All along the Watchtower: Intersectional diversity as a core intellectual value in the

Digital Humanities

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This problem is significant because it indicates the failure of the traditional model for scholarship adequately to describe serious intellectual work in humanities computing, whose scope cannot be delimited in the same way and to the same extent as the traditional kind…. A new definition of scholarship, demanding new abilities, would seem to follow.[1]

The Bonfire of the (Digital) Humanities

The Digital Humanities (DH) came close to imploding as an organised discipline in the 2015-2016 academic year.

The origins of the dispute lay in the deliberations of the programme committee for *Digital Humanities*, the annual, usually very competitive, international conference organised by the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organisations (ADHO) and held in 2016 in Krakow, Poland.

What criteria, this committee asked itself, should we use for accepting or rejecting submissions? Should we privilege "Quality"—presumably as this is measured by success in the conference's traditionally highly structured and quite thorough peer review process? Or should we privilege "Diversity"—defined largely in terms of ensuring that speakers from as wide a

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[1] Willard McCarty, *Humanities Computing* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1227.

possible range of demographics are given slots at a conference (and in a discipline) that has been accused of skewing heavily towards the white, male, Northern, and Anglophone?

Or, as one member of the committee put it with forceful clarity in an email:

> There's a solid consensus that the conference is there in order to hear from diverse groups, but whenever one opts for diversity, it usually means opting for less quality (otherwise there would be no issue), so the danger is that one loses sight of this, very central goal of the conference.[2]

Email is an informal medium, and it would be unfair to take the position expressed here and later circulated by others on social media as having been considered in the same way that this chapter has been or that other formal presentations have been that have referred to this email since this controversy first arose. As Steven Ramsay has noted of his own apparently unintentionally provocative comments on the belief that coding is the core activity within the Digital Humanities, moreover, "all quotes are by nature taken out of context."[3] In this particular case, it is important to remember, the passage in question comes from the middle of an internal debate (most of which has not been published or released on social media) in which members of a conference organising committee struggled to determine the best method of fairly distributing access to a major conference with a high rejection rate.

At the same time, however, the "Diversity Debate" exemplified (and in part provoked) by this email was real and involved the numerous regional, national, linguistic, and other organisations that make up ADHO and run the field's major journals, conferences, and societies.

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[2] [ADHO Conference Coordinating Committee Email Listserv], "Re: DH2016 and Diversity," September 16, 2015.

[3] Stephen Ramsay, "On Building," accessed June 28, 2017, http://stephenramsay.us/text/2011/01/11/on-building/.

The debate led to the resignation of one of ADHO's officers and it resulted in inter-society debates about cultural norms surrounding issues of "Diversity" and "Quality" that are still ongoing. This resignation and these debates led to a brief threat from one of the societies to break away from the larger consortium, taking its journal and participation in the international conference with it. The debate provoked in part by this email, in other words, was serious enough to threaten some of the most prestigious and central organs and activities that characterise global Digital Humanities and undo what can be considered one of the most characteristic features of international Digital Humanities as it is currently constituted: its strong and highly centralised international organisational collaboration and cooperation.

Moreover, while people seem wary of putting it in writing, the sentiment that there is an opposition between "Quality" on the one hand and "Diversity" on the other remains relatively common within some parts of institutional Digital Humanities as (well as other industries).[4] It also aligns to a certain extent with longer-standing positions and regional trends in how the field as a whole is understood: between "those who *build* digital tools and media and those who *study* traditional humanities questions using digital tools and media," as Mark Sample puts it: "do vs. think, practice vs. theory, or hack vs. yack."[5]

I am a member of a national Digital Humanities society executive and a former chair of the Special Interest Group (SIG) Global Outlook::Digital Humanities (GO::DH), an organisation that played a pivotal role in the recent "Global Turn" within DH. I am also a middle aged, white

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[4] See Cleve R. Wootson Jr, "A Google Engineer Wrote That Women May Be Unsuited for Tech Jobs. Women Wrote Back," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2017/08/06/a-google-engineer-wrote-that-women-may-be-genetically-unsuited-for-tech-jobs-women-wrote-back/.

[5] Mark Sample "The Digital Humanities Is Not about Building, It's about Sharing," samplereality, May 25, 2011, http://www.samplereality.com/2011/05/25/the-digital-humanities-is-not-about-building-its-about-sharing/.

Anglophone man who enjoys the security of a tenured North American professorship. And I have been, at various times, a member of the ADHO executive, ADHO conference organising committees, and president of one of the national societies that collectively govern the organisation. In these contexts, I have heard both dismissive complaints about "Diversity" as a way of promoting the less qualified and honest struggles with the question of how a desire to promote as wide participation as possible within DH might conflict with definitions of various forms of "Quality" within the field.

As is true of many significant disciplinary debates within the DH, however, much of this discussion has taken place out of public view—on closed email lists used by the ADHO executive or in closed meetings of its various committees: as Shelaigh Brantford pointed out in an unpublished paper, a person unfamiliar with the details of the internal debate provoked by this email and resignation would not be able to build an accurate sense of the issues at stake (or just how serious the crisis had become) from the organisation's own public pronouncements.[6]

In this paper I would like to tackle the question of "Diversity" and "Quality" within the Digital Humanities head on. That is to say, I would like to consider the question raised in the email thread from the Digital Humanities 2016 organising committee directly and seriously. Is there an inherent conflict between these two concepts within the Digital Humanities? *Is* it the

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[6] See Daniel Paul O'Donnell and Shelaigh Brantford, "The Tip of the Iceberg: Transparency and Diversity in Contemporary DH," *CSDH-SCHN (Congress 2016)*, Calgary, June 1, 2016. For a summary, see Geoffrey Rockwell, "CSDH-CGSA 2016," *philosophi.ca*, August 26, 2016, http://philosophi.ca/pmwiki.php/Main/CSDH-CGSA2016. Examples of public statements showing this oblique approach include Alliance of Digital Humanities Organisations, "ADHO Announces New Steering Committee Chair," ADHO, November 20, 2015, http://adho.org/announcements/ 2015/adho-announces-new-steering-committee-chair; Karina van Dalen-Oskam, "Report of the Steering Committee Chair (November 2015 – July 2016)," ADHO, July 4, 2016, http://adho.org/announcements/2016/report-steering-committee-chair-november-2015-%E2%80%93-july-2016. It is important to remember that the purpose of such statements is administrative and political rather than academic and that an approach that makes things difficult for the researcher may represent good management practice.

case that "whenever one opts for diversity, it usually means opting for less quality"? And is the promotion of "Quality," to the extent that it can be kept distinct from "Diversity," *actually* a "very central goal of the [Digital Humanities] conference," or any other venue for disseminating our research?

