

## Creating a regional DH community – A Case Study of the RedHD

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### Abstract

Although Digital Humanities (DH) has become more established in recent years one of the main issues that remains is the true internationalization of DH as an academic discipline. Up to this point the DH community has been mainly focused on scholars from a handful of English speaking countries and there is little or no participation from other regions of the world. This paper discusses the experience of setting up a DH community in Mexico. The aim is to describe the multi-faceted approach used for DH community building as well as discussing different strategies employed, difficulties encountered, produced results as well as areas for future growth. We propose that this may serve as a model for similar initiatives in other countries.

## Introduction

In recent years there has been a noticeable growth in the establishment of new DH associations both regional and national. 2011 saw the establishment of the Red de Humanidades Digitales (RedHD), Humanidades Digitales Hispánicas (HDH) and the Associazione per l'Informatica Umanistica e la Cultura Digitale<sup>[1]</sup>; 2012 of the Digital Humanities Deutschland, and 2013 the Associação das Humanidades Digitais (AHDig), Asociación de Humanidades Digitales en Argentina (HDA) and Ruach Digitalit – Digital Humanities Israel [Galina 2014]. These organizations should contribute to an increasingly complex global DH landscape. However, the DH international community and in particular the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO), established in 2002 and arguably the largest professional society of Digital Humanities and/or the initiatives its sponsors, has been criticized in recent years [Fiormonte 2012], [Dacos 2013] for a narrow representation of worldwide DH: "... from the point of view of the scientific results, research projects, and institutional presence, Informatica Umanistica, like most of the 'other' DH practiced in the world, practically doesn't exist" [Fiormonte 2012].

There are, of course, numerous and complex issues at stake here and they must be addressed on many different levels. However, one small step which may contribute towards knowing and recognizing "other" DH in the world is to better understand how DH communities are formed and what their particular characteristics and trajectories are. In this way we can address the issue of how to improve their visibility, participation, and recognition in the field of Digital Humanities as a whole. In this paper we will discuss the experience of setting up a DH community in Mexico. The aim is to describe the multi-faceted approach used for DH community-building as well as to discuss different strategies employed, difficulties encountered, and results produced as well as areas for future growth. This article has a necessarily descriptive aspect but still we propose that this may serve as a learning example or model for similar initiatives in other countries.

## Background

In April 2010 a research project was funded by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) with the principal aim of studying the current situation of digital resources for the humanities. The methodology for this research project included the organization of a series of workshops. It was during these that the idea to form a DH network was proposed by the participants. This article will not report on the results of the research project that have been reported

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elsewhere [Galina 2012b], but rather on the work done from the workshops onwards to form and establish the Red de Humanidades Digitales (RedHD), the resulting DH organization that was established.

## Workshops

The principal researcher on the project had previous contact with Digital Humanities due to postgraduate studies in the UK. There are a number of self-reflective articles on the role, organization and future of Digital Humanities which is typical of an emerging field and they attempt not only to define but also to understand the role, impact and challenges of developing digital projects as part of research and teaching in the Humanities [Svensson 2009]. With this in mind from the onset it was considered that DH literature would provide a suitable framework for developing the research project.

Four workshops were organized between September 2010 and June 2011 under the name “Digital Humanities”. The aims of the first two workshops were: to share experiences in the development of digitization and digital resource creation in the Humanities; identify the main difficulties and limitations for DH; discuss and identify the necessary skills for human resources, and to define concrete actions to strengthen and improve digital projects in the Humanities. The last two workshops were specifically aimed at consolidating the RedHD.

One of the first challenges was selecting the participants for the workshops. The aims of the workshop required that the participants have some experience working with digital projects in the Humanities. They were not just informative but also participative. As part of the research project a database of digital projects within the UNAM web space — www.unam.mx — had previously been compiled. This was done by selecting the web pages of all the Humanities-related schools and institutes and navigating through the different links finding and registering digital resources created by university members. This database was used to contact the creators of these resources and invite them to the workshops when possible. Additionally, they were strongly encouraged to invite colleagues with similar backgrounds, creating a snowball effect. Although originally the workshop was only UNAM members, colleagues from other universities became interested in participating and they were included.

