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# **Introduction to Digital Humanities Summer Institute Special Issue**

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This collection of essays proceeds from selected presentations shared at the 2017 and 2018 Conference and Colloquia hosted by the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI). Founded in 2001, DHSI is the largest international digital humanities training summit and is hosted annually by the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab (ETCL) at the University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada). What began as an informal gathering of early-career scholars desiring to build community and learn computational humanities skills has grown into a formal institute drawing over 800 participants each year. DHSI is spearheaded by the ETCL's Director Dr. Ray Siemens, Associate Director Alyssa Arbuckle, and Coordinator Jannaya Friggstad Jensen, and features an international group of nearly 100 expert instructors who teach weeklong courses in a specialized area of digital humanities. Over its 20 year history, DHSI has become an essential (and often cherished) professional development opportunity for many digital humanities practitioners.

In 2009, the Colloquium was introduced as a collegial outreach event where graduate students could deliver short, lightning-style presentations in order to share their research with the wider DHSI community. With its growing popularity, the Colloquium has since broadened to include all scholars, librarians, and alt-academic colleagues. Now, the Conference & Colloquium also includes a poster and digital demonstration session as well as a single-stream day conference. Two special issues collecting papers from the Conference & Colloquium have been published in [Digital Humanities Quarterly](#) and [Digital Studies](#); this publication is the third installment of proceedings. Across this decade-long history, the Conference & Colloquium has showcased the work of over 500 participants. At the time of writing the Conference & Colloquium is chaired by Lindsey Seatter and Arun Jacob.

As part of uniting, mobilizing, and invigorating the community, the Conference & Colloquium aims to support the spirit of openness and collaboration espoused by DHSI. The [DHSI Statement of Ethics & Inclusion](#) commits as its first mandate to “[welcome] and [encourage] intellectual discussion and debate on issues impacting both our local DHSI community and the broader Digital Humanities community”, and the Conference & Colloquium is just one of the venues where these types of foundational discussions take place. The Conference & Colloquium supports a wide array of presentation formats, strives to be inclusive of all backgrounds and levels of presenters, and takes place in an intellectual space characterized by open communication. Generally, sessions are not organized around a theme, but rather attempt to build serendipitous connections between presentations. This form of

purposefully unregulated programming avoids the ghettoization of student panels—which can be all too common at academic conferences—and encourages audience members to attend each of the colloquium sessions rather than just an individual session on a specific theme. Both of these values are taken to heart by the community, as Julie Meloni notes in her [article for \*The Chronicle of Higher Education\*](#).

In 2017 and 2018, between 20-38% of the Conference & Colloquium programs featured collaborative presentations with two or more presenters. These research collectives included instructors and students, principal investigators and computer programmers, faculty members across separate disciplines, and teams of graduate students from unique institutions, alongside other combinations. This diversity not only represents the breadth of the DHSI community, but also reflects the reality of digital humanities practice more broadly. Rarely is a digital humanities project or publication the result of a single researcher's effort. Instead, digital humanities relies on cross-disciplinary collaborations and the labour of many hands—both within and beyond the bounds of the university. Not only are numerous presenters members of collaborative research groups, but the audience also actively engages with the sessions. On several occasions, presenters have enlisted the participation of the audience, such as when John Barber created an [impromptu DHSI soundscape](#). Further, the brevity of the lightning talk format means that presenters are often sharing projects in progress and it has become common practice for audience members to offer substantive feedback, suggest additional research directions, and to chime in with offers for collaboration. Similarly, the single-stream organization of the one-day conference eliminates competition between panel topics and allows all of the conference attendees to participate in an extended dialogue across the entirety of the event.

These atypical qualities separate the Conference & Colloquium from more standard digital humanities symposia, and continue to make it an attractive and exciting venue for presenters. As an editorial team, we agree that this special issue captures a multitude of voices in syncopation—from different career stages, disciplines, backgrounds, interests, and skill sets. The eclectic mix of essays in this collection characterizes it as both a compelling snapshot of DHSI and a record of the types of innovative research projects, methods, and endeavours being pursued by members of the wider digital humanities community.

Several of the essays concretely demonstrate how digital tools can be used to enhance humanities research. **Thana Al-Shakhs** provides a compelling and comprehensive account of the value of digital tools for vocal analysis within the broader realm of

poetry analysis. **Erica Hayes** and **Kacie Willis** introduce eighteenth-century collector Sarah Sophia Banks and demonstrate how digitally mapping her numismatic holdings--using Neatline--visualizes the powerful networks of the British Empire in a way previously obscured from view. In his paper, **John Barber** unifies academic and creative approaches. He provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of “soundscapes” and “soundwalking,” and their connection to digital humanities. **Marieke M. A. Hendriksen** documents the creation of the ARTECHNE research database and critically reflects on the dataset and interface developed.

Another collection of the papers showcase how digital humanities methods can highlight marginalized groups, uncover histories, and work towards more inclusive practices. **Arun Jacob** examines the narrative arcs that survive—and the stories that are absent from—the genealogical history of the field of digital humanities in hopes of offering a counter-hegemonic cultural memory. **Heather Bliss**, **Inge Genée**, **Marie-Odile Junker**, and **Daniel Paul O'Donnell** comment on the disconnect between Indigenous conceptions of authorship and institutionalized academic practices regarding the same. **Christina Boyles** introduces the *Puerto Rico Disaster Archive*: an open access repository that collects and chronicles the experiences of Puerto Rican residents after the recent natural disasters, and how these narratives shift our cultural understanding of relief following disaster. **Gia Alexander** adds to the current conversations around accessibility and digital humanities, and includes both theoretical and practical engagement with the topic of digitizing material in accessible ways.

The concluding trifecta of papers present case studies that explore how institutions structure, use, and develop digital humanities programming. **Paulina Rousseau** describes a Public History course, taught at the University of Toronto, that focuses on local, public, digital history, and introduces digital tools like Omeka, Scalar, and Neatline. **Evan Peter Williamson** and **Sean Butterfield** contribute an essay that outlines a web-based, interactive, open textbook for undergraduate music theory. In their paper, **Fiona Coll**, **Serenity Sutherland**, and **Candis Haak** share how digital humanities' practices have evolved at their home institution, SUNY Oswego, by discussing how ad-hoc committees and informal meetings eventually evolved into the establishment of a digital humanities minor and the Humanities Collaboratory.

Taken together, the papers collected here offer a snapshot of the ideas and projects shared at the DHSI Conference & Colloquium. Wide-ranging in scope and approach, we hope each reader can gain a sense of the innovative and important conversations

that presenters spark during this annual event. From pragmatic, project-based inquiries to more theoretical engagements with weighty issues around discipline formation, these proceedings encapsulate the digital humanities as an ongoing, evolving, and multi-voiced field.