



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Digital Humanities*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/202727/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Roy, D. orcid.org/0000-0003-0684-7977 and Deshbandhu, A. (2023) Digital Humanities. The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory, 31 (1). pp. 45-60. ISSN: 1077-4254

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ywcct/mbad015>

© The English Association (2023). This is an author produced version of an article published in The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Digital Humanities

Dibyadyuti Roy and Aditya Deshbandhu

The absence of an entry on Digital Humanities in the last volume of *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the exacerbation of academic precarity (that was acknowledged in the editorial preface of the last volume) would normally predicate that this chapter develop a narrative bibliography of notable scholarship in the Digital Humanities between 2020 and the early part of 2023 (when this article is being completed). However, the unprecedented circumstances that have extended the scope of scholarly review for this chapter beyond a chronological year also provide the unique opportunity to not only "trace and expand upon currents in critical and cultural theory, and to engage in [the] areas' key debates" (Quinn and Ghosh 2022) but also (and more importantly one might argue) understand some of the radical thematic transformations brought about and anticipated by the legacies, presents and futures of Digital Humanities within the supposedly "new-normal" of a post-Covid world. Therefore, this chapter, in surveying and consolidating diverse conversations from varied contexts that shape the contemporary disciplinary field of Digital Humanities, eschews a purely chronological approach. Divided into three strands, this chapter locates scholarship in the Digital Humanities and related fields from the year 2020 (up to 2023) within the interconnected themes of resistive ontologies, organizations, and new directions in the Digital Humanities. While the analytical focus will remain primarily on the scholarship produced within the aforesaid chronological period, the methodological approach adopted here (to select the materials reviewed) demanded that this chapter also acknowledge contemporary contributions in the Digital Humanities, which find scholarly juxtaposition within these three primary themes.

1. Resistive Ontologies of DH

The scholarship surveyed in this section includes the edited volumes: *Alternate Historiographies of Digital Humanities* (2021), *People, Practice, Power: Digital Humanities outside the Center* (2021), and *Global Debates in Digital Humanities* (2022). All three volumes represent an ontological shift in contemporary Digital Humanities wherein the focus is markedly less on the definitional debates that have occupied DH conversations in the last few decades. Instead, by highlighting polyvocality, difference, and non-traditional Digital Humanities infrastructures as legitimate assemblages: for understanding the formation(s) of Global Digital Humanities, these volumes have energized debates around the distinct structural inequalities, especially in its neo liberal manifestations, which form the basis for much of the global network of institutions and academics representing Digital Humanities in its current formations. We see this scope of self-reflexive scholarship in the Digital Humanities as particularly important in shaping the futures of (Global) DH in locations beyond its normative centers in the Global North.

Alternate Historiographies of the Digital Humanities (2021) edited by Dorothy Kim and Adeline Koh is a notable departure from the standard trajectory of edited volumes in Digital Humanities scholarship over the past few years. With a manifesto-like approach toward inaugurating conversations around the alternate genealogies and histories of Digital Humanities,

