Joan Starr (CDL)
Jon Stiles
Alberto Todeschini (EECS)
Camille Villa (Research IT)
Daniel Viragh (Center for Jewish Studies, Historical GIS)
Claudia von Vacano (DH @ Berkeley)
Perry Willets (CDL)
Notes

Led/Facilitated by Claudia von Vacano, Quinn Dombrowski, Camille Villa

DH at Berkeley: $2M Mellon funded initiative

Claudia - Role includes development of teaching, scholarship - institute - DH Fellows Program. (Summer?) Institute. Also budget management, managing RFPs for research proposals. New courses that explore DH methods; engage existing DH projects. Also course components re: existing courses. Also a critical component: thinking critical about what is lost and gained from/by scholarship, how are humanities and the arts changing, by engaging with digital methodologies. Currently thinly staffed (GSR, undergraduate assisting -- in the works), but will be onboarding others. Quinn and Camille working on digital humanities, Quinn with 10 years' depth at Chicago and here. There is a DH council, pivotal in submitting the proposal to Mellon and continuing into the development of the program, CvV will support that council as well.

Claudia's background: At D-Lab for ~2 years, ~14 years Program Management experience including UCOP; prior to that in K-12. MS from Stanford in Learning, Design, and Technology, also a BFA.

Claudia's question to the group: What is the DH @ Berkeley challenge? So much going on at Berkeley in so many places: a strength and a challenge. How do we unify the strengths to leverage them in a synthesis that createse and permits us to present Berkeley as a center of DH excellence in the larger academic landscape. How too will we reach out to faculty who are not engaged with digital humanities.

Quinn: Research IT helps to coordinate the program, my role and Claudia's. Also, tying into a larger RIT offering, we offer consulting. In DH, that includes consultation about how DH might come into teaching and research for a particular faculty / research-area; facilitating partnerships. 3-D modeling, annotation in 3-D environments -- we discovered a lot of interest in that in December as we interviewed scholars who an

Camille: DH Working Group. D-Lab / Townsend Center. A low barrier to participation: share problems, discuss tools and pedagogical approaches. Have held workshops on network analysis, text analysis using Python, XML. Meets every other week throughout the semester, and are open to all disciplinary backgrounds (about a third of the participants are staff). Also Camille helps to run the Bay Area DH Meetup: software engineers interested in D3 data viz; Stanford DH folks; et al. This week, D3.js: Jason Hapler of Stanford on Post Offices across the west; etc.

Claudia: digitalhumanities.berkeley.edu/resources -- Camille maintains this, it's very informative, and addresses a lot of different questions.

Quinn: digitalhumanities@berkeley.edu

Quinn: What interests folks most? How might you participate (esp. those who represent an organization)? How can/should we keep DH-interested community informed?

David: How broadly among grad students and across disciplines is there DH interest on campus?

Claudia: We're seeing grad students taking leadership positions in the DH initiative, more than expected, with support by and leadership of Berkeley faculty.

David: Any sense how DH helps or hurts in obtaining academic jobs? Is DH interest career-motivated or other?

Brendan Mackie: My interest as first year grad student is methodological first. It was the tool at hand.

Yairamaren Roman-Maldonado (?): Necessary tools that we need to bring in and consolidate, apply to literature.

Sharon G: In English Lit, in my cohort, there is growing sentiment that there should be support, should be

Cathryn: Chris Church as an example. Not just tasked with DH, but with broader Data Science program. Somewhat experimental how things are developing.

Alex Saum-Pascual: It depends on what we teach. I taught a techno-culture class, and what grew out of that was interest from 3 additional graduate students who wanted to apply DH methods to their work. This from Spanish/Portugese courses. Students don't know 'til they hear about it.

Nick Adams: Social Scientists who consider themselves quantitative Social Scientists are seeing a precipitous drop off in responses to surveys, but a burgeoning availability of digital data. This is moving the field to where the data is. Seeing mix of human annotation and algorithmic methods. Tenured faculty don't necessarily have a lot of interest in digital methods, so it's important to engage them, to elevate their understanding of what these methods are able to add to scholarship.

Claudia: Explosion of DH presentations at conferences, but that's not the same as posting of positions that explicitly call for DH focus. A bit of a contradiction. Exploration does not necessarily align with institutional orientation.

Barbara Hui: If you have technical skills, you can get work -- better compensated than a post-doc or than an adjunct floating around the country. Less compensation than tech-industry proper, but stable, working on interesting projects among interesting people. This in a context, when I entered job market with PhD in Comp Lit 5 years ago, where institutions were not really ready to hire DH into faculty positions.

Joan Starr: In other words, you came out with marketable skills, marketable outside academia.

Quinn: What communications work? How did you all get here? How do we get information to DH-interested Berkeley community in general?

Nick: What communications happen now?

Camille: Weekly DH newsletter: subscribe for weekly roundup of upcoming deadlines, events of interest, trainings at DLab and GIF, off and
on-campus working groups, etc. Open list, so subscribers can send to it as well, a two-way street. Also @DHBerkeley on Twitter -- announcements about new resource guides, new DH blog posts, also retweet what's being Tweeted by DH folks around campus.

Quinn: We want to use channels that people already use actively, which is why we don't have a presence on Vine, etc.

Claudia: We got a great response to our call that built a statement of the scope of DH interests across the campus. We'd like to hear more, either from new scholars or in greater depth about what we've begun to learn about.

Claudia: Launch at Magnes on Feb 18

Francesco: 5pm on 2/18

Alex Saum-Pascual: A DH Berkeley Commons would be v. useful -- DH Commons was very useful to me as I began engaging in DH -- to find folks to work with here on campus. Find resources. I need computers, where can I get some? My work: curating an exhibit at Doe -- first electronic lit exhibit at a university library -- one at LoC last year, some showcases at MLA in years past. Putting electronic literature in its performative aspect, needs engagement and interaction. On the one hand ELit is a logical extension of experimental writing; and has an important Hispanic aspect. So we have the Library's agreement about space (Brown Gallery) and clearing out the room, adding power; but we need still to build furniture and getting ahold of vintage equipment to showcase the original environments in which the pieces were created. Could use help in all this!

David Fulmer: Communication question. A lot of communication here is either buried under white-noise, or you just happen to hear from someone. I wonder about whether there is a need for some sub-set of Micronet-like forum. So, how to communicate to DH-interested folks about, for example, offering of SPSS and Stata via CITRIX, a project that the library and IST are rolling out in just a couple of weeks.

Aron: Campus calendar exists, aggregator. events.berkeley.edu

Rick: There is a DH feed on that calendar.

David: Yes, this happens all the time in my world: I suggest something needed, and it turns out it exists.

Sharon: I found, for example, a discussion of German medevil scholarship that is DH-interesting, but the participants didn't really think of it that way and so didn't think to advertise.

David: Might a curated set of events be more useful than a channel that aggregates everything? I myself find the Public Affairs curation of campuswide events quite useful.

Quinn: A OneIT initiative?

Aaron: 1/26, D-Lab, BIDS hosting 2/3 of a day "Consulting Summit" -- bringing together orgs that do some form of consulting, and think about how to maintain awareness of and refer to each other.

Claudia: Lots of digital modes by which to connect, but bringing people together to interact is where so much gets done.