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Beyond the Margins: Intersectionality and the Digital Humanities

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between intersectionality and the digital humanities. Intersectionality offers a critical approach to debates between theory and method in the field, transcending simplistic hack vs. yack binaries. This article situates debates over difference in the digital humanities within the context of the culture wars within the U.S. academy during the 1980s and 1990s, locating the stakes for diversity in the digital humanities. It surveys digital humanities projects, outlining the need for alternate histories of the digital humanities told through intersectional lenses. Finally, the article proposes ways of looking forward towards the deeper intersectional analysis needed to expand intellectual diversity in the field and move difference beyond the margins of the digital humanities.

Introduction

While digital humanities has grown, so too has the number of voices making the case for attention to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, and other categories of identity in the field. Increasing numbers of panels at the annual meetings of Digital Humanities; Modern Language Association; American Studies Association; American Historical Association; National Women's Studies Association; and Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC) examine the role of difference in digital humanities scholarship. In today's "digital humanities moment" [Gold 2013], the field often re-encounters the growing pains of the "eternal September of the digital humanities" [Nowviskie 2013]. As a result, recurring questions insist on the need for cultural critique in the field: "Where is cultural criticism in the digital humanities?" [Liu 2013], "Can we describe digital archives as feminist?" [Wernimont 2013], "Why are the digital humanities so white?" [McPherson 2013], and "Can information be unfettered?" [Earhart 2013]. The persistence of these questions demonstrates the need for more answers to the pressing matter of inclusion and exclusion within the field.

[1]

A recent special issue of the journal *differences*, "In the Shadow of the Digital Humanities," considers the fraught relationship between digital humanities and diversity. The call for papers for the Canadian Society for Digital Humanities and Association for Computers and the Humanities joint conference encourages proposals from "women, people of color, LGBTQ, or other under-represented groups" [Saklofske 2014]. The 2015 Digital Diversity conference in Edmonton celebrates the 20th anniversary of *The Orlando Project* and asks, "Have decades of digital studies enhanced, altered, or muted the project to recover and represent more diverse histories of writers, thinkers, and artists positioned differently by gender, race, ethnicity, sexualities, social class, and/or global location?" [Digital Diversity 2015]. Such calls suggest that scholars within digital humanities have begun recognizing the need for inclusive representation and a critical approach that foregrounds intellectual diversity within the field.

[2]

Resistance to the utility of cultural criticism abounds. Notably, Matthew Kirschenbaum argues many critics target a construct of "digital humanities" rather than the varied range of projects that comprise the field [Kirschenbaum 2014]. In distinguishing between a discursive subject of criticism and material praxis, he echoes debates over the "hack vs. yack" binary – doing vs. theorizing – that have taken place in the field [Ramsay 2011]; [Cecire 2011]; [Schmidt 2011]; [Jones 2013]. Invoking a division between the two has been something of a stock move, used in equal measure to call digital humanists untheoretical [Bauer 2011] and to distance digital humanities from the messy realities of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other forms of difference [Smith 2007]. As Bethany Nowviskie notes, the binary has become a strawman for a false claim of a "fundamental opposition in thinking between humanities theorists and deliberately anti-theoretical DH 'builders'" [Nowviskie 2014]. The division between "hack" and "yack" has been complicated by the idea of tacit knowledge [Turkel 2010] that

[3]

emerges from "journeyman learning experiences" [Nowviskie 2012] and by the intimate link between building and knowing within the field [Rockwell 2011]; [Scheinfeldt 2010a]. Yet, the binary persists, both in questionable arguments that cultural criticism targets a discursive construction of the field alone and invalid claims that an emphasis on building makes digital humanities untheoretical.

The relationship between theory and praxis is integral to the digital humanities. Connections between the two appear in the archives built, corpora analyzed, oral histories recorded, and geographies mapped. As Alan Liu has suggested, the practices of digital humanities make engagement with cultural critique online possible [Liu 2013]. In turn, theory contributes to the development of the field's metadiscourse and enables a critical look at material practices, including their omissions. Those of us who work with issues of difference often perceive the ways that many digital humanities projects fail to engage with race, gender, disability, class, sexuality, or a combination thereof. Some of the most developed digital humanities work – The Rossetti Archive, The Walt Whitman Archive, The William Blake Archive – preserve the writing of dead white men, specifically individuals unlikely to be forgotten in Anglophone literary history even if these projects did not exist. There are practical explanations for such subjects. For example, the body of pre-1923 public domain material digitized and ready for study privileges canonical writers and texts. As Earhart argues, fewer scholars are working with digital textual recovery and diversifying the available texts [Earhart 2013]. Yet, as Skye Bianco has argued, the consolidation of digital humanities as a recognizable field for institutions and grantors has led to exposure for "disciplinarily legible projects" that rely on canonicity for justification, yielding a field that trades on "its kinship to much older modes of humanistic study" [Bianco 2013]. Bianco describes this trend as a form of "retro-humanism" that does not account for recent developments in the humanities, like cultural studies, feminism, postcolonial studies, critical race studies, or queer studies [Bianco 2013]. Earhart proposes that digital humanities might intervene by reviving digital textual recovery work and identifying the omissions of the canon: "crucial work by women, people of color, and the GLBTQ community" [Earhart 2013]. The stakes here are high; as digital humanities becomes the public face of the humanities through organizations like 4Humanities and HASTAC, retro-humanism cannot be the order of the day. Without attention to the omissions that exist within digital humanities scholarship, the field risks replicating the exclusions of a dominant culture that already relegates difference to its margins.