In order to be as inclusive as possible the definition of a digital project in the Humanities field was broad. The participants had worked on projects such as XIX century manuscripts markup, digital images (research in pre Hispanic mural paintings, visualizations archeological sites), sound files (linguistics research in indigenous languages), computational linguistics (text mining, corpus of Mexican Spanish), computational creativity (story building) as well as digital journals, collections and libraries. Table 1 shows number of participants by field for each workshop.

Subject	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3	Workshop 4
<b>Anthropology</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Architecture</b>	0	1	1	1
<b>Art History and Aesthetics</b>	3	3	3	1
<b>Bibliography, Book and Library Studies</b>	2	3	7*	1
<b>Cultural Studies</b>	0	0	0	2
<b>Engineering Linguistics</b>	1	0	2	0
<b>Graphic Design</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>History</b>	1	1	0	3
<b>Philology and Literature</b>	3	3	2	4
<b>Philosophy</b>	4	1	2	3
<b>Total # of participants</b>	15	12	18	16

**Table 1.** \*Note: For this particular workshop one of the participants invited his MA in Library Studies students to work on the RedHD’s website as a final project for a course on designing information systems, hence the pronounced increase in number of assistants.

For the most part the involvement of participants was fairly constant throughout the workshops and we managed to consolidate a core group. Excessive workload or previous commitments were the most common reasons for not participating.

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As previously mentioned, Digital Humanities concepts were used to framework the research. The first workshop began with an introduction to DH explaining its history, main concepts, communication channels, publications and discussions. We defined DH as “an area of research and teaching at the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities,” which was taken from the Digital Humanities Wikipedia entry. The principal researcher did, however, previously attempt to find a more concise definition, but this proved problematic. A member of an established DH centre responded to the following when asked for a definition of DH: “a very familiar question! and there is no answer, I'm afraid...I'm currently seeing through press our next edited volume (...) in which we round up all the crucial papers and blog posts in the area and bundle it all into one teaching text that goes ‘there is no one definition! see!’”<sup>[2]</sup>

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In the first workshop only one participant had heard of DH. This was due to a sabbatical in the United States. However, by the fourth workshop two more participants, PhD students in Spanish Literature from the University of Western Ontario in Canada, were familiar with DH. It is worth adding that they had heard of the efforts to establish the RedHD through the participation of several workshop members in March 2011 of *Day of DH* and this was how contact was established.

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The introduction to DH was followed by a group discussion which focused on the experiences that participants had when developing a digital project. In order to provide a framework for the conversation, we identified seven key topics from the DH literature. These key topics were then addressed in the form of questions that participants were invited to respond to orally, and this in turn was discussed within the group. Key topics are listed below and the specific questions are provided in Appendix 1.

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1. Organization context including institutional recognition and support
2. Planning and development
3. Intellectual property and copyright
4. Human resources and training
5. Dissemination and use
6. Completion and sustainability
7. Digital humanist career

The results of these two initial workshops have been reported in much more detail elsewhere [Galina 2012b], but in summary a common characteristic was that participants felt that there was little infrastructural and institutional support for the development of their digital projects and no policies or guidelines in place. Some enjoyed this marginality as it allowed them to work more independently, while others remarked on the difficulties of investing time in a project that was not recognized as “proper” research. Everyone felt that there was little recognition of the value of their work from colleagues and evaluation committees. Contrary to what was expected, participants had few difficulties obtaining funding (albeit small amounts) but in general had more trouble finding and retaining students or research assistants with the appropriate combination of digital skills and a Humanities background to help with the work. Projects were generally a personal initiative, were not properly documented due to lack of time, and there was concern about what would happen to them once the funding run out. As put by one participant, “When does a project become the university’s service and somebody else’s responsibility?” The long-term future of most of these resources was not assured as hosting and maintenance was precarious for almost all projects.

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As our discussion focused on general issues related to working on a DH project, we did not find significant differences amongst disciplinary backgrounds. We found that we had similar problems despite the different topics of the digital projects. Although most participants had not previously heard of DH, there was considerable interest in hearing about this field and how it could help them out with their own digital projects. In particular, participants reported a sense of marginality in their workplace and they felt that they benefited from talking to “other people like me.” In this sense the knowledge that there was a larger community of scholars with similar interests and challenges was revealing. At this

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particular point, participants were interested in how as a local group we could collaborate together towards the “professionalization” of the type of work we were doing as well as address our common challenges together. We did not however, reflect on the nature of Digital Humanities or go into too much depth about its definition. Rather, it served as a useful umbrella term that helped group us together. Possibly the most notable result was that although originally only two workshops were planned, at the end of the second one the group decided to continue to meet in order to address pending issues. It was concluded that the best way forward was to create a DH association that would allow us to deal with them collectively, rather than individually. This was the focus of the next two workshops.