To anticipate my argument, I am going to suggest that the answer to each of these questions is "no." That is to say, first, that there is no inherent conflict between "Diversity" and "Quality" in the Digital Humanities; second, that emphasising "Diversity" does not threaten the "Quality" of our conferences and journals; and, finally, that "Quality"—when taken by itself, without attention to questions of "Diversity"—is in fact *not* the central goal of the DH conference, or any other Digital Humanities dissemination channel. Indeed, to the extent they can be distinguished at all (and to a great degree, in fact, I argue they are the same thing), "Diversity"—in the sense of access to as wide a possible range of experiences, contexts, and purposes in the computational context of the study of problems in the Humanities or application of computation to such problems, *particularly as this is represented by the lived experiences of different demographic groups*—is in fact *more* important than "Quality," especially if "Quality" is determined using methods that encourage the reinscription of already dominant forms of research and experience.

Full of Sound and Fury…?

As intense as it was, the "Quality vs. Diversity" debate revolved around what can only be described as a very odd premise for a discipline that is commonly described as a

"methodological commons"[7] or "border land."[8] At the most literal level, the debate suggests that the two qualities in question (i.e. "Diversity" and "Quality") have a zero-sum relationship to each other: the more "Diversity" there is of participation on a panel or at a conference, the fewer examples (presumably) of "Quality" work you are likely to find.

That this is inherently problematic can be tested simply by reversing the terms: if diversity of participation is thought to lead to lower "Quality," then, presumably, greater "Quality" comes from increasing the homogeneity of participation.

In certain circumstances and to certain degrees, of course, this can be true: a conference that is focussed on a single discipline or subject, for example, is likely to be of higher "Quality" (in the sense of creating opportunities to advance that discipline or topic) than a conference that sets no limits on the subject matter of the papers or qualifications of the participants. Faculty and students at the University of Lethbridge participate in several conferences each year where the principle of organisation is geographic ("academics living in Alberta") or educational status ("graduate students") rather than discipline or topic. In such cases, the principal goal of the conference is less the advancement of research in a particular discipline (i.e. promoting the kind of "Quality" that seemed to be at issue in the ADHO debate) than the advancement of researchers as a community. These conferences can attract a wide variety of approaches, subjects, and methods and, frankly, "quality" of contributions (in the sense of "likely to be of broad interest or impact to the field or discipline in question"). The benefit they offer lies in the practice they afford early-career academics and students in preparing papers or the cross-

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[7] McCarty, *Humanities Computing*, 2005.

[8] Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplining Digital Humanities: Boundary Work in an Emerging Field* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

disciplinary networking opportunities they provide for scholars working in a particular geographic area. But while it would be wrong to measure the success of such conferences by the impact they have on their field (since there is no single field), it is also undeniable that such conferences generally have lower "Quality" when measured from a disciplinary perspective.

At the same time, however, absolute homogeneity is also obviously problematic. Research, like many collaborative tasks, is an inherently dialectic process. It involves argument and counter-argument; debate over methods and results; agreement, disagreement, and partial agreement over significance and context. In many cases, this dialectic takes place within a broader context of theoretical agreement (the so-called "Normal Science"[9]) in others, it can involve sweeping changes to the framing theories or concepts (the infamous "Paradigm Shift"[10]). Advancement in research, in other words, requires there to be at least some difference among researchers in approach, goals, method, or context. For great advancement to occur—the kind that changes the field or opens up new avenues of exploration—it is necessary for at least some of the participating researchers to understand the problems the discipline is facing from very different perspectives from that of the rest of the field.

The relationship between lack of homogeneity and advancement of research is particularly true in the case of the Digital Humanities. This is because the "field" is really a *paradiscipline*— that is to say "a set of approaches, skills, interests, and beliefs that gain meaning from their association with other kinds of work."[11] In contrast to many traditional Humanities disciplines,

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[9] See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2012).

[10] See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. While Kuhn is discussing science, the same pattern can be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

[11] Daniel Paul O'Donnell, "'There's No Next about It': Stanley Fish, William Pannapacker, and the Digital Humanities as Paradiscipline," dpod blog, June 22, 2012, http://dpod.kakelbont.ca/2012/06/22/theres-no-next-about-it-stanley-fish-william-pannapacker-and-the-digital-humanities-as-paradiscipline/.

the Digital Humanities traditionally has been much more about methodology than content: that is, it is less *about something* than it is about *how one studies or researches something else*.

Advancing the field in such cases requires developments either in the range of "something elses" to which these "hows" can be applied (i.e. the range of subjects studied); or in the "hows" themselves (i.e. the methods that can then be used across disciplines and problems). Novelty in the Digital Humanities (and research is always about *new* ideas or concepts), in other words, requires either the application of existing techniques, models, or understandings to an ever widening range of humanities problems (testing the boundaries of our existing tools and approaches); or experiments in the development and application of new techniques, tools, theories, and approaches to new or old types of problems (expanding the range of the Digital Humanities methodological project).

In both cases, diversity of experience and situation are crucial pre-conditions for advancement. We improve our understanding of computers and the Humanities by discovering new problems for old solutions and re-solving existing problems in new cultural, economic, social and computational contexts. Without such diversity of experience and condition, the Digital Humanities ceases to be a paradiscipline and becomes instead simply a computationally heavy sub-discipline within some larger traditional field of research.

Medieval Studies: A counter case

This fundamental importance of diversity to the Digital Humanities can be seen when they are compared to a more traditionally content-focussed field such as Medieval Studies.