To avoid this pitfall, we need critical approaches that transcend false binaries between "hack" and "yack." Intersectionality is one such frame that offers a way of examining the history of digital humanities to identify strategies for greater intellectual diversity in the field. Intersectionality originates in the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar who sought a model for understanding the relationship between race, gender, and violence against women of color. The concept articulates Crenshaw's perception that "the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" [Crenshaw 1991, 1243]. Through her research with women living in shelters, Crenshaw saw the ways the women encountered "burdens, largely the consequence of gender and class oppression...compounded by the racially discriminatory employment and housing practices women of color often face, as well as by the disproportionately high unemployment among people of color" [Crenshaw 1991, 1245–1246]. Crenshaw proposes that "multilayered and routinized forms of domination...often converge" to shape the experiences and limit the opportunities of women of color – black women in particular – whose concerns are not adequately represented by either anti-racist or feminist discourse alone [Crenshaw 1991, 1245]. From Crenshaw's grounded analysis in the 1980s to now, intersectionality has come to signify the ways that oppression manifests through multiple facets of identity that confer or withhold privilege, unearned advantages that accrue to individuals on the basis of their identities [McIntosh 1990]. In its more expansive definition, intersectionality is generally understood to look beyond the race-class-gender triad described by Crenshaw to additional axes of difference including sexuality and ability. As a lens for scholarship in the digital humanities, intersectionality resists binary logic, encourages complex analysis, and foregrounds difference.

This article proposes that intersectionality is a viable approach to cultural criticism in the digital humanities, enabling us to write alternate histories of the field that transcend simplistic "hack" vs. "yack" binaries. I begin by situating debates over difference in the digital humanities within the larger context of the culture wars within the US academy in the 1980s and 1990s to locate the stakes of diversity within the field. Then, I suggest what an intersectional approach to digital humanities might look like and offer a survey of projects through an intersectional lens. Finally, I suggest ways the field might look forward towards deeper intersectional analysis needed to develop a transformed, inclusive digital humanities.

The Lessons of Theory

In 2009, William Pannapacker called digital humanities "the next big thing," a move that recalls the rise of critical theory, the *last* big thing to shape the humanities [Pannapacker 2009]. Responses to digital humanities from cultural critics in the

mainstream press often echo the culture wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the struggle within the US academy over the fraught relationship between literature and theory. As the story goes, with the advent of theory, Shakespeare was going to be jettisoned for Saussure, Defoe for Derrida. Cultural critic Roger Kimball argued that "ideological posturing, pop culture, and hermetic word games" were supplanting humanities education [Kimball 1990, 11]. Critics of the digital humanities have made analogous charges. For example, Adam Kirsch suggests, "...the very idea of language as the basis of humane education – even of human identity – seems to give way to a post- or pre-verbal discourse of pictures and objects. Digital humanities becomes another name for the obsequies of humanism" [Kirsch 2014]. Digital humanities reduces literature to "data." Distant reading is destroying close reading.

History repeats itself in other ways too. The backlash against theory for its elision of difference resonates with arguments for cultural critique within digital humanities. Along with theory came criticism of its rise from black, ethnic, and women's studies. Many scholars in these fields were conscious of their hard-won gains during the 1960s and 1970s – establishing academic departments and journals and having their work recognized as scholarship – and worried their position within the academy would be jeopardized by the arrival of theory in the 1980s. They did not see theoretical models based on the work of Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida as schools of thought that promoted their goals. Rather, they viewed the rise of theory in opposition to their work, which was located not in continental philosophy but in lived experiences of difference in the U.S.

