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The disciplinary impact of the digital: DH and " the Others "

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The disciplinary impact of the digital: DH and “the Others”

Elena Pierazzo

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Disclaimer

- Every presentation is a simplification
 - This presentation is no different
- Every speaker can (should!) only talk about what they know
 - This presentation is no different
- Every point of view is biased
 - This presentation is no different
- Examples are representatives of larger categories
 - This presentation is no different

I hope my thoughts on the subject may facilitate a conversation and encourage a discussion

Core or Periphery? Digital Humanities from an Archaeological Perspective

Jeremy Huggett

Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung

Vol. 37, No. 3 (141), Controversies around the Digital Humanities (2012), pp. 86-105

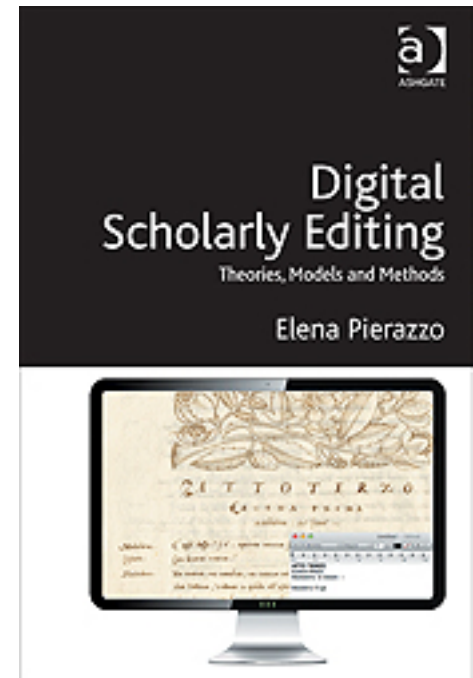
‘The relationship between Digital Humanities and individual humanities disciplines is difficult to define given the uncertainties surrounding the definition of Digital Humanities itself.’

‘From a traditional humanities perspective, it can often seem as if Digital Humanities (DH) is not only the new kid on the block but also the monster that is garnering all the attention and sucking up available research funding.’

Where this started

What is Digital Scholarly Editing?

- A new discipline?
- The same old discipline done digitally?
- A new methodology?





A Darwinian acceleration?

“digital scholarly editing is a radical evolution (but not revolution) of print-based editing, as if in a Darwinian pattern of evolution, a few steps have been jumped all at once”

“[I] reserv[e] the right to return to this point in a few years’ time”



What is digital scholarly editing, precisely?

- Just editing, digitally
 - All editing is now digital since we use Word, Google, JSTOR, emails, digital images... so what?
- Something radically new: new method, new heuristics, new hermeneutics, new outputs, new understanding, new goals...

From tools to heuristics to hermeneutics to epistemology

Consequences of producing a critical edition using automatic collation

- Change in the heuristics: transcription of all witnesses instead of copy-text + variations
- Non-distinction of substantial variants, errors, accidentals
- Change in representation: unrooted, rhizomatic trees instead of clear stemmas
- Change in understanding: many editions/apparatus, each of them centered on a different witness
- Change in perception: from the text to text variation

How accepted is it in mainstream textual scholarship?



A growing methodological gap

The Big Encoding Divide: Do you XML?

... and XSLT, HTML, jQuery, JSON, RDF, xQuery, SQL, JS, PHP, Python...

Digital editors, or developers converted to editing?



Broadening the question: from Digital Scholarly Editing to Digital Humanities

- Digital scholarly editing is a foundational component of DH
- Scholarly Editing resembles DH: transversal discipline; interdisciplinary; meta-discipline
- Not entirely accepted

Why digital humanists should get out of textual scholarship. And if they don't, why we textual scholars should throw them out.

(Robinson 2013)

Broadening the question

Is the Digital Humanities a movement toward the “modernisation” of the Humanities or will it lead to the creation of new digital/computational disciplines?

Digital Editing? Digital History? Digital Musicology? Digital Philosophy?...

Digital humanities is a nest of big data ideologues. Digital humanities digs MOOCs. Digital humanities is an artifact of the post-9/11 security and surveillance state (the NSA of the MLA). Like Johnny, digital humanities can't read. Digital humanities doesn't do theory. Digital humanities never historicizes. Digital humanities is complicit. Digital humanities is naive. Digital humanities is hollow huckster boosterism. Digital humanities is managerial. Digital humanities is the academic import of Silicon Valley solutionism [...] Digital humanities cannot abide critique. Digital humanities appeals to those in search of an oasis from the concerns of race, class, gender, and sexuality. **Digital humanities does not inhale** (easily the best line of the bunch). Digital humanities wears Google Glass. Digital humanities wears thick, thick glasses [...] Perhaps most damning of all: **digital humanities is something separate from the rest of the humanities, and—this is the real secret—digital humanities wants it that way.**

Digital Humanities ecosystem

- Where do Digital Humanists work and live?
- Which social models apply to them?
- How do they interact with members of other disciplines?