## Building a community

One of the first challenges was moving from a workshop atmosphere to establishing a more formal but still dynamic network of DH practitioners. As mentioned previously the workshops had already attracted the attention of participants from outside the UNAM, so it was clear that the network would be geographically dispersed. No funding was available so we did not want to incur travel costs. It was necessary and practical to think from the start of a virtual community with few or no face-to-face meetings. One of the main concerns during the third and fourth workshop was that although we noted a lot of enthusiasm, we feared that personal workloads, geographical dispersion, and different disciplinary backgrounds would lead to a weakening of our initiative. A virtual community is defined as a situation where “people carry on public discussions long enough, with *sufficient human feeling*, to form webs of personal relationships” [Rheingold 1993]. We therefore wanted to ensure good communication channels to talk, organize and work with relevant people on particular topics.

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It was agreed that it was important for us to focus on concrete actions and outcomes rather than just on good intentions or overambitious plans. We therefore developed a concrete agenda that would serve to focus our attention. Initial plans were reported at DH 2012 [Galina 2012a] but the following expands and updates the work done. Referring back to Rheingold’s definition, our main priorities were to: establish our communication channels, define participants, and state our topics.

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## Establishing communication channels

It was decided that digital technologies could easily be employed for our communication channels, especially with the high degree of computer use by all the participants. The success of the Humanist Discussion group and its key role in the establishment of the Anglo-American DH community led us to decide to establish a listserv as our primary communication channel, despite the fact that there are currently more modern approaches in particular with social networking sites. The listserv was a proven method and in addition it did not require participants to have to belong to a particular social networking site. All participants had access to email thus creating a low barrier entry. We currently have over one hundred and sixty registered participants. Presently participants are asked for their name, institution and country but this was not always the case. We are currently working towards completing the missing information. In general terms there are people from Archaeology, Art History, Computing, Conservation Studies, Culture Studies, Pedagogy, Graphic Design, History, Library Studies, Linguistic Engineering, Philology, and Philosophy. Around a third of the subscribers are from outside Mexico from the following countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Perú, Uruguay, USA, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK and Signapore. The second step was to set up a webpage. We were fortunate to be able to have one web programmer from the research project to help. The webpage was considered a space for hosting the projects and tools that we wished to develop and not just as an informative page. Both the establishment of the listserv and the webpage required us to make a series of decisions about our aspirations as a group, albeit in a roundabout way, as we made decisions about hosting and domain names. As a starting point we realized that although the workshops had been held at the UNAM already, there were participants from other Mexican universities and from non-academic organizations. We also knew that at least at that time, there was no other Latin American organization. In terms of language, although we were aware of DH type work being done in Spain [Rojas2013] there was still no formal association in place. We therefore agreed that the aims of the RedHD are:

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to promote and strengthen work on humanities and computing, with special emphasis on research and teaching in Spanish speaking countries as well as the Latin American region in general. The

RedHD supports better communication between digital humanists in the region, the formation of human resources, preparation of documentation and good practices, the promotion of DH projects, dissemination of DH related events as well as promoting the recognition of the field. Additionally we seek to promote regional projects and initiatives on an international level.

In terms of domain names we did not want to associate the DH community to any institution in particular. Additionally, we were thinking not only on a national scale but also on a regional Latin American one. We took the decision to get a .mx and .net domain (www.humanidadesdigitales.mx and www.humanidadesdigitales.net) and pay for external hosting. These costs were absorbed by some of the members of the group, as they are relatively low. However, although costs have gone down considerably this may not necessarily be the case for other countries, and this should be taken into consideration.