As a cross-disciplinary area study, Medieval Studies covers a wide range of topics, approaches, and subjects—from archaeology to philosophy to literature to geography—and

involves a number of technical and methodological skills (e.g. paleography, linguistics, numismatics, etc.). The field is commonly organised along cultural and temporal lines, with often parallel (but largely unconnected) research going on otherwise similar topics within different political, cultural, or linguistic contexts. A scholar of Anglo-Saxon kingship may have little to do with somebody studying the same topic with regard to continental European or Middle Eastern cultures during the same time frame—or even with those studying the same topic in earlier or later periods in the same geographic area. Medieval vernacular literary studies, similarly, tend to focus on relatively narrowly delimited languages, movements, or periods. Apart from some common broad theoretical concerns, a student of early Italian vernacular literature might have very little to do with research on early French, Spanish, or English literature of the same or different periods. Even within a single time or culture, the multi-disciplinary nature of the field means that it is quite common for research by one medievalist to be of only marginal immediate relevance or interest to another medievalist trained in a different discipline or tradition: art historians debate amongst themselves without necessarily seeking input from (or affecting the work of) philologists or archaeologists working the same geographical or cultural area and time-period.

But while the range of medieval studies is huge, its definition is still primarily about content rather than methodology. That is to say, the goal of medieval studies ultimately *is to know or understand more about the Middle Ages*, not, primarily, to develop new research techniques through their application to the Middle Ages. While differences between the different sub-disciplines within medieval studies are such that advanced research in one area can be difficult or impossible to follow by researchers trained in some other area, it remains the case

that the overall goal of research across domains and approaches is to develop a comprehensive picture of the time or location under discussion: the history, archaeology, politics, language, literature, culture, and philosophical understandings of a particular place or time in the (European) Middle Ages. If a piece of research focuses on Europe or the Middle East (as a rule, research involving a similar time period in Africa, Asia, or the Americas is not considered part of medieval studies) and if it involves or analyses content or events occurring from (roughly speaking) the fall of the Roman Empire through to the beginning of the Renaissance, then that research is likely to be considered "Medieval Studies" and its practitioner a "medievalist"; if, on the other hand, a piece of research falls outside of these temporal and geographical boundaries, then it is not considered "medieval studies," even if the techniques it uses are identical to those used within medieval studies or could be applied productively to material from the medieval period.[12]

Content vs. Method in Historical Disciplines

One implication of this is that in Medieval Studies, comprehensiveness or completeness can be as important a scholarly goal as novelty of method, and the discovery and explication of additional examples of a concept or type of cultural object are as or more valuable than more generalisable methods or studies. If having a scholarly edition of one Anglo-Saxon poem is thought to be useful for the study of the period, for example, then having editions of two Anglo-Saxon poems—or, better still, *all* Anglo-Saxon poems—will be thought to be even more useful. A digital library of Frankish coins, similarly, is the better the more it is complete.

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[12] For a discussion of this with regard to medieval and classical studies see Gabriel Bodard and Daniel Paul O'Donnell, "We Are All Together: On Publishing a Digital Classicist Issue of the *Digital Medievalist* Journal," *Digital Medievalist* 4 (2008), https://doi.org/10.16995/dm.18.

Just how important this focus on the accumulation of examples and detail is can be seen simply by examining Medievalist conference programmes or publishers' booklists.

Medievalist conferences, for example, place a premium on the specific. While broad generalised papers synthesising across domains are not unheard of (they are in fact characteristic of keynote addresses), by far the majority of contributions focus on quite specific topics: "The Music of the Beneventan Rite I (A Roundtable)" or, in a session on "flyting" (i.e. the exchange of insults in Germanic poetry), papers on three or four specific texts: "The Old High German St. Galler Spottverse," "Flyting in the Hárbarðsljóð," "Selections from Medieval Flyting Poetry," and "Hrothgar, Wealhtheow, and the Future of Heorot [i.e. in the poem *Beowulf*]," to take some examples from the 2017 International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University.[13]

Indeed, it is significant in this regard that the dominant form of submission to a conference like the International Congress on Medieval Studies is by externally organised panel (i.e. a collection of papers assembled and proposed by an external organiser) rather than through the submission of individual papers by individual scholars: given the level of detail involved in the majority of the papers (and the lack of generalising emphasis), this is the only way of ensuring a critical mass of background knowledge in speakers and audience.[14]

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[13] Andrew J. M. Irving, "The Music of the Beneventan Rite I (A Roundtable) [Conference Session]," *International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Kalamazoo, MI, May 11, 2017, https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u434/2017/medieval-congress-program-2017-for-web.pdf; Doaa Omran, "Dead Poet Flyting Karaoke [Conference Session]," *International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Kalamazoo, MI, May 11, 2017, https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u434/2017/medieval-congress-program-2017-for-web.pdf.

[14] This focus on specificity is the norm across the traditional Humanities: the annual conference of the Modern Language Association, for example, the largest in the Humanities, fills its programme entirely by means of externally proposed sessions (Nicky Agate, Personal Communication).

Book series on topics in medieval studies, similarly, tend to justify their claims to the scholars' attention through their comprehensiveness. Thus the Early English Text Society advertises for new subscriptions by pointing to its collection of

> most of the works attributed to King Alfred or Aelfric, along with some of those by bishop Wulfstan and much anonymous prose and verse from the pre-Conquest period… all the surviving medieval drama, most of the Middle English romances, much religious and secular prose and verse including the English works of John Gower, Thomas Hoccleve, and most of Caxton's prints…[15]

A similar emphasis on comprehensiveness is found in the advertisement for Early English Books Online:

> From the first book published in English through the age of Spenser and Shakespeare, this incomparable collection now contains more than 125,000 titles... Libraries possessing this collection find they are able to fulfill the most exhaustive research requirements of graduate scholars - from their desktop - in many subject areas: including English literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, theology, music, fine arts, education, mathematics, and science.[16]

Significantly, this interest in completeness is such that it can even trump methodological diversity: the goal of comprehensive collections of texts or artifacts, after all, is to provide

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[15] Anne Hudson, "The Early English Text Society, Present Past and Future," *The Early English Text Society*, accessed August 29, 2017, http://users.ox.ac.uk/~eets/.

[16] Early English Books Online, "About EEBO," *EEBO*, accessed August 29, 2017, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/marketing/about.htm.

researchers with a body of *comparable* research objects—that is to say, research objects established using (more-or-less) common techniques and expectations.