the pithy introduction to the volume emphasizes that "the digital...is based on settler colonialism...[and] digital structures are deeply raced." As a natural consequence, the essays in this volume "address whiteness, fascism, race, decoloniality, feminist materiality, toxic masculine games cultures, queer digital histories, multilingualism, the military industrial complex and the history of area studies and environmental studies, Indigenous futures, Black futurities, Black Diasporic protest, Black Digital Social Media, Black Feminist archival praxis, digital archives of the Global South, and the mythic spectre of IBM that DH has had to contend with in conversations about the field's origins" (pp20-21). While this broad list of areas and topics might initially suggest that this edited volume lacks scholarly focus, the editors make it abundantly clear that the core issue uniting the contributions in this volume is the "question of power" (21). Building on the legacy of the edited volume *Disrupting the Digital Humanities* (2018), which also had Dorothy Kim as one of the co-editors alongside Jesse Stommel, *Alternate Historiographies of DH* deliberately seeks a trajectory of DH scholarship that is not bound within dominant debates and definitions. In addition to the introduction, the chapters in this volume are divided across six sections: "Presents", "Histories", "Praxis", "Methods", "Indigenous Futures", and "Break (up, down, and out) DH and Black Futurities", which can be consolidated into three thematic sections that correspond to "three main historical methodologies" (21). These are media archaeology, the discussion of historiography in relation to big data and big humanities/digital humanities, and the discussion of silence and history making. In the first two sections of the volume, "Presents" and "Histories", which deal with the troubling "fascist politics and historiographies" shaping contemporary digital humanities, the notable contributions include an interview of David Golumbia by Dorothy Kim (Digital Humanities and/as White Supremacy) and essays from Carly Kochurek ("Towards a Digital Cultural Studies"), Arun Jacob ("Punching Holes in the International Busa Machine Narrative"), and Edmon Y. Chang ("Why are the Digital Humanities so Straight"). Kim's interview with Golumbia makes transparent how the notion of technical development as social progress is often extrapolated within contemporary DH theory and practices, which naturally alienates minority and marginalized populations, especially from low resource contexts. As a mode of redressing such inequities, Golumbia notes that DH should be understood "as an institutional formation and ideology rather than a method or set of methods" (40). Dorothy Kim as Golumbia's interlocutor situates such institutional formation(s) of DH within the register of a "reckoning" for DH by reflecting on the use of the same term in contemporary anthropological discourse (Todd 2018). Kim notes that such a reckoning can galvanize a praxis where the "whiteness of DH" can be uncoupled from the techno positivism, often plaguing institutionalized DH. Carly Kochurek's essay ("Towards a Digital Cultural Studies") picks up on this homogeneity in Digital Humanities and argues for the need to "cross pollinate" Digital Humanities with the radical possibilities implicit in the historical trajectories that led to the formation of Cultural Studies as a discipline. Kochurek's argument is informed by a survey of key cultural studies texts in an effort to understand how the political praxis of cultural studies can be taken forward by digital cultural studies, which emerges from the above-noted dialogue between Cultural Studies and DH. Arun Jacob's contribution in this volume ("Punching Holes in the International Busa Machine Narrative") alongside Chang's essay ("Why are the Digital Humanities so Straight") consolidates a trenchant critique of some of the narratives now understood to be the canonical legacies of twentieth century Humanities

Computing (such as the work of Roberto Busa and his collaborations with International Business Machines), and its evolution into the field we now know as Digital Humanities. Jacob's "counter hegemonic cultural memory" (122) challenges the dominance of Busa's pioneering project *Index Thomisticus* as the origin story of contemporary digital humanities. Jacob's contribution complements Cathy J. Schlund-Vials' essay (Cold War Computations and Imitation Games: Recalibrating the Origins of Asian American Studies) that similarly eschews such normative digital humanities histories and attributes their emergence to the neoliberal machinations of the American military industrial complex. By proposing a "politically inflected comparative genealogy" of digital humanities that brings together a Foucauldian framework alongside more recent scholarship from Rey Chow, Schlund-Vials notes the primary, yet largely under-theorized, role of the Cold War military industrial complex in shaping the epistemes of Digital Humanities: much like its role in shaping Asian American Studies within a racialized (and gendered) imaginary. Chang's essay ("Why Are the Digital Humanities So Straight?") which allows for a transition into the next section in this volume ("Praxis") builds upon Tara McPherson's essay "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation" (2012) and offers an alternative praxis for both the scholarly academic chapter as well as Digital Humanities, through a feminist media praxis. Alexandra Juhasz ("The Self-Reflexive Praxis at the Heart of DH") and the co-authored contribution from Anastasia Salter and Bridget Blodgett ("Training Designer Two: Ideological Conflicts in Feminist Games + Digital Humanities") which constitute the section on "Praxis" speak to the challenges of digital pedagogies within diverse settings such as prisons, traditional classrooms as well as within digital game worlds. The next section on "Methods" has contributions from Viola Lasmana ("Toward a Diligent Humanities: Digital Cultures and Archives of Post-1965 Indonesia"), Domenico Fiormonte ("Taxation against Overrepresentation?: The Consequences of Monolingualism for Digital Humanities") and Alenda Y. Chang ("Pitching the "Big Tent" Outside: An Argument for the Digital Environmental Humanities") which brings together a reassessment of the prevalent methods in Digital Humanities based in a self-reflexive critique of Digital Humanities methods, within situated local contexts, which demand decolonial modes of inquiry. The concluding two sections of this volume on "Indigenous Futures" and "Break (Up, Down, Out, In) DH And Black Futurities" provides an expansive view of Indigenous Digital Humanities as well as the disciplinary barriers in DH for Black and Indigenous scholars. With contributions from Siobhan Senier ("An Indigenist Internet for Indigenous Futures: DH Beyond the Academy and "Preservation"), Jordan Clapper ("The Ancestors in the Machine: Indigenous Futurity and Indigenizing Games), Christy Hyman (Black Scholars and Disciplinary Gatekeeping"), Nalubega Ross ("Dr. Nyanzi's Protests: Silences, Futures, and the Present") and Jamal Russell ("Against Lenticular Modeling: Missives on Locating Blackness from the WhatEvery1Says Project") the chapters in this section range from indigenous digital methods and its possibilities to the limitations of current DH methods such as topic modelling for racialized minorities due to the lack of context about the model as well as the data that needs to be analyzed. *Alternate Historiographies of the Digital Humanities* shows the limitations of current DH methods and scholarship while highlighting the alternative ontologies and resistive possibilities that can emerge from minoritized and indigenous archives, which are often silenced within mainstream DH discourses.