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## Relevant people

It was agreed that we continued to want to be as inclusive as possible. We decided that certain academic structures available to us (such as seminars) were restrictive in terms of who could participate (for example, had to formally belong to a university). The workshops had caught the interest of a diverse range of people from researchers with PhDs to young programmers not interested in traditional academic careers or people not formally employed or enrolled in the university. We also had some from government and private companies. We decided to maintain an open and dynamic structure and anybody who joined the listserv would automatically become a member of the community. This allowed us to grow rapidly without too many restrictions. In recent months however, we have had to alter this slightly and this will be discussed further on.

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## Working around topics

From the work done at the workshops we concluded that the following topics would be the focus of our attention:

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1. Information: about digital humanists, digital resources and projects and relevant publications
2. Formation of human resources: strategies, guidelines, documentations and other activities that promote the formation of human resources required for the development of DH.
3. Project evaluation: necessary actions to generate standards, policies and indicators in order to promote the validity of DH projects and lobbying for the recognition of DH as a valid academic field. ([Galina 2012a]

The following section will describe how each one of these topics was addressed as well as the results and the difficulties we have encountered. It is important to note that these topics however do overlap and the boundaries of the different initiatives are not always clear cut but rather complement and connect to each other.

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## Information

One of the workshop results indicated that there was little documentation available about DH in Spanish. Additionally there was modest and dispersed information about the work that had been done in Mexico and other Latin American countries. This situation has changed considerably in the past four years and there is a fast growing corpus of DH literature in Spanish<sup>[3]</sup>. However at that time, one of our first objectives was to document and provide documentation related to DH in Spanish and about the work that we had already done. We also wished to maintain a database of DH projects. The discontinuation of similar projects from other countries such as AHDS, Intute and similar DH resource discovery systems was discouraging<sup>[4]</sup>. However, it also presented us with the opportunity to focus on different approaches to long-term sustainability. We are currently looking at grass root development and working in partnership with libraries. We are also in talks with other ongoing projects, such as DH Commons, in order to share information. We have found, however, that up to now, despite the maintenance issues, the databases have been useful in giving an initial important sense of production and of critical mass to move forwards as a community.

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## Formation of human resources

This was another area that we identified as a key issue. Almost all the projects experienced difficulties finding and retaining human resources — in particular research assistants and programmers — that had the right combination of both technical skills and subject knowledge to develop the projects. The lead researchers themselves were also in need of specific training that simply was not available. Most work was done through trial and error and self-training. This is similar to what has been reported in other parts of the world but the growing number of DH courses and DH degrees at the postgraduate level seeks to address this. Therefore, teaching and training were one of our focus points.

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Initially we offered a few basic courses such as “Digital resources in the Humanities” and “Introduction to TEI” within the framework of continuing education and human resource development. These courses, however, were usually done on an ad hoc basis and did not have the overall impact that we were looking for. We were more interested in getting DH into the official curriculum in order to formalize and establish in a more definite manner the presence of DH teaching.

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At the UNAM we worked on a syllabus proposal for a DH *diplomado*<sup>[5]</sup>. In order to develop this we consulted syllabi from other countries.<sup>[6]</sup> Although the topics we proposed to cover were similar, we sought to emphasize the use of a more diverse set of DH project examples. We hoped that this *diplomado* could become the basis for a future MA course. We originally assumed that setting up an MA in Digital Humanities would be simple as we believed it to be an attractive topic, especially considering the popularity in other parts of the world, but we have encountered numerous obstacles. From anecdotal evidence we feel that this is the same experience of early DH adopters in Anglo-American countries. A recent New Zealand report on passing a DH curricula through a national board notes that the “final form reflects not only the ‘state of the art’ in the discipline in question, but the ‘state of the art’ as parsed through academic staff, informed (and uninformed) reviewers, institutional context (and necessity), national educational policies, and the shifting sands of methodological and critical best practice” [Smithies 2013]. New DH courses are, therefore, shaped and influenced by a variety of different actors and interests. Political and cultural issues are definitely at stake.

