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ALWAYS-ALREADY: LIBRARY SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

The thesis of this paper is simple: the digital humanities (DH) can and should make a happy home in the modern research library, and this has been true for decades. What? – Some may ask. – You mean to say that DH has been around for decades? Yes, – I say – and not only that, but DH has some very serious theoretical and practical forebears from almost a hundred years ago: the Russian Formalists, who even today have some important things to teach us not only about DH in general, but also about DH in the library.

The description of a panel in the 2013 American Library Association annual conference in the Chicago read as follows:

> Digital technologies are opening up new possibilities for the investigation of literary and historic texts. They are also changing library spaces and reconfiguring relationships between librarians and researchers. This program investigates new roles for European and American Studies librarians in this emerging physical and virtual environment. What old skills remain relevant and what new skills are needed? What new forms of collaboration are developing between librarians, scholars, and IT personnel?[1]

This panel was called upon to discuss "literary texts and the library in the digital age." I suppose it's possible to imagine, based on this title, that the panel is not explicitly about the digital humanities; oddly enough, the widely accepted term of art "digital humanities" doesn't appear in the panel description at all, although one might assume that the audience came precisely to hear about that.

Does this reticence actually to name the topic come from a sort of DH fatigue? Or a DH phobia? I sincerely hope that it's neither fatigue

[1] American Library Association: Annual Conferen
http://ala13.ala.org/node/10087

nor phobia. This panel description included all the signs of contemporary digital humanities and digital library discourse: phrases like "digital technologies" and "opening up new possibilities"; even more loaded terms like "changing," "reconfiguring," "emerging," and "virtual" speak to a current fascination with (or, some may say, even fetishization of) the affordances of technology as they apply to literature and the library.

But I also see other words in the panel description, and these in fact please me more than the faddish and fashionable terms above: "investigation," "literary," "historic texts," "relationships between librarians and researchers," "European and American Studies." These are good, old-fashioned words about humanities research and "traditional" library work.

At around the same time as this American library conference, a collection of essays was published called *Make It New*, edited by Sarah Potvin, Roxanne Shirazi, and Zach Coble, in the Association of College & Research Libraries' outstanding dh+lib group blog.[2] I can't recommend these readings, or the thoughtful group of library workers who contributed to both of them, highly enough: the contributors to this collections, and to the dh+lib blog in general, are people you should pay attention to if you're interested in the challenges and rewards of doing (or supporting, or "making") DH in your library.

In the introduction to the dh+lib mini-series, Potvin and Shirazi put forward an interesting set of binaries, remarkably reminiscent of the description of conference panel quoted earlier:

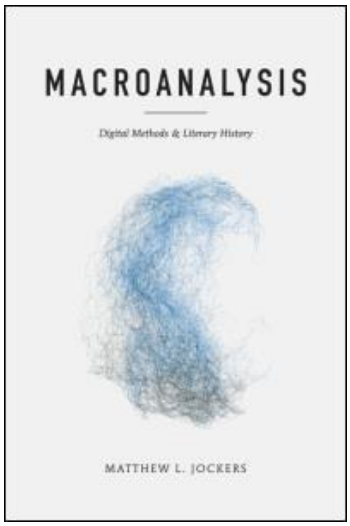
> DH as entrepreneurial v. DH as institutional enterprise, DH as disruptive v. DH as contiguous, libraries and librarians as partners or supporters, collaborators or service-providers. What is new, what is traditional, what is novel, what is constant.

One's preferences may fall on either side of these binaries; my own preferences, even as a digital humanities librarian, tend toward the latter pairs: I prefer to focus on the contiguous, collaborative, traditional, constant aspects of DH in the library, rather than its entrepreneurial, disruptive, service-provider aspects. In support of this "traditionalist" view of the digital humanities, I propose focusing on the deep historic and critical parallels and roots of this supposedly new field.

Just as the great Russian Formalist Iurii Tynianov in the 1920s ridiculed the scholarly error of allowing only "the generals" to pass for all of literature, so precisely did Franco Moretti, in 2000, emphasize the need for our times to overcome this error, in in his own foundational essay "Conjectures on World Literature" (*New Left Review*, Jan./Feb. 2000), which practically

[2] "dh+lib: Where the Digital Humanities and Librarianship Meet." http://acrl.ala.org/dh/

inaugurated the 21st-century DH practice of "distant reading" (Moretti coined that term in this essay) of what he called "the great unread" in world literary history.