Historical social models

1. The lone wolf



2. The pack in a hostile/indifferent environment



The Lone Wolf

- The LW lives in a department / faculty of English/ Italian/History/Fine Arts...
- The LW is the only DHer and has a complicated relationship with their colleagues
 - They ask them how to change the toner of the printer
 - They think their scholarship is weak/not real
 - They are jealous of the attention they receive from the Administration and of their funding
- The LW feels lonely and finds their peers online and at conferences



Relationship with “home” discipline

- Torn between researching/publishing within the home domain and DH
- Their research is not often correctly evaluated
- Their research and methodology is felt as foreign

‘the scholar-programmer in a traditional humanities department may find it challenging to communicate the value of her work to her colleagues’ (Reside 2011, online).

Consequences

1. the LW leaves the institution to join a pack
2. the LW ignores their colleagues and build a career in a (virtual) alternate space
3. The LW leaves DH and re-enters their 'home' discipline

The pack

- Centres / Departments of DH, Digital culture, new media...
- Group of think-alikes that tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the Institution
- Different business/financial model with respect to other departments (project-based, soft-money)
- Different profiles: alt-ac; “engineers”.





The relation with the Others

- Service: an academic of another faculty/ department asks help for building a resource/ project
- Incomprehension, misunderstanding
 - Risk of closure at the first sign of financial crisis
- Internal self-sufficiency, lack of intellectual engagement outside the pack

A new social model: the tamed wolves

- Progressive integration of DH within teaching programmes: joint honours, certificates, minors, MA...
- Presence of DH in disciplinary conferences (ESTS, STS, SHARP, MLA)
- How much is real integration?
- What does integration mean?



Number of “digital” papers* at disciplinary conferences

| | STS | ESTS |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 2010 | 18/140 | 12/52 |
| 2011 | 17/75 | 8/67 |
| 2012 | 8/62 | 10/39 |
| 2013 | 15/74 | 8/61 |
| 2014 | 8/94 | 5/60 |
| 2015 | 7/58 | n/a |
| <i>Totals</i> | <i>73/503</i> | <i>43/279</i> |
| Percentage | 14.5% | 15.4% |

* Looking for the word digital/electronic/website/hypertextual/etc. in the title of the paper

Which model for DH in the English* Department?

What Is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in
English Departments?

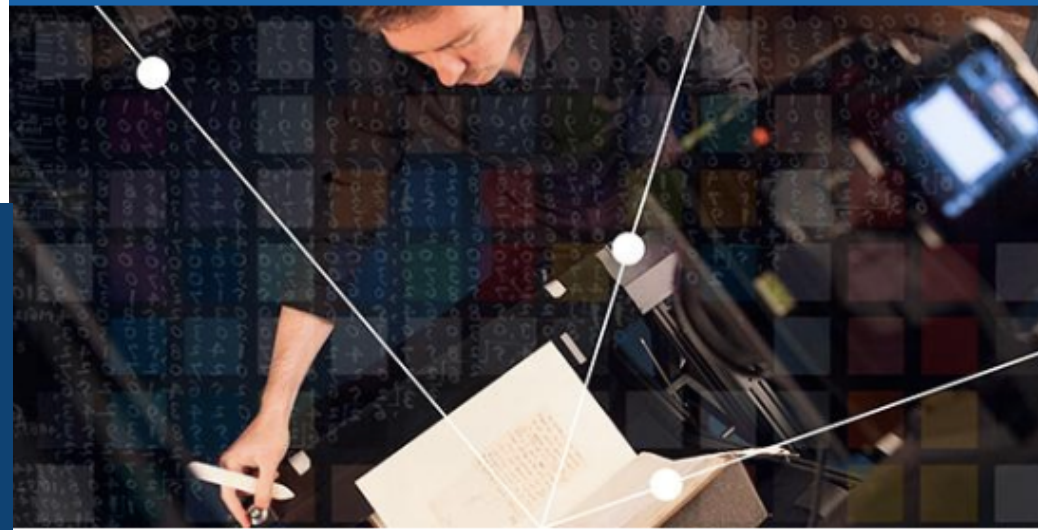
Matthew G. Kirschenbaum

- **Library-like:** you go there when you need something, or you send your students; you complain if it is closed, but you ignore how it works: **DH as service**
- **Renaissance-Lit-like:** they do their research, they go to their conferences where they meet other Ren. scholars (French, Spanish, Historians); they participate in faculty activities and teach your same students: **DH as (sub)discipline**