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In her essay "The Race for Theory," Barbara Christian writes about the growing importance of theory in the academy in the late 1980s, articulating concerns about inclusion and exclusion that are strikingly relevant to the digital humanities. She begins, "The New Philosophers, eager to understand a world that is today fast escaping their political control, have redefined literature so that the distinctions implied by the term…have been blurred. They have changed literary critical language to suit their own purposes as philosophers, and they have reinvented the meaning of theory" [Christian 1987, 51]. Just as theory's "New Philosophers" have begun transforming literary studies through theory, so too are digital humanists opening up new possibilities for scholarship. Christian's "literary critical language" is digital humanities' "methodologies." She anticipates a shift in the landscape of the academy, wondering what will happen to radical critics if theory becomes a defining part of literary scholarship and a commodity for appointment, tenure, and promotion. Christian sees the possibility of radical critique being domesticated as "black, women, [and] third world" scholars invested in intersectional approaches to literature are coerced into adopting the language of theory and "speaking a language and defining their discussion in terms alien to and opposed to our needs and orientations" [Christian 1987, 52]. Likewise, scholars in the digital humanities advocating for cultural critique recognize that engaging with difference is not only a question of representation but also one of method.

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Digital humanities scholars who work with difference fear for its viability, much like Christian and her colleagues worried about their relationship to theory in the 1980s. Will black, ethnic, and women's studies be legible within digital humanities? Will other forms of difference – gender, sexuality, ability – have a place in the field as well? Scholars who take up these issues focus on the ways digital humanities intersects with how we engage difference in our work. These approaches are grounded in core questions of difference above, articulated by Alan Liu, Jacqueline Wernimont, Tara McPherson, and Amy Earhart, among others. Newer groups within digital humanities have been inspired by their concerns. For example, #transformDH is "an academic guerilla movement seeking to (re)define capital-letter Digital Humanities as a force for transformative scholarship by collecting, sharing, and highlighting projects that push at its boundaries and work for social justice, accessibility, and inclusion" [transformDH 2012]. The roots of #transformDH lie in "intersectional critical cultural studies" such as "critical race and ethnic studies; feminist, gender, queer studies; postcolonial, transnational, diaspora; disability studies; DIY (Add your own!)" [Cong-Huyen 2013]. As a result, #transformDH operates under the assertion that "gender, sexuality, race, nationality, and ability are all central to how we encounter and participate in digital humanities" and that "we must work collectively towards transformative, social justice oriented engagements" [Cong-Huyen 2013]. Similarly, Postcolonial Digital Humanities, or #dhpoco, has sought to build a community of scholars working at the intersections of postcolonial studies and the digital humanities, to promote "global explorations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability within cultures of technology" [Risam 2013]. Another initiative, Global Outlook::Digital Humanities (GO::DH), a special interest group of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO), fosters communication and collaboration around the world, navigating not only geographic but also economic difference and the practical challenges of embracing multilingualism within ADHO. The organization has supported the development of regional and linguistic tracks like South Asian Digital Humanities, Red Humanidades Digitales, and Associação das Humanidades Digitais; a whisper campaign to facilitate on-the-fly translations at the Digital Humanities 2014 meeting; and Alex Gil's *Around DH in 80 Days* website that showcases the international scope of projects. Groups like #transformDH, Postcolonial Digital Humanities, and GO::DH

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situate their missions at the intersections of multiple axes of difference, recognizing the need for attention to the complex power relations that serve as barriers to achieving inclusivity within the digital humanities.

The recent popularity of digital humanities obscures a longer history of which these initiatives are part. Just as Christian pushes back against the newness of theory and argues, "people of color have always theorized" [Christian 1987, 52], there are earlier, oft-unrecognized instances of digital humanities work that engages with difference. Since the 1990s, Afrofuturist scholars have been framing technoculture through intersectional lenses. Afrofuturism is an African American literary and artistic movement that foregrounds speculative approaches to displacement, belonging, and home for the African diaspora. Its literary dimensions encompass science and speculative fiction by writers like Nalo Hopkinson, Octavia Butler, and Samuel R. Delaney, while its critical angle has considered the ways that blackness, gender, class, and sexuality intersect in technoculture. Alondra Nelson created the Afrofuturism listserv in the 1990s to examine futurist themes in African diasporic cultural production, blackness in science fiction, and the possibilities of black technoculture. Her 2001 edited volume *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life* (with Thuy Linh Tu) was one of the first collections to consider the influence of racial politics on technoculture, and she also edited a 2002 issue of *Social Text* on Afrofuturism, with an emphasis on how new media, culture, and technology influence the African Diaspora. Kali Tal, who developed the Afrofuturism website, is perhaps best known for her article "Life Behind the Screen," which considers omissions in cyberculture scholarship in the mid-1990s [Tal 1996]. Scholars like W.E.B. Du Bois, she argues, have been theorizing identity in ways useful for but largely ignored by cyberculture studies. This body of work, which situates the African diaspora within the digital milieu, exists alongside early efforts at textual recovery for African American studies during the 1990s. As Earhart has suggested, projects like *The Charles Chesnutt Archive* and *Race and Place: An African-American Community in the Jim Crow South* embraced the affordances of emerging Internet technologies to resist canon bias among early digital projects [Earhart 2013]. To recognize this work within digital humanities is to embrace the possibilities of digital cultural recovery for the African diaspora. Earhart herself has begun archiving and recovering early work through her project *The Diverse History of Digital Humanities*.

