Final report for *Teaching Digital Humanities at Warwick*

IATL strategic project, David Beck

Summary of the project

Digital humanities sits at the intersection of traditional arts study and computational technologies and techniques. It expands research paradigms in the humanities, but does so by communicating problems to computer scientists and IT professionals and reaching collaborative solutions. In teaching, it may involve the application of digital technologies and "digital pedagogy" to pre-existing humanities subjects; or may be based on research which itself relies on computational technologies (e.g. data mining, corpus linguistics, text encoding, crowd-sourcing, digital media…). Both broad approaches would result in the improvement and evidencing of students' digital literacy, a key aspect of future employability.

The overall aim of this project was to examine how best we can teach Digital Humanities at Warwick. Its three main goals are to:

- Make it easier for academics to incorporate aspects of Digital Humanities research into their own research-led modules, both by providing support this year and frameworks for the future.
- Enable the teaching of digital literacy to students where relevant to the curriculum or pedagogy being employed, and develop the support network for this.
- Facilitate the sharing of good practice in the use of technology for assessment, to include video-projects, e-portfolios and data visualisation.

Report Structure

Activities and reflections:

Digital humanities modules and research-based teaching between Monash and Warwick; digital humanities modules elsewhere at Warwick; digital literacies and skills; technology for assessment.

Next steps:

Personal and institutional.

Appendices

- Certificate of Digital Literacy for Liberal Arts Students - summary
- Digital Humanities and Texts – IATL module summary
- Sharing a virtual space: infrastructure for Digital Humanities - summary of workshop in February 2015 and link to notes from November 2016
- Digital literacy and the digital humanities at Warwick – abstract for the Warwick Teaching and Learning Showcase
- Other links relevant to those considering utilising digital pedagogy or Teaching a Digital Humanities project

Activities and reflections

Digital Humanities modules and research-based teaching between Monash and Warwick

I applied for and won Monash-Warwick Alliance Seed Funding of c. £17,000 (information enclosed) which allowed a workshop to be held at Monash in February 2015 and another at Warwick in November 2015.

In the autumn term 2014-15 I taught *Thinking with Data in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, which by and large went well. The learning from that module has been incorporated in a new module, delivered jointly between Warwick and Monash, *Digital Humanities and Texts*, which was to be taught from 2015-16 through IATL, but failed to recruit students at all at the Monash end. The main changes were a more focused approach on textual analysis – covering a wider range of digital humanities approaches in ten weeks made the theoretical and critical engagement which is integral to the Digital Humanities too challenging for students. Secondly, the assessment method more coherently guides students through the process of producing a research project utilising one of the tools I will be introducing them to. The first three weeks of *Digital Humanities and Texts* were to be co-taught with Simon Musgrave and Anna Poletti of Monash University, whose contributions to the assessment method and intellectual rationale of the module have been invaluable. A two-page summary of the module as proposed is below – we have decided not to attempt to teach it in its current form, due to the lack of undergraduate interest. There were plans for its revision but given my new role, this is unlikely.

Digital Humanities modules elsewhere at Warwick

There are several other modules under development which have Digital Humanities at their heart, in which I have played a minor advisory role. For instance, Mediated Self (the subject of another IATL Strategic Project) by Jo Garde-Hansen and David Wright, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, takes the effects of the digital on the sense of self as its subject matter. Hellenistic World in Classics, convened by Clare Rowan, integrates text encoding and digital storytelling. Cultural Connections, Digital Histories: Britain and the 19th-century Hispanic World, taught by Kirsty Hooper in Hispanic Studies, has students producing a public-facing wiki.

