Re-centering the Humanities

Neil Fraistat
Director, MITH
Co-chair, centerNet
2 December 2009
Walk with me then, through the front door of MITH.

Walk through door
Let's say hello to Chris Grogan, MITH's business manager, who sits behind the front desk working out the budget for a grant proposal that needs to get out the door in an hour. That probably explains why she seems to be grumbling quietly to herself.
MITH:
The Digital Humanities Adventure
explains why she seems to be grumbling quietly to herself.

> Walk west
We'll turn quickly to our right and pick up something to drink in MITH's coffeehouse lounge, whose walls are a melange of early videogame motifs, retro 1960s multi-colored shooting stars, and, improbably enough, an exactingly executed rendering of a Sol Lewitt conceptua work of art—all but the last of which were produced during a graduate student painting party.
Produced during a graduate student painting party.

Look at lounge
The red loveseat is empty and no one is playing a game on the vintage Apple IIe perched on a low table, but sitting in two over-sized bean bags are Greg Lord, MITH’s lead designer and software engineer and Grant Dickie, a junior programmer, intently discussing their work on the interface for the Shakespeare Quartos Archive...
on the interface for the Shakespeare Quartos Archive...

...an electronic environment for the scholarly study of all known pre-1641 Quartos of Shakespeare's plays, living artifacts that tell the story of how Hamlet, Henry V, King Lear, Midsummer Night's Dream, and Romeo and Juliet, to name just a few, first circulated in print.

➤ Take coffee
You pour yourself a cup of coffee at MITH's coffee bar.
MITH's coffee bar.

Walk south
Taking our cups of coffee with us, we head back into the center aisle of MITH, where ten paces to our right Helen DeVinney, a graduate student in the English Department and the Manasins Director of the Electronic Literature Organization, is readying a mailings of CDs containing the second annual Electronic Literature Collection, an anthology of born-digital literature.
DeVinney, a graduate student in the English Department and the Managing Director of the Electronic Literature Organization, is readying a mailing of CDs containing the second annual Electronic Literature Collection, an anthology of born-digital literature.

The most prominent international group devoted to the writing, publishing, and reading of electronic literature, the Electronic Literature Organization moved its headquarters to MITH almost three years ago.
three years ago.

Turn left
Turning left as we proceed towards MITH's seminar room at the far end of the main aisle, we pass a workstation for the staff of Romantics Circles, a scholarly Website for the study of British Romantic literature and culture, and just before we come to two video-editing stations, we see to our right, Angel David Nieves, a Faculty Fellow from the School of Architecture...

more...
just before we come to two video-editing stations, we see to our right, Angel David Nieves, a Faculty Fellow from the School of Architecture...

leaning over the shoulder of one of our technical staff as they collaborate on building a 3D model of the Soweto township, which is part of a multimedia archive dedicated to the events on that fateful day in June 1976, when Soweto students gathered to protest the use of the Afrikaans language as a medium of teaching and learning in black schools.

> Look south
Fateful day in June 1976, when Soweto students gathered to protest the use of the Afrikaans language as a medium of teaching and learning in black schools.

› Look south
Just beyond Angel, at one of the video-editing stations, sits Merle Collins, a faculty fellow from English and Comparative Literature, who is just completing a multimedia project on Saraka and Nation that traces connections between cultures of Africans in the Americas and sites of cultural memory in Africa.

› Walk east
cultures of Africans in the Americas and sites of cultural memory in Africa.

> Walk east
About twenty feet further down the central aisle, we pass by the workstations of two MITH graduate research assistants. the first, James Hesla from the Theatre Department, is encoding texts for MITH’s Electronic Broadway Project, dedicated to producing the first ever scholarly editions of musical theatre.
First ever scholarly editions of musical theatre.

The second, Rachel Donahue, from the College of Information Studies (iSchool), is preparing with MITH’s associate director, Matt Kirschenbaum, to lead the weekly meetings of the MITH group working on a grant from the Library of Congress for the preservation of virtual worlds and born-digital literature, whose long-term survival is imperiled by inevitable changes over time in both hardware and software.
For the preservation of virtual worlds and born-digital literature, whose long-term survival is imperiled by inevitable changes over time in both hardware and software.

Walk east
We now stand in front of three doors. To our right is Matt’s office. To our left is the office of MITH’s assistant director and lead programmer, Doug Reside, who is busy refining the code for AXE, MITH’s web-based tool for “tagging” text, video, audio, and image files with XML metadata.

Look Forward
web-based tool for "tagging" text, video, audio, and image files with XML metadata.