Located within a similar plane of resistive DH ontologies and with a distinct focus on the Global South, *Global Debates in Digital Humanities*, published in 2022, recenters the ontological positioning of Digital Humanities beyond its historical positioning in the resource-rich and privileged institutions of the Global North. In the introductory note to the edited volume, the editors, Domenico Fiormonte, Sukanta Chaudhuri, and Paola Ricaurte note that “In this condition [the post pandemic Covid landscape] the role and scope of Digital Humanities are going to be completely rethought, and reshaped, locally and globally” (ix):resonating with the clarion call from the African social scientist David Mwambari for the pandemic to be a “catalyst for decolonization” (Mwambari 2020) within and beyond academic spaces. *Global Debates in Digital Humanities* is divided into three parts: “Global Histories of Digital Humanities”, “Exploring and Practicing Global Digital Humanities”, and “Beyond Digital Humanities” with a total of twenty-four chapters constituting the volume. The eight chapters comprising the first part of the volume on “Global Histories of Digital Humanities” offers case studies from diverse contexts and modalities: ranging from the archival turn of DH in India (Puthiya Purayil Sneha) to the inseparability of blogging and open access practices as from emancipatory possibilities in scholarly communication (Priego), to the bespoke DH ontologies in Russia (Kizhner et al), China (Cheng and Hang Tusi) and Poland (Maryl). Authors from these differing contexts provide a timely reminder of the historical, cultural, and multilingual challenges (and possibilities) of doing and making Digital Humanities in Global South spaces. For example, Rahul Gairola’s essay in this first part of the volume that articulates a postcolonial and queer critique of DH through a self-reflexive journey into South African and Indian digital queer spaces, while seemingly dissimilar to Jing Chen and Lik Hang Tsu’s chapter on the debates in developing Chinese Digital Humanities are inherently connected—in showing how the lack of methodological inclusion is very often a function of the normative racial, gendered, caste and class imaginaries within dominant (Global North) DH epistemes. Similarly, the histories of DH in Russia and Poland (Kizhner et al.; Maryl) show how the inherently political nature of digital affordances and their dialogue with the regional specificities of humanistic practices, require sustained acknowledgement and actionable critique within Global (North) DH discourses. Bookended by the chapters on epistemic invisibility in/of DH within Global South spaces (Bhattacharya) and the impossibility of constructing new models of (digital) humanistic practices without acknowledging the “diversity of epistemologies, cultures, ethics, identities, and axiologies” (Rodriguez-Ortega 111), the chapters in this first part of the volume provide an engaging, if sometimes fragmentary, overview of DH beyond the hegemonic centers. Part 2 of this volume on “Exploring and Practicing Global Digital Humanities”, which is the largest section in this volume with ten chapters adopts a case-study based approach by focusing on specific projects and the challenges beyond the technical, including “linguistic, bibliographical, epistemological issues...and cultural history” that need to be negotiated for accomplishing Digital Humanities projects in the Global South. Specific challenges associated with the “nature of the material” in digital humanities projects that are in non-normative languages or contexts form the primary preoccupation of the chapters by Purbasha Auddy, Aliz Horvath, Itay Marienberg-Milkowsky; and Carlton Clark, Lei Zhang, and Steffen Roth. Erneststo Miranda Trigueros’ chapter extends the technological issues into the cultural and epistemological domains by articulating the surprising possibilities offered by digital affordances for remediating the

