Digital Humanities Dissertations: A New Model for PhD Scholarship

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What makes a DH dissertation a dissertation?

Same process:

- Asking a question?
- Research/gathering data
- Analysis of research/data
- Coming to conclusions
- Making an argument
- Contributing to scholarship
Who is interested...and why?

- Changing nature of research/scholarship
- Changing student population

Technology changes everything!
What disciplines are involved?

- English
- History
- Fine Arts
- Movement Arts
- Social Science -
  - Anthropology
  - Sociology
What universities offer this option?

- George Mason University
- City University of New York (CUNY)
- UNC - Chapel Hill
- Michigan State University
- University of Iowa
- University of Maryland
BUT...what about evaluation/publishing?

- **How are they evaluated?**
  
  - MLA Guidelines for Evaluation Work in Digital Humanities
  - AHA Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship
  - Amanda Visconti
  
  Universities develop their own guidelines

- **How are they published?**
  
  - University Institutional Repository or ETD Database
  - D3 (Digital Dissertation Depository): Developed by Kathie Gossett and Liz Potts, currently in beta phase.
  
  Individual websites (we will take a look at)
How can universities support students?

● **Resources:**
  ○ **Starter Kit for Considering PhD Diss**
  ○ **Remixthediss**
  ○ Libraries:
    ■ **Digital Dissertation Liaison**
  ○ Offering fellowships

● **Advocate**
Advocate - Who are the gate-keepers?

- Department Chair
- Dissertation Committee
- Campus IT
- Graduate School
- Graduate Standards Committee
Empathy mapping


Department Chair:

**Hearing:** Students want to create non-traditional dissertations; faculty aren’t sure how to support students working on digital projects; graduate college is insisting on formatting requirements and/or ProQuest participation; university IT is saying no to almost everything.

**Thinking & Feeling:** Students who put their work online might not be able to publish it in traditional venues (university presses, academic journals, etc.).

**Seeing:** Graduates with strong digital skills are the ones getting jobs; other schools are passing us by when it comes to digital work.

**Saying & Doing:** Let’s form a committee to study whether our department should allow digital dissertations; take it slowly; we have never done it that way before.
Let’s take a look...

**Literature Dissertation** - Amanda Visconti, "How can you love a work, if you don't know it?": Critical code and design towards participatory digital editions

GOAL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:

“A command of new research applications, many of which are used both within and beyond the academy, will equip graduate students to work in increasingly technology-enhanced occupations (e.g., as data journalists, social media coordinators, political pollsters, or test assessors). If their technological skills are coupled with flexible rhetorical skills, our students will also be credible candidates for occupations that have not yet come into clear focus, since these jobs will meet not-yet-defined needs and requirements. Our PhDs will be ready—and will think of themselves as ready—to thrive in positions that did not exist when they entered graduate school...at a moment when workers often see their job responsibilities rapidly evolve, we will help graduate students think of themselves from day one as having the flexibility of a Swiss Army knife.”

Judith Pasco, University of Iowa
This presentation will be archived in Mississippi State University’s Institutional Repository at:

https://ir.library.msstate.edu/