DH as a Service

- DHers are craftsmen/women that code for you
- You have a project, you think up your goals, and then you ask your DHer(s) to write the technical bit of the grant
- You research, they develop

Digital Humanities Services

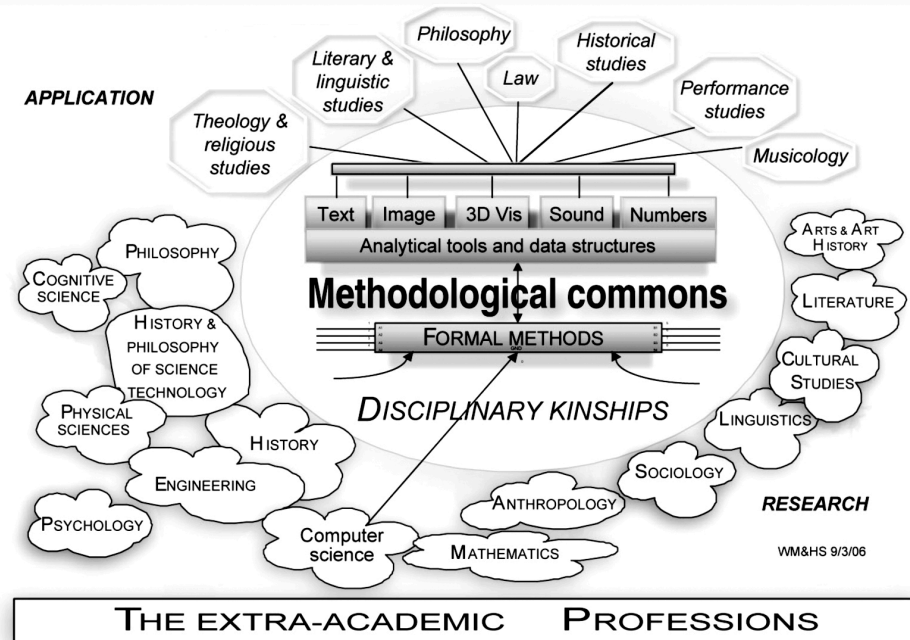


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LIBRARY

DH as a (sub)discipline

Digital History; Digital English; Digital Classics; Digital Scholarly Editing... but how?

- The **melding** model
- The **antagonistic** model
- The **bit-by-bit** model





The melding model: Archaeology

Archaeology has a strong computational component: Archaeology *is* digital

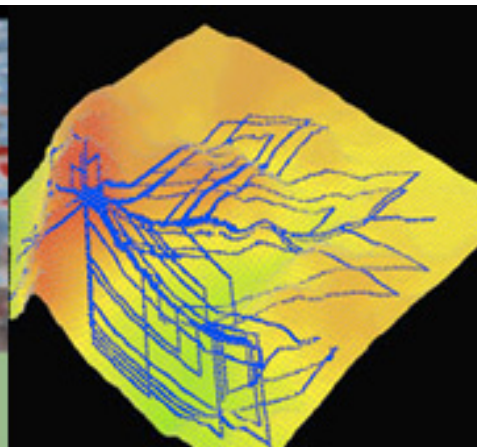
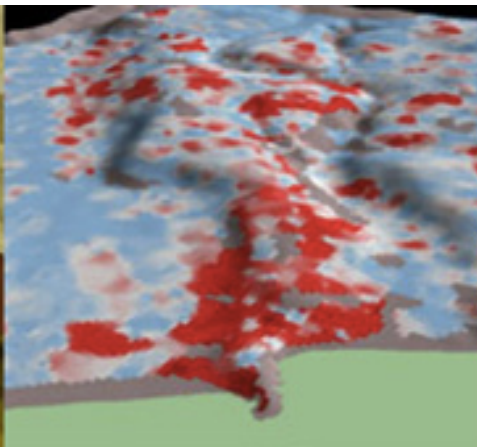
Conference “Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology (CAA)” since 1973 (like ALLC)

“It might be that DH is really a branch of archaeology.” ([Graham](#) 2016)



Computational Archaeology

- GIS and spatial data
- (3D) Modelling
- Ontologies, metadata, linked data
- Standards (CIDOC-CRM)
- Visualisations
- Imaging
- Machine Learning



A desirable model?

- Digital tools are part of mainstream archaeological methods
- Aren't there any specific research potentials in the computational methods per se?
- What are the heuristic and epistemology of
 - Modelling?
 - Imaging?
 - Space representation?

The Antagonistic Model: Computational Linguistics

- Karen Spärck Jones (2007),
“Computational linguistics: what
about the linguistics?”
Computational Linguistics, Vol. 33,
No. 3: 437–441
- In mainstream Linguistics journals
there is no trace of Computational
Linguistics topics, and vice versa.
- “Does it matter?”



How did it start?