performative orality of Mexican Amerindian cultures, which have rarely found any voice in dominant global (north) cultural conversations. Dibyadyuti Roy and Nirmala Menon's chapter on Indian DH, as well as Sofia Gavrilova's account of Russian Digital memory projects provides insights into how the documenting, harnessing, and facilitating of the specificities inherent in localized DH infrastructures while acknowledging the limitations, is crucial for ensuring a thriving praxis for Global (South) DH. The next three chapters from Maira E. Álvarez and Sylvia Fernández Quintanilla; María José Afanador-Llach and Andres Lombana-Bermudez; Diana Barreto Ávila are connected by their commitment to implementing decolonial digital humanities practices in borderland communities (Álvarez and Quintanilla) and in sites that have minimal tangible or intangible DH infrastructures (Afanador-Llach and Lombana-Bermudez) as well as how in creating digital archives of a hidden collection through participatory methodologies can compensate for the lack research infrastructures (Diana Barreto Ávila). The final section of this volume on "Beyond Digital Humanities" is an appeal for DH research, practice, and pedagogy to go beyond its normative formations in the Global South and become a vehicle for contextually driven social change. The first four chapters from Gimena del Rio Riande; Juan Steyn and Andre Goodrich; Carolina Dalla Chiesa and Leonardo Foletto; and Anita Gurumurthy and Deepti Bharthur provide incisive insights into the frugal innovation approaches of communities with limited resources and their tactics for negotiating DH practice in locations that face the threat of technological appropriation. The last two chapters of this volume from Tim Unwin, and Cédric Leterme analyze how such forms of technological appropriation in the low resource contexts of the Global South are "dominated by patriarchal, colonialist, and capitalist visions of the world" (xxiv). Overall, *Global Debates in Digital Humanities* in putting forward both theoretical interventions as well as specific case studies about DH practices in the Global South makes an undeniable argument for conceptualizing Global DH "as a [heterogenous] assemblage of technical and sociocultural infrastructures." A key takeaway from this volume is that the diverse ontologies of Digital Humanities across the world must be operationalized within a critical framework of epistemic justice for ensuring that the field sustains long-term humanistic impact.

The third volume in this section *People, Practice, Power: Digital Humanities outside the Center* (2019), also features in the Debates in the Digital Humanities series and is edited by Anne McGrail, Angel David Nieves, and Siobhan Senier. The volume's various contributions have been segregated into three broad themes, the first of which looks at historical perspectives and models from new contexts, the second theme engages with understandings of labour and communities of practice and the final theme charts dimensions of vulnerability, collaboration, and resilience in the discipline's pedagogy. The editors lay the foundation of this volume when they state the desire to foreground the human aspect of DH infrastructure. They question the creators of said infrastructures and in a critical STS approach observe how these are "... after all, designed by people, people in very specific social and economic locations, and they are used by groups of people in still other, often heterogeneous and contradictory social and economic positions." (p. vii) Chapters in the first theme offer a wide range of DH perspectives to the reader as some argue the need for considering more than just equipment and material infrastructure when understanding the demands of DH pedagogy. Malazita in his essay argues for the need for epistemological and ideological structures to shape both curricula and the institutions that offer them. The same strand of thought is furthered by Arnold and Tilton when they try to demystify