This is both why it makes sense for scholars to regularly re-edit core texts in the field (the better to make them compatible with current scholarly trends and interests) and why it can make sense to explicitly require researchers to follow specific methodological approaches and techniques. Thus the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editions codifies its views on best practice in textual editing in the form of a checklist against which new editions can be compared. This checklist and the associated guidelines include advice on the specific analytic chapters or sections that ought to be included in a "certified edition" as well as minimum standards of accuracy and preferred workflows.[17]

The Early English Text Society, likewise, warns potential editors of its strong preference for editions that follow the models set by previous editions in the series, recommending against experimentation without prior consultation:

> We rely considerably on the precedents set by authoritative earlier editions in our series as a means of ensuring some uniformity of practice among our volumes. Clearly discretion must be used: departures from practice in earlier editions are likely to have been made for good, but particular, reasons, which do not necessarily suit others. Moreover, if they wish to make an argument from precedent, editors should follow EETS

[17] MLA Committee on Scholarly Editions, "Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions," *Modern Language Association*, June 29, 2011, https://www.mla.org/Resources/Research/Surveys-Reports-and-Other-Documents/Publishing-and-Scholarship/Reports-from-the-MLA-Committee-on-Scholarly-Editions/Guidelines-for-Editors-of-Scholarly-Editions.

editions, in preference to those of other publishers. Once again, please consult the Editorial Secretary in cases of doubt.[18]

This emphasis on continuity, consistency, and clearly identified standards is not (necessarily) evidence of unthinking conservatism. Textual criticism and editing as a method has gone through some remarkable developments in the last three decades, and while not all presses or series are prepared to accept some newer methods for representing texts and objects editorially,[19] others, such as the Modern Language Association, have worked diligently to ensure their guidelines work with different prevailing methodologies and approaches.[20]

What it does suggest, however, is a belief in the necessity of minimum common standards, in a minimal degree of common understanding about expectations and purpose, and that the purpose of method is to develop reliable content rather than, as both the MLA and the Early English Text Society emphasise, experiment for the sake of experiment—a sense of minimum "Quality," in other words, that is more important than "Diversity" if "Diversity" produces something methodologically or conceptually unexpected.

Given the choice between reliable content produced using a conservative, well-tested methodology, and content of unknown quality produced using novel, but less well-tested methodologies, in other words, these examples suggest that mainstream medievalists will tend to prefer the reliable success over the interesting "failure."[21] This bias against (methodological)

[18] Early English Text Society, "Guidelines for Editors," Early English Text Society, 4, accessed August 29, 2017, http://users.ox.ac.uk/~eets/Guidelines%20for%20Editors%2011.pdf.

[19] The Early English Text Society, for example, promises to issue separate guidelines for "electronic editions… as and when the Society decides to pursue this manner of publication in the future," see *Early English Text Society*, 3.

[20] MLA Committee on Scholarly Editions, "MLA Statement on the Scholarly Edition in the Digital Age," *Modern Language Association*, May 2016, https://www.mla.org/content/download/52050/1810116/rptCSE16.pdf.

[21] A famous example in Medieval English Studies is the reception of the Athlone Press editions of Piers Plowman, i.e. George Kane, *Piers Plowman : The A Version. Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well* (London:

diversity need not, in principle, lead to a bias against participation by "Diverse" communities (in the sense of gender, belonging to a racialised community, economic class, or educational background)--although Medieval Studies as a field has recently begun to recognise both its lack of diversity in this respect as well, and the degree to which this homogeneity may leave it particularly vulnerable to co-option by explicitly racist political movements.[22] But it does in current practice discourage it, in part because it interacts poorly with the lived experience of intersectionally diverse participants: it allows for participation by "anybody," but is methodologically suspicious of those whose experience, training, interests, or economic situation results in work that does not easily continue the larger common project using clearly recognised methods and meeting previously recognised standards. As a new generation of medievalists

University of London, 1960); George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, *Piers Plowman The B Version* (London; Berkeley: Athlone Press, 1975); William Langland, George Russell, and George Kane, *Piers Plowman : The C Version ; Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best* (London; Berkeley: Athlone ; University of California Press, 1997). These were generally criticised on the basis that their innovative editorial method, while interesting and perhaps theoretically sound, left the texts "unreliable" and incomparable to other editions of the poem. See among many others Derek Pearsall, "Piers Plowman: The B Version, (Volume II of Piers Plowman: The Three Versions), by George Kane, E. Talbot Donaldson," *Medium Aevum*, 1977; John A. Alford, "Piers Plowman: The B Version. Will's Vision of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best. George Kane, E. Talbot Donaldson," *Speculum*, 1977; Traugott Lawler, "Reviewed Work: Piers Plowman: The B Version. Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best. An Edition in the Form of Trinity College Cambridge Ms. B. 15.17, Corrected and Restored from the Known Evidence, with Variant Readings by George Kane, E. Talbot Donaldson," *Modern Philology* 1979. Lawler's review is an interesting example as it praises the edition while mentioning these same caveats. Robert Adams, "The Kane-Donaldson Edition of Piers Plowman: Eclecticism's Ultima Thule," *Text* 16 (2006): 131–41, contains a discussion of the reception.

[22] See among others Candace Barrington, "Beyond the Anglophone Inner Circle of Chaucer Studies (Candace Barrington)," *In the Middle*, September 11, 2016, accessed January 14, 2019, http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/09/beyond-anglophone-inner-circle-of.html; Wan-Chuan Cao, "#palefacesmatter? (Wan-Chuan Kao)," *In the Middle*, July 26, 2016, accessed January 14, 2019, http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/07/palefacesmatter-wan-chuan-kao.html; Dorothy Kim, "A Scholar Describes Being Conditionally Accepted in Medieval Studies (opinion) | Inside Higher Ed," *Inside Higher Ed*, August 30, 2018, accessed July 14, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/08/30/scholar-describes-being-conditionally-accepted-medieval-studies-opinion; Dorothy Kim, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Medieval Studies," *In the Middle*, November 10, 2016, accessed January 14, 2019, http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/11/the-unbearable-whiteness-of-medieval.html; and Medieval Institute, "FEATURED LESSON RESOURCE PAGE: Race, Racism and the Middle Ages," *TEAMS: Teaching Association for Medieval Studies*, July 29, 2018. Accessed January 14, 2019, https://teams-medieval.org/?page_id=76.

tackle this problem using an explicitly intersectional theoretical approach, the field may gradually become more hospitable to a broader and more welcoming definition of diversity.

