DHQ in the Public Eye

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Abstract

This editorial reflects on developments to DHQ and the ways we can assess impact and readership.

[1] Welcome to the second issue of DHQ. It is difficult, at this stage in a journal's progress, to monitor uptake, success, or readership. Where can we start? The launch of DHQ was emblazoned across various discussion lists (such as Humanist, Digital Classicist, Digital Medievalist, TEI-L) and featured on many blogs (such as Grand Text Auto, Stoa, and personal blogs from those within the digital humanities community). DHQ is pointed to from the Digital Humanities entry on Wikipedia, linked to by over 40 different home pages, and has been saved and tagged by 90 different individuals on del.icio.us, suggesting we have reached thousands of potential readers.

[2] Still, with the comments feature yet to be enabled (we are still building the back end of the site, and this experiment of a journal will continue to evolve with each issue) it is difficult to gain a feel for opinions regarding the journal — save from those individuals which have taken the time to email the editors directly with their congratulations. Comments on del.icio.us generally raised one question about our format: Where is the RSS feed? And we are pleased that this issue features this functionality, alerting you when we have added new content to the journal (which we plan to do even between issues).

[3] So far so good, even if the digital humanities community can be viewed as being fairly small, fairly insular, and fairly unlikely to reach out to wider academic and technological sphere. We at DHQ hope that we will eventually reach a wider audience (and trust our readers will help us do so), introducing the type and range of activities the digital humanities community is interested in, and featuring energetic, novel, and interesting articles on a variety of research, making use of all the Internet technologies at our disposal.

[4] One of the papers in this, our second issue, has already done just that. Dennis G. Jerz's Somewhere Nearby is Colossal Cave: Examining Will Crowther's Original *Adventure* in Code and in Kentucky, was posted on the test site for proofreading a few weeks before launch, when one of our editors featured an advance mention of it on his blog. A few days later, it was picked up by the gaming community on a popular discussion list (rec.arts.int-fiction), garnering comments such as "HOLY MOLY!" and "It is clear on a single reading that this is the most important single paper ever written on the history of interactive fiction" before it had even been formally published. It doesn't stop there: the paper went on to be featured on Boing Boing (a "directory of wonderful things" which is read by hundreds of thousands of readers), then being mentioned on Slashdot, the popular technology-related news site. (We are pleased to report our servers survived being "slashdotted" so far, which is perhaps the best load test we could wish for). Shortly after, it featured on Metafilter, a community weblog that anyone can edit with a vast readership, where comments included "What academic research should aspire to be" and "I can feel a new LOLCATS meme coming on. (I can haz mint-cake?)". On the eve of publication, we have had a request from a local Kentucky newspaper wishing to republish the paper (which our publication terms willingly permit). This paper has legs.

[5] In addition, publication on DHQ has made the original game available again for a new audience. When the preprint version of this article became available on the internet in August 2007, Matthew Russoto modified Crowther's source

code so that it will compile for today's computers. David Kinder made a Windows executable version. The colossal cave lives again.

Of course, this is due to the contents of the article: Will Crowther's classic computer game *Colossal Cave Adventure* created the text-adventure game genre, and this paper details new evidence discovered when unearthing Crowther's original source code (in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike, on a Unix server), which was thought lost. The original game is compared to the real Colossal Cave in Kentucky, with some surprising insights into the structure and history of the game. The contribution of this article to gaming history, given the popularity of games with the type of people who read Slashdot or Boing Boing or Metafilter, is assured. Yet the popularity of this article, even before publication, also indicates how work in digital humanities, and publications in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, can reach beyond our disciplinary boundaries, and provide interesting, entertaining, and academically rigorous contributions to a general reader beyond the usual digital humanities suspects.

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We hope other articles in this issue tickle readers in the same way. Some useful connections emerge between Jerz's article and Eric Eve's analysis of the challenges of interactive fiction design, both of which present a thematic perspective grounded in a detailed view of the structure and coding of the game. Steve Anderson examines the emerging digital practices and techniques that distinguish the digital avant garde, and David Hoover argues for the critical and interpretive value of text analysis.

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We also hope that the success of this article indicates the importance and benefits of publishing in DHQ. We encourage you to continue with us in this experiment: submit, review, and enjoy.

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