the term “Digital Humanities lab” and not just suggest a possible configuration of such spaces but also engage with the possibilities and limitations of calling such spaces “labs.” Pawlicka-Deger also identifies the role of a lab in spaces where institutions are developing DH departments and notes how labs must not be seen as the immediate requirement after the launch/repurposing of a DH center. She argues that it is essential to preserve the dual nature of DH as a discipline and a practice and the lab then becomes a space that offers diverse research methods and practices. Cecire and Merriam offer a different perspective to this by arguing for the need for custom built DH practices and curricula that are rooted in the expertise, requirements, and contexts of the institutions they are housed in. The other chapters in this theme also explore DH’s various engagements with infrastructures and resources – one, for example, looks at the role played by stacks and libraries, spaces that the authors liken to a zombie category (Braunstein & Warren); the others look at more critical takes where they call DH an invisible discipline and call for it to be repositioned as a means of emancipation against surveillance (Rose Glass); and the final strand in this section is also a powerful one as Boyles calls for the need for DH to embrace intersectionality and open up the possibilities to engage with gender, race, sexuality and take the steps towards the emergence of a critical DH.

The second set of essays in this volume offers several experiential standpoints of DH programmes, undertakings, and initiatives. The contributors in this section tell powerful stories of their experiences with the use of DH theory and praxis while also reflecting on their journeys. The selection of essays here is diverse as some draw on the journeys of DH departments in specific academic institutions (Rodrigues & Schnepfer; Colins & Ruediger; Lach & Pressman), while others chart possibilities of working in spaces that differ from traditional DH centers (Rivera et al; Colins & Ruediger). This section also includes advice for individual DH practitioners where Remy argues for the acceptance of web-based portfolios by committees that screen applications for tenure and promotion; and Berens highlights the spotlight on the invisibility and precarity of the “DH Adjunct” in educational institutions. Berens’ essay also dwells on possible ways of remedying this concern while trying to understand the role of the DH adjunct in contexts like the gig economy.

The third and final theme in this collection presents contributions that focus on dimensions of vulnerability, collaboration, and resilience in DH pedagogy. Simon builds on ideas of hybridity and the challenges of accessibility to suggest the benefits of minimal computing and the need to integrate reflections in pedagogic practices. On the other hand, Miya et al. come together to write a manifesto for student driven research and learning in DH which allows the role of students in DH projects to not just be limited to invisible performers of tedious tasks but extend to their role as active learners and co-creators of knowledge. The manifesto, written from the vantage point of students of DH, states both what the students deserve and what they aspire to be. The focus on students of DH is also evident in Pewu and Shrout’s essay where they highlight the need to “center” first generation students, a measure they believe will not only address challenges of polyvocality but allow for DH to acknowledge that a lot of first-time students lack both the social capital and the necessary knowhow to navigate spaces where DH is studied, practiced, and taught. A similar sentiment is also expressed by Risam (working at Salem State at the time of writing this article and now at Dartmouth) in her chapter when she cautions us against emulating

DH models and practices from elite academic institutions in the US. She voices the need for DH's research activities at elite institutions to be understood in the limited context of privilege they are conducted in and to prevent research of that kind determining the broader trajectory of the discipline. The final chapter of this book adopts a radically different perspective (from other chapters in this thematic section) when Applegate asks if DH and Critical University Studies (CUS) can work together and resist the ongoing neo-liberalization processes in modern universities. He builds on this perspective further when he imagines if DH and CUS' similarities could enable a more egalitarian vision which in turn could help address issues of institutional and disciplinary inequalities. As is evident from the vibrant themes and contexts presented in this volume, the spectrum of possibilities for DH as a discipline comes to the fore when we examine bodies of work that are not necessarily supported or produced in the "center" but rather in the intersections of contexts, affordances, and realities.