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More recently we worked on another academic course known as *Especialización*, which is available to undergraduate students and looks to inform students in a particular area (for example, paleography or art appraisal) on the subject of Textual Culture and Documentary Heritage, and again we proposed *Humanidades Digitales* as one of the courses. Both the *diplomado* and the *especialización* included an important practical component and both focused on doing a DH project as an end result. The *especialización* was accepted but it was necessary to change the name to “Digital projects in the Humanities.” On this occasion we faced objections to the term Digital Humanities. The term was unfamiliar to most of the people on the commission and because there were no precedents<sup>[7]</sup>, except for the RedHD, we had difficulties justifying its use. Although we made references to the work done in other countries we were unable to convince the program committee to take the risk of proposing something so new. Proposals go through a complex bureaucratic process and it is quite likely that the commission did not want to put the whole *Especialización* in jeopardy by proposing an unknown subject. Additionally, at the time we ourselves as RedHD had not fully discussed what we meant by DH except as a broad definition and possibly we were not sufficiently prepared. As stated by [Terras 2010], digital humanists must be ready to explain “what we do and why we matter and why we should be supported and why DH makes sense.” This will be discussed in more detail further along.

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As well as training and formal courses we also noted an absence of information about DH in Spanish, although as mentioned previously this has changed notably over the past four years. One of our first actions was a special issue of the *Revista Digital Universitaria* (RDU) in July 2011<sup>[8]</sup>, a successful online peer-reviewed general interest journal published by the UNAM on the subject of Digital Humanities. In September of that same year we set up a blog of the RedHD<sup>[9]</sup> and we have been publishing fairly regularly every two weeks. The blog now has over 100 entries from 27 collaborators both from Mexico and international covering topics from open access, open culture, collective intelligence, preservation, philosophy and technology, digital objects among others all in relation to DH. Almost all entries are original Spanish creations, although we have included a few translations. We have not as yet initiated a planned translation program, but rather the ones we have are a result of interest by some of our bloggers. We are currently in talks with other blogs about setting up reciprocating translations. The blog has been key in gaining attention and distributing

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information. In April 2013 we also began to publish a monthly newsletter (*Boletín RedHD*) which includes a few news items plus information about one of the blog entries of that moment. We currently have almost two hundred subscribers and the number is still growing. Unfortunately the system only requires email address so we do not have further information about the subscribers.

In the near future we are planning on more formal and extensive publications, namely a book and a journal. Recently a number of DH readers have been published ([Berry 2014]; [Gold 2012]; [Terras 2013]) and to our knowledge there is only one recently published book on Digital Humanities in Spanish [Romero 2014] and we see a need to provide more general DH books. There are currently several DH journals (for example, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* and *Digital Humanities Quarterly*) that are published in English. In Spanish some journals have published DH articles (for example *Caracteres* and *El Profesional de la Información*) but as of yet there is not to our knowledge a dedicated DH journal.

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Another strategy for the human resource formation has been the organization of DH events, namely a biannual conference. Academic events provide visibility of DH as well as promote the formation of human resources and foster collaboration between the community members. As the community grows we feel that these events are key to identifying and bringing together fellow digital humanists. In May 2012 we organized the 1er Encuentro de HD (Digital Humanities Conference) in Mexico City, co-hosted by CONACULTA, the ministry of art and culture, and again in 2014 additionally held in conjunction with GO:DH (Global Outlook: Digital Humanities), a special interest group of the ADHO (Association of Digital Humanities Organizations). In both cases the events have been free as we have wanted to be as inclusive as possible, and due to administration problems regarding funds that will be described later. The venue was provided by Conaculta and catering and other amenities were kept simple. The work for the conference has been done mainly by members of the RedHD and student volunteers. In 2012 we had 31 presenters and almost all were from organizations within Mexico. For 2014 there were over 70 presentations and although there was a predominance of speakers from the hosting country, which is to be expected, almost half of the authors were from other countries namely Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States. The program was divided into talks on: Libraries and archives, Social networking, Teaching, Theory, Applications, Language and corpora, Cultural studies, Technology and philosophy, Visualizations, Reading and materiality as well as Demos and Posters<sup>[10]</sup>. What makes these events particularly interesting is that we it helps us to discover the numerous DH projects that exist in the country and others areas of Latin America as well as connecting with the creators.

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## Project evaluation

The third and final issue that we decided to focus on was project evaluation. As mentioned previously among workshop attendees we found that lack of recognition of their work was a constant grievance. DH scholars felt that evaluation committees and peers tended to dismiss digital resources as inferior to “real” publications (i.e., on paper). Criteria for evaluation both at the UNAM and at national level do not take into consideration digital resources and until only recently have incorporated digital publications, especially in the Humanities.