The Digital Humanities as Methodological Science

The focus on content, comprehensiveness, and, in the more technical areas, methodological conservatism that I argue characterises the practice of a traditionally historically-focussed field like Medieval Studies contrasts very strongly against what we can easily see to be the case within the Digital Humanities. If Medieval Studies can be described as a discipline that marshals specific types of method and theory in order to apply it to the study of a specific temporally and geographically bound subject, the Digital Humanities can be described as a field that marshals studies of a variety of (often) temporally, geographically, and similarly bound subjects in order to develop different types of method and theory.

As in Medieval Studies, the range of topics, approaches, and subjects covered by the Digital Humanities is extremely wide—indeed, in as much as the Digital Humanities does not focus on a specific temporal period or geographic location, far wider. And as in Medieval Studies, different streams of research in different areas of the Digital Humanities—while engaged, broadly speaking, in the same large project—commonly advance with a fair degree of independence: advances in 3D imaging, for example, may or may not be related to or have an impact on developments in text encoding, media theory, gaming, or Human-Computer Interaction, to name only a few areas commonly considered to be part of the Digital Humanities.

The difference, however, is that the project of the Digital Humanities, in contrast to that of an area study like Medieval Studies, is primarily *about* the methods and theories used rather than the content developed. That is to say, the goal of the Digital Humanities as a discipline is *not*

primarily to know more about any specific period, text, idea, object, culture, or any other form of content (though it does no harm if it helps further this knowledge), but, rather, to develop theories, contextual understandings, and methods that can be used in the context of computation to study such periods, texts, ideas, objects, cultures, etc.

This is not to deny that research in the Digital Humanities can have an impact on our knowledge of such periods, texts, ideas, objects, and cultures. In fact much good Digital Humanities work does have that impact. Rather it is to claim that this impact is not the primary interest of such research to other Digital Humanities researchers: a digital edition of an Anglo-Saxon poem can be at the same time a work of medieval studies (if it adds to our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon period) and Digital Humanities (if it adds to our knowledge of how one can make digital editions or some other aspect of digital method or theory).

In order to make such an edition a contribution to the Digital Humanities, however, it must do something new computationally, regardless of its value to Anglo-Saxon studies: the kind of methodological conservatism we have seen as being acceptable in Medieval Studies is simply fatal in a field like the Digital Humanities. Where editing yet another Anglo-Saxon text improves our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon England, the simple application of well-known computational techniques to yet another cultural object of the same kind dealt with previously by others does nothing to advance the Digital Humanities as a paradiscipline. Advancement in the Digital Humanities requires there to be something new, innovative, or generalisable about the work from a digital/methodological perspective.

As is the case with Medieval Studies, this difference in emphasis is reflected in how Digital Humanities dissemination channels define themselves and operate. Digital Humanities

book series, in contrast to the examples we have seen from Medieval Studies, tend to celebrate the methodological and disciplinary breadth of their catalogue, rather than the comprehensiveness of their collections. Both "Digital Culture Books," a Digital Humanities imprint of the University of Michigan Press, and "Topics in the Digital Humanities," an imprint of the University of Illinois Press, for example, advertise their series in terms of the breadth of topics covered in their volumes, the methodological diversity and innovation they entail, and the diverse experiences of their authors:

> The goal of the Digital Humanities series will be to provide a forum for ground-breaking and benchmark work in digital humanities. This rapidly growing field lies at the intersections of computers and the disciplines of arts and humanities, library and information science, media and communications studies, and cultural studies. The purpose of the series is to feature rigorous research that advances understanding of the nature and implications of the changing relationship between humanities and digital technologies. Books, monographs, and experimental formats that define current practices, emergent trends, and future directions are accepted. Together, they will illuminate the varied disciplinary and professional forms, broad multidisciplinary scope, interdisciplinary dynamics, and transdisciplinary potential of the field.[23]

> Humanities computing is undergoing a redefinition of basic principles by a continuous influx of new, vibrant, and diverse communities or practitioners within and well beyond the halls of academe. These practitioners recognize the value computers add to their work, that the computer itself remains an instrument subject to continual

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[23] University of Michigan Press, "Digital Humanities Series," *Digital Culture Books*, accessed September 11, 2017, http://www.digitalculture.org/books/book-series/digital-humanities-series/.

innovation, and that competition within many disciplines requires scholars to become and remain current with what computers can do. Topics in the Digital Humanities invites manuscripts that will advance and deepen knowledge and activity in this new and innovative field.[24]

Conference sessions, too, tend to be far less specialised and homogenous in terms of subject. Where in the case of area or historical studies, conference papers tend to focus on very specific research questions and outcomes and submissions tend to be primarily through the externally organised panel, in the case of Digital Humanities conferences, papers tend both to be on a wider variety of topics in any single session (because the content is less important than the methodology) and organised by single-paper-submission rather than externally organised panels. I have been on conference panels in both the Digital Humanities and Medieval Studies: where in the case of Medieval Studies conferences, committees commonly look favourably on papers that emphasise new detailed findings, Digital Humanities committees commonly ask the authors of papers that concentrate too much on the details of their "case" and not enough on its generalisability to reorganise their paper or consider presenting their findings as a short paper or poster.

The role of diversity

This brings us finally, to the role of intersectional Diversity in the advancement of the Digital Humanities. Thus far this paper, I have been emphasising the way in which the Digital Humanities acts as what McCarty and Short have described as a methodological commons: an

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[24] University of Illinois Press, "Topics in the Digital Humanities," *University of Illinois Press*, accessed September 11, 2017, http://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/find_books.php?type=series&search=TDH.

intellectual space in which researchers active in different disciplines, in essence, compare notes and develop new approaches and ideas about the role, context, and use of the digital in relation to Humanities questions.

The great change in the last five years within the Digital Humanities, however, has been the recognition that this "commons" also involves lived experience within the digital realm. That is to say, that diversity of personal, gendered, regional, linguistic, racialised, and economic experience and context is as important to developing our understanding of method and theory in the Digital Humanities as is diversity of subject or focus.