2. The Organizations of DH

Questions around the state and ontology of digital humanities as a discipline often seem to be located exclusively within the traditional sites of research, teaching, and practice within institutional spaces, with relatively scant attention paid to Digital Humanities Conferences and their organizing bodies, as crucial markers for determining "the shape and definition of a scholarly field" (Estill et. Al 2022). In this section we chronicle two essays published in the *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (DHQ) in 2022 that were written in response to each other, and which offer specific insights into how the policies and politics of academic conferences can lead to different imaginaries for the discipline of Digital Humanities. *The circus we deserve? A front row look at the organization of the annual academic conferences for the Digital Humanities* is a co-authored article that was published in DHQ in November 2022 and contributing authors included "various people formally involved" in the organization of the annual conference of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO), the flagship umbrella organization for Digital Humanities "whose goals are to promote and support digital research and teaching across arts and humanities disciplines, drawing together humanists engaged in digital and computer-assisted research, teaching, creation, dissemination, and beyond, in all areas reflected by its diverse membership" (ADHO). In this section we look at this aforesaid article alongside the ADHO's official response to the article, which was also published in the same volume and issue of *DHQ* (16.4). *The Circus we deserve*, locates the experiences of the contributing authors who were part of "organizing the [ADHO annual] conference over the past decade" (Estill et al., 2022), and their recommendations for ADHO considering the needs of the field of Digital Humanities to acknowledge its growth and presence beyond normative contexts and identities. By using agenda setting, the article's authors identify not just the role the annual conference plays in shaping the discipline/movement but also examine how themes for the conference were chosen, members of the various committees selected, the way the peer review system functioned, and identify that the existing structures that govern the conference are inadequate in representing the global DH community's diversity in gender, language, and context. Similarly, the authors also identify the conference's significant dependence on volunteers and unpaid labour and inconsistent implementation of key principles which in turn lead to the reification of existing

inequalities in academia and broader society. As they answer these questions, they offer recommendations for a realignment of the guidelines for future conferences. Their recommendations include embracing inclusivity (by reducing measures of gatekeeping); emphasizing justice (by moving away from a singular focus on merit); fostering equity (as opposed to celebrating innovation); and championing polyphony, polyvocality, and diversity (instead of supporting canon/existing discourses or replicating what is deemed “standard”).

The response to this article by the ADHO (2022) acknowledges the roles of the authors in the organization of the annual conference and the importance of the arguments raised by the authors. By recognizing the need for significant amounts of work to reimagine the conference and better serve the global DH community, they commit to learning with humility from past experiences and the experience of other, similar academic bodies. The rest of the response details the various steps taken by the ADHO to try and make the annual conference more diverse and inclusive. While the benefits of these tangible measures adopted by the ADHO will find maturity in the near future—both in the composition of the participants at future conferences and the nature of conversations initiated there—it is important to highlight the benefits of such an engagement and ADHO's willingness to participate in this dialogue. By using the DHQ (the journal which featured both the critical examination and ADHO's response) as a site for sharing one's experiences and highlighting the limitations of the current trajectory of DH research, the authors tap into the energy of a temporal frame where digital technologies are being adapted, repurposed, and modified to suit the various needs of surviving a generational pandemic, processes that cannot be charted or recorded by the field if it continues to overlook inclusivity and celebrates uncritical innovation. In the pandemic as the world found ways to work, learn, live, and perform acts of leisure online, the possibilities and expectations of a field like Digital Humanities grew exponentially. Therefore, the perspectives represented by these two articles are a telling reminder that transparency and a commitment toward dialogue (as shown here by ADHO) are key toward ensuring "that the [largest] conference in [DH] better serves the global DH community, and that ADHO does right by those who are willing and able to volunteer as organizers " (*ADHO Response*)

New Directions in Digital Humanities

While questions around the relationalities of humanistic data with justice, ethics, colonialism, epistemologies, and infrastructures, to only name a few areas of emphasis, have occupied the attention of Digital Humanities stakeholders for a substantial period now, the rapid rise of algorithmically-driven platforms—exacerbated in many contexts by the Covid-19 pandemic— as well as the rising dominance of large language models (such as *ChatGPT*) demands the renewed acknowledgement of the intersections between humanities and data-science as an important direction in the Digital Humanities. In charting (some of) the future directions in Digital Humanities, this section looks at the white paper on "The challenges and prospects of the intersection of humanities and data science" published by *The Alan Turing Institute*^{[\[1\]](#)} (2020) and "Parables of AI in/from the Majority World: An Anthology" published by the *Data and Society Research Institute* (2022) as two documents, that represent diverse yet complementary humanistic perspectives around the intersections between data driven infrastructures and our contemporary lives, with a clear focus around the challenges and possibilities of living with

digital technologies. With critical discussions around the social power of algorithms and its concomitant harms (Beer 2017; Acemoglu 2021) gaining increasing valence, we surmise that the discipline of Digital Humanities that has had a historical investment in computational cultures will develop increasing stakes in the fields of algorithmic accountability and algorithmic impact assessment. In his 2016 essay "Do Digital Humanists Need to Understand Algorithms?" Benjamin Schmidt notes that

As one of the few sites in the humanities where algorithms are created and deployed, the digital humanities are ideally positioned to help humanists better understand the operations of algorithms rather than blindly venerate or condemn them.

