Cultivating Digital Humanities Biomes: A Collaborative Model

How do we identify the broad digital humanities community & cultivate, coordinate, & support it?

Digital Humanities has a long history at Michigan State University, and the infrastructure that sponsors and supports digital research is located all across campus. In addition to faculty and grad students conducting digital pedagogy and research in at least ten different departments, there are also DH practitioners in two research centers (MATRIX & WIDE), two labs (LEADR & Digital Humanities & Literary Cognition Lab), Michigan State Libraries, a high performance computing cluster (iCER), and three museums and archives (MSU Museum, Broad Art Museum, & University Archives).

We conducted a University-wide survey & targeted interviews of faculty, staff, & graduate students

15 minute survey sent to all faculty, specialists, & graduate students on campus
→ 421 responses
→ 266 responded that they "do or are interested in doing DH"
→ Questions measured usage and interest in different DH methods, services, training, data, and barriers to DH teaching and research

Also Interviewed 13 faculty & graduate students ~1 hour each

> I became aware of DH through talking with Ethan Watrall at Matrix and I had someone from the Masters in Education Technology program recommend me taking my interest in technology to Ethan...The tech background definitely was part of it, just being able to keep up with that world and that interest of mine, but the real sell was having it transform my research so I could actually reach a broader audience. So on the one hand it was very interesting thinking about learning a new technology but what was much more important to me was oh this is a great way to get people to read my research.
> **Alex Galarza, PhD Candidate, Department of History**

### Which type of training would you prefer?
(1-5 scale; avg rating shown)
→ 4.1   Workshops (1-2 hrs)
→ 3.7   Online Tutorial(s)
→ 3.2   Cohort Model (group works collaboratively on a project over a period of time)
→ 3.1   Day-long Bootcamp (6-8 hrs)
→ 2.4   Multi-day Intensive (week long, up to 30 hrs)

Barriers to DH research & pedagogy
(check all that apply)
→ 66%   Lack of time
→ 44%   Lack of services
→ 41%   Finding funding
→ 28%   Unclear how DH is evaluated In tenure & promotion
→ 26%   Lack of access to technology
→ 21%   Finding collaborators
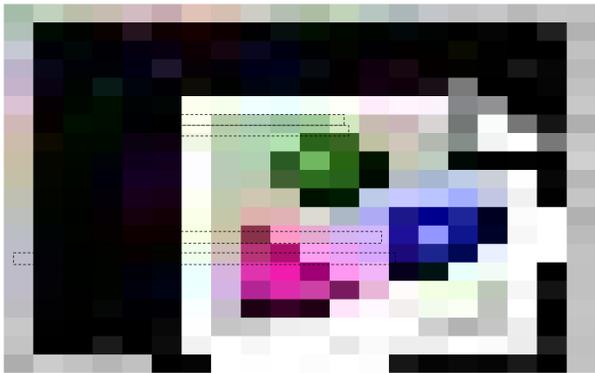
Campus resources desired	
Training & Workshops	88%
Institutional Support	59%
Data Consultation	54%
Data Management Guidance	53%
Campus Technology Infrastructure	50%
Physical Space	39%
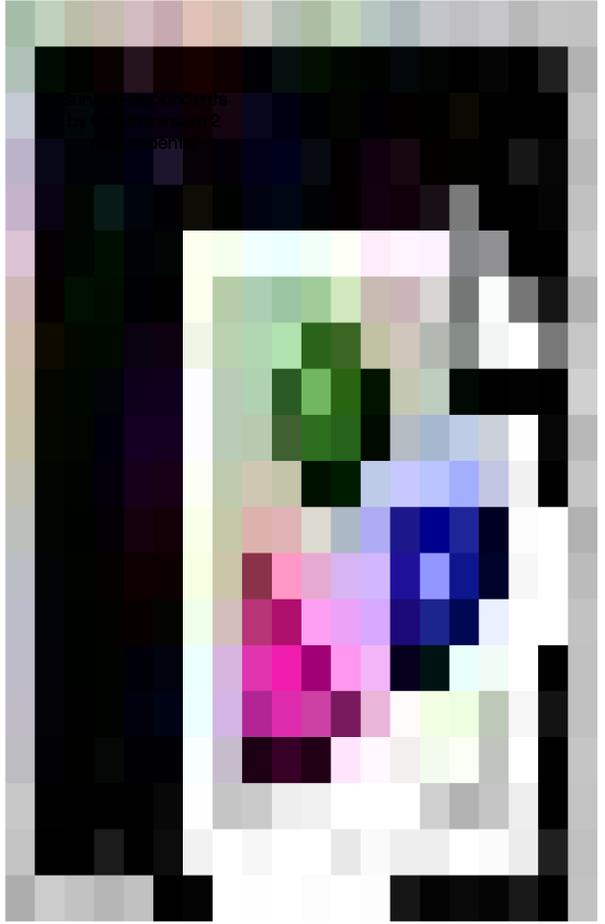
> It is a huge challenge for assistant professors because they're racing against a clock. And what I've seen happen for a lot of associate professors is that they then get placed into administrative roles so there's always this hobbling that goes on. We have now two GA ships in WIDE, and I think that's going to help a lot of us to a certain extent. So part of it isn't "grad students go do our research for us" it's more of grad students can help us manage projects and keep them on task and rolling along and maybe doing some help with data management. At least that's my hope...But the summer is supposedly where all the magic is going to happen.
> **Liza Potts, Director, WIDE & Associate Professor in Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures**