What this means is that it is as important to promote diversity of experience in the Digital Humanities as it is diversity of methodology or topic. The experiences of researchers working with relatively poor infrastructure in mid and especially low income communities, for example, are as important to the progress of the Digital Humanities as a discipline as those working with cutting edge infrastructure in the most advanced technological contexts. The problem of doing good Humanities work with "minimal" computing infrastructure is at least as challenging (and interesting) for the Digital Humanities as the problem of adapting the latest tools from Silicon Valley in a high bandwidth environment—and it remains so, even if the research in High Bandwidth Infrastructures produces "better" content for the domain specialist (e.g. colour or HD imagery vs black and white, for example, or larger collections taking advantage of the latest interfaces and technologies). The experiences of those working in rigid or very traditional research environments that discourage novel work with computation in traditional Humanities fields, likewise, bring interesting cultural and methodological challenges which enrich the understanding of researchers working in environments in which the Digital Humanities is "the

Next Big Thing."[25] Because it *also* involves the application of computation to the Humanities or the understanding of the Humanities in an age of (mostly) ubiquitous networked computing, the research of underfunded researchers, those at non-research-intensive institutions, those without permanent faculty positions, and those just beginning their careers as students, likewise, is at least as important to our understanding of the Digital Humanities as that of tenured researchers working with the best funding in the most elite institutions.

The Digital Humanities, in other words, is about the intersection of the Humanities and the world of networked computation; it is not (solely) about the intersection of the Humanities and the world of the fastest, most expensive, and best supported examples of networked computation. Because it is part of the contemporary humanities, the experiences of the marginalised in their use of computation or their understanding of and access to different computation contexts are at least as important to a full understanding of the Digital Humanities as are the experiences of those at the centre of our best-funded and most technologically advanced research and cultural institutions.

Diversity and quality

There is in theory of course no reason why encouraging the contributions of the marginalised alongside those of the non-marginalised (i.e. encouraging "Diversity") should result in lower "Quality," as measured by things like "impact," citation rates, or peer review scores. Researchers working with poor infrastructure can do as "careful" work as those working with excellent infrastructure and, as Dombrowski and Ramsay have pointed out, excellent infrastructure and funding does not preclude large scale failure.

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[25] William Pannapacker, "No DH, No Interview," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 22, 2012, http://chronicle.com/article/No-DH-No-Interview/132959/; William Pannapacker, "The MLA and the Digital Humanities," *Brainstorm*, accessed June 22, 2012, http://chronicle.com/blogPost/The-MLAthe-Digital/19468/.

The problem, however, is that measures of "quality" in the academy are as a rule, self-inscribing. That is to say, the mechanisms by which "quality" is determined strongly favour the already favoured: as my colleagues and I have demonstrated of "excellence" (a synonym for "quality" in this context):

> a concentration on the performance of "excellence" can promote homophily among...
> [researchers] themselves. Given the strong evidence that there is systemic bias within the
> institutions of research against women, under-represented ethnic groups, non-traditional
> centres of scholarship, and other disadvantaged groups, it follows that an emphasis on the
> performance of "excellence"—or, in other words, being able to convince colleagues that
> one is even more deserving of reward than others in the same field—will create even
> stronger pressure to conform to unexamined biases and norms within the disciplinary
> culture: challenging expectations as to what it means to be a scientist is a very difficult
> way of demonstrating that you are the "best" at science; it is much easier if your
> appearance, work patterns, and research goals conform to those of which your
> adjudicators have previous experience. In a culture of "excellence" the quality of work
> from those who do not work in the expected "normative" fashion run a serious risk of
> being under-estimated and unrecognised.[26]

This is particularly true when measures of relative "quality" (or "excellence") are used to distribute scarce resources among researchers. Peer review is an inherently conservative process —the core question it asks is whether work under review conforms to or exceeds existing

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[26] Samuel Moore et al., "'Excellence R Us': University Research and the Fetishisation of Excellence," *Palgrave Communications* 3 (January 19, 2017): 7, https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.105. Internal bibliographic citations within this quotation have been silently elided.

disciplinary norms. In zero-sum or close to zero-sum competitions—such as the distribution of prizes or space in a conference—it has a well-established record of both rewarding the already successful and under-recognising the work of those who do not conform to pre-existing understandings in the discipline.[27] In other words, as we have argued elsewhere,

> ...the works that—and the people who—are considered "excellent" will always be evaluated, like the canon that shapes the culture that transmits it, on a conservative basis: past performance by preferred groups helps establish the norms by which future performances of "excellence" are evaluated. Whether it is viewed as a question of power and justice or simply as an issue of lost opportunities for diversity in the cultural coproduction of knowledge, an emphasis on the performance of "excellence" as the criterion for the distribution of resources and opportunity will always be backwards looking, the product of an evaluative process by institutions and individuals that is

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[27] This is known as the "Mathew Effect"; see Robert K. Merton, "The Matthew Effect in Science," *Science* 159, no. 3810 (1968): 56–63, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.alu.talonline.ca/stable/1723414; Dorothy Bishop, "The Matthew Effect and REF2014," *BishopBlog*, October 15, 2013, http://deevybee.blogspot.ca/2013/10/the-matthew-effect-and-ref2014.html discusses the effect in relation to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. As Jian Wang, Reinhilde Veugelers, and Paula E. Stephan, "Bias Against Novelty in Science: A Cautionary Tale for Users of Bibliometric Indicators," *Social Science Research Network*, January 5, 2016, have shown, novelty in science is consistently underestimated by most traditional measures of "impact" in the short and medium term. There is a minor industry researching the failure of peer review to recognise papers that later turned out to be extremely successful by other measures such as citation success or the receipt of major prizes. See Joshua S. Gans and George B. Shepherd, "How Are the Mighty Fallen: Rejected Classic Articles by Leading Economists," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives: A Journal of the American Economic Association* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 165; Juan Miguel Campanario, "Rejecting and Resisting Nobel Class Discoveries: Accounts by Nobel Laureates," *Scientometrics* 81, no. 2 (April 16, 2009): 549–65; Pierre Azoulay, Joshua S. Graff Zivin, and Gustavo Manso, "Incentives and Creativity: Evidence from the Academic Life Sciences," *The Rand Journal of Economics* 42, no. 3 (2011): 527–54; Juan Miguel Campanario, "Consolation for the Scientist: Sometimes It Is Hard to Publish Papers That Are Later Highly Cited," *Social Studies of Science* 23 (1993): 342–62; Juan Miguel Campanario, "Have Referees Rejected Some of the Most-Cited Articles of All Times?," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 47, no. 4 (April 1996): 302–10; Juan Miguel Campanario, "Commentary on Influential Books and Journal Articles Initially Rejected because of Negative Referees' Evaluations," *Science Communication* 16, no. 3 (March 1, 1995): 304–25,; Juan Miguel Campanario and Erika Acedo, "Rejecting Highly Cited Papers: The Views of Scientists Who Encounter Resistance to Their Discoveries from Other Scientists," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 58, no. 5 (March 1, 2007): 734–43; Kyle Siler, Kirby Lee, and Lisa Bero, "Measuring the Effectiveness of Scientific Gatekeeping," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 2 (January 13, 2015): 360–65.

