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Review: Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles, and Politics

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Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles and Politics. Brett D. Hirsch (ed). *Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012. xix + 426 pp. ISBN 978-1-909254-25-1. £14.95 (paperback).*

The dramatic advance of the digital humanities (DH) during the last half dozen years, supported by laudatory articles in the mainstream press and academic publications alike, has tended to focus on the academic research outcomes and products of DH, pushing the digital bells and whistles of DH data visualization, interactive mapping, and whiz-bang multimedia presentations. Brett D. Hirsch, editor of 'Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles and Politics', a collection of 16 essays by DH practitioners from Open Book Publishers (which also makes a free online version available on its website: http://www.openbookpubl ishers.com/reader/161), wants to expand that one-sided emphasis on DH research to encompass DH pedagogy, which he suggests in his introduction is, 'the heart of the digital humanities' (p. 16). Hirsch argues that if DH is to fully realize its potential to reshape the contemporary academy, then DH pedagogy needs to be moved 'out of marginalization and exclusion, to the fore of the digital humanities' (p. 6). Organizing the collection around three broad (and, to my mind, somewhat overlapping and murky, albeit alliterative) themes—practices, principles, and politics—Hirsch's collection succeeds admirably overall, though the essays are somewhat uneven. I can't do justice in this short review to the collection's 16 chapters; instead I will

highlight the ones that offer the most interesting insights about the DH and DH pedagogy.

'Practices' features seven contributions by DH scholars and teachers who have undertaken path-breaking experiments in using digital technologies to reshape their undergraduate and graduate classrooms. Willard McCarty, one of the old hands in humanities computing (the predecessor movement to DH), describes his and his colleagues' efforts to launch a PhD in DH at King's College London in 2005. He reports that in 2010, the program had to create multiple disciplinary-based iterations of the DH doctorate degree, linked to specific humanities disciplines—including English, Classics, history, music, and theology—to make the student recipients of the degree more competitive in the academic job market. McCarty concludes by noting that he is still unsure what exactly a PhD in DH is, although he is confident that the demand for newly minted DH PhDs (with disciplinary affiliations attached) will continue to grow. In a thoughtful and self-critical essay about the ways New York University's Archives and Public History Master's program integrated digital skills across its entire decades-old curriculum, Peter J. Wosh, Cathy Moran Hajo, and Esther Katz reflect on how their decision to use digital technologies pushed them to rethink and reshape their basic approach to educating a new generation of public archivists and historians. The revised curriculum emphasized student usage of and facility with various open-source software tools, focusing first and foremost on sound pedagogical and practical reasons for choosing those tools. Olin Bjork argues convincingly for the importance of DH pedagogy in reshaping the first-year writing course, the bane of many college freshmen. Drawing an important and useful distinction between older forms of humanities computing and new media studies, Bjork suggests that although the former focused narrowly on digital tools and their more traditional uses in such things as digital textual editing projects, new media scholars see digital tools (e.g. blogs, computer games, text messages, etc.) as 'objects of study' that can and should be incorporated directly into undergraduate and graduate instruction. Such an approach privileges student-generated digital projects at the same

time, as it encourages students to become active critics and producers (rather than passive consumers) of new knowledge. Applying this insight to the first-year writing course at Santa Clara University, Bjork and his co-teacher incorporated aspects of both approaches, suggesting that digital textual editing work 'facilitate[d] the teaching of multimodal literacies' and helped 'bridge the divide between literature and composition, adding coherence to . . . English studies' (p. 108–109). What is particularly admirable about Bjork's analysis is his refusal to present himself as a breathless technophile, offering instead clear examples of the practical difficulties and problems involved in incorporating particular digital technologies into teaching. Matthew K. Gold in 'Looking for Whitman: A Multi-Campus Experiment in Digital Pedagogy' offers a powerful argument in support of using digital technologies such as blogs to expand the idea of the classroom and of the academic community while also building a broader sense of what DH pedagogy might accomplish (full disclosure: Matt is my colleague and co-teacher in a number of graduate courses at the CUNY Graduate Center where we both teach, though I was not involved in his 'Looking for Whitman' project). Gold's project linked four geographically dispersed academic institutions in what he describes as 'a concurrent, connected, and semester-long inquiry into the relationship of [Walt] Whitman's poetry to local geography and history' (p. 153–4). Gold is clear about what worked and what didn't in this ambitious undertaking. Perhaps most impressive was the project's success in blowing open the traditional four walls of the classroom to allow participating undergraduates and faculty members to engage directly with one another across space, engaging the students, as Gold argues, 'in active learning experiences that enacted the principles of constructivist pedagogy' (p. 165). At a time when the whole world, especially the academy, seems to have gone Massive Open Online Course mad, 'Looking for Whitman' offers an effective digital and pedagogical alternative to the current hype.