“But since then [the 1960s] there has been a divergence. On the computational side [...] research continued and expanded in the 1970s without much input from mainstream linguistics. It had to **model process**. [...]

Thus by the 1980s it was already clear that computational linguistics and natural language processing were advancing without referring significantly to mainstream linguistics or being significantly inadequate thereby.”

“As this historical summary implies, **computational linguistics does not need mainstream, non-computational linguistics**, whether to supply intellectual credibility or to ensure progress. Computational linguistics is not just linguistics with some practically useful but theoretically irrelevant and obfuscating nerdie add-ons.”

“This is a **comforting conclusion**. But it’s perhaps more than a **little arrogant**.”

“The growth of computational linguistics or, more specifically, natural language information processing is increasingly being done **by people with a computational rather than linguistic background**; machine learning work needs a mathematical, not a linguistic, training.”

“we should not forget that mainstream linguistics **may have some things to offer us**, even if not as many as linguists themselves may suppose.”

Computational Linguistics vs. Linguistics

- Not only have they grown apart
- There is basically no interchange between the two anymore
- Computational Linguistics is not Linguistics done digitally, but the result of interdisciplinary research where computer scientists are not at the service of linguists, but have ‘merged’ with them or even taken their places
- Is this a pattern for other DH-flavoured disciplines?



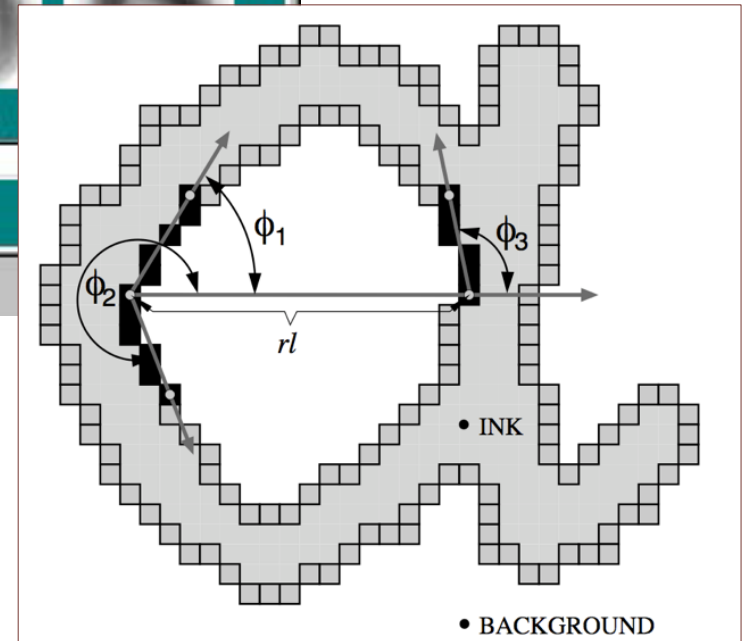
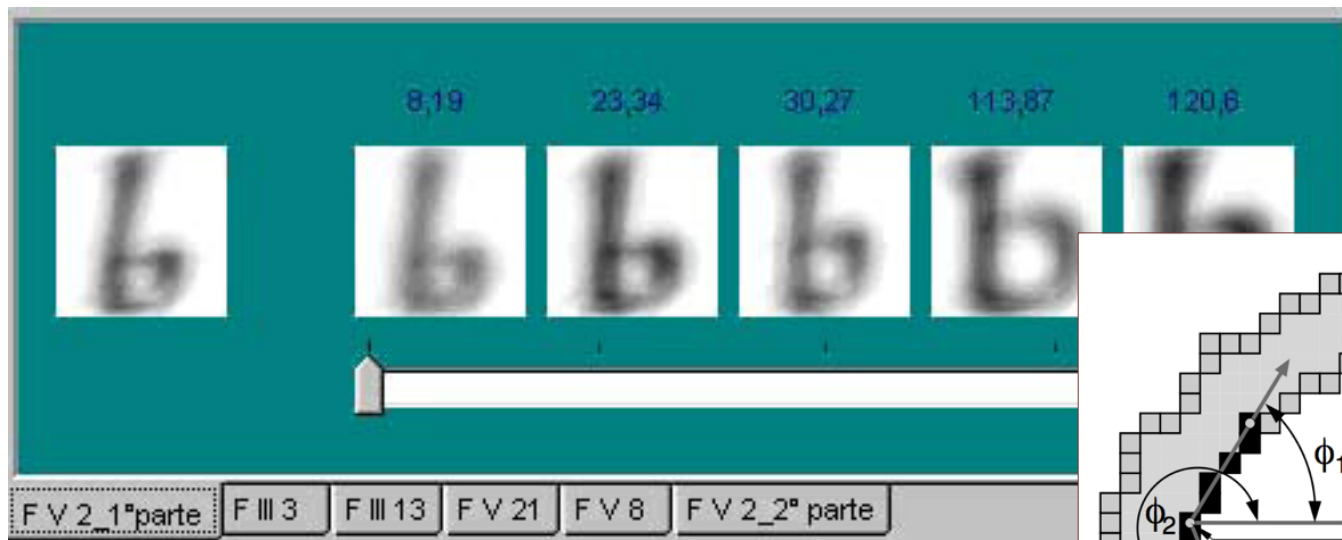
The bit-by-bit model: Digital Palaeography



