Add & Stir: Going Beyond Acknowledging the Diversity Problem in DH

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Going Beyond Acknowledging the Diversity Problem in Digital Humanities

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Diversity

- Definition: the quality or state of having many different forms, types, ideas, etc.
- Coping mechanism of the binary

"They say we're not placing enough emphasis on diversity."
Why this panel matters

- First step: start having the conversation
James Baldwin

"Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced."
Why this panel matters

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- It's an opportunity to listen
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- It's an opportunity to listen
- Our worlds are microcosms
Digital Humanities

- Global
- Collaborative
- Non-traditional
- Public
- Democratizing
- Capacity for Play and Failure

Martin Grandjean.
Diversity in DH

- Anecdotal
- Perceived lack of diversity
- Only recently collecting data
The Alliance of Digital Humanities Orgs

- The Annual DH Conference
- Largest (other than perhaps the Digital Humanities Summer Institute)
- First "Eastern" conference 2015
- First multilingual conference 2017
ADHO Participation by Gender Study

- Nickoal Eichmann - starting Jan 2017, Digital Scholarship Librarian at CU Boulder
- Scott Weinhart - DH Specialist at Carnegie Mellon University
- Report to publish 2017
- No other demographic data (i.e. race)
ADHO DH Conference Findings

- Sydney (2015) 46% female
- Over 30% of authors and attendees arriving from outside Europe or North America
ADHO DH Conference Findings

- 71% of women and 73% of men who submitted presentations passed the peer review process.
- Women represent 36.1% of all authors (29%-38% fluctuation depending on the year).
- Total Authors: 3,239
ADHO DH Conference Findings

- Keywording on proposals align along gender
- Acceptance Rates:
  - Cultural Studies – 57%
  - Gender Studies – 60%
  - Text Analysis – 83%
  - Programming – 80%
Efforts to Correct Imbalance

- Diversity in DH 2011
- GO:DH 2012
- Twitter Discussions
Efforts to Correct Imbalance

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  - #myDHi5
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  - #whatifDH[year]
How many of you have already seen a COCKATOO? How about a KOALA? A KANGAROO? Has anyone seen a funnel web SPIDER? Has anyone met an Australian who actually says G’DAY? Now for that RAREST AND MOST ELUSIVE OF CREATURES.....

Imagine for a moment what it’s like for the rest of us attending a DH conference. When was the last time the conference air conditioning didn’t feel right to you? When was the last time you had to queue to use the bathroom? When was the last time you thought twice about what to wear on stage so you could use a lapel mike? Why are they even called lapel mikes?

SERIOUSLY! WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS FIELD...??!!

I took the theme of this year’s conference Global DH to be a celebration of diversity not the universalization of one perspective.

SO BLOKES – I’M JUST GOING TO TALK TO YOU FOR A MOMENT...

When was the last time you saw seven consecutive women get up at a DH conference and speak about anything other than gender? You’ve made a world designed around ensuring your own personal comfort. But it’s not comfortable for so many, many others.

WHAT TO DO?

For a start we can turn the aircon down.... Systemically, seriously - I’M CALLING IT - it’s time for you guys to sweat.

NOW I appreciate that you may not be able to understand what I’m saying because I haven’t got a mansplainer on stage with me.... So I’m going to slow it right down....and be very.... very clear. Don’t take this personally this is about a systemic problem.

SYSTEMIC & PERSUASIVE

This is not about issuing another policy advisory for “inclusion”. This is not about developing a new checklist to mitigate your biases. And it’s definitely not about inviting a token female speaker to join you all on the stage - this needs to be about your plans to EXIT the stage. This is not about learning how to do it better next time - this is about YOU LEAVING BEFORE THERE IS A NEXT TIME.

This is not about approximating equity where 20% or 30% or 40% or even 50% is good enough. This is about letting everyone else in by letting go of your privileged positions. The problem is not how many of us there aren’t.

WE ARE NOT THE PROBLEM YOU ARE

The problem is how many of you occupy the positions that get to speak. And let’s face it - 50% representation for women going forward is not even close to equity!

Given the number of years women have existed and continue to exist as a shocking minority in this field - the closest we can get to equity would be for men to leave the stage proportionally for an equivalent number of years.

I WANT 80% WOMEN, 20% BLOKES

for the next thirty years and only then can we say the scales have been righted. But in reality I’m not even agitated by my own definition of equity. The last thirty years have been pretty horrible for so many of us and I’m not an especially vindictive person. I wouldn’t impose the last thirty years on anyone else.

SO BLOKES, PLEASE, PLEASE JUST STOP IMPOSING IT ON US NOW.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO LEAVE DH IN A BETTER PLACE THAN YOU FOUND IT:

1. Get quantitative and number your days. Preferably publicly.
2. Find someone who doesn’t look and sound like you and mentor them, encourage them and invite them into your role.
3. Have a clear, purposeful succession plan and enact it.
4. And above all – BE MORE THAN BINARY – do this because you embrace diversity in all its complexity. Not because you have checklists or policies. But because you recognise that the real story of DH is more heterogeneous and complex and vibrant than you have allowed it to be to date.

OK - WAS THAT CLEAR ENOUGH? 😊
Efforts to Correct Imbalance

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- GO:DH 2012
- Twitter Discussions
  - #myDHi
  - #whatifDH[year]
  - #transformDH
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  - #DHdiversity
Add & Stir

- Realize a group is too homogenous – or realize a need for diverse perspectives
- Build a program and hire one or two
- Mix them in when the macaroni
- Hope it gels
- Run with it
"As opposed to meeting people where they are, where people of color, women, people with disabilities are already engaged in digital projects, there’s a making of room at an already established table."
Add & Stir Limitations

- Does not engage people
- Does not provide equitable pathways for advancement and exposure
- Typically does not include mentoring programs
- No further cultivation of youth
Get Involved

- Get in touch with your prejudices.
- Allow space for others.
- Participate in movements
- Acknowledge limitations.
- Personalize approach.
- Understand the value.
- Continue to act.
YOU CAN DO IT
Questions?

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