The second section of the collection, entitled 'Principles', offers a handful of meditations on the larger concepts and precepts that animate DH pedagogy in diverse academic fields, including textual analysis, computer programming for humanists, history, and new media. Simon Mahony and Elena Pierazzo argue that students who wish to become digital humanists need to be taught humanities methodologies and new ways of thinking—which include 'collaborative methods and reflective practice in order to build a community of learning' (p. 215)—as much as they need to learn specific digital skills. Stephen Ramsay—famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) for his provocative 2011 MLA presentation 'Who's In and Who's Out', which argued that digital humanities 'is about building things', and therefore real DHers needed to learn how to code—makes a compelling case for 'Raising an Army of Hacker-Scholars in the Digital Humanities'. Teaching basic Unix and Ruby coding skills to undergraduate and graduate humanities students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Ramsay is intent not so much on producing a bevy of computer programmers, as he is teaching his humanities students 'to ask what the "philosophy" of the computers, cell phones and gaming devices they generally use might be, and what it means to conform to a philosophy as a user and as a developer' (p. 233). Ramsay argues that this emphasis deepens his students' appreciation for and understanding of humanistic inquiry. Joshua Sternfeld in 'Pedagogical Principles of Digital Historiography' argues for the use of multimedia tools in history classrooms to provide students with 'the methodological means to interrogate digital history works, build complex questions and arguments and evaluate scholarship' (p. 268). In the final chapter in the Principles section, Virginia Kuhn and Vicki Callahan use their 'Nomadic Archives' course at USC to argue that 'digital humanities represents an opportunity for a new form of interdisciplinary engagement', which emphasizes the use of diverse multimedia tools to develop 'a vertically integrated praxis' that ruthlessly interrogates the academy's traditional disciplinary silos (p. 292–3). Each student must develop sound, still image montage, and moving image projects that embrace the qualities of scholarly 'remix, distributed and networked authorship, and the realignment of objects and investigators in research'

(p. 295). Kuhn and Callahan also offer an important caveat about digital courses being sensitive to students' needs for privacy in their online intellectual spaces, a practice that all teachers who encourage student digital work should embrace.

The final section of the collection, 'Politics', focuses on the philosophical disagreements and institutional constraints faced by faculty members and students interested in implementing DH programs in their colleges and universities. Lisa Spiro argues that to make DH education and training available to as broad a group of teachers and learners as possible, the DH community needs to collaborate on building 'a networked, open digital humanities certificate program' that will 'spark innovations in teaching and research, share educational practices and resources, . . . and cultivate a shared sense of mission' (p. 332). Spiro makes a compelling case for how such a non-campus-based program might be developed, emphasizing its community roots, potential global reach, modular development, technological innovation, and experimental nature. Although she takes a long and lamentable detour into the world of Massive Open Online Courses to help explain why her 'DH OOC' (which drops the 'M' for 'massive') idea is so timely, Spiro returns to consider a range of practical and theoretical questions related to her nascent DH certificate idea, including funding, development of shared content, and assessment. There is much in Spiro's proposal to like and to embrace, and the DH community should grab this idea with enthusiasm and help push it forward. Tanya Clement in her discussion of 'Multiliteracies in the Undergraduate Humanities Curriculum' suggests that DHers need to focus on incorporating the methodologies and purposes of DH into the undergraduate curriculum so as to 'improve students' abilities to write and read the Web, to interpret, discern, and critique the Web, and, ultimately, to be more engaged citizens of the world' (p. 366). In the final chapter, Melanie Kill makes a compelling argument for how and why college teachers should use Wikipedia with their students 'not only for the collaborative compilation of knowledge, but also for collaborative inquiry into knowledge-making practices and resources across disciplines and culture' (p. 389).

This collection makes an important contribution to DH pedagogy's coming out and may help transform it from forgotten stepchild of the DH movement to the more appropriate and elevated status it deserves.

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Macroanalysis. Digital Methods and Literary History. Matthew L. Jockers. *Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013. x + 192 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-07907-8. $30 (paperback).*

Jockers' recently published monograph on digital literary history, *Macroanalysis*, has been long anticipated. Especially those of us active on social media have had the opportunity to monitor the book's progress fairly closely, via the many small 'appetizers' that the author regularly shared on his personal Web site (http://www.matthewjockers. net). *Macroanalysis* is the first English-language monograph to come out on a stylometry-related topic in at least a few years. In a field that is still dominated by—often disparate as well as short—journal and conference papers, Jockers' study deserves our careful attention. Although the book's appealing title, *Macroanalysis. Digital Methods & Literary History*, suggests a very broad coverage, the study in fact only targets a single, albeit comprehensive, corpus of English-language prose literature. Readers hoping for a more general introduction to the young paradigm of 'Distant Reading' will nevertheless find the author's discussion still generic enough to be appreciated by a varied audience of Humanities scholars.

The introductory chapter 'Evidence' offers a very readable discussion on the study's foundations, as well as Jockers' personal views on Big Literary Data. Although the author does not dwell on theory, he offers a very credible, at times programmatic, plea why 'distant analysis' is a valid, if not a desired,