- Since early 1990s: many digital quantitative research efforts on handwriting recognition
- Frequent scepticism and refusal by mainstream palaeographers
- [Quantitative methods in palaeography] **‘simply cannot exist.’** (Petrucci, in Costamagna et al. 1996, p. 403)

'Computational' Palaeography

Ciula, 'Digital Palaeography', *Digital Medievalist* 1 (2005)



Bulacu & Schomaker (2006)



Stokes, 'Palaeography', *Digital Medievalist* 2007

| H-runs | A | B | C | D |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| B | 2.07 | | | |
| C | 2.97 | 2.31 | | |
| D | 3.16 | 2.68 | 2.70 | |
| E | 6.38 | 5.13 | 2.99 | 2.29 |

| V-runs | A | B | C | D |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| B | 1.15 | | | |
| C | 1.70 | 1.61 | | |
| D | 1.04 | 1.83 | 1.54 | |
| E | 1.71 | 2.49 | 2.45 | 0.93 |

| Edge | A | B | C | D |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| B | 0.16 | | | |
| C | 0.41 | 0.26 | | |
| D | 0.46 | 0.31 | 0.09 | |
| E | 0.78 | 0.60 | 0.23 | 0.12 |

| Hinge | A | B | C | D |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| B | 1.70 | | | |
| C | 1.99 | 2.03 | | |
| D | 2.08 | 2.00 | 1.43 | |
| E | 3.55 | 3.10 | 2.32 | 2.34 |

| Auto | A | B | C | D |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| B | 0.09 | | | |
| C | 0.18 | 0.20 | | |
| D | 0.24 | 0.17 | 0.26 | |
| E | 0.26 | 0.19 | 0.27 | 0.00 |

Questions: What Does it Mean?

‘I downloaded your ... software and ran a comparison ... I need to determine if they are the same person. However,
I don't know how to interpret the results ...
Can you help me?’
(E-mail to author, April 2011)

DigiPal Framework for Latin Script

Folio: CCCC 173, fols. 1–56: 29v [Edit in admin]

Manuscript Image Annotations (91) Hands (2) Metadata Image Copyright Other Pages (17)

Annotations **ON**

g, Insular

Chronicle Han...

g, Insular

3

Hand: Chronicle Hand 5 (fols. 28v–30r; annals 973–1001) 3



g, Insular Group

body (g)

| | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3-shaped | <input type="checkbox"/> hangs from right |
| <input type="checkbox"/> angular | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> large |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hangs from left | <input type="checkbox"/> small |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> hangs from middle | <input type="checkbox"/> through top-stroke |

tail (g)

| | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3/4 closed | <input type="checkbox"/> on right |
| <input type="checkbox"/> angular | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> open |
| <input type="checkbox"/> closed | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> oval |

Enter search terms



Manuscript Image: BNF hébr. 592: 25v [\[Edit in admin\]](#)

Manuscript Image Annotations (4) Hands (2) Metadata Image Copyright Other Manuscript Images (74)