From conversations with various staff members in Classics, History, English, and the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, I think we need to solve the perceived "problem" of incorporating technical skills into modules before this type of innovation will spread more widely. The recent workshop resulted in the following graphic notes, following a presentation and discussion led by Diane Jakacki, Digital Scholarship Coordinator at Bucknell, which point at some ways in which this might take place:
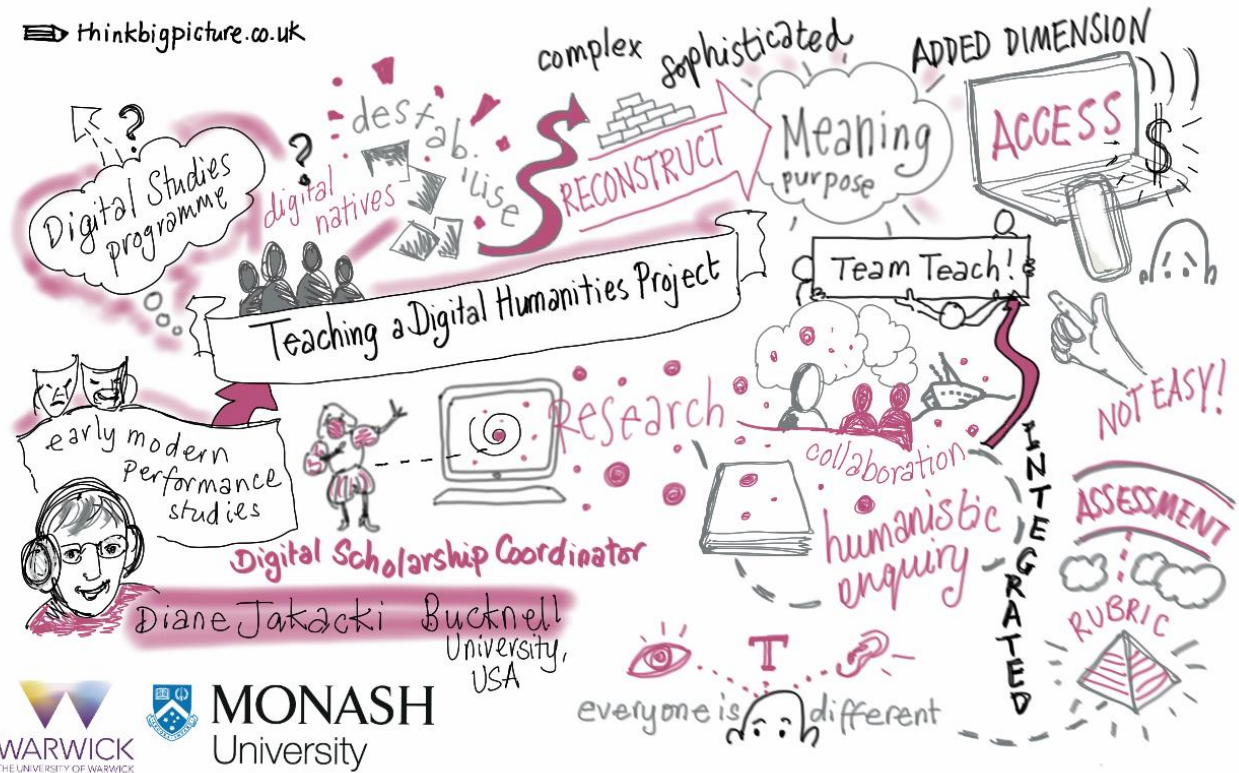
Digital literacy and skills