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Most DH projects are not presented in traditional research output formats such as articles or books, but take on various formats such as development of metadata, textual markup, tools, websites and others [Schreibman 2011], so many evaluation committees are at a loss with how to deal with these materials. At the same time, people developing a DH project do not necessarily know what elements should be included. Although much work has been done to convince our colleagues that digital research is worthy, a pending problem is that they do not necessarily have the knowledge or tools to evaluate DH work [Rockwell 2011].

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We wanted therefore to develop and provide basic guidelines and best practices for DH resources. In addition we wanted to provide an online checklist that allowed users to evaluate a particular resource using an interface that displays the results of the evaluation, indicating areas of weakness and strength. The aim of this tool would be threefold: step-by-step evaluation tool for committees, a resource for developers, and an informal compliance of a minimum standard.

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We formed an ad hoc committee from the original workshop attendees to work on a proposal and revised related guidelines (both national and international) and created initial best practice guidelines. We then extracted key elements in the form of questions and presented them as an online checklist. The final product is in Spanish and adjusted to our own particular requirements. The checklist is divided into five sections with questions related to: Project Team, Documentation, Usability, Design and Access; Evaluation and Peer Review; Copyright and Visibility and Dissemination. The checklist is also available in English<sup>[11]</sup>.

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## Discussion and conclusions

In the previous section we discussed the work we have done around the topics that we set out to solve. In this process several general issues arose. As mentioned previously, the workshops used the term Digital Humanities. However, during the workshops we discussed whether this was an appropriate term. We looked at the terms used in English over time (at that point Humanities Computing was still used by some) and different options in Spanish, specifically *Informática para las Humanidades*, which had been used in Spain and is similar to the long standing term *Informatica Umanistica* used by the Italians. In the end we decided to settle for *Humanidades Digitales* due to its emphasis on “digital” rather than “informatics” and because of its similarity to the English term. This discussion was led mainly by the participants who had had contact with the international DH community. Outside the workshops however, this term has created some controversy and even opposition. Although Digital Humanities has gained growing popularity in academic sectors around the world [Pannapacker 2009], it is still true that many digital humanists continue to have the need to explain and sometimes defend the type of work they are doing [Pannapacker 2009] as there is by no means a universal acceptance or recognition of the value of DH [Fish 2011], [Kirsch 2014]. In Mexico where, as previously mentioned, Digital Humanities is fairly unknown, it seems that the RedHD probably underestimated the need to introduce and discuss in a more structured manner the impact of Digital Humanities. We are now more aware that lobbying will be a fundamental part of our future work.

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Furthermore, as we seek to consolidate our DH community we also have to continue identifying and clarifying the particular needs and challenges we face that are different from other DH communities around the world. It is not just a question of importing but of establishing our own agenda. In order to do so, however, we have had to work on defining ourselves. At the beginning we had settled on being very open in order to be as inclusive as possible, but in recent months we have started to consider in a more detailed manner what the RedHD is, what it does, who belongs and what our relationship is to other emerging and established DH communities

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In this way we have begun to address some regional as well as linguistic issues which we would like to work on in the near future. To this effect we participated in the organization of el Día de Humanidades Digitales (DíaHD)/ Dia das humanidades digitais modeled on the well known project Day of DH. The event has been held twice, in June 2013 and then again in October 2014, and it sought to identify and bring together the work of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking digital humanists. The idea behind creating a separate event to the Day of DH was to see if we could identify particular characteristics that differed from the main event, in particular because Day of DH is characterized by a predominant participation of digital humanists from the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom. From the 2013 edition, 97 blogs were analyzed in order to document and transcribe how there is an emerging discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, as Portuguese and Spanish speaking communities undergo a process of semantic change in order to accommodate the language and terminology used in the Digital Humanities. The results are reported elsewhere [Priani 2014] and focus on the discourse as a space of disciplinary construction in the way we name, describe and explain as well as giving an overview of some initial characteristics we detected. Another result of this exercise is the the creation of MapaHD (DH Map) an “exploration of the features and intersections among those who self-identify as HD practitioners and their characteristics beyond language affiliation” which not only evidences the existence of this DH community but also some of its characteristics [Ortega 2014b].

