[Course] David Berry(@berrydm), DH and cultural criticism

Meme: http://cartonomics.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/i-do-digital-humanities.jpg

Thinking a "critical" digital humanities

Developing a "humanistic" approch to computational phenomena

DH appears to some observers a "Managment friendly discipline"

The digital collections/publications etc. has been accepted as a means of research but not as research itself.

Technician are no longer considered doing the "dirty work"

- dichotomy between academic and technical humanities...

Catherine Hayles : renaming/rebadging/rebrandig to the term Digital Humanities was meant to signal that the filed emerged from athe low prestuge statut of support serivvce into a genuily intellectual endeavour with its own prof practices, rigourous standards, etc. (http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/H/bo5437533.html ?

Re-branding trend: Different research centers renamed as Digital Humanities. "Because it is good money" - says Berry.

(Example in Switzerland: Imaging and Media Lab in Uni. Basel --> Renamed in 2013 "Digital Humanities Lab": http://www.dhlab.unibas.ch/index.php/en/

Steven Ramsay talks about

- DH Type I : TEI consortium + Association for Litt & linguistic computing + Association for Computers in the humanites + Consortium for Computing in the humanites in the early 90ies

Community level = Humanities Computing

including....(examples of practices : encoding of corpuses...ETC.

- Type II : new comers

incl. media studies, people who did things without calling them so, some digital artists, digital pedagogy

http://stephenramsay.us/2013/05/03/dh-one-and-two/

David Golumbia : narrow definition of DH, "DH" with capital letters, "tools-and-archives" as some say (see http://www.uncomputing.org/?p=203)

The big tent definition includes the plain litteral meaning of the term "dh"

Follow them on Twitter, he sometimes argues with Ramsay :)

Why does this matter ? What is at stake ?

Axe I Calculation

- We are not talking of individual act of calculation. But more of this comportment (?) : large scale, calculative, enumeration, representation

- Organisation of knowledge epistemologically grounded in Mathematics

- University becomes de facto buisiness establishments, and much less a place of "contemplative reflexion"

- Digital is hegemonic

- Twitter as a backchannel where people are debating in RT what's happening.

- Heavy focus on tech in DH, discourse & also in projects

- Calculation as a mentality, a "progressive" discourse, as opposed to the "old fashioned" traditonal humanities. Not necesssarly articulate, but implicety accepted./

Implicit distinction in DH with "old fashioned" DH - Both real and imagined dichotomies

- Traditionally, outputs of research like code, archives, tech reports are not taken into account when it comes to publishing.

- These dichotomy are both real & imagined ; productive & improductive

- Often the outputs of DH are not yet conceived scholarly for tenure => generates precarity

- Keen early adopter mentality...

- Journalists love DH, in contrast to their lack of interest in traditional Humanities

- The term DH is new-ish (2001)...

- Debates over XML/TEI = public expression of "Digital formalism" that many DH projects often contain

- The problems/notions of acronyms: "you're not really doing a digital project if it doesn't have an acronym" --> technical language changes the way we frame/formulate the project

- Ref: CULTURE MACHINE VOL 12 · 2011 www.culturemachine.net · 1 - *THE COMPUTATIONAL TURN: THINKING ABOUT THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES* (David M. Berry)

- Bulding things, "more hack, less yack" = very strong in DH community (cf. Ray Siemens rhetoric) = construction & making of digital systems, archives, interfaces, visualisations = PROGRAMMING = code-focuses

- this has been seen as a lack of critical engagement

- "Making things" as a marketable skill

- Detractors of DH see DH as a move by neoliberalism/mangement within the university

- Project-oriented mentalities

Axe II Organisation

The university is a methodological commons of computational techniques

- Is this a kind of "scientisim"? The humanities taking science as its model

-" Putting aside the question of the ˙˙two cultures,˙˙ we nevertheless observe a striking, non-trivial resemblance between humanities computing and experimental science: both are data-centerd, equipment-orientated activities

that centrally involve modeling and tend to be collaborative.", McCarty
http://www.mccarty.org.uk/essays/McCarty,%20Humanities%20computing.pdf

- Risk of seeing the computer as "truth machines"

- Constant struggle for funding

- Shift towards research

- Reading the DH as a revelator of how the Academia is evolving in a neo-liberal economy

- Universty: risks to become corporations, professors project managers.

- Input/Output calculation: enure that capital invested is repaid in termes of knowledge produced and disseminated

- DH is a savious AND a sinner in relaiton to the future of university

Grusin: http://www.c21uwm.com/2013/01/09/the-dark-side-of-the-digital-humanities-part-1/

Stanford literary labs -- Pamphlets: http://litlab.stanford.edu/?page_id=255

Axe III Speed

mechanical increase of speed with the power of computers

Transience becomes an important aspect

These new technologies enable team-based working methods, offering the possibilities of new social ontologies in the Humanities: ˙Big Humanities˙ - not necessarily collegial and flat.

Just in case: possible amendments can be made afterwards as well, David Berry gave a previous talk on the issue http://vimeo.com/62788322 and later on infoclio.ch

What are Critical DH ?

- How political views are embeded the in tools themselves

- See TransformDH Group 2013: http://transformdh.org/

- Productive slowdown forcing a project to reflect on its approach, method and goals (--> slow HD?)

- critical thinking acts as "grit in the machine" (though DB is looking for a better metaphor)

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

EP - Digital Humanities starts with a research question; yet there's a proper recognition of technology as a strategy. Technology is considered a given...

DB clarifies that after the question is phrased, you use technology to structure the project

Algorithms and their importance for the digital humanities. Important questionmark over the algorithm

- To what extent is DH a response of governmental demand that humanities(?) justify what they do?

DB suggests that while DH language fits in nicely with justifying activity in "management speak", the DH is not a cynical exercise in working a system. It emerges out of a more authentic space of engagement with humanities issues.

Abigail de Kosnik's work on 'free labour' in the digital enviroment may be of interest here: http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.Ucw49vn7AZg