I have had extensive discussions with both academic and support staff surrounding digital literacy and its integration into the undergraduate curriculum over the course of the year – of particular value here has been input from Christian Smith (English), Emma Smith (SCS), Yvonne Budden (Library), Amber Thomas (ITS), Rob O'Toole (ITS), Siobhan Bennett (SCS), Giorgio Riello (IAS / History) and Melodee Beals (History, Sheffield Hallam). This will be the subject of a paper I write during the summer, but two key points which have emerged are the importance of academic involvement (rather than seeing digital literacy as a set of "skills" to be taught by SCS), and the incorporation of digital literacy into assessment methods, which I'll explore in a moment. The importance of this is clear – to use the metaphor we discussed at the workshop in November, the digital is now the water in which we all swim:
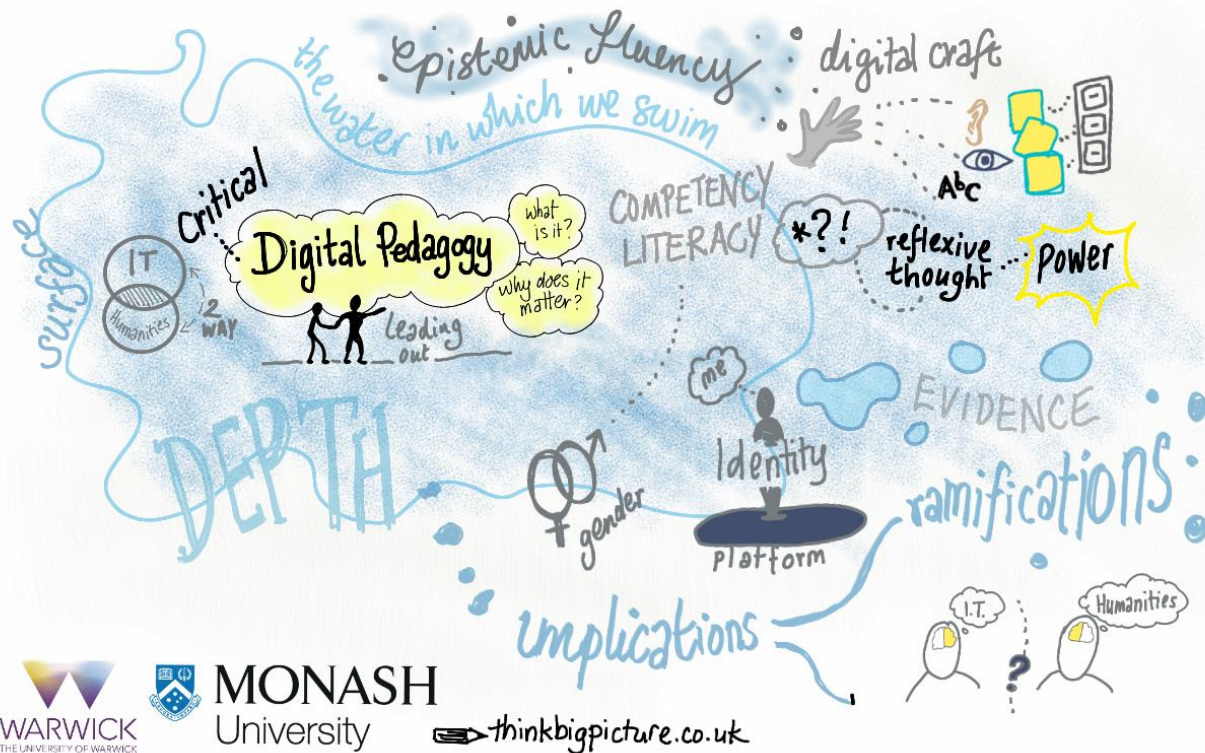
One model for taking this forward might be certificate-level study embedded within degree programmes – which could be supported by central services such as SCS and the Library, but delivered by academics who are part of the degrees concerned. This is what will be happening for both the Liberal Arts BA and the range of nine joint BAScs with Global Sustainable Development from 2016-17 – both certificates will be convened by myself, but with input from the Liberal Arts team in the case of their students.

I co-taught a workshop for CADRE (with Yvonne Budden, Library) around "organising humanities data digitally" to around 20 PhD students from the Faculty of Arts (and a couple from Social Sciences), which we will be repeating this academic year for the Institute of Advanced Study. As regards doctoral training, this demonstrated fairly clearly the low base from which we are starting at Warwick as regards Digital Humanities provision. In an attempt to begin rectifying this, I have been involved in a couple of bids for funding for collaborative doctoral training networks, both headed by Beat Kumin in History, which with my input included a Digital Humanities element. One was unsuccessful and the other, for a 'European Training Network' with partners including QMUL, NATMUS Copenhagen, and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, is currently under determination by the EU after being invited to re-bid. In addition, our Monash funds are being used to host an 'hackathon' in February which will enable a couple of post-doctoral researchers and more senior academics to gain a couple of days training