established by those who came before and resists disruptive innovation in terms of people as much as ideas or process.[28]

Diversity instead of quality

Taken as a whole, this bias among traditional measures of quality means that they are highly likely to underestimate the value of potentially "excellent" work by Digital Humanities researchers from non-traditionally dominant demographic groups—especially if this work challenges existing conventions or norms in the field.

But what about *poor* quality work from "diverse" researchers? That is to say, what about work from researchers outside traditionally dominant demographic groups within the Digital Humanities that can be shown on relatively concrete grounds to be below the accepted standards in the field? Work, for example, that does not use or recognise existing technological standards? That ignores (or appears to be ignorant of) basic disciplinary conventions? A student project, say, that encodes text for display rather than structure? Or a project from a researcher working outside mainstream Digital Humanities that uses proprietary software or formats or strict commercial licences? It is easy to see, in theory, how a conference programming committee that had to choose between a good project by a research team from a dominant demographic group and a flawed project by a team working outside such traditionally dominant communities might struggle with the question of "Diversity vs. Quality" when it came to assign speaking slots.

The answer is that it is a mistake to see "poor quality" as a diversity issue. While such problems can arise with researchers from demographics that are not traditionally dominant

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[28] Moore et al., 7.

within the Digital Humanities, they also arise among researchers from traditionally dominant demographics as well.

Indeed, the willingness to celebrate (or at the very least destigmatise) "failure" is one of the features of the Digital Humanities that distinguishes it from traditional area fields like Medieval Studies. McCarty has described the Digital Humanities as "the quest for meaningful failure"[29] and many authors in the field have devoted considerable attention to the "error" part of "trial and error"[30] (I am aware of no such bibliography or tradition within Medieval Studies). We have a proud tradition of accepting student papers at Digital Humanities conferences—indeed, there are often both special prizes and special adjudication tracks for such papers. As long as the researchers in question conform to dominant group expectations in other ways, it seems, referees and review panels are prepared to accept work that implicitly or explicitly violates disciplinary norms on an exceptional basis because it helps define the field. In the case of student papers, they also take positive steps to identify and support a demographic that, by definition, is still presumably acquiring the skills that otherwise make for "Quality" work.

What this suggests, in turn, is that even "poor quality" is not a reason to avoid privileging diversity within the Digital Humanities. The Digital Humanities has a tradition of encouraging

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[29] Willard McCarty, "Humanities Computing," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (Marcel Dekker, 2003), https://doi.org/10.1081/E-ELIS.

[30] See, among many others, Isaac Knapp, "Creation and Productive Failure in the Arts and Digital Humanities," inspire-Lab, January 22, 2016, https://inspire-lab.net/2016/01/22/creation-and-productive-failure-in-the-arts-and-digital-humanities/; Katherine D. Harris, "Risking Failure, A CUNY DHI Talk," *triproftri*, March 20, 2012, https://triproftri.wordpress.com/2012/03/19/risking-failure-a-cuny-dhi-talk/; Brian Croxall and Quinn Warnick, "Failure," *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*, MLA Commons, accessed August 29, 2017, https://digitalpedagogy.mla.hcommons.org/keywords/failure/; Jenna Mlynaryk, "Working Failures in Traditional and Digital Humanities," *HASTAC*, February 15, 2016, https://www.hastac.org/blogs/jennamly/2016/02/15/working-failures-traditional-and-digital-humanities; Stephen Ramsay, "Bambazooka," accessed August 29, 2017, http://web.archive.org/web/20161105014445/http://stephenramsay.us/2013/07/23/bambazooka/; Quinn Dombrowski, "What Ever Happened to Project Bamboo?," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 326–39.

accounts of failure and accounts of structurally often less accomplished researchers such as students for the same reason it has a tradition of encouraging reports from researchers working in a wide variety of disciplinary contexts—because these accounts contribute collectively to the breadth of our understanding of the application of computation to Humanities problems, expanding particularly our knowledge of method (i.e. the "hows," or, in this case perhaps, "how not tos"). Adding to this the occasional failed or less accomplished work of a researcher from a traditionally non-dominant demographic will neither disturb this tradition of celebrating failure nor result in the crowding out of successful projects by members of traditionally dominant or non-dominant demographics.

Conclusion

The history of the Digital Humanities is often traced through landmark projects and movements, from the initial work by Roberto Busa on his concordance, through the stylometrics and statistical work of the 1970s and 1980s, to the "Electronic editions" of the 1990s and 2000s, to big data and ubiquitous computing today. This history, however, is also a history of diversity. At each stage, progress in the field has required the introduction of new problems, new methods, and new solutions: a broadening of, rather than simple repetition or perfection of, the type of problems to which computation can be applied or which exist in an interesting computational context. The Digital Humanities is what it is today because we did *not* privilege "Quality"—of concordance-making or edition-making or other early forms of Humanities Computing—over other novel forms of computational work. Rather, it has thrived because we have embraced new and (often initially) imperfect experiments in the application of computation to other problems or new approaches to understanding the significance of computation in the context of Humanistic

research. This is, indeed, as McCarty has pointed out, perhaps the most ironic thing about the decision of the editors of *Computers and the Humanities* to narrow the focus of their journal to *Language Resources and Evaluation* in 2005, just as the Digital Humanities entered its most expansive and diverse phase.[31] Just as progress in Humanities Computing would have stalled if it had been unable to expand beyond Roberto Busa's early interest in concordances, or the burst of activity in text encoding and presentation that characterised the "Electronic Editions" of the 1990s and early years of this decade, so too the Digital Humanities will fail to progress if it cannot expand its range of experiences beyond those whose work and experience have largely defined it for most of its history: the white, Northern, male, university researcher with access to reasonably secure funding and computational infrastructure.