Another area of scholarship that inspires digital humanities scholars invested in intersectionality is new media studies, which has been asking difficult questions about difference and the Internet since the 2000s. Lisa Nakamura's work interrogates the ways that online experiences shape perceptions of race, ethnicity, and identity, drawing on critical race theory as she identifies a relationship between operations of stereotypes online and offline [Nakamura 2002]; [Nakamura 2012]. She further suggests that the Internet is a space of re-embodiment along the lines of race and gender, as biotechnologies and other forces shape the online body [Nakamura 2007]. Similarly, Wendy Chun has examined how superficial views of difference have led to troubling beliefs that online spaces are disembodied and therefore insulated from the realities of social inequalities [Chun 2001]; [Chun 2005]. Anna Everett also takes up related issues, ranging from race in the digital public sphere [Everett 2002] to black public life and black women's experiences online [Everett 2009] and the influence of intersectional forms of difference in video games [Everett 2014]. Bringing a postcolonial lens to these debates, Pramod Nayar argues that technologized bodies are "raced, gendered, and classed, and situated in particular social, and economic, and cultural contexts" and emphasizes the importance of acknowledging subalternity in cyberspace [Nayar 2010, 66]. Drawing on theories of globalization as well as postcolonial studies, Radhika Gajjala examines the nature of South Asian technospaces, the effects of microfinance and peer-to-peer lending on women's craft communities, and the ways silence and voice are shaped online, insisting on the relationship between the local, global, and digital [Gajjala 2008]; [Gajjala 2012]. Attending to questions of media and migration, Isabelle Rigoni argues that intersectionality is an important tool for analyzing ethnic minority media. She suggests that while representation is increasingly happening in digital media, little attention has been paid to how race, gender, and postcolonial migration together "produce and maintain the unequal distribution of power in the mediascape" [Rigoni 2012, 834]. Her work situates the affordances of intersectionality for analysis of digital media, arguing that it "provide[s] an important analytical and conceptual tool for enabling us to understand gender, race, and class, as dimensions of social identities in transition, especially as reflected in the media" [Rigoni 2012, 835]. Ben Aslinger and Nina Huntemann also identify a relationship between new media studies and intersectionality, suggesting that new media studies may be a safe space for intersectional analysis and a challenge to the "often described conflation/caricature of the new media scholar as an apolitical white heterosexual male academic" [Aslinger 2013, 11]. Together, these developments in new media speak to the strides that feminist, queer, and critical race theory scholars have made in interrogating the relationship between digital media and multiple categories of identity, changing the ways we understand the relationship between networks, digital media, and subjectivity.

Recent calls for intersectional analysis in digital humanities are further indebted to Sandra Harding's ground-breaking work in feminist and postcolonial science and technology studies, which considers the relationship between feminist ways of

knowing in scientific paradigms, the role of multiculturalism in science studies, and the imperialist foundations of European and American science [Harding 1998]; [Harding 2008]. This scholarship speaks to the relationship between difference and technology in a range of intersectional forms. Implications for digital humanities include the emphasis on technoscience, which enables critical analysis of the materiality of digital and computational technologies in relation to power, embodiment, and difference. Emphasizing that technologies themselves are implicated in intersectionality, Claire Potter has suggested, "New digital technologies have their own history, one that is recent to be sure, but that nevertheless resonates to historical questions of race, class, gender, nationalism, and sexuality that are at the heart of a feminist intellectual enterprise" [Potter 2010, 358]. Together, these scholarly contributions to difference in technoculture have places in the alternate histories we must write about the digital humanities. They offer models that foreshadow the role of intersectional analysis in the field by making the case that engagement with computational technologies is inextricably linked to questions of history, culture, identity, and difference. They hint at methods that advocate inclusion and critical analysis but are situated in the materiality of technologies – the very methods central to an intersectional approach to digital humanities.

Towards an Intersectional Digital Humanities

These concerns are vital to the analytical work of digital humanities, the computational technologies developed or used to produce scholarship, and the ways projects are designed. Like any scholarly field, digital humanities veers towards the monolithic, constructing centers and peripheries. Every definition is necessarily exclusionary but the task of defining is an inevitable part of academic practice. Yet, acts of exclusion often come at the expense of those who inhabit the margins and whose identities are shaped by intersecting axes of difference. This phenomenon manifests in multiple ways, from the presumptive white maleness of digital humanities [Bailey 2011] to the canon bias within the field [Earhart 2013]; [Bianco 2013]. That is to say, this is not only a matter of the diversity of individuals within digital humanities but also of intellectual diversity. Therefore, it is incumbent on those at the center of the digital humanities to understand the position of those whose work dwells in the peripheries, to understand the historical legacies that link knowledge production with the denigration – even the destruction – of that which is other.