At the workshop in November we also discussed the issue of support extensively: how can academics who are pursuing digital projects that might help students gain the digital literacy they need be supported by the university? Below are some graphic notes:
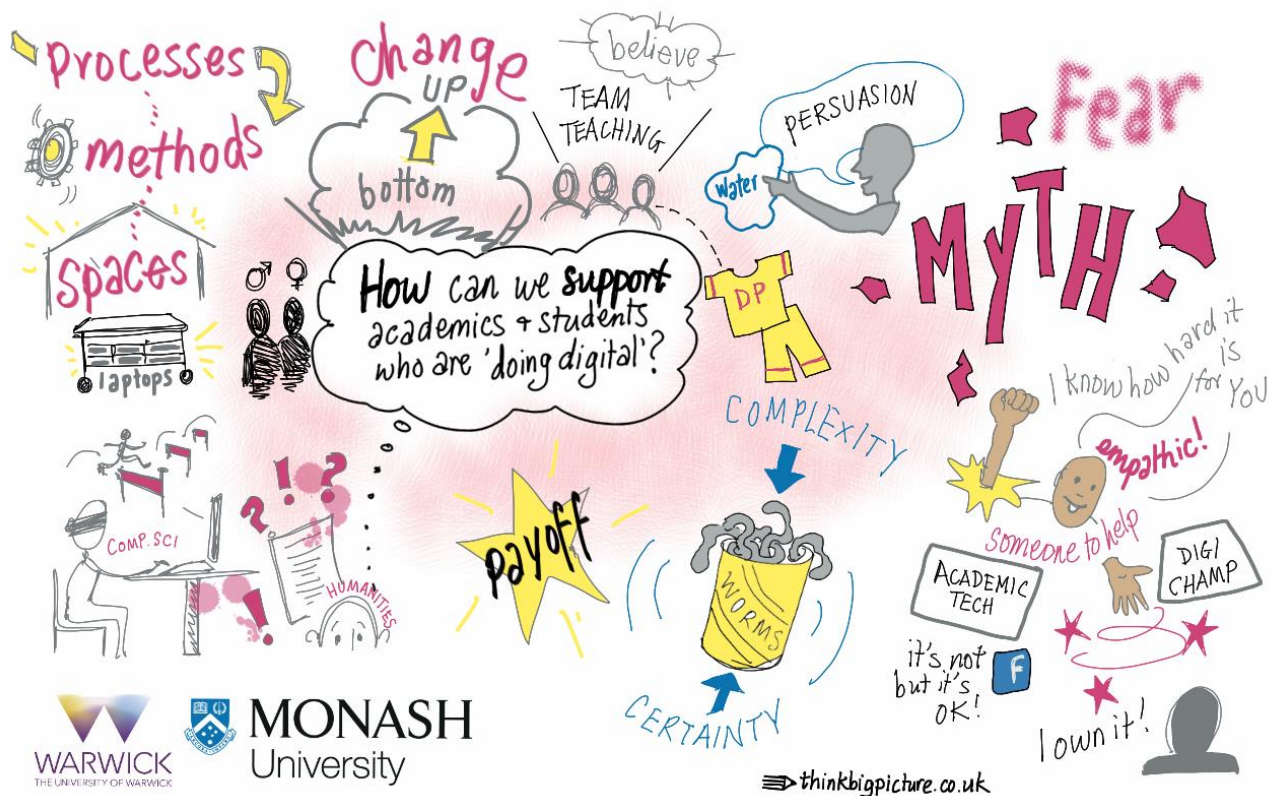
Technology for assessment

In November 2014 I held an event on digital forms of assessment, presenting my experiences with Making History and asking Michael Scott and Clare Rowan (both Classics) to speak to their use of student-produced wikis, forums, and digital stories. The discussion which followed demonstrated considerable interest in forms of assessment which demonstrate student's digital literacy, but concerns about academic rigor, the requirement for the module tutor to have technical knowledge, and the practicalities surrounding submission.

Over the course of the project I have used videocasting and podcasting myself in Making History and supported Clare Rowan's use of digital storytelling in Classics, Michael Scott's use of student-produced databases in Classics, and Alison de Menezes' use of digital storytelling in Hispanic Studies. I think that through these, we are beginning to address some of the concerns raised by other academics about the incorporation of digital forms of assessment. But Classics, for instance, are very keen to see a set of criteria for the assessment of digital stories endorsed by the new Academy.

On academic rigor, there are plenty of examples of institutions elsewhere using assessment methods such as these which I can draw on. In addition, Kirsty Hooper is running a module this academic year in which students will discuss the assessment of wikis and contribute to the design of their own assessment criteria. While having student-co-produced assessment criteria will be a step too far for some, the model of having students critically engage with the type of output they are going to produce is a replicable one – my mini-project module for Global Sustainable Development will use something similar.

On submission methods. Previously, to use the example of digital storytelling, submission of video has been through workaround practices such as uploading to a sitebuilder "news" page, youtube, or other third-party service. Likewise "wikis" and databases have actually been a custom javascript interface laid on top of sitebuilder by Rob O'Toole, and only supported, to my knowledge, by Rob. None of these are sustainable models, only a couple meet requirements for external examiner access and marking workflows, and all require considerable trust or digital literacy on the part of the academics teaching the modules concerned.