Annotations **ON**



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Ellezer Gagos



Aleph, Square



Components

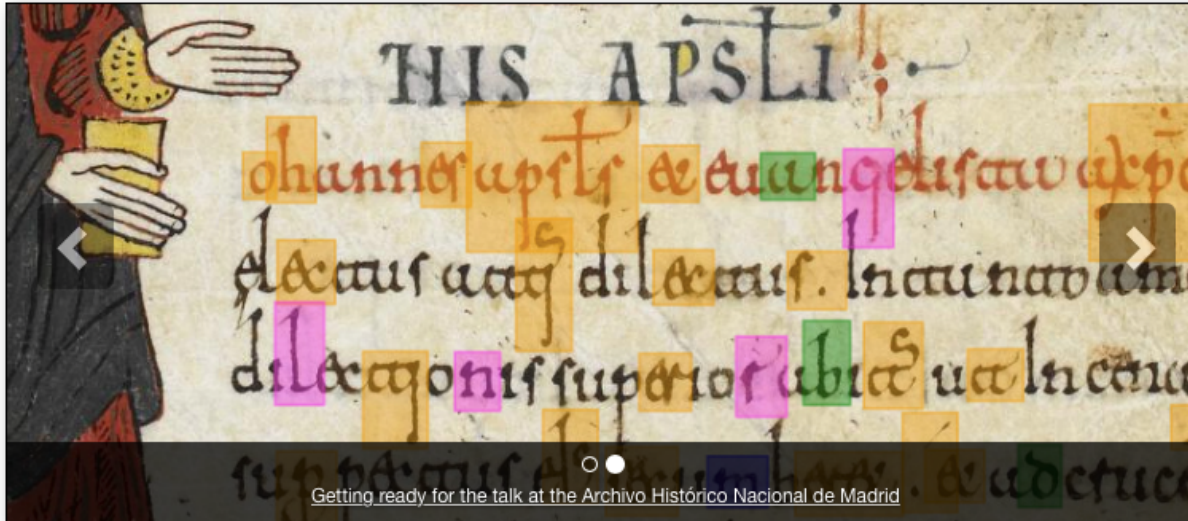
Notes

Left Diagonal Stroke

- compressed
- dilated
- elongated
- short
- slightly curved
- straight
- thick
- thin
- with connector
- with serif
- with spur

Left Vertical Stroke





VisigothicPal is a resource for the study of Visigothic script and its manuscript sources. It is the digital counterpart of the project **VIGOTHIC** which aims to facilitate and refine the study of this script, to make the scientific community aware of the needs and possibilities of conducting research based on the extant Visigothic script sources, and to disseminate the research that has already been carried out in the field or that is currently in progress. VisigothicPal and VIGOTHIC intend to open the study of Visigothic script to everyone interested in Manuscript Studies.

The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie research and innovation programme, and it is based at King's College London.

[read more](#) | [start searching](#) | [browse images](#)

Blog

ViGOTHIC update: learning new things
1 year, 1 month ago, by Ainoa Castro Correa

ViGOTHIC: collaboration among scribes in the BL Beatus
1 year, 2 months ago, by Ainoa Castro Correa

VisigothicPal: how do you call what you see?
1 year, 3 months ago, by Ainoa Castro Correa


VisigothicPal: project ViGOTHIC
1 year, 5 months ago, by Ainoa Castro Correa

News

Charla en el Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid
1 year ago, by Ainoa Castro Correa

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Tweets by @ainoa_castro

 **Ainoa Castro** @ainoa_castro
At the cinema. Adds. The new Macdonald's add features a palaeographer!! 🤔🤔

31 Mar

 Ainoa Castro Retweeted

 **Projecte Scriba** @ProjecteScriba
.@ARXIUPORT_TGNA Podeu trobar més fotos i informació del curs a m.facebook.com/arxiu.portdeta...

31 Mar

Search: Graphs (69)

Advanced Search

You are searching for: **Shaft: looped**

Keywords

Result Type (7)

- Manuscripts
- Images
- Scribes
- Texts
- Graphs**
- Clauses
- People

MS Date

Precision (in years)

at most

21/06/17

50 / pages 1 2 Sort by



Manuscript Image: **Walters 561:**

[Manuscript Image](#)[Annotations \(11\)](#)[Hands \(1\)](#)[Metadata](#)[Image Copyright](#)[Other Manuscript Images \(0\)](#)

Annotations

ON



h1 ▾

lam ʃ, medial ▾

 2

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Components

Notes

This graph has not yet been described.

lam ʃ, medial ▾

Hand: h1 **2**



Search Graphs (25)

Adva

You are searching for:

CJK ideograph ✕

Phrase

Go

Type (6)

Show less

Manuscript

Image

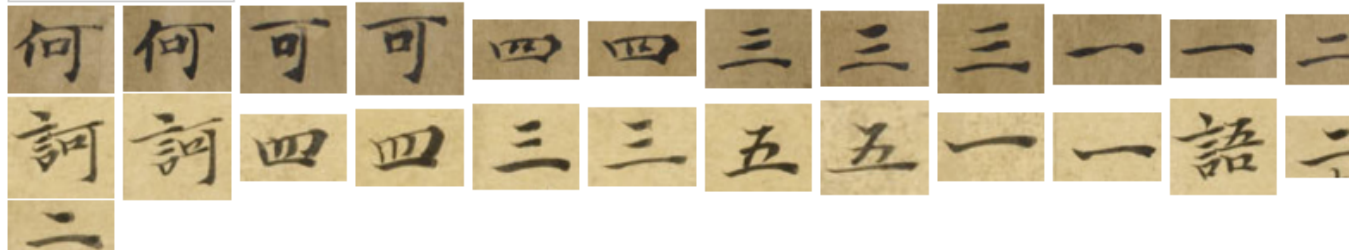
Scribe

Hand

Text

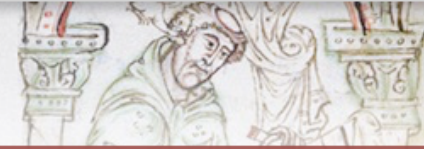
Graph

50 / pages ▾



50 / pages ▾

Hand Date



Search

My Collection (0 )