What I offer here is the beginning of a genealogy that identifies the influences of intersectionality on digital humanities, in its approach to theory and practice. I chart the ways intersectionality has been part of conversations in the digital humanities and survey projects in which we might find hints of intersectionality. These are the traces on which we might build to properly situate intersectionality as critical approach to the field. Broad in range, hallmarks of intersectionality in digital humanities include common sense advice for cultivating a diverse community, theoretical models for understanding the ways difference shapes digital practices, applied theoretical models that position intersectionality as an already existing but oft-overlooked part of computation, and practical tweaks like acknowledging inclusions and exclusions in data or developing search functions that enable intersectional engagement. Projects that are explicitly intersectional in their design and development are more rare but nonetheless essential.

Among early voices advocating for a theoretically intersectional approach to digital humanities is Martha Nell Smith, who proposes that the rigor of the field depends on it. She suggests, "Our pliant and accommodating standards need also to be more interdisciplinary and take into account the 'messy' facts of authorship, production, and reception: race, class, gender, and sexuality" [Smith 2007, 2]. Undertaking such a task of "embracing messy humanity in all its diversities" is, according to Smith, "no longer a luxury for our community, it is a necessity" [Smith 2007, 2]. More recently, Smith has issued a call to integrate feminist, critical race, sexuality, and class-based analysis into digital humanities, particularly in digital archival practice. Such an approach would address questions like "How have these items of knowledge and the organizations and working groups who made them come into being? Who has stakes in their presentation? What is visible in these new media archives and what might not be? Can what is invisible but relevant be known to users of new digital archives?" [Smith 2014, 409]. To thaw the "frozen social relations" [Smith 2014, 404] that she identifies within digital humanities scholarship, Smith suggests, "Producers should make every effort to make clear what has been occluded by remediation, by principles and practices of selection, and to unfreeze old binaries of authority and involve users in knowledge production" [Smith 2014, 409]. That is to say, digital humanities scholarship must be self-reflexive, interrogating its own positionality within the broader landscape of knowledge production, along axes of difference.

Another consideration is the tensions evoked by engagement with difference in the digital humanities. The field is beleaguered by its own creation myths and investment in "niceness," "collegiality," and "openness." Tom Scheinfeldt attributes this niceness to the field's investment in method, suggesting that methodological debates are easier to resolve than theoretical ones [Scheinfeldt 2010b]. Conversely, Bianco has proposed that depictions of digital humanities as the

"cool kids' table" from outside the field and the emphasis on niceness within mean digital humanities is "constructing itself through the competing narratives of privileged, middle-class, white high-school politics in tension with privileged, middle-class, white people who work 'nicely' together" [Bianco 2013]. These issues – niceness, method, difference, theory – came to the fore in responses to Miriam Posner's essay about coding. While not opposed to code, Posner identifies the way that knowledge of coding plays out along gendered, classed, and racialized lines, noting that "men – middle-class white men" are more likely to have been encouraged to engage with computational technology at a young age [Posner 2012]. Identifying the intersectional structural biases influencing trends in who is most likely to know how to code, Posner suggests, "If you [digital humanists] want women and people of color in your community, if it is important to you to have a diverse discipline, you need to do something besides exhort us to code" [Posner 2012]. Responses to Posner's post, which included dissent, revealed how misunderstood the connection between theory and method can be. She responded by linking method – coding – to theory – arguing, "Let's make inequities of power something else we decide to abandon" and proposing guidelines for intersectional engagement in the digital humanities community: "1. Let's think about ways to build communities of underrepresented people...2. Let's acknowledge that we all do racist and sexist stuff sometimes...3. Let's talk about when our niceness could be shutting down important conversations...4. Let's believe people when they tell us they feel uncomfortable" [Posner 2012]. Here, Posner identifies the influence of difference, arguably a theoretical concern, on method. These guidelines are a precondition to an intersectional response to difference in digital humanities that embraces the relationship between theory and method.

Approaching difference by blending Smith's recommendations for intersectional analysis and Posner's community guidelines reveals the ways the field is already informed by intersectionality. As Bianco has suggested, computational scholarship already is "a radically heterogeneous and a multimodally layered – read, not visible – set of practices, constraints and codifications that operate below the level of user interaction" [Bianco 2013]. In that layer, operations of intersectionality may be visible if we look for them. Accordingly, Bianco notes, "Our ethics, methods and theory are *not transparent* in our tools, unless you have the serious know-how to critically make them or hack them" [Bianco 2013]. While digital humanists themselves may have access to that layer by virtue of technical skill, users engaging with digital humanities scholarship may not. Similarly, Smith argues, "Tools cannot be separated from the knowledge systems in which they have been imagined and made" but proposes we might frame intersectional practices as tools themselves [Smith 2014, 408]. To do so would ensure that digital humanities scholarship unsettles essentialist categories, rather than reifying existing assumptions about race, gender, class, ability, sexuality, or other categories of difference. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to make the critical layers visible to users in the apparatus developed around our work.