In simultaneously being infrastructures that transform data into predictive models and actionable insights while also potentially reconfiguring the social contexts from where such data points are extracted, algorithms are opportune sites for humanistic inquiry in the digital age. *The Alan Turing Institute's* Humanities and Data Science special interest group in framing this white paper "brought together voices from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds... as an example of how conversations of this type can benefit and advance computational methods and understandings in and between humanities and data science". In considering "digital humanities researchers and practitioners" as one of the key stakeholders for this white paper, the document develops recommendations across seven key areas: 1. Methodological frameworks and epistemic cultures 2. Best practices in the use and evaluation of computational tools 3. Reproducible and open Research 4. Technical Infrastructure 5. Funding Policy and Research assessment 6. Training Education, and expertise 7. Career, development, and teams. While all these seven areas have significant purchase in providing new directions for the Digital Humanities, sections 1-3 have particular salience for Digital Humanities across global contexts. Noting that the current field of Digital Humanities cannot be seen as a monolithic entity due to the continual "productive tensions" (8) between computational methodologies and critical modes of humanistic analysis, the document argues that "we are currently witnessing another one of these junctures, one that is calling for a critical involvement with data science" (9). In highlighting the heterogeneity of approaches, methods and epistemes that constitute the current formations of Digital Humanities, the white paper emphasizes that the characteristic of humanities datasets of often being "unstructured, fragmentary, ambiguous, contradictory, multilingual, heterogenous and bounded by the subjectivities...of data collection" is a key strength for "yielding new insights...historical and cultural records. " Further, the document argues that digital humanities must continue on its "strong tradition of interdisciplinary and intermural collaboration" since without "such collaborations there is a substantial risk that data driven research does not say anything new or meaningful, repeats well known distortions or introduces new forms of bias at an even larger scale" (11). On a connected register, the "Parables of AI in/from the Majority World: An Anthology" published by the *Data and Society Research Institute* also emerges from the question "So what stories can we tell about a world that has increasingly come to rely on AI-based, data-driven interventions to address social problems?" (*Data and Society Research Institute*, 2022), which was also the motivation for experimental workshop organized in 2021 "designed to produce new ways of engaging with the global impacts of digital technologies." The 14 chapters that constitute the anthology, including an epilogue and a prologue, bring "together original

stories about the everyday experiences of living with AI-based systems from storytellers in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and South Asia — who explore themes including postcolonial computing, data extractivism, dignity, solidarity, and data justice." (*Data and Society Research Institute*, 2022). In the prologue to this anthology, the editors note that while the anthology in its completed form is focused on the goals of community formation through the act of collaborative storytelling, the origins of the project lie in "an effort to map the ongoing debates over appropriation of digital IDs, national digital identity infrastructures, and associated AI-based systems for development in the global south" ((*Data and Society Research Institute*, 2022). In highlighting how critical academic engagement on data-centric technologies can be approached through humanistic narratives, this anthology challenges existing epistemic trajectories (in Digital Humanities and related fields). By operationalizing a fresh methodological approach and by using storytelling of lived experiences with AI as a critical analytic for interrogating the value-neutrality of AI-driven systems, the anthology inaugurates multiple possibilities for the future(s) of human-centered qualitative methodologies in the Digital Humanities. Of particular note in this anthology (and the preceding workshop) are the range of voices that are facilitated including narratives regarding the failure of Machine-learning based content moderation tools in detecting offensive content in vernacular Indian languages (Chesta Arora), to how the instrumental rationality of computing infrastructures spill over into the personal lives of hacker-entrepreneurs inhabiting Mexico and USA (Héctor Beltrán), to how the grammar of photographic communication inflected by digitality can potentially reconfigure cultural artefacts and social experiences (Massimiliano Fusari), to only name a few. The diversity of voices and perspectives represented make a compelling case "for how a descent into the ordinary is crucial to understanding how we are all implicated in living with data and AI". The anthology in recovering the value of the human quotidian in an increasingly data-driven (and very often technopositivist) world not only offers us new approaches but reminds us of the many rhizomatic possibilities implicit in the Digital Humanities.