Look Forward

Directly in front of us, at the end of our tour, is MITH's seminar room, which houses the Deena Larsen Collection, a rich archive of early-era personal computers and software for researchers interested in early hypertext and electronic literature and for MITH's own in-house research in digital curation and preservation.
In the seminar room, we also teach classes, hold meetings and consultations, and host on every Tuesday afternoon "Digital Dialogues," a talk or presentation featuring either an invited guest to the campus or a member of our local research community. Since 2005, MITH has hosted well over sixty of these Digital Dialogues, featuring many of the most prominent names in the field. Audiences are often standing room only, and with the speaker's permission we record talks for podcasting.

> MITH
the speaker’s permission we record talks for podcasting.

Leave MITH
Retracing our steps, you say good-bye to Chris, who has finished the grant budget and is visibly happier.

THE END
DIGITAL CULTURES & CREATIVITY

a living and learning program in the Honors College

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact us at dcc-honors@umd.edu
FOLLOW DCC NEWS & UPDATES: Twitter  Facebook

About DCC

Designed for the 21st century student who was born into the world of windows and the web, Digital Cultures and Creativity (DCC) provides an innovative curriculum and learning community that combines art, imagination, and global citizenship with new media and new technologies. Depending on individual interest, DCC students pursue activities as varied as digital music and video production, digital art, computer game design, creative electronic writing, virtual worlds, and developing online communities.

As members of the DCC community, students will live and learn alongside the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), University of Maryland’s world-class center for research in digital media (mith.umd.edu). In the past two years alone MITH has done projects with the Library of Congress, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and Linden Lab, the creators of Second Life among many other cultural institutions and high-tech partners. MITH is also the institutional home of the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO), the premier international group for writers, scholars, and technologists engaged in creating and studying literary new media.

As part of the curriculum, DCC students will take a variety of classes with top-notch (and technologically sophisticated) faculty from departments such as Art, Music, Theatre, English, History, and Women’s Studies as well as the internationally acclaimed Computer Science, and Information School programs. The program is 16 credits over the freshman and sophomore year, including a practicum that culminates in a research project or major creative effort.
an applied think tank, where theory and practice meet on a daily and interdisciplinary basis
deep local roots
strong local partnerships
Centers as nexus for local and global
DIGITAL HUMANITIES
CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

- Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
- Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
• Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
• Scholarly Technology Group
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
• Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
• Scholarly Technology Group
• Humanities Computing, Oxford University
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
• Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
• Scholarly Technology Group
• Humanities Computing, Oxford University
• Centre for Computing in the Humanities
DIGITAL HUMANITIES
CENTERS

• laboratories
DIGITAL HUMANITIES
CENTERS

• laboratories
• advocates
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

- laboratories
- advocates
- theorizers
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

- laboratories
- advocates
- theorizers
- models
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
• Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
• Scholarly Technology Group
• Humanities Computing, Oxford University
• Centre for Computing in the Humanities
• Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
• Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
• Scholarly Technology Group
• Humanities Computing, Oxford University
• Centre for Computing in the Humanities
• Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities
• Stanford Humanities Lab
DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTERS

• Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities
• Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities
• Scholarly Technology Group
• Humanities Computing, Oxford University
• Centre for Computing in the Humanities
• Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities
• Stanford Humanities Lab
• Center for Digital Research in the Humanities
Our Cultural Commonwealth

American Council of Learned Societies, 2006
"By analogy with the word infrastructure, "cyberinfrastructure" intends to convey both its importance in providing basic enabling tools supporting scholarly endeavors, and the idea that you eventually will be able to use it without thought - much as you assume you can plug an electrical appliance into a wall outlet without having to understand the intricacies of electrical generation and its conduction through power lines."

- Greg Stewart

*Indiana University Cyberinfrastructure Newsletter, March 2007*
MITH/NEH National Summit

April 2007
MITH/NEH
National Summit
April 2007

Collaboration
MITH/NEH National Summit
April 2007

Collaboration
• among Centers
Collaboration

• among Centers
• among Funders
Collaboration

- among Centers
- among Funders
- between Centers & Funders
Strengths of Digital Centers

• Mentoring for Humanities Scholars
Strengths of Digital Centers

• Mentoring for Humanities Scholars
• Staffing and Security for Research Projects
Strengths of Digital Centers

- Mentoring for Humanities Scholars
- Staffing and Security for Research Projects
- Opportunities for Faculty-Student Collaboration

--John Unsworth
MITH/NEH
National Summit
April 2007

Mandates
Make the network:
MITH/NEH National Summit April 2007

Mandates
Make the network:
1. International
MITH/NEH National Summit April 2007

Mandates
Make the network:
1. International
2. Broad and inclusive
MITH/NEH
National Summit
April 2007

Mandates
Make the network:
1. International
2. Broad and inclusive
3. Free
Steering Committee