And when Matt Jockers, in his foundational 2013 DH monograph *Macroanalysis*, produces massive network graphs representing his quantitative studies of literary history (such as we see on his book's stunning dust jacket), his focus is precisely that of the Russian Formalists: namely, *form*, *system*, and *language*. When he presents textual work as a data visualization, as so many contemporary digital humanists do, he is defamiliarizing those texts, making them strange, precisely as Shklovsky advised.

And when the productive and dedicated DH community of stylistics and authorship attribution scholars uses statistical packages to algorithmically cluster digital texts according to style and authorship, they're just extending Eikhenbaum's *skaz* onto a more quantitative and computational footing.

And when the Stanford Literary Lab produced its first research pamphlet ("Quantitative Formalism: An Experiment")[3] in 2011, it was very clear to them what they were doing, and in whose footsteps they were following: their carefully selected title was a direct reference to formalist literary theory from a century earlier.

My claim that the digital humanities are in many ways a 21st-century version of Russian Formalism of a hundred years ago. Just as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev all came out of Gogol's "Overcoat," my claim is that we digital humanists – including us digital humanities librarians – in some sense have all come out of Eikhenbaum's great essay on that novella, and out of the foundational writings, approaches, and ideas from Eikhenbaum's fellow Formalists.

In approaching the literary text, we focus on "how it's made" – how literary history, genre systems, narrative lines, character networks, and even language itself are "made." Like the Russian Formalists, we in the textual digital humanities focus on "The Word as Such" (to use the title of a manifesto by two poets who were close comrades to the Formalists, Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov); the advantage we claim in a particular digital approach is that we can do that at scale: our focus can be telescopic. But the object in view is very much the same as that of our predecessors.

[3] http://litlab.stanford.edu/LiteraryLabPamphlet1.pdf

And what does all this have to do with the library? The library is where the Stanford Lit Lab gets the vast majority of its raw materials: the data that is its lifeblood; the same is true (or should be true) for countless cadres of digital humanists around the world, and for the libraries with which, and in which, we work. Over the years, we librarians have selected it, procured it, curated it, preserved it, and made sure that our licenses are generous enough for us to use it.

The library is also, and always has been, a locus of long-term memory. That core library value comes strongly into play for successful DH as well: more than just a passing fad, acknowledging and proclaiming that DH is here to stay (and has been for a long time already!), we in the library should make long-term, structural commitments to digital humanities work, rather than relying on short-term hires or crudely tacking on new job responsibilities to those of already-busy librarians.

Finally, one of the hallmarks of digital humanities practice has been the desire to experiment, to make things, to dig into our data – to see how humanities "things" are "made." There is nothing contrary to the library spirit in that desire either: in fact, librarians – perhaps even more than other knowledge workers – have long distinguished themselves with the very gears and cogs of literary production and study: with the book trade; with bibliography and metadata; with the acquisition, organizing, and preservation of textual objects; with a variety of technological means for scholarly discovery. What is all this traditional library work if not an engagement with how knowledge is "made"? And what are we, if not co-makers of that knowledge?

Perhaps I haven't provided many concrete ideas about how DH is done in the library: each library must serve its digital humanities researchers in the particular ways that they require for their research. But I do hope to have defamiliarized the practice of digital humanities (and of digital humanities librarianship) for you somewhat, made it somewhat strange, and challenged your notion of its depth and critical heritage. The important thing is the library's commitment to support this new and important line of research, to recognize its place in innovative scholarship, and to embrace its mission to provide context, information literacy, and raw materials for research – just as it has always done.

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ALWAYS-ALREADY: БІБЛІОТЕЧНЕ ОБСЛУГОВУВАННЯ В ПІДТРИМКУ ЦИФРОВИХ ГУМАНІТАРНИХ НАУК

Тези даної статті прості: цифрові гуманітарні науки (ЦГН) можуть і повинні створити затишний будинок в сучасній науковій бібліотеці, і так було завжди протягом багатьох десятиліть. У ЦГН є кілька дуже серйозних теоретичних і практичних попередників, які існували майже сто років тому: російські формалісти, у яких навіть сьогодні є важливі аспекти, щоб донести до нас не тільки про ЦГН в цілому, але і про ЦГН в бібліотеці.

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Тезисы данной статьи просты: цифровые гуманитарные науки (ЦГН) могут и должны создать уютный дом в современной научной библиотеке, и так было всегда в течение многих десятилетий. У ЦГН есть несколько очень серьезных теоретических и практических предшественников, существовавших почти сто лет назад: русские формалисты, у которых даже сегодня есть важные аспекты, чтобы донести до нас не только о ЦГН в целом, но и о ЦГН в библиотеке.