Digital Humanities Data: Collaboration and innovation

Lorna M. Hughes
Professor of Digital Humanities
University of Glasgow
@lornamhughes

Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII)
Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII), University of Glasgow

Leading international unit for research on the creation, management and use of information in the digital age

The only institution in the UK that researches and teaches library, museums and archives informatics, in analogue and digital form

Develops innovative research in collaboration with cultural and creative industries, locally, nationally and internationally

Research strategy focuses on three key areas:
  • Cultural Heritage Informatics
  • Digital Humanities
  • Information Management and analysis

Basis for projects in partnerships on research, grants, and publications with HEIs and cultural heritage organisations internationally.
Core elements of Digital Humanities

Digital Content
• Digital collections, and projects with digital outputs

Methods
• ‘Scholarly primitives’ to gain new knowledge:
  Discovering, annotating, comparing, referring, sampling, illustrating, and representing digital content

Tools
• For processing and analysis

Outcomes
• Existing research processes can be conducted better and/or faster
• Researchers can conceptualize completely new research questions

Collaboration is key: content, tools, methods are multi and interdisciplinary
Humanities Data

Variants on “Belgian refugees” in Welsh and English, 1914-19
cymru1914.org
Macroscopic analysis

- *Distant reading* methodologies to work with datasets

- *Kyffin Williams Online*

- Lloyd Roderick, Aberystwyth University and National Library of Wales
Visualising Data

- **Welsh Traditional Music**

- Integration of sources to map traditional music and its cultural reception

- Andrew Cusworth: Open University and National Library of Wales
Digital methods in the humanities highlight challenges of data driven research

1. The underlying data and metadata
2. Linking data from disparate collections
3. The human infrastructure: data sharing, rights management, open data and open access...
4. Invisibility of digital methods in scholarly outputs: we do not ‘show our workings’
5. Supporting multi and inter-disciplinarity.
Data ‘biographies’
Multi and interdisciplinary data driven research: ‘The snows of yesteryear: narrating extreme weather’: http://eira.llgc.org.uk

- Identified accounts, representations of extreme weather events in academic, institutional and public sources;
- Climatologists integrated sources into scientific research and visualisations
- Digitally connected primary and secondary references to weather, from archives on meteorology, geography, natural history, folklore, documentary accounts and artworks
- Community and performative aspects
- Co-curation and integration of data
Addressing the challenges: lessons from data driven research in the humanities

• Better collaborations with the cultural heritage sector are key
• Understanding of data creation and management needed
• We need to understand the human infrastructure: the scholarly ecosystem around data driven research
• Develop new approaches to documenting and describing digital methods within traditional publications
• The key to big data is its unpredictability and un-structured nature: moving beyond scaling up, into the realm of the Known Unknowns
• Enquiry-led understanding of the essential elements of data and its complexities is transferrable across disciplines and genres

• From small things, big things one day come...