3. Collaboration & Polyvocality: the way forward?

As is evident from the materials reviewed, during the years of the global pandemic DH theory, practice, and pedagogy transformed in order to embrace not just the emergence of new practices and meanings but to also make room for understanding the several contextual realities for humanistic scholarship in the digital age. The review suggests that it is imperative for DH as a field to find the necessary spaces to engage with the many voices in the field and chart the multiplicitous understandings of DH that emerged: as the connected world relied on the digital to survive, work, engage in social interactions, and perform acts of leisure. As new competencies and capabilities emerged by the repurposing of platforms and technologies in creative ways, DH acquired plurality, nuance, through the various collaborative efforts and initiatives that were undertaken in sites that were deemed to be "peripheral". The vibrant polyvocality of these stories needs to be amplified to showcase and highlight what it cost for humanity to survive a once in a generational pandemic by forging meaningful connections with the digital.

Books/Anthologies/Reports Reviewed

Fiormonte, Domenico, Sukanta Chaudhuri, and Paola Ricaurte, eds. *Global debates in the digital humanities*. U of Minnesota Press, 2022.

Global Debates in the Digital Humanities | *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. 27 Jan. 2023, dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/global-debates-in-the-digital-humanities.

Kim, Dorothy, and Adeline Koh, eds. *Alternative Historiographies of the Digital Humanities*. Punctum Books, 2021. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1r7878x>. Accessed 23 March 2023

McGrail, Anne B., Angel David Nieves, and Siobhan Senior, eds. *People, Practice, Power: Digital Humanities Outside the Center*. U of Minnesota Press, 2022.

Singh, Ranjit, Rigoberto Lara Guzmán, and Patrick Davison, eds. *Parables of AI in/from the Majority World*. New York: Data & Society Research Institute, 2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4258527>.

The Alan Turing Institute (2020). *The challenges and prospects of the intersection of Humanities and Data Science*. [online] Available at: <https://www.turing.ac.uk/news/publications/challenges-and-prospects-intersection-humanities-and-data-science> [Accessed 26 Apr. 2023].

Journal Articles Reviewed

Estill, Laura, et al. “The Circus We Deserve? A Front Row Look at the Organization of the Annual Academic Conference for the Digital Humanities.” *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 016, no. 4, Aug. 2022, www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/16/4/000643/000643.html#. Accessed 3 March 2023.

The Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations,. “Response to the Circus We Deserve? A Front Row Look at the Organization of the Annual Academic Conference for the Digital Humanities.” *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2022, www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/16/4/000664/000664.html. Accessed 3 March 2023.

References

Acemoglu, D. (2021). *Harms of AI*. [online] National Bureau of Economic Research. Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w29247>.

adho.org. (n.d.). *About – Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations*. [online] Available at: <https://adho.org/about/>.

Beer, D. (2016). The social power of algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, [online] 20(1), pp.1–13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2016.1216147>.

Emelia Quinn , Ranjan Ghosh (2022), Preface, *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, Volume 30, Issue 1, 2022, Pages ix–x, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ywcct/mbac018>

- Kim, D. and Stommel, J. (2018). *Disrupting the digital humanities*. Goleta, Ca: Punctum Books.
- Schmidt, B. (2016). Do Digital Humanists Need to Understand Algorithms? In: Matthew.K. Gold and L. Klein, eds., *Debates in Digital Humanities*. [online] Minneapolis London: University of Minnesota Press. Available at: <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/dfaeea1b-e682-4b0b-bbd6-3955db0db3be#bk> [Accessed 25 Apr. 2023].
- Todd, Z (2018). *The Decolonial Turn 2.0: the reckoning | anthro{dendum}*. [online] anthro{dendum}. Available at: <https://anthrodendum.org/2018/06/15/the-decolonial-turn-2-0-the-reckoning/>.

^[1] The Alan Turing institute is UK's national institute for data science and artificial intelligence