

SIG conveners:

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Introduction

Digital Humanities as a discipline has emerged both in academic departments and in libraries; this emergence runs parallel to the development of digital library collections and digital scholarship more generally. The connection between digital humanities centers and libraries was traced by the Digital Humanities community in 1999, when Willard McCarty and Matthew Kirschenbaum tallied about nineteen library-based humanities computing centers – the single largest category in their listing (of about one hundred units internationally). Based on a spreadsheet of DH centers compiled as a joint MITH, CDRH, and MATRIX project (Hovde 2013), Chris Alen Sula estimated that nearly half of the nearly one hundred identified centers have a relationship, some just informally, with a library (Sula 2013). The DH-library relationship appears even more pervasive when considering DH apart from DH centers; a 2011 Association of Research Libraries survey on libraries and DH reported that ad hoc services in support of DH were a far more common offering than library-hosted DH centers. Only 6% of responding libraries reported that they provided “no digital scholarship services” (Bryson, Posner, St. Pierre, and Varner 2011).

As Digital Humanities has grown, its ties to libraries and librarians¹ have garnered more formal, international recognition. Librarians around the world are organizing around digital humanities, forming professional organizations to address issues and needs that libraries—whether public or private, research- or teaching-focused—confront in this arena.

¹ We use the term “librarian” inclusively, to reference all those who work in libraries, a category that extends beyond just those in possession of professional accreditation to include paraprofessionals, technologists, alt-academics, and other “feral librarians.”

For example, the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries — a division of the American Library Association, ALA) Digital Humanities Discussion Group first met in the summer of 2012. With burgeoning interest and high attendance, it quickly became an ACRL Interest Group;² it hosts a discussion list with 850 subscribers. This group also hosts dh+lib (<http://acrl.ala.org/dh/>), a publication for community-curated reviews and original articles related to DH and libraries, launched in late 2012. The frequent listings of new positions for librarians with digital humanities responsibilities indicate that these new organizations will continue to grow.

Outside North America as well, DH conferences and workshops are being offered that more explicitly consider the role and influence of libraries. The 2014 Japanese Association for Digital Humanities conference, for example, placed a particular focus on GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) in the call for proposals and in the program. Library conferences, too, are considering DH; as the 2014 International Bibliotheca Baltica Symposium asked: “Digital Humanities — Where Are the Libraries?”

In many parts of the world libraries have been the main participants in large digitization projects that are of great value to Humanities scholars (including DH scholars), even if the libraries may not have labeled the projects as Digital Humanities. *Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes*, the *Public Digital Library of America*, *Europeana*, and UNESCO's *World Digital Library* are just a few examples.

Isabel Galina, reporting on a study of the DH community at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, has observed that, in spite of the fact that university libraries have digitization expertise, scholars often create digital products as part of their own research. Galina finds that these projects, ones that originate from outside the formal publishing or library context, frequently overlook issues such as “classification, collection development, reader notification, rights management, dissemination, long term maintenance and preservation” (Galina 2013). Conversely, there is benefit to libraries in involving DH expertise and the DH community in library-led digitization projects; fostering relationships between these groups could help libraries connect with new and deeply-engaged user communities, making their projects more visible, more scholarly, and introducing more diverse expertise in their design.

Clearly, working together has advantages. Nancy Maron and Sarah Pickle, in their 2014 report *Sustaining the Digital Humanities*, repeatedly discuss libraries’ wide and diverse capacity for supporting and leading digital humanities work: partnering

² The move from Discussion Group to Interest Group involved a petition that overshot needed signatures in less than one day. By becoming an Interest Group, we are able to sponsor programming and develop relationships with other organizations. ACRL’s Board of Directors recognized the importance of this group serving the interest of “a crucial area for our membership,” in an email from Mary Ellen K. Davis, ACRL Executive Director, on January 30, 2014.

with university IT groups, maintaining long established relationships with humanities faculty, developing metadata standards, and training existing staff to meet the increasing demands of digital humanities work (Maron and Pickle, 2014).

However, the relationship between libraries and digital humanities has been the subject of scholarly debate; a growing literature examines the administration and role of library/digital humanities partnerships. A report from the Research division of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) aimed at library leadership emphasized the research library's role as a *responder* to the needs of digital humanists rather than as an initiator of DH work, advising against one-size-fits-all models (Schaffner and Erway 2014). This report has spawned a vigorous debate that continues even now. For example, Bethany Nowviskie advocates librarians' "considered anticipation" of digital humanities needs rather than a framing that advises libraries to simply respond to faculty requests (Nowviskie 2014). Trevor Muñoz has encouraged libraries and librarians to reframe their participation in digital humanities and to take up projects that focus on their own intellectual and scholarly work (Muñoz 2012). Positioning librarianship as a feminized profession, Roxanne Shirazi reminds us of the power relations that complicate calls for librarian-faculty collaborations, where librarians "face the dual hurdle of breaking through these gendered assumptions and dealing with the deep credentialism found within the academy" (Shirazi 2014). Miriam Posner urges libraries to avoid adopting a "service-and-support" model, seeking instead equal partnerships with scholars as collaborators in digital humanities work (Posner 2013). After outlining numerous challenges librarians must overcome to achieve this type of partnership, she provides examples of centers with strong ties to libraries where collaboration flourishes.³

SIG Mission and rationale

The ADHO *Libraries and DH Special Interest Group* aims to foster collaboration and communication among librarians and other scholars doing digital humanities work. By establishing this SIG, ADHO serves its mission and provides the connective tissue between ADHO organizations and emerging DH initiatives within organizations of professional librarians such as ACRL. Further, given the SIG's explicitly international purview and aims, by establishing it ADHO will provide a new professional space that fosters and encourages collaboration across the national and regional lines that demarcate many other library professional organizations. We believe that creating these connections will lead toward a much-needed international professional "dual-citizenship," i.e., librarians connected to, participating in, and supported by both library- and DH-oriented professional organizations, in league with fellow DH-oriented librarians around the world

³ The centers mentioned specifically are: University of Maryland Library's new Digital Humanities Incubator, Columbia University, University of Nebraska's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, The Scholars' Lab at University of Virginia, and Harvard's Library Lab.