Search: Graphs (18)

[Advanced Search](#)

You are searching for:

decoration ✖

living being, dog ✖

Keywords

Result Type (6)

- Manuscripts
- Images
- Scribes
- Hands
- Texts
- Graphs**

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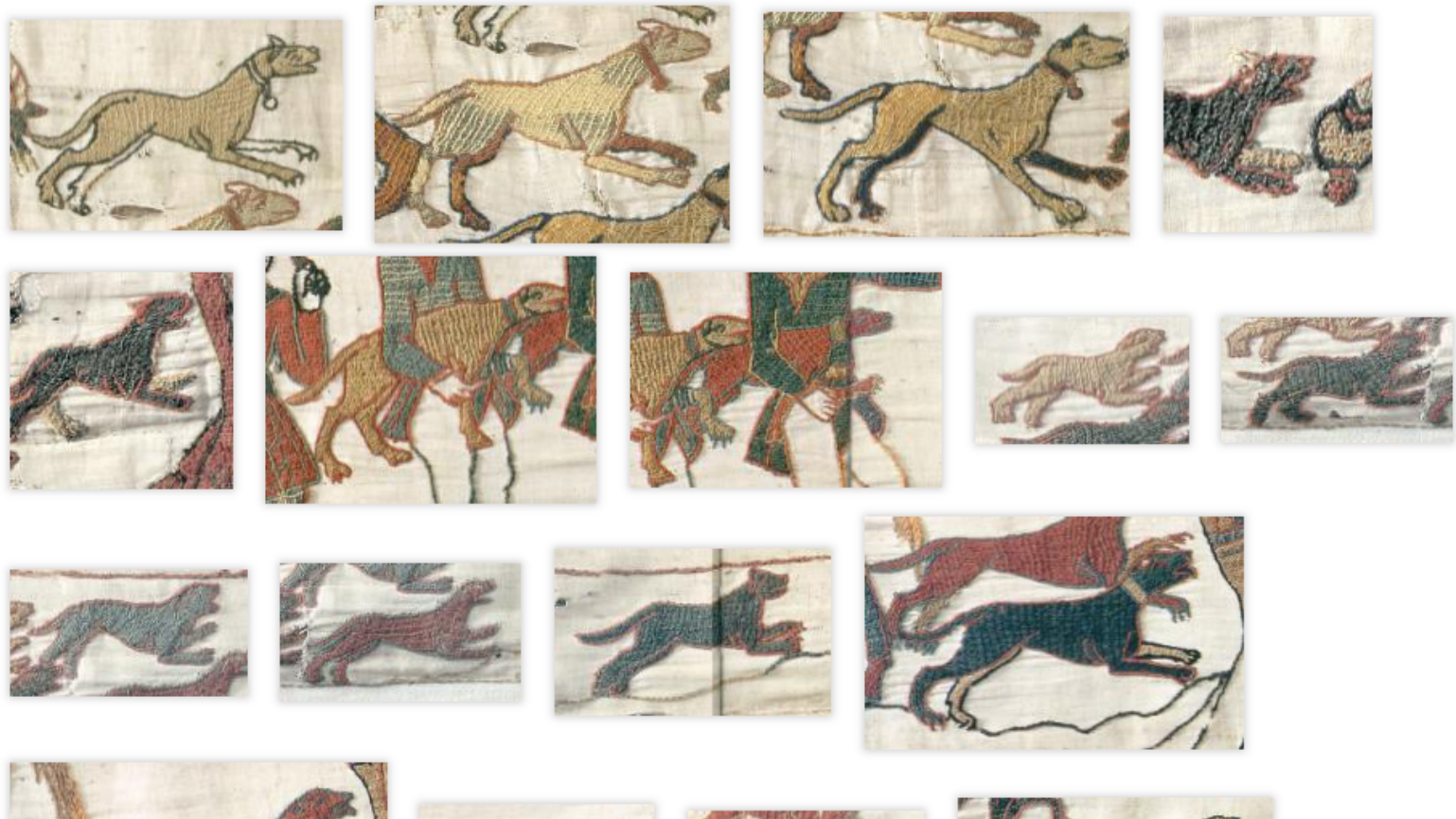
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Character Type

← 50 / pages ▾ Sort by ▾ ↓



Late Medieval English

Scribes



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Late Medieval English Scribes is an online catalogue of all scribal hands (identified or unidentified) which appear in the manuscripts of the English writings of five major Middle English authors: Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, John Trevisa, William Langland and Thomas Hoccleve.

The easiest place to start is to click on the link "Manuscripts" in the menubar above and begin navigating your way to a particular library.

