

Welcome to Digital Humanities Quarterly

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Abstract

A welcome to DHQ from the editors, with a brief summary of the journal's development and goals.

Welcome to the first issue of Digital Humanities Quarterly: a new, online, open-access journal published by the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations. This issue has been a long time in the making. The first organizational efforts began in June 2005, and the journal's technical development started soon after. Developing a new journal — on a new publication model, with an innovative technical architecture — is not an undertaking for the faint-hearted. That level of challenge, however, was central to the venture from the start: the world may not need yet another academic journal, but it does need experiments in how academic journals are published. DHQ is conceived as just such an experiment, conducted by the community best suited to make it a success and learn from the results.

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What is experimental about DHQ? First, it is an open-access journal, freely available to the public, and published under a Creative Commons license that permits copying, distribution, and transmission of the work for non-commercial purposes, as long as attribution is made. Copyright remains with the author, so that DHQ serves as a gathering point for the best digital humanities research, without becoming a barrier to further publication or reuse. Second, DHQ treats its articles as contributions to a growing research archive that will itself become an object of study. All articles are given a detailed XML encoding to mark genres, names, citations, and other features that may serve the future scholar interested in the emergence of the digital humanities as a research field. As articles accumulate, the journal's interface will develop to exploit this markup through nuanced searching, visualization tools, and other modes of exploration. Finally, DHQ seeks to encourage experimentation with the forms of scholarly publication. The journal itself is multimodal and evolving: we accept multimedia and interactive submissions, and very shortly will be adding a blog and the ability to comment on DHQ articles. We also look forward to opportunities for collaboration with *LLC*, perhaps involving co-publication of articles with complex multimedia components. To the extent that our rhetorical habits are partly the product of the print medium, with its familiar reference structures, ordering conventions, and practical limitations, we would like to see whether those habits can adapt and mutate — or, at the very least, become more self-conscious — when given the opportunity. The opportunity to include interactive media, links to data sets, diagrams and audiovisual materials may in itself shift the way arguments are made. We expect these changes to happen slowly, if at all: we will be publishing plenty of articles in familiar genres and formats for some time to come. But we welcome thoughtful experiments, even risky ones, and we hope our readers will read them in the same spirit.

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In all of these ways, DHQ is guided by the desire to reach outwards beyond the immediate community of ADHO, ACH, and ALLC, and to complement rather than duplicate the function of LLC, the journal of record for these organizations. Digital humanities is by its nature a hybrid domain, crossing disciplinary boundaries and also traditional barriers between theory and practice, technological implementation and scholarly reflection. But over time this field has developed its own orthodoxies, its internal lines of affiliation and collaboration that have become intellectual paths of least resistance. In a world — perhaps scarcely imagined two decades ago — where digital issues and questions are connected with nearly every area of endeavor, we cannot take for granted a position of centrality. On the contrary, we

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have to work hard even to remain aware of, let alone to master, the numerous relevant domains that might affect our work and ideas. And at the same time, we need to work hard to explain our work and ideas and to make them visible to those outside our community who may find them useful.

DHQ thus seeks to serve as a bridge between the historic constituencies of the digital humanities — the members of ADHO and its affiliate organizations — and the many closely related domains that have emerged. Being open-access, it can offer a freely accessible view of the field to those who are curious about it, and can also provide a publication venue that is visible to readers (and potential authors) from these other domains. Our hope is that DHQ can function as a meeting ground, a space of mutual encounter where we ask and explain, rather than assuming, why our work is interesting and how it is relevant. This approach places a heavy burden on the peer review and editorial process, since it must play a dual role: not only to ensure that we identify and accept what is of the highest quality, but also to help authors address the entire DHQ audience and make the full value of their work as clear as possible. The revision process should never reduce the complexity of an argument, but it should make the argument — and its significance — clear to an intelligent reader from any field.

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It is tempting, in the first issue of a journal by this name, to pose the question, “What is digital humanities?” and perhaps to attempt an answer. Instead, we defer this question to the future, with the expectation that it will be answered, or at least addressed, in the annals that are to be written and published here. Not the first issue, nor even the tenth, will give a sense of the emerging shape: it will take time for the range of submissions to represent the real contours of the field. And there will be a further dialectical process of reading and authorship, provocation and response, through which we can expect the field to evolve. The question for this journal is thus not “What is digital humanities?” but “How can we shape the digital humanities?” and we hope the process will reward your attention. Join the experiment — submit, review, read, comment, and enjoy!

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