Working with my Making History module, Rich Clay from the Academic Technology team has been piloting a system for the submission and marking of video and audio files through moodle (something which is not possible through tabula) to a service called mediastream. There were some problems with the service Rich was trialling, and we have now switched to an alternative provider which is proving much more sustainable. Having something sustainable, easy-to-use, and well-documented in place is vital to spreading practices of digital storytelling or videocasting.

Regarding wikis, Radoslaw Poplawski, from the UNIX platforms team in ITS, has produced a set-up of mediawiki which uses the University-wide single sign on system. This will allow a wiki to be set up on request, with an easy system for the module leader to assign permissions to their students, all contributions to be tracked, and can potentially meet all the other requirements of a replicable submission workflow. Kirsty Hooper is using mediawiki as part of a module this year.

It is important to stress that this isn't new, there are plenty of institutions which use technology far more comprehensively in their assessment than we do, as I'll explore in a paper later in the year. Nor are the techniques I'm using entirely new for Warwick, although the stress on providing replicable solutions that can be incorporated into modules without extensive one-on-one support or the possession by the academic of advanced technical skills, and the stress on making this part of "normal" practice rather than the exception-to-the-rule, is new here. All of this will take multiple years to embed and needs to be seen in terms of scale, as we discussed at the workshop in November:
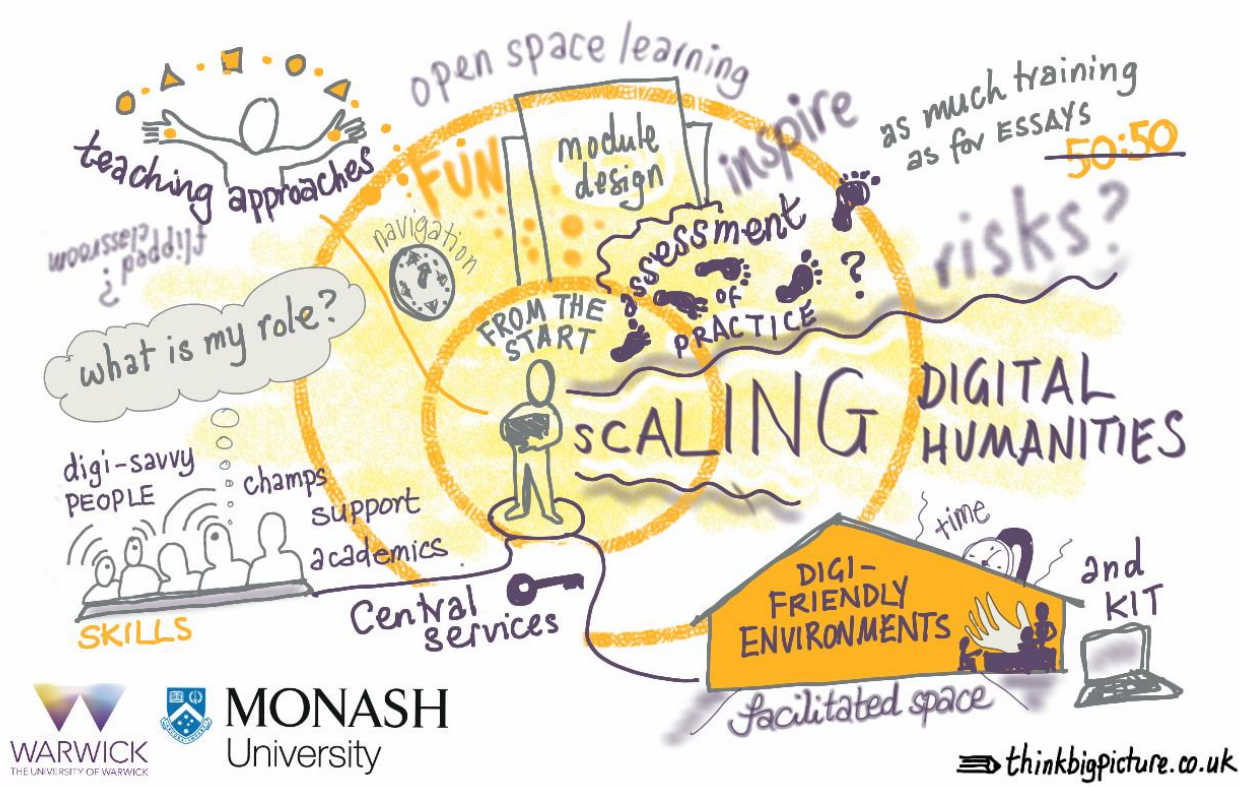
Next steps

Personal

I'll be embedding many of the lessons I have learnt as part of the Global Sustainable Development program, where I am now Director of Student Experience & Undergraduate Studies.