As Digital Culture (and hence the scope of Humanities research) expands globally, the type of methodological and theoretical questions we are faced with have become itself much broader: Why are some groups able to control attention and others not? How do (groups of) people differ in their relationship to technology? How do you do digital humanities differently in high- vs. low-bandwidth? How does digital scholarship differ when it is done by the colonised and the coloniser? How is what we discuss and research influenced by factors such as class, gender, race, age, social capital in an intersectional way? This expansion *requires* the field, if it is to advance, to ensure that researchers with experience in these questions from different perspectives are given a place to present their findings in our conferences and journals. In some cases—and there is no reason to believe that the frequency of such cases will be more than we find whenever new approaches and ideas enter the field—this work will belong to the well-established tradition of

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[31] See Humanist Discussion Group (by way of Willard McCarty <willard.mcc (willard.mccarty_at_kcl.ac.uk), "18.615 Computers and the Humanities 1966-2004 from *Humanist Discussion Group* (Humanist Archives Vol. 18)," accessed June 25, 2017, http://dhhumanist.org/Archives/Virginia/v18/0604.html.

"failure" narratives within the Digital Humanities. Much more often—again, in keeping with what we would expect from those belonging to more traditionally dominant demographics—this work will represent the kind of "Quality" we expect as the norm in our various dissemination channels. Regardless of whether such "Diverse" work is a "success" or a "failure," however, it is crucial that it be heard. The Digital Humanities only grows as a field when researchers differ from each other in what they do, why they do it, and how they understand what it is that they are doing. Without this diversity, there is no such thing as the Digital Humanities—of any quality.

Appendix: Writing about internal deliberations

This chapter discusses the internal deliberations of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organisations (ADHO), its Constituent Organisations (COs), and committees (such as the Steering Committee, which I was a part of during some of this time, and its various conference committees, which I was not). These deliberations were carried out by email and in person. As the debate about "Quality" vs. "Diversity" broke out, parts of the debate were also discussed in Social Media, notably Twitter and Facebook. The debate finally became the subject of a number of conference presentations and, with this collection, chapters and articles.

This history raises various ethical, evidentiary, and argumentative challenges. As noted in the introduction, many of the key texts in this debate were composed as emails as part of an at times heated and semi-private discussion among committee members faced with the practical problem of how to distribute speaking spots at the annual and high prestige *Digital Humanities* conference. As a result, they were not intended for publication (or even wide circulation) and, given the context of the discussion, they cannot be assumed to represent the considered, evidence-based, and reasoned positions of their authors.

Moreover, our knowledge of the discussion from which these emails come is by nature fragmentary and partial. In my experience of participating on similar committees, the collected correspondence for a conference programming committee can range into the hundreds (or even thousands) of emails. If the committee also meets in person or by teleconference, this correspondence also has an unrecorded oral context. This means that the few emails from this debate that have circulated on Social Media, in addition to representing perhaps unguarded and also provisional and informal positions taken in the context of a larger discussion, are also by nature incomplete: we do not know (or it is impossible to report) the full context of the discussion from which they have been extracted or how views were modified, strengthened, or abandoned in the course of debate.

Having said all this, however, the discussion these emails prompted is important to the field. While it is true that much of the evidence discussed in this essay was not intended for publication and may not represent the considered views of their authors, the debate from which it comes was much more than a private philosophical discussion among colleagues. Conference programming committees play an important gatekeeping function in any discipline and the debate that was going on in this case was about the practical definition of the Digital Humanities as a discipline as it would be manifested at what is its premiere conference. As such, it has the potential to affect the direction of the discipline as much as any published theoretical piece or trend-setting project.

The Digital Humanities as a discipline, moreover, seems to me to be unusual in the degree to which such "internal" administrative and institutional debates and acts affect its intellectual growth and direction, particularly in the course of the last 20 years. There are a number of

famous and not-so-famous examples of this, beginning, perhaps most famously with the "internal" agreement between the publishers and editors of the first "Companion to Digital Humanities" to use "Digital Humanities" rather than "Humanities Computing" (or similar) to "brand" their collection of essays—an "administrative" decision that, as many have argued, has had a profound effect on the direction of the field. A considerable amount of published scholarly discussion within DH, moreover, focuses on the intellectual and practical significance of these organisational discussions and decisions—as a glance at the foundational essays in many of the most important collections suggests.

What this means, therefore, is that the history of the Digital Humanities simply cannot be written without reference to ostensibly private conversations and documents. In some cases, these references are seemingly positive and are willingly promoted by the participants to the conversation. For the same reasons that DH also attempts to destigmatise failure, however, these conversations and documents cannot be ignored when they are less obviously flattering to the participants in the discussion, especially once, as in this case, they either become part of the public record or are hinted at in official, public pronouncements. Given the degree to which research in the Digital Humanities is networked, collaborative, and organised, ignoring what happens "behind closed doors" is both misleading to those "not in the know" and ultimately counterproductive in a field that at least ostensibly emphasises openness and transparency as primarily values.

In this paper, I have tried to respect both aspects on this problem. On the one hand, I have, as much as possible, tried to avoid tying some of the more provocative documents to named individuals and organisations—what is significant about this debate is not who held what

position but rather what these positions were and the stakes involved in the debate. On the other hand, however, I have directly quoted from and commented on specific emails from this debate as they were released on social media. A discussion about what kind general kind of work is and is not allowed at a discipline's major conference or what kinds of criteria should or should not be used to adjudicate access to speaking slots is more than a private conversation: it is as much about the definition of the field as any theoretical book or article.