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Digital Humanities and the Visual: A Special Themed Issue of the Visual Resources Association Bulletin

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Abstract
Introductory comments from the editors to a special, guest edited issue on the digital humanities and the visual.

Keywords
digital humanities

Author Bio & Acknowledgements
Maureen Burns is an information professional with over 25 years of experience developing and managing teaching resources of analog and digital images at UC Irvine, the Getty Villa, and CSULB. Presently working on a consulting basis, through IMAGinED, Burns is handling sales for Archivision and is partnering on a CSU Archives Japanese American history digitization project as well as other image-focused work. With a doctorate in Educational Administration from the UCI/UCLA joint Leadership program, Burns provides editorial support for the electronic *Journal for Learning through the Arts* and works as a project coordinator for a UCI NSF K-12 arts integration professional development grant. She is currently serving as the Chair of the VRA's Southern California Chapter and Content Editor for the online *VRA Bulletin* also participating in the work of VRA's Slide and Transitional Media Task Force, Financial Advisory Committee, and International Chapter. She is a past VRA president and past director of the VRA Foundation.

Digital Humanities and the Visual: A Special Themed Issue of the *Visual Resources Association Bulletin*

This issue of the *Visual Resources Association Bulletin (VRAB),* is a special themed issue focused on the digital humanities and the visual. It is the brainchild of John Taormina, who served as the guest editor—calling for and selecting substantive content, providing informational metadata, and editing the articles. John was the *VRA Bulletin* editor for over a decade, when it was a print journal, and he approached the current co-editors with the idea of considering special themed issues with guest editors. There have been themed issues in the past, but we had not thought through how we might support guest editors with the electronic journal. The editors developed a workflow, consulted with the VRA Executive Board, and now have everything in place to handle such guest-edited issues in the future. We are grateful to John for setting all of this in motion and stepping-up to be an exemplary first guest editor. We hope that other VRA members will consider guest editing special themed issues in the future. Please don't hesitate to contact the co-editors if you are interested doing so and want to learn more about the process.

The theme that John chose for this issue, digital humanities and the visual, is a timely and important topic for visual resources curators and art librarians to consider, since many institutions are drawing upon or could be utilizing our professional expertise to support such projects. As the Director of the Visual Media Center in the Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies at Duke University, John is also a member of the Wired! Lab for Digital Art History & Visual Culture. He has gained valuable experience through this collaborative work and organized digital humanities activities at both ARLIS/NA and VRA conferences as well as instigated initiatives to advance work in the digital humanities for both professional organizations. Who better to edit an issue focused on this topic.

John used UCLA's Center for Digital Humanities definition of the digital humanities in his call for articles for this *VRAB* special issue and it grounds the articles included:

> "Digital Humanities interprets the cultural and social impact of new media and information technologies—the fundamental components of the new information age—as well as creates and applies these technologies to answer cultural, social, historical, and philological questions, both those traditionally conceived and those only enabled by new technologies."

The first use of the term "digital humanities" can be traced back to University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) 15 years ago. Willeke Wendrich, the director of UCLA's Center for Digital Humanities, provides some historical background in a recent news article at: http://www.cdh.ucla.edu/news-events/digital-humanities-at-ucla-creating-knowledge-creating-bridges/. The digital humanities have exploded since then, but visual resources curators have not always found a place at the table. The articles and reviews in this 43rd volume of the *VRAB* provide information about innovative projects filled with ideas for making space at the table for visual resources curators and art librarians.

John's stated goal for this publication was to address the issues surrounding the support, development, dissemination, and preservation of digital humanities projects in the arts and humanities. He asked the authors to discuss the issues associated with the transformational changes brought about by introducing the concepts of digital humanities

into arts and humanities disciplines and, most importantly, how visual resources specialists and librarians work with and support faculty and students at their institutions to develop and implement digital humanities tools in the classroom and in research projects in art, art history, architectural history, archaeology, visual studies, and related cultural disciplines. The article and review authors have succeeded admirably in fulfilling these goals. In this issue, the reader will see how creativity in data collection, analysis, and representation is at the core of digital humanities projects, learn about new tools that can be used to make this information accessible, and understand the importance of involving faculty, students, and staff with many areas of expertise, from the arts to the sciences, in the process.

In my Web wanderings preparing to support this issue, I came across an interesting blog post written by Macie Hall at Johns Hopkins University: http://ii.library.jhu.edu/tag/digital-humanities/. She also provides an excellent definition of the digital humanities:

"DH is a field of scholarship (and pedagogy) that is often described as being at the intersection of humanities and computing. The idea is that humanities scholars who have traditionally worked alone in the ivory tower, or more accurately, in archives, libraries, museums, and in the field, are now engaging in collaborative, cross-disciplinary research endeavors that involve large data sets, computational analysis, and new methods of visualizing information. Publication for DH scholars had moved from the monograph to open access, web-based, collaborative, and social media outlets."

Macie identifies and links the reader to a number of important online resources, if you want to learn more about the digital humanities, and discusses her views. Among the resources is the University of Richmond Library's excellent "Digital Humanities Toolbox" developed by Jeannine Keefer at: http://libguides.richmond.edu/dighumantoolbox#s-lg-box-4442399. Many of the seminal books on the digital humanities are listed there and some are reviewed in this issue of the *VRAB*. If you seek a more extensive bibliography, the Visual Resources Association developed one that can be found here: https://vrdighum.wordpress.com/40-2/

Although educational institutions have been participating in digital humanities projects for many years, these are still evolving times. Growing support from academic administrations provides opportunities to get involved and join in on collaborative learning environments where new tools are being developed and creativity is the name of the game. We hope this issue of the *VRA Bulletin* inspires you to consider how you might contribute to this exciting trend in the arts and humanities.

The co-editors would like to express their sincere gratitude to John Taormina for taking the time and putting in the effort to guest edit this issue. It is a terrific issue and it was a pleasure working with John. His taking the lead on this issue has allowed us to focus on the possibilities of adding peer review and getting back issues uploaded to VRA Online—more news on these fronts soon.

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