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By approaching intersectionality in the digital humanities at the juncture of disciplinary knowledge and technical specification, we blend theory and method and avoid what Moya Bailey calls "the add and stir model of diversity, a practice of sprinkling in more women, people of color, disabled folks and assuming that is enough to change current paradigms" [Bailey 2011]. Bailey frames this issue in intersectional terms, proposing, "This identity based mixing does little to address the structural parameters that are set up when a homogeneous group has been at the center and don't automatically engender understanding across forms of difference" [Bailey 2011]. Axes of difference are fluid and converge in multiple ways. For example, the considerations necessary for a project on black lesbian activism would necessarily be different from one on oral histories of Latina transwomen; these might range from technical specifications to design principles to issues of safety that a public project might raise. As a result, there is not simply one way of doing intersectional digital humanities. Rather, it is a provisional lens that suggests practitioners begin their work with an understanding of the particularities necessary to design projects that account for influences of difference on knowledge-production. To date, we have few alternatives that enable such an approach. For example, Kara Keeling's "Queer OS" or "queer operating system" suggests that a queer perspective, broadly construed, would change how we view technology. Queer OS "would take historical, sociocultural, conceptual phenomena that currently shape our realities in deep and profound ways, such as race, gender, class citizenship, and ability … to be mutually constitutive with sexuality and with media and information technologies, thereby making it impossible to think of any of them in isolation" [Keeling 2014, 153]. By viewing "queer" as an operating system, Keeling proposes to decenter social norms in favor of their alternatives. Moreover, she frames Queer OS in intersectional terms, emphasizing the relationship between sexuality and other categories like race, ability, and nationality. Offering another alternative, Fobazi M. Ettarh interrogates the relationship between Boolean search terms and intersectional identity. Describing her experiences in library school, she notes, "I am proof that these [race, gender, and sexuality] are not separate issues. I am not Black one day and Queer the next. Instead, I am Black AND Queer. In Principles of Searching we learn how important and, or, and nor are in Boolean searching. Too long the environment has been 'Black OR Queer'" [Ettarh 2013]. As such, she identifies a conceptual fit between intersectionality and structures of information. These issues are further explored by Alexis Lothian and Amanda Phillips who ask, "Can digital humanities mean transformative critique?"

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[Lothian 2013]. They argue that if scholars in fields like ethnic studies, gender studies, cultural studies, disability studies, or queer studies are engaging with technology in their scholarship, they should "lay claim to our place within digital humanities" [Lothian 2013]. Through such an intersectional bent Lothian and Phillips look forward to transformative digital humanities "where neither the digital nor the humanities will be terms taken for granted" [Lothian 2013]. These theoretical perspectives offer models of how intersectionality operates in relationship to the digital humanities, from the nature of computation itself to the way we constitute relationships between the humanistic inquiry and the digital.

In additional to theoretical precursors, we have projects that, in their own ways, provide models for how to approach digital humanities through an intersectional lens. An acknowledgment of the inclusions and exclusions within a data set or the source material is an important start. Allison Booth's *Collective Biographies of Women* [CBW], for example, focuses on prosopography, or collective biography, a genre of text comprised of short biographies. Using print volumes and digital resources like Project Gutenberg or Google Books, *CBW* compiles biographical narratives and develops tools for prosopography. The project's "About" page offers an important model of how projects can be positioned in intersectional terms:

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> Prosopography must be selective, but it can claim a share of attention for marginal identities. Most women have gone missing in history and have no printed memorial. The Anglo-American catalogues in CBW tended to exclude all but the rare working woman, woman of color, or woman who did not belong to the Christian middle class of English descent. Religious nonconformists and various minorities nevertheless began to use this tool of recognition. The collections camouflage or accept some examples of diverse sexuality and same-sex relationships and many examples of single or old women. It is high-ranking women who pursue heterosexual affairs who get censured in these books — but not always or not with conviction. Some books celebrate opposites of the "good woman" type. The limitations of the lists – and any canons or lists – notwithstanding, a search through this bibliography and the books it registers helps to correct some distorted generalizations about the lack of records of women in the past. [CBW]

The project's "Pop Chart" or index of most frequently recurring subjects indicates a bias towards white European or American women, with Pocahontas and Cleopatra being notable exceptions. However, the *CBW*'s proactive foregrounding of questions of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the fashioning of the project is a fitting model of how to engage with intersectional digital humanities. Key here is making the intersecting phenomena that shape a project visible even though they may not be readily understood. *The Orlando Project* does this as well. *Orlando* examines women's literary history but its focus on women's writing may obscure its intersectional underpinnings upon first glance. However, the scholarly introduction to the project notes that while gender is "an indispensable tool for historical analysis," the project creators "see gender as one among other constituents of identity" [Orlando]. Therefore, the project includes documents that examine race, class, sexuality or other categories of difference to illuminate the "cultural formation" of writers. Identifying such a frame, the project makes clear that its engagement with gender is situated in the flexible and provisional spirit of intersectionality.