- Julia Flanders
- Matt Kirschenbaum
- Mark Kornbluh
- John Unsworth
- Ray Siemens
- Geoffrey Rockwell
- Neil Fraistat (Co-chair)
- Kay Walter (Co-chair)
Diane M. Zorich

Survey of Digital Humanities Centers
centers offer interdisciplinary ‘third places’
Achievements of Centers

• Incubated Important Research
• Fostered New Generation of Scholars
• Devised Creative Modes of Governance
• Developed Variety of Strategies for Funding
• Built Digital Collections and Suites of Tools

--Amy Friedlander
CLIR Survey of USA Centers

• Silos
• No coordination on “big issues”
• Only small, local collaboration
“embarking on efforts to foster greater communication . . . nationally and internationally”
• Local campus pressures
- Local campus pressures
- Insularity of Centers
• Local campus pressures
• Insularity of Centers
• Competition among Centers
• Local campus pressures
• Insularity of Centers
• Competition among Centers
• National boundaries, cultural divides, language communities
• Public Awareness
• Public Awareness
• Membership Building
• Public Awareness
• Membership Building
• Working Groups
• Public Awareness
• Membership Building
• Working Groups
• Strategic Alliances
CHAIN

CONSORTIUM OF HUMANITIES AND ARTS INFRASTRUCTURES AND NETWORKS

• arts-humanities.net
• ADHO - Association of Digital Humanities Organisations
• CLARIN
• centerNet
• DARIAH
• NoC - Network of Expert Centres in Great Britain and Ireland
• Project Bamboo
• TextGrid
GOALS OF CHAIN

• Advocating for an improved digital research infrastructure for the Humanities
• Developing sustainable business models
• Promoting technical interoperability of resources, tools and services
• Promoting good practice and relevant technical standards
• Developing a shared service infrastructure
• Coordinating approaches to legal and ethical issues
• Interacting with other relevant computing infrastructure initiatives
• Widening the geographical scope of our coalition
Collaboration
Collaboration
Collaboration
WELCOME TO CHCI

Established in 1988, the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes serves as a site for the discussion of issues germane to the fostering of crossdisciplinary activity and as a network for the circulation of information and the sharing of resources within the humanities and interpretive social sciences. CHCI has a membership of over 150 centers and institutes that are remarkably diverse in size and scope and are located in the United States, Australia, Canada, China, Korea, Finland, Taiwan, Ireland, United Kingdom, and other countries.

Our 2010 Annual Meeting, Whose Global Humanities?, will take place June 14-15, 2010, at Brown University’s Cogut Center for the Humanities. Click here for more information, and here for information on past annual meetings. Registration for the 2010 Annual Meeting will open in November, 2009. We look forward to seeing you in Providence!

The Stanford Humanities Center, which hosts over 30 faculty and student fellows each year.
DIGITAL DISCIPLINES

How might digital practices become disciplinary in themselves or reshape the evolving disciplinary system?
DIGITAL PUBLICS

What are the publics with which digital scholarship engages?
DIGITAL DISCIPLINES

• What is the idea of the digital? What is the utility of the notion of “digital humanities”?
• What is the relation between digital practices and disciplinary expertise?
• How should digital practices be incorporated into the disciplinary structure of the 21st-century university?
• To what extent should digital techniques and methods be granted autonomous disciplinary status in the coming university?
• How have digital practices affected research practices in the arts and humanities? How have the relations between disciplines been transformed?
DIGITAL PUBLICS

• How can digital technologies facilitate a broader engagement with the public and many publics?
• What are the implications for Universities of the “democratization of knowledge” in the new digital media?
• How have new-media artistic practices affected the question of what counts as knowledge and what counts as public?
• What sort of humanities will be left to next generation?
FIVE YEAR PLAN

• Shared Events
• Shared Grants
• Shared Training
Digital Humanities Manifesto

“teamwork . . . [is] the new model for the production and reproduction of humanistic knowledge”
Pilot Program

• Three-year program
Pilot Program

- Three-year program
- Model new research methods
Pilot Program

• Three-year program
• Model new research methods
• Multi-institutional, multi-generational teams
Pilot Program

- Three-year program
- Model new research methods
- Multi-institutional, multi-generational teams
- Topics tractable with computational methods
Intergenerational Model

By engaging members from different stages of a scholarly career . . . in a common project, we hope to socialize the entire group in new research cultures.
Digital Humanities Manifesto

Interdisciplinarity/ transdisciplinarity/ multidisciplinarity are empty words unless they imply changes in language, practice, method, and output.
cosmopolitics of the digital humanities
International Summit of Digital Humanities Centers and Funders

London, July 3-4, 2010
Won’t you join in?