By fostering such “dual-citizenship,” librarians and libraries will not only identify opportunities to initiate and engage with digital humanities projects and scholarship, they will also have more success collectively addressing the challenges they face. These challenges may include, for example, advocating for financial support, release time, training opportunities, technical infrastructure, and resources needed to undertake their digital humanities projects; addressing the changing notions of “service” in light of the collaborative nature of much digital humanities work; and promoting a culture of digital humanities scholarship in the library.

The mission of the ADHO *Libraries and DH SIG* will be to:

- offer advice and support to these new and emergent associations of librarians engaged in digital humanities pursuits — either projects of their own making or in collaboration with non-librarian digital humanists
- advocate for initiatives of interest and benefit to both libraries and digital humanities (e.g. Collaborators’ Bill of Rights white paper, Digital Public Library, Europeana, UNESCO World Digital Library, Asociación de Estados Iberoamericanos para el Desarrollo de Bibliotecas Nacionales de Iberoamerica [ABINIA], GO::DH, etc.)
- document how librarians and library-based units meet the many challenges, and take advantage of the many opportunities, of DH librarianship addressed above
- provide information about available resources and opportunities (e.g. training, funding) that encourage collaboration between DH scholars in a variety of roles, especially in libraries
- showcase the work of librarians engaged in the digital humanities
- promote librarians’ perspectives and skills to the rest of the DH community

An initial goal of the SIG will center on developing working relationships within and across library-oriented organizations such as the ACRL DH Interest Group, the Digital Library Federation, the TEI in Libraries Special Interest Group, the Society for American Archivists, the Association for Information Science and Technology, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), etc. (It is notable that the conveners of this SIG are active or hold leadership positions in several of these organizations already, so our proposal itself is in some ways a formalization of existing relationships.)

In terms of concrete activities, the SIG would, when possible, coordinate or collaborate with librarian organizations to accomplish the following:

- connecting librarians with digital humanities responsibilities with one another; arranging for DH librarian mentors; and facilitating communication among DH librarians and other DH practitioners wherever they may be

- researching and documenting existing librarian-led DH projects, DH organizations in which librarians are active partners, and digital library organizations that may benefit from a DH perspective (e.g. the TEI Consortium SIG on Libraries, the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries, etc.)
- organizing conference sessions — ones for librarians at DH conferences, and others focused on DH at conferences intended primarily for librarians, such as IFLA, the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL), the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL), the Bibliothekartag,⁴ ALA, ACRL, Art Libraries Society (ARLIS), specialized library organizations such as the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM), the Digital Library Federation (DLF), etc.
- organizing workshops, training events, and conference sessions aimed at promoting librarians' involvement in the general DH community and showcasing library-led projects.
- organizing training opportunities for librarians seeking digital humanities project experience, skills, and expertise
- facilitating access to training opportunities (e.g. Digital Humanities Summer Institute) by seeking grants to help support librarians who wish to attend
- organizing special issues of journals or other publications
- sharing curricula and teaching materials for DH courses and library instruction; and sharing training materials for librarians seeking to advance their own DH skills
- advocating for initiatives of special interest to librarians (such as the Collaborators' Bill of Rights white paper)
- collaborating with dh+lib on
 - creating a DH "toolkit" for librarians⁵
 - collecting and making available collection development policies that facilitate digital humanities research
 - collecting information about training opportunities for librarians.

⁴ This conference is organized by three groups: Bibliothek Information Deutschland (BID), Berufsverband Bibliothek Information (BIB) and Verein Deutscher Bibliothekare (VDB).

⁵ Toolkits are a guide to resources, e.g. Collection-Building tools, and best practices. As an example, see the Sociology Librarian Toolkit: <http://connect.ala.org/node/173714>

Structure

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the issue. Currently, more than 100 people have actively expressed an interest in joining this SIG. In the first year, the SIG will be led by a small executive committee consisting of the eight authors of this proposal. This committee will seek to broaden the international scope of our membership with outreach activities to all ADHO organizations. This founding committee will also develop structures and procedures for sustained leadership by polling our general membership, and by asking for volunteers to serve on a short-term by-laws committee to establish future governance. In addition, we will seek volunteers to form subcommittees around concrete activities that our general membership has indicated as initial priorities.

Required resources

The Libraries and DH SIG does not require any substantial ADHO resources at this time, although at some point we may request ADHO support for email listserv, wiki space, or other low-cost infrastructure support. We do anticipate at some point proposing SIG-sponsored activities that might require (or benefit from) ADHO funding, although none are planned at present.

Works cited

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https://www.zotero.org/groups/adho_library_sig

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