Certificates of Digital Literacy for Liberal Arts and Global Sustainable Development – a summary of which is below. This is an interesting model in which key competencies are being certificated and delivered by the Departments involved (or related Departments, in the case of Liberal Arts); which ensures that the content is of interest to students and the skills taught can be calibrated to that particular cohort.

Institutional

I am happy to continue to contribute to development in this area beyond this project, though in a more informal manner. The notes below are inevitably partial, and I have not found time to write up my experience at a *Digital Humanities Pedagogy* workshop at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute in Victoria, Canada, which included some invaluable lessons. So – if IATL come across others interested in this area, encourage them to get in touch with me, please. Likewise, I have some useful connections and thoughts on the possibility of future programme-level changes in Digital Humanities and would be happy to contribute to those conversations.

Discussions about the possibility of central support in several areas are ongoing with Becky Woolley (Library) as well as Lisa Faulkner and Emma Smith (Careers and Skills). All are unable to make commitments at this stage, but keen on the idea of some form of support for digital storytelling in particular, and on exploring the possibility of delivery in this area through blended learning in collaboration with academic modules / degree programmes.

From discussions with people mentioned above, as well as Siobhan Bennett (who is leading an HEA-funded project around employability in the curriculum), Giorgio Riello and Christian Smith, the importance of considering digital literacy across the length of an undergraduate degree has become evident. One model for this might be introducing students to the use of some technologies for content presentation and access in year one (with the mark being assigned on the content itself, the technology just being an accessory), followed by a more critical use of a tools in year two (in which the mark is assigned partially on digital literacy demonstrated), with the third year giving a clear emphasis on digital "skills" as important to employability and/or postgraduate research.

Certificate of Digital Literacy for Liberal Arts Students

Certificate to be taught in term 2 of year 1 of the Liberal Arts BA (from 2016-17); a similar certificate will also be taught to Global Sustainable Development students.

Title- Digital Literacy [for Liberal Arts students]

Rationale- To quote from a recent JISC study, "As 90% of new jobs will require <skills> excellent digital skills</skills>, improving digital literacy is an essential component of developing employable graduates." These necessary skills include everything from an awareness of different digital media platforms, the ability to manage a professional online identity, and the capacity to effectively utilise online tools for learning. Yet these skills are rarely recognised in the curriculum at Warwick. This certificate aims, for Liberal Arts students, to rectify that deficit by helping students think through the capabilities they need to live, learn and work in an increasingly digital society.

Workload and delivery -

10 contact hours plus 10-30 hours study in own time.

Assessment will be through a reflective learning journal on "myportfolio".

5x 2 hour sessions in alternate weeks. Maximum group size: 30.

Summary syllabus-

- Online identity (including social media, personal and professional profiles)
- Copyright and the reuse of digital information (including rights identification, attribution, etc.)
- Digital etiquette (cultural and personal good practice)
- Digital forms of media (e.g. news, blogs, networks, feeds)
- Academic technologies for research and collaboration

Learning outcomes-

By the end of this module, students will be able to…

interpret the information they find online in a way that takes into account the cultural, political, historical and other backgrounds of the author/site/organisation.

identify the rights associated with material found digitally and an understanding of the best practiced in terms of attribution and reuse of this material.

describe the issues around cyber security and protecting yourself in the digital world.

describe the philosophy and etiquette of "the digital age".

Digital Humanities and Texts

Module Outline

Digital humanities sits at the intersection of traditional arts study and computational technologies and techniques. It expands research paradigms in the humanities, but does so by communicating problems to computer scientists and IT professionals and reaching collaborative solutions. At its heart it's an interdisciplinary endeavour – bringing people together from disparate areas to work on common problems and subjects. And it's transformative, in more than one way.