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A project might also structure its search mechanism to optimize intersectional analysis. Brad Pasanek's *The Mind is a Metaphor* database, for example, makes clear that its scope and textual sources only cover 18th century British metaphors [Pasanek]. Yet, the metaphors themselves are tagged to enable intersectional searches. A user can sort by not only literary period, metaphor category, and genre but also gender, race, and nationality. Among the latter, "African or Afro-British" is one such category, which when selected with "female" produces a list of metaphors by Phillis Wheatley. Despite the predictable underrepresentation of black women in a database of 18th century British writing, the ability to navigate the database in such a way acknowledges the importance of intersectionality. The *Emory Women Writers Resource Project* (EWWRP) similarly foregrounds an intersectional approach through the way it structures project data. Among the collections through which the site is organized are "Native American," "Abolition, Freedom, and Rights," and "Women's Advocacy," but the collections are fluid, with texts fitting multiple categories appearing in more than one collection [EWWRP]. *A Celebration of Women Writers*, a site that preserves public domain women's texts compiled by Mary Mark Ockerbloom, also enables ethnicity as one method of browsing the archive [Ockerbloom 2012].

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User integration is another way digital humanities projects can make intersectional interventions possible. *NINES: Nineteenth-century Scholarship Online* material is beginning to grow more diverse. Visible tags on the project website, including "women," "Chinese," "African," and "diaspora," suggest an effort to foreground a range of objects from 125

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federated websites. The Collex interface offers possibilities for creating exhibits, which allows users to interact with the material through curation; even users without specialized training could arrange the material to explore a range of topics through available objects. Moreover, Collex offers the possibility of expanding the archive of affiliated websites via RDF, allowing creators of substantial projects to seek peer review and inclusion in NINES. NINES demonstrates openness towards greater representation and offers tools to make that possible. *The Women Writers Project*, which undertakes electronic text encoding for pre-Victorian women's writing, includes a publication series called *Women Writers in Context,* which features exhibits "designed to engage readers in the exploration and discovery of topics related to early modern women's writing" [WWP]. One such exhibit on women and race allowed creator Kim Hall to explore the role of intersectional analysis and engagement with *The Women Writers Project*. Accordingly, she notes, "Rather than isolating race as a focus, the best research sees race in relation to concerns of gender, class, religion, and sexuality. To say that race is connected to these other social divisions is not to say that race is analogous to these other categories, nor is it to say that all marginalized people are oppressed or made marginal in the same ways" [Hall 1999]. Though the scope of *The Women Writers Project,* namely the periods of literary history it examines, privileges the writing of white women, the *Women Writers in Context* series signifies how scholars might find interpretive paths through the material. Through user engagement, these projects make intersectional analysis more legible in the archive.

Beyond projects that address intersectionality indirectly, we can look to the examples of those that foreground it in project design. An example of an intersectional digital archive, Amy Earhart's project *The 19th Century Concord Digital Archive* examines the relationship between Concord, Massachusetts and American literature and history. The archive "invites the scholar to utilize a broad set of digital documents to reconsider how the town and its writers are situated within broader scholarly conversations" [CDA]. Addressing scope, the project statement notes, "These [Concord] authors interacted with groups less frequently recorded in textual documents of the time period: free African-Americans, Irish immigrants, the poor, and criminal class" [CDA]. The archive offers insight on these engagements across lines of gender, nationality, class, and more: "By digitizing a broad range of materials that represent the diverse people associated with literary production the archive allows scholars to rethink the way we conceptualize individual work associated with Concord, to redefine our assumptions about literary and historical representation, and to reconsider the very foundation of our disciplinary studies" [CDA]. The archive reflects Earhart's observation that "scholars invested in early work on race in digital humanities insisted on building editions and digital texts as activist intervention in the closed canon" [Earhart 2013]. Indeed, Earhart's own project is an example of what intersectional activism in the canon looks like.