The results inform how we collaborate across units and also drive activities within units, as well as shape new initiatives at the university

Immediate Actions
→ continuation of workshop series as primary training format
→ centered programming on demonstrated needs of respondents
→ presented preliminary reports to departments and committees to guide recruitment, support, and coordination
→ reached out to iCER for Software Carpentry and Data Carpentry workshops to fulfill programming language training needs

Long Term Actions
→ integrate findings into departmental reports and planning documents
→ develop DH planning document to coordinate medium- and long-term plans across the university. Potential recommendations include:
 ● a cross-college cluster hire in digital humanities to bolster teaching capacity
 ● digital scholarship center at the library to be a service point for digital research
 ● small start-up grants or a project incubator
 ● formalized relationships and collaborations between units on campus

> If I know I need to write a paper, I'm trained in what i need to do: read primary text, secondary, sit down; in terms of what I'm going to do, write 8 pages, 12 pages, 300 pages. There's certain moments and intuitiveness, but I have training in how to conduct myself. The problem with DH projects is some guidance would be helpful to have...where we can have like a project incubator that would in a more formal way allow us to have projects that have been taken on by people and have consulting groups and expertise available.
> **Matt Handelman, Assistant Professor of German**

History Graduate Student DH Needs Assessment Summary
17 Respondents

Do you teach or conduct Digital Humanities research?
Yes: 3
No, but would like to learn more: 14
No and am not interested: 0

Please indicate the areas into which you integrate Digital Humanities
Research: 3, Teaching: 1, Service: 1

What campus services would be beneficial for your Digital Humanities research and/or pedagogy?
Training and Workshops (workshops, bootcamps, multi-day training): 13
Institutional Support (funding, research assistants, etc.): 9
Data Consultation (find, acquire, clean, prepare data): 8
Data Management Guidance (write DMPs for grants, manage data in projects): 7
Campus Technology Infrastructure (web hosting services, repository services): 7
Physical Space (lab, makerspace): 6

Rank your interest in the following methods for learning more about Digital Humanities methods, tools, research, and/or pedagogy. [1(low)-5(high) Scale, averages below]

3.88 Workshops (1-2 hours each)
3.06 Day-long Bootcamp (6-8 hours)
2.12 Multi-day Intensive (week long, up to 30 hours)
3.18 Online Tutorial(s)
2.94 Cohort Model (group works collaboratively on a project over a period of time)

Which of the following methods are you interested in learning more about? [Yes]
13 - GIS / Mapping
13 - Qualitative Data Analysis
13 - Quantitative Data Analysis
13 - Database Design
11 - Text mining/Computational Text Analysis
10 - Multimedia Production
10 - Digital Public History
9 - Digital Cultural Heritage
8 - Digital Writing
8 - Network Analysis
8 - Digital Publication
7 - Gaming
7 - Visualization
5 - Image Analysis (computational)
5 - Physical Computing (e.g. working with computing hardware)
5 - 3D Printing
4 - Machine Learning

Preliminary report delivered to the Department of History's Graduate Committee

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