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Review of "Digital Humanities in the Library: Challenges and Opportunities for Subject Specialists"

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Review of "Digital Humanities in the Library: Challenges and Opportunities for Subject Specialists"

Abstract

Sarah Osborne Bender provides a review of *Digital Humanities in the Library: Challenges and Opportunities for Subject Specialists*

Keywords

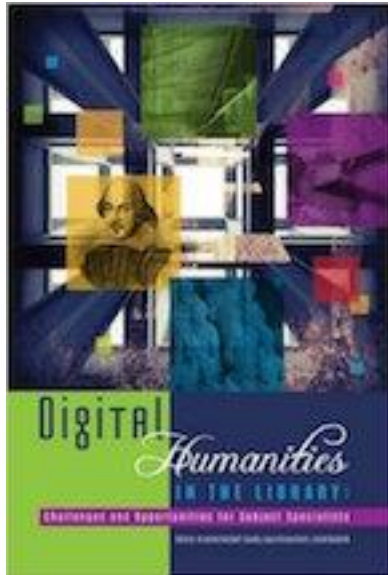
Digital Humanities

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

Sarah Osborne Bender is the Director of the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. She is on the advisory board for the National Digital Stewardship Residency Art program and currently the coordinator of ARLIS/NA's Digital Humanities Special Interest Group.

Arianne Hartsell-Gundy, Laura Braunstein, and Liorah Golomb , eds. *Digital Humanities in the Library: Challenges and Opportunities for Subject Specialists*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, 2015.

Reviewed by Sarah Osborne Bender, National Museum of Women in the Arts



In her contribution to *Digital Humanities in the Library: Challenges and Opportunities for Subject Specialists*, Caro Pinto nails the spirit of the book: “If this generation of librarians must choose between disrupting and being disrupted, there are exciting possibilities ahead for us.” Throughout, the inherent skills of librarians—as translators, as guides, as collaborators, as beacons—prove to be just the organizing factors that disorganized digital humanities services are looking for. Subject librarians are at the ready to ferry their faculty and students beyond digital projects and into digital humanities scholarship.

The essays are organized in four thematic sections, moving from the fundamental (encouragement to try, how to gather a team) to aspirational (designated DH space, working within the curriculum). Inevitably there is considerable repetition throughout the course of this collection. Nearly every essay beats the drum for the importance of collaboration and highlights the innate flexibility of subject specialists. Refreshingly, however, few words are devoted to the seemingly endless need to define digital humanities. Librarians from a variety of professional settings and operating at various levels of organized institutional DH structure contributed essays.

The strength of this book lies within its ability to justify the need for subject specialists, or any academic librarian, to not only have skills to engage in facilitation of DH projects, but also to have the support of supervisors, departments, or in ideal situations, the university as a whole. Recommendations abound for professionals who are already enmeshed in digital projects of the faculty and students with whom they liaise, or for those who wish to formalize their own explorations into digital tools and methods: how to form a community (essential), guidance on the lifecycle of a digital project (in handy checklist form, even), and excellent references

throughout. This collection is also valuable for supervisors who are unsure how DH dovetails with more traditional library services, but see their staff and faculty already engaging.

Some useful discussion is included over the need (or not) for DH centers, typically found in large research institutions, as opposed to the more common distributed or ad hoc DH support. In their own way, all of the essays stress the need for DH support and services to be purposeful and organized as opposed to reactive, when it is hard to ensure best practices for instruction, preservation of project content, and funding sources, among others.

Originally available in print and e-book, ACRL is now offering this publication as an Open Access publication.