

IPAC Activity Description

Name of Activity

Digital Humanities Interest Group

Contributor

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Brief Description of the Activity

Digital humanities, as it is conceived at SUNY - Oswego, is concerned with the ways that computer and information technology can enhance research done by students and scholars in areas broadly related to humanistic inquiry. Aspects of this field involve the "traditional" concerns of information management, such as encoding text into electronic form and retrieving digitally stored texts. Allied with the search and retrieval process, adequate ways of representing data concerning the humanities must be established. Also, the introduction of hypertext and multimedia into the "artifacts" of the humanities can enhance a document by allowing thematic association and a rich multi-modal sensory experience.

Beyond the aspects of information management and data representation, digital humanities at Oswego emphasizes computational and cognitive methods that can enhance research in the humanities. Algorithms that analyze and model data and the use of abstract data structures (such as queues, lists and trees) that facilitate analysis and modeling are central features of the computational aspect of digital humanities. Model building and interpretation in the digital humanities can be aided by an understanding of the relationship between cognitive processes and their products in the forms of artistic productions, literary creations, and human activities.

Interdisciplinary Nature of the Activity

Digital humanities draws upon the intellectual resources of a number of different fields. The objects of study in this academic area, that of the humanities disciplines themselves, have long-standing interdisciplinary connections. For example, aspects of literary criticism have drawn upon history, philosophers have used linguistic analysis, and the understanding of the development of visual artistic expression has benefited from the work of historians, literary theorists and philosophers. Digital humanities, however, has the added investigative orientations of the disciplines of computer science, information science, cognitive science, psychology and graphic art (as a form of data visualization). Hence, digital humanities has interdisciplinary connections that

work at two levels: the first, among the humanities disciplines themselves, and the second, at a meta level with the interaction between the humanities and the fields broadly concerned with information analysis, visualization and modeling. Given the many intellectual threads in the fabric of digital humanities, it is ideally placed in an institutional setting such as the Interdisciplinary Programs and Activities Center (IPAC).

Relationship to Interdisciplinarity at Oswego

Digital humanities has a relationship to a number of programs that already exist at SUNY Oswego. For example, Information Science and Cognitive Science can supply much of the needed methodological orientation for this new field. The Human-Computer Interaction program (HCI), can contribute not only from the information and cognitive domains, but also from the area of data visualization and graphics. Linguistics, particularly in the area of natural language processing, can provide techniques for the analysis of texts. The results of work in digital humanities - that have the potential for deepening our understanding of the human condition - can enhance the research of virtually every program in IPAC, from American Studies to Women's Studies.

IPAC Support

Physical space is needed to convene members of the interest group.

Limited secretarial assistance is required to support the interest group activities.

IPAC will provide an administrative umbrella to support transition from interest group activities to curricular initiatives.

Relevant Dates

The 2012-2013 academic year for initial meetings and drafting courses and potentially a minor in this area.

2013 onwards for continued support of activities and the minor.