Digital humanists at the forefront in a range of disciplines are using and combining techniques such as analysing texts through corpus linguistics, using numerical data effectively, visualising data in new and innovative ways, and analysing/incorporating the spatial both as data and visually. And, importantly for those of you who don't think they are IT-literate – the tools that make all of this possible are increasingly easy to use: point-and-click, intuitive, and free!

But this isn't just about bringing digital skills and methods into the humanities – digital humanities has also changed the nature of some humanities study itself. For instance in literary studies the work of Franco Moretti and others, which uses computers to read and critique texts, has raised questions about what it means to read a text in the first place – can a research project which uses a computer to read 2,000 texts produce greater insight into the history of literature than a scholar's close and context-driven analysis of text? Are these approaches complementary, different, or mutually exclusive…? In a number of humanities fields, digital techniques are igniting debate about how and what we study.

In this module, as well as engaging with some of these debates, we'll show you a variety of ways in which digital humanists work. You'll learn to use some new tools and build your confidence with IT, review existing resources, work collaboratively with a student cohort from the other side of the globe, and, as your main assessment piece, contribute something to the world of Digital Humanities research. Students will be getting involved in research projects based on two live databases- and this work will emphasize two key aspects of the Digital Humanities enterprise, collaboration and openness. Projects will be carried out by groups working collaboratively, and the key output will be shown to academics working on the data sources you use, and shared within the student cohort at Warwick and Monash.

Note that no previous IT experience or expertise is required for this module (although computer science students and others with a technical background are more than welcome).

Structure

Week 1 – Introduction to the datasets students will be working with (Godwin's Diaries, Restoration Theatre Song Archive)

Week 2 - Reading, writing and researching in a digital world (Anna Poletti), Research projects: principles and practicalities

Week 3 – Monash-led discussion on "text analysis and visualisation: what the digital can (and can't) tell us"; Warwick-led discussion surrounding Moretti's *Graphs, Maps and Trees*.

Week 4 – Principles and practices of linguistic analysis

Week 5 – Lab session on linguistics tools

Week 7 – Lab session on spatial analysis with texts

Week 8 - Thinking with Data: structure, format, manipulation, accountability

Week 9 – Lab session, manipulating and visualising data

Week 10 – reflections and conclusions.

Assessment

15 CAT: group research project and individual 1,250 word reflective essay (55%), project proposal (15%), 2 x Wiki entries of 500 words each (30%)

12 CAT: group research project and individual 1,000 word reflective essay (60%), project proposal (20%), wiki entry 500 words (20%)

The *wiki entries* will engage with and assess a Digital Humanities output from a list curated by Beck and Musgrave. It aims to encourage an analytical approach to DH outputs, encourage students to reflect on quality / assessment criteria for their research projects, provide an early diagnostic tool on student's technical knowledge, and to build a collaborative resource accessible to both Monash and Warwick students on the connected modules.

The *project proposal* will put forward a research question based on one of two datasets specified by the module convenors, and potential approach to using digital humanities methods to answer it. In addition to marking, tutors will assess the viability and rigor of approaches to decide which project proposals may be taken up by the group research projects.

The *research project* will be completed as a group of three to four students. It may involve the production of an annotated edition of a segment of text, the analysis of a large corpus, the development of a programmatic approach to textual analysis in the digital humanities, or another approach as discussed with the module convenor. In all cases, the digital component must illustrate (or give) a meaningful answer to a research question. It will be accompanied by an individual 1000-1,250 word reflective essay, which will be based around a templated set of questions.

While we will take feasibility into account, experimental approaches to research will be encouraged, so some of the *research projects* will in all likelihood fail to provide anything significant for submission. In that case, we'll invite a 2500 word co-authored analysis and reflective piece on the issues and problems which the group encountered (following a template), alongside the individual reflective essay. These analyses and reflective pieces will be eligible for the full range of marks.

Sharing a virtual space: infrastructure for Digital Humanities (Feb 2015)

Summary of Monash-Warwick Alliance Seed Funding Application
Principal applicants: Dr Simon Musgrave (Monash), Dr David Beck (Warwick)
Co-applicants: Prof. Mark Philp (Warwick), Dr Anna Poletti (Monash)
January 2015 to December 2015

Project summary

This project will develop an environment to enable co-operation in the digital humanities across the two institutions. Workshops and specialised training will build a framework within which datasets can be shared for both teaching and research purposes, enhancing collaboration in both areas. At least two existing datasets will be shared in the new environment and this will directly support the delivery of existing units as well as encouraging the development of additional units and courses and opening up new possibilities for collaborative research.