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One aspect that we did not take into consideration during the workshops and that has been important in the creation of the RedHD has been our connection to the international DH community. Our work has coincided with a particularly self-critical period for DH as a field and increasing international participation has become a key priority. As mentioned previously there are also a number of other regional and/or linguistic initiatives have that been created over the past few

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years. It is important that as a community we define how we want to fit in with other DH communities around the world. As the global DH community is expanding, many aspects about the organization are being renegotiated and this is an important moment to participate in the discussion.

From our own experience at the RedHD the use of English as the predominant language in DH international events is an obstacle for further participation. Although this is a common problem in academia in general, in DH we have found this to be particularly troublesome due to the makeup of participants. Although further research would still be necessary it is quite common in the Sciences that PhD holders will generally have a good working knowledge of English as it is usually indispensable to their field. In the Humanities however, this is less common as many work on particular subjects where English is not necessarily the *lingua franca*. Moreover, for DH projects there is usually the participation of graphic designers, programmers and a wide variety of people that do not necessarily have a traditional PhD academic track where English is more common. How do we incorporate these new types of participants? This issue is complicated but must be addressed. For the time being we have participated in a number of translation initiatives. For example: the translation of the Call for Papers for the international Digital Humanities conference and the “I whisper” translation campaign for DH2014 [Ortega 2014a].

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Funding has been a particular ordeal for us. Originally we set ourselves up as a loosely formed network as this allowed us great flexibility in setting up our community. However, this less rigid structure does not allow us to exist “officially” and this leads to difficulties in obtaining funding. We have decided to form a legally constituted association. However, forming an association in Mexico is both complicated and expensive. Currently it costs about \$1000 dollars in bureaucratic and legal fees just to set up the association, and the process takes several months. Apparently this is a similar situation in other Latin American countries. We do not know if this is the case for the USA or European countries, but anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that this is not an obstacle. Through a donation scheme we have managed to collect the necessary amount and we are currently setting up the association. However, bureaucracy and expensive legal and notary fees are a problem for this kind of initiative. We are aware, again through anecdotal evidence, of other difficulties such as international transfers and payments for some countries (for example, Cuba) that greatly hamper participation.

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An association however, allows us to participate in government funding, offer bursaries for our members, receive payments for courses, workshops or other academic events, issue receipts, do consulting work and other activities which we could not do before.

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Membership fees are modest and exemptions and alternative options are in place in order to remain as inclusive as possible.

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The work done during the workshops, in particular identifying critical issues through the DH framework exercise, has been key to the success of the project. In retrospect, developing specific tasks and areas to be addressed helped the formation of the RedHD and as a community gave us a sense of direction and purpose. In the DH spirit of building and making things [Ramsay 2011], the RedHD has achieved quite a lot in a short period of time. Digital Humanities proved to be a useful term that grouped us together and helped us resolve our common goals in a very pragmatic sense. These past four years' work has been achieved with little funding and a great deal of enthusiasm. However, this is not sustainable over a longer period and if we are to grow any more we definitely require a more institutionalized scheme. We would in the future be interested in the establishment of DH centres or other types of institutional recognition for further strengthening our community both in research and in teaching. We are well aware that part of our work will now involve a great degree of lobbying and promotion. However, we do think that this should change gradually over the next few years as DH becomes better known within academic circles and in particular university authorities in the country and the region. Part of this work is to establish DH within the curricula both at undergraduate and graduate level.

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We have entered now though, together with other people in DH, a period where there is a need for reflection on how we understand the term Digital Humanities, who we are as a community, our objectives, and the way we relate to other DH communities both regional and international. Defining Digital Humanities and our role as a community is an ongoing and continuing process. It is important at this stage, as we are trying to more formally institutionalize and implement our

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projects to better phrase what we are doing and what we want to achieve. Additionally, collaboration and communication with other DH communities around the world is fundamental and we must find ways of addressing this. We will be working towards that and other issues described here in the near future.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the reviewers of this article for their extremely helpful comments.