421 manuscript descriptions

526 scribal profiles

17191 images of letter forms

441 images of manuscript pages

Your randomly chosen scribe is:

Unknown from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 185 (SC 1786)



'Late Medieval English Scribes' was developed by [The Centre for Medieval Studies](#) at the University of York and the University of Oxford with technical development provided by [The Humanities Research Institute](#), University of Sheffield. The project was funded by the [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#)

Technical issues should be addressed to hri-support@sheffield.ac.uk

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Key features of DigiPal

- Instead of providing computational analysis of handwriting, it provides support for scholars to build their own arguments about a script/ms
- Refrain from doing “cool” stuff
- Advisory board made of 50% mainstream palaeographers
- Annual symposium with balance of traditional and digital stuff



Digital Palaeography today

- Accepted and respected within mainstream palaeography
- Digital Palaeographers in the Comité International de Paléographie Latine
- Articles, journals, conferences, seminars, workshops, projects, jobs...
- Not all Palaeographers do digital, but the awareness and respect has increased considerably

The limits of the model

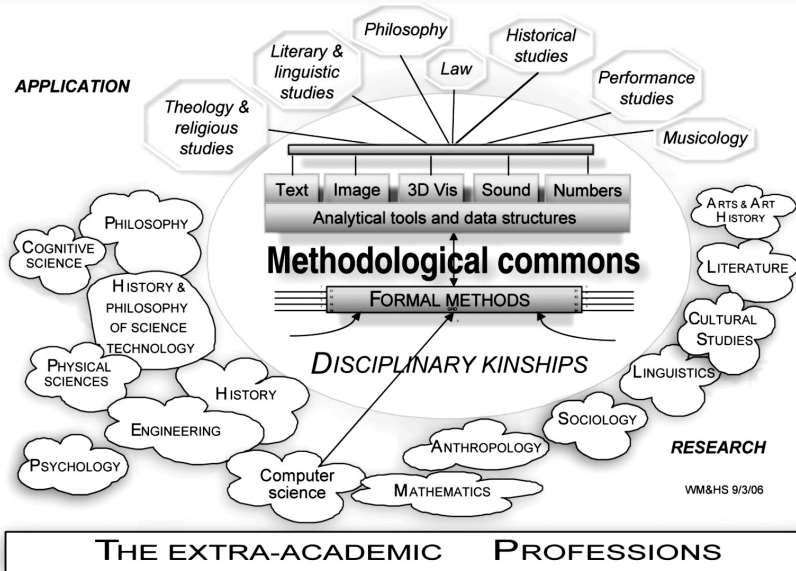
- Stepping back from what can be done (although it meant a huge acceleration later): the ‘traditional’ paradigm determines what you do
- Works in a small communities where personal respect is pivotal: is it scalable?

A place for DH

Whatever model we will follow (and I know the one I like!), what is the place, if any, of Digital Humanities as such?

- None: there isn't such a thing as DH as a discipline
- In the Computer Science / Engineering Department
- In a Department of its own
- In the Philosophy Department

The Content of DH, or: What is DH, really?



But also:

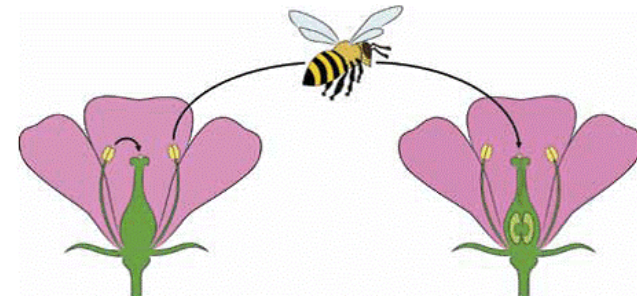
- Modelling
- Data structures
- Heuristics, Hermeneutics and Screwmeneutics
- Experimentation, prototyping
- Re-mediation



DH and the Others

- What is the relationship of the “DH Core” with the Others (a.k.a Disciplines, more or less digitally flavoured)?
- A further model: Cross-pollination
 - Exchange, discussions, conversations...
 - Who will be acting as the worker bee*?

*Bees are in danger!!



Digital Humanities or Computational Humanities?

- Digital is / will shortly be ubiquitous:
will the 'D' of 'DH' (etc.) still mean something
in 10 years?
- Computational: emphasis on the process and
the method, not on the nature
- 'More hack, less yack'

“In the early stages of a new technology, people tend to think that its purpose is merely to replace and improve on something they already know. The promise of the new is thought to be quantitative: the new things will do the old job faster, more efficiently, and more cheaply. Tools, however, are perceptual agents. A new tool is not just a bigger lever and a more secure fulcrum, rather a new way of conceptualising the world.” Willard McCarty, 1991

Thank you