Project aims

1.   To advance research and teaching in the area of digital humanities at both institutions

2.   To develop a common framework for managing research data in the humanities which will enhance cross-institution activities

3.   To pilot a "sandpit" environment in which students and researchers at both Monash and Warwick will be able to manipulate research data.

4.   To migrate existing data sets into the framework and sandpit, initially in order to make them available for teaching in the unit MON3005 at Monash in 2015 and IL011 at Warwick in 2015/16.

Excerpts from the summary of Feb '15 workshop

(go.warwick.ac.uk/teachdh/feb15workshop):

Core skills. The core skills to be taught to students in Digital Humanities and Text(s) will be: understanding types of data, making data manipulable, text mark-up techniques, and understanding the importance of data format standards (e.g. .csv, xml). The unit will also feature collaboration and openness as key aspects of DH(aSS) by emphasising improving and republishing datasets which are used and by making student projects visible at least within our own communities.

Dataset identification. MON3005 will have students produce research projects based on different datasets each year. This suggests that some structured process of tracking available data in our institutions would be of value for teaching as well as research collaboration – we all know that there are plenty of datasets hidden away on institutional websites, and on individual academics' hard drives. We recommend an audit process should be initiated in each of our faculties. We suggest that discovery of datasets and sharing information about them is an important pathway to research collaboration for DH(aSS) in the MWA, and that making *Digital Humanities and Text(s)* work successfully will establish much of the common ground necessary to allow such collaboration to occur.

Sharing a virtual space: infrastructure for Digital Humanities (Nov 2015)

11 pages of notes from the November 2016 workshop are available at tinyurl.com/MonWarDH

[Simon Musgrave is writing a summary of this workshop which will be appended here when available]

Digital literacy and the digital humanities at Warwick

Abstract for paper delivered at the Warwick Teaching and Learning Showcase
Addressing the "graduate capabilities" strand.

Digital Humanities teaching takes place at the intersection of digital technologies and the humanities disciplines. It may involve the application of digital technologies and "digital pedagogy" to pre-existing humanities subjects; or may be based on research which itself relies on computational technologies (e.g. data mining, corpus linguistics, text encoding, crowd-sourcing, digital media…). Both broad approaches would result in the improvement and evidencing of students digital literacy, a key aspect of future employability. As part of a strategic project on *Teaching Digital Humanities* which I have been conducting this year, funded by IATL, I've had a range of discussions with academics and support staff surrounding what digital literacy is and how it can be integrated into the curriculum here at Warwick.

This presentation will introduce the strategic project, and go on to explore the teaching of digital humanities as an exemplary way to integrate digital literacy into the curriculum. Two issues in particular will be covered –research-led teaching which necessitates students learning new digital skillsets; and the integration of digital methods of assessment.

Regarding research-led teaching, I will discuss the development of a new module for next year, *Digital Humanities and Text(s)*, partially co-taught with Monash University, and which offers to introduce students with no IT-expertise to corpus linguistics, xml encoding, and the production of a research project based on one of two databases. While developing the module, Simon Musgrave (Monash) and I have had extensive discussions surrounding how to "fit" both skills and theory into a module, which are worth re-iterating for a wider audience. Regarding digital methods of assessment, as well as talking through existing and proposed practices in History and Classics, I will address issues of collaboration across support services and academic departments at Warwick through the example of digital storytelling – the production by students of short still-image videos with narration.

The session as a whole will be of interest to anyone who is concerned with the integration of skills into the curriculum – while the focus will be on digital literacy many of the issues I cover have correlates for presentation skills, communication skills and other aspects of personal development. Discussion following the paper may centre upon any aspect of the presentation – depending on the audience I'd be keen to solicit feedback on the role of central services in delivering core/compulsory content to students, the relationship between (digital) skills and assessment practices, and other related areas.

Relevant Links

Collaborative notes from the Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities workshop I attended at the University of Victoria in June (google document) - http://bit.ly/DHSIdhp

More extensive reading from the same workshop (pdf) - http://goo.gl/bXCHNs