## Appendix 1

1. Organization context including institutional recognition and support [Warwick 2008b]
  - a. Does the project have dedicated office space assigned?
  - b. Is the project financed? Who finances it? For how long?
  - c. Does the project have the necessary computing infrastructure? Where did it come from? What will happen to it once the project is finished?
  - d. If the project is online, where is it hosted? What are the hosting terms? For how long?
2. Planning and development
  - a. What was the main motivation for undertaking this project?
  - b. How was the project planned? Was there a planning phase?
  - c. Was user testing undertaken?
  - d. How were the interfaces designed? Are they in more than one language?
  - e. Is documentation available about the project and its development?
  - f. Is the project finished or will it be finished? How was this decided?
3. Intellectual property and copyright [Rehm 2007]

*Material for the project*

  - a. Were the appropriate legal permissions for the materials used in for the project secured? How was this done?
  - b. How were copyright issues addressed in general?

*The digital project*

  - c. How was copyright established for the final digital project?
  - d. Were any additional licensing implemented, such as CC or Open source?
4. Human resources and training [Warwick 2009]
  - a. How easy or difficult was it to find people to work on the project?
  - b. Did they have the appropriate skills? Was further training necessary? How was this achieved?
  - c. Has it been easy to keep the necessary team together? What type of hiring issues have you had?
5. Dissemination and use [Warwick 2008a]
  - a. Has the project been presented at a conference, workshop or other type of event? Have there been any publications?
  - b. Does the final product contain metadata that can increase its visibility for search engines?
  - c. Do you have information about how the project is being used, by whom and for what?
  - d. Do you have usage statistics, such as Google Analytics?
6. Completion and sustainability [Brown 2009]; [Kretzschmar 2009]; [Sewell 2009]
  - a. What are the long term plans for the project?

- b. How will it be updated?
- c. Have preservation issues been addressed?
- d. If you were no longer involved in the project, what would happen to it? Is there shared responsibility?

#### 7. Digital humanist career

- a. As an academic have you received recognition for your digital work?
- b. Has your digital work been considered for evaluation purposes (for example SNI or PRIDE<sup>[12]</sup>)?
- c. What other types of recognition have you received? (for example, invitations to meetings, conferences, presentations, interviews)<sup>[13]</sup>

## Notes

[1] This is the date of official creation although as a network it has a much longer history. See D. Fiormonte *Informatica Umanistica...* Quinze ans après, 20 March 2014, <http://infolet.it/2014/03/20/informatica-umanistica-quinze-ans-apres/>

[2] Melissa Terras, personal correspondence, 13/03/2011

[3] See for example the Zotero group of Humanidades Digitales created by Antonio Rojas Castro in August 2013 which currently has almost one hundred members and over four hundred entries. See [https://www.zotero.org/groups/humanidades\\_digitales](https://www.zotero.org/groups/humanidades_digitales).

[4] See for example, AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council, Announcement 14<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Published AHDS webpage 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007. Available Internet Archive: <http://web.archive.org/web/20071012045201/ahds.ac.uk/news/futureAHDS.htm> and NINCH (National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage). "International Database of Digital Humanities Projects." Project report: <http://www.ninch.org/programs/data/>.

[5] A diplomado is a highly specialized academic course that must cover a minimum of 120 hours. No academic degree is awarded but they are recognised as certification courses of specialized topics.

[6] We used Lisa Spiro's Digital Humanities Education, Zotero Group. Available at: [https://www.zotero.org/groups/digital\\_humanities\\_education](https://www.zotero.org/groups/digital_humanities_education). The list has a strong preponderance of courses in the USA.

[7] As explained by [Rojas2013] the use of the term Humanidades Digitales was consolidated with the creation of Humanidades Digitales Hispánicas (HDH) in 2012, shortly after the work we are reporting.

[8] *Humanidades Digitales*, Revista Digital Universitaria (RDU), 2011 Vol. 12, No.7

[9] Blog de la RedHD. Available at: <http://humanidadesdigitales.net/blog/>

[10] The final program is available at: <http://www.humanidadesdigitales.net/files/Programa.pdf>

[11] Checklist for Digital Humanities Projects - <http://humanidadesdigitales.net/evaluacion/eng/>

[12] Research incentive programs in Mexico at national and university level: SNI (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores*) belonging to the Conacyt (*Consejo Nacional para la Ciencia y Tecnología*) and Pride (*Programa de Primas de Desempeño Académico de Tiempo Completo*) belong to the UNAM.

[13] This list of questions has been published previously in Galina, 2012 but it was considered relevant to include a version in English for this article.

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