DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly

Introduction to the Digital Humanities Summer Institute Colloquium Special Issue

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Abstract

This is the introduction to the DHSI Colloquium Special Issue. The DHSI Colloquium serves as a forum for emerging scholars to present their own research.This special issue showcases some of the research presented at the Institute in 2014.

The DHSI Colloquium was founded in 2009 by Diane Jakacki and Cara Leitch — then doctoral candidates at the University of Waterloo and the University of Victoria, respectively — as the DHSI Graduate Colloquium. As initially proposed to Ray Siemens, the Colloquium would serve as a forum for emerging scholars to present their own research. This was particularly valuable in that moment, as research presented at major conferences tended to focus on the work of more established scholars, with graduate students rarely presenting in a capacity other than as research assistants. While many generous and supportive principal investigators and research supervisors encouraged emerging scholars to take ownership of various components of major research projects, there were not many outlets for presentation of the specific student-driven activities. The DHSI Graduate Student Colloquium offered these emerging scholars a platform to present formal papers and to demonstrate works in progress to an enthusiastic audience comprised of both established and emerging DH practitioners, and most importantly, in an environment that encouraged constructive feedback and professional guidance. [1]

In 2012, after three successful years, Ray and the ad hoc Colloquium Advisory Committee observed that there was an unrealized opportunity to expand the pool of presenters to include more scholars at different phases of their careers, working across different registers. This coincided with a remarkable growth in attendance at DHSI, and so the Colloquium, as well as the audience, grew considerably. In order to efficiently respond to the increasing volume of abstracts submitted for consideration, as well as to accommodate more presenters whose work was at different phases of development and implementation, the structure of the Colloquium again changed, with a variety of shorter formats introduced to accompany the longer, more formal papers. [2]

Two years later, in 2014, the Colloquium underwent further transformation when James O'Sullivan and Mary Galvin succeeded Diane as the event's Chairs. Struck by the omnipresent sense of community that exists at DHSI, James and Mary set about continuing the work of their predecessors by maintaing the Colloquium as a venue to present groundbreaking work, remaining attractive to scholars as other DH conference, symposia, and gatherings proliferate. The introduction of a poster session proved hugely successful, a format designed to accommodate those projects that are not conducive to the constraints of an oral presentation set within a limited timeframe. A mechanism for peer-review was incorporated: reviewers are instructed to offer constructive criticisms, while the final program is developed in an inclusive manner, with space found for any submission deemed to be of an acceptable standard. It is testament to the support of Ray, and of course, Daniel Sondheim, Assistant Director of the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab at the University of Victoria, that such a challenging scheduling process is facilitated. [3]

We are in an era of firsts for the DHSI Colloquium: this special issue marks the first ever publication to emerge from the gathering; a dedicated website, http://dhsicolloquium.org, was launched, through which proceedings are disseminated; the current CFP features themed sessions, "Gender and the Digital" and "Building an Inclusive DH Community"; and 2016's poster session will be hosted in collaboration with the Electronic Literature Organization. The next iteration will also benefit from the addition of a local Program Assistant, Lindsey Seatter. But while the Colloquium continues to expand and progress, its ethos will remain consistent — it is an opportunity for digital humanists, whether curious, fledgling, or established, to present their research, projects, and ideas within an engaging, collegial, and rewarding [4]

environment. The products of this space — such as the varied, insightful, and rigorous research articles found in this special issue — are sufficient justification of this approach.

DHSI is founded on collaborative principles — it is about learning through sharing, encouraging curiosity, it is about the creation of interpersonal and cross-instutional opportunities — all of which underpin the model adopted by the Colloquium. While these principles are its foundation, the presenters are very much the driving force of the Colloquium, and it is this community that will shape its future directions, so that it can continue to serve as a platform for the many and diverse voices that make our field what it is.

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