A further dimension to consider is how intersectional analysis can be engaged through text mining. In their work on the Black Drama database, Shlomo Argamon, Charles Cooney, Russell Horton, Mark Olsen, Sterling Stein, and Robert Voyer made space for intersectional structures within the database as they considered "the degree to which machine learning can isolate stylistic or content characteristics of authors and/or characters having particular attributes – gender, race, and nationality" [Argamon 2009]. The database contains 963 texts written by 128 men and 243 by fifty-three women; 831 titles are by US authors while 375 are by authors from Caribbean or African countries. There are further variations in the number of speeches by women and male characters and black and white characters, with a small number of speeches by characters of other ethnic backgrounds. Metadata for the project contains 30 fields to describe characters and authors from the black stage, including "Race, age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, occupation, sexual orientation, performers, if a real person and type" [Argamon 2009]. They use the ARTFL search system PhiloLogic, which "allows joining of object attribute searches, forming a matrix of author/title/character searching" [Argamon 2009]. Argamon et al. demonstrate the range of intersectional analysis made possible by choice of platform, noting that "one can search for words in speeches by female, black American characters depicted by male, non-American authors in comedies first published during the first half of the 20th century" [Argamon 2009]. Argamon et al.'s work suggests how data mining can provide new understandings of language use and its relationship to representation. For example, they note that analysis of racial epithets reveals variations of language use based on gender and nation and propose that such test cases "hint at larger discursive and representation issues" [Argamon 2009]. As Argamon et al.'s work with the Black Drama database begins looking at how to represent attributes like gender, race or nation as textual characteristics through computation, we might ask, "Can the database be intersectional?"

Conversation within the 2014 Critical Code Studies Working Group indicates the importance of intersectionality to our understanding of code as well. The CCSWG 2014 featured a week on "Feminist Programming," led by Arielle Schlesinger and featuring Jacqueline Wernimont and Ben Wiedermann as discussants. Schlesinger began by asking the group, "What is feminist code? What is feminist coding?" in relation to code snippets by Mez Breeze and micha cárdenas. Among the conversations generated were the relationship between executable code and cárdenas's work code poems, an issue raised

by Mark Marino. cárdenas explained, "I am more committed to the visionary and speculative possibilities of these code snippets than their literal executable possibilities" [Lasmana 2014]. Wernimont raised the issue of absence, evoking a generative possibility in "allowing the absent-presence of feminist executable code to operate as an irritant" [Lasmana 2014]. She described this in feminist terms as "an occasion to continue to question the structures that have not permitted such a thing to exist" [Lasmana 2014]. cárdenas further complicated the notion of "feminist" by noting that "feminist without qualification can easily be equated to white, cis-gender, first world feminism," asking "What is gained and lost by the formulation of this code as feminist, as opposed to say, decolonial, in the sense of rejecting western systems of epistemology" and raising the question of the role of intersectionality in code [Lasmana 2014]. Viola Lasmana responded by invoking Trinh T. Minh-ha: "Shake syntax, smash the myths, and if you lose, unearth some new linguistic paths" (qtd. in [Lasmana 2014]. She suggests that such processes occur in the code poems written by cárdenas and Breeze. The question of executable code raises the issue of whether executability may be a limit to both intersectional praxis and digital humanities methodology. Given the reliance of digital humanities methodologies on executable code, is engaged intersectional work limited by it? By examining this question, we may consider the limits of code as not only sets of operations but also a language that may enable or foreclose intersectional conversations.

Finally, practicing digital humanities through social media, Jessica M. Johnson's *The Codex,* is an example of intersectional engagement in digital humanities. *The Codex* is "a social media triptych" composed of three sites: *African Diaspora, PhD*, *Diaspora Hypertext*, and *Seeing Dark Matter* [Johnson 2015]. Guiding the development of these sites is Johnson's intersectional praxis, which by her own description, is "anti-oppression, feminist and social justice oriented" [Johnson 2015]. *African Diaspora, PhD* showcases developments in African diaspora history, from an intersectional lens. A survey of recent posts shows attention to scholarship on a range of subjects like images of "faithful slaves" in Confederate discourse, including mammies and kinship, and race and gender in Atlantic New Orleans. Johnson's site is an important resource for African diaspora scholarship, which she frames in intersectional terms: "The field is also interdisciplinary, supporting and supported by research emerging from the fields of African, Africana/African-American, and Latin American studies; women, gender, and sexuality studies; and feminist, post-colonial, and race theory" [Johnson 2015]. *Diaspora Hypertext* showcases Johnson's work as a "black feminist/radical woman of color digital humanist and media maker" [Johnson 2015]. Organized into "writing," "research," and "teaching" tracks, the site provides a range of resources on African Atlantic Diaspora history. Complementing these sites is *Seeing Dark Matter*, a Tumblr-driven digital archive devoted to black diasporic visual culture and to "processing Atlantic slavery through application, code, and screen" [Johnson 2015]. In its multiple modes, Johnson's work demonstrates how engaging a range of tools enables more full exploration of intersectionality within an interdisciplinary field.

The theoretical approaches and projects I have described here are intentionally diverse in subject, providing a survey of intersectional traces in the digital humanities. Some projects, like Earhart's, Argamon et al.'s and Johnson's work, consciously integrate intersectionality into their design. Others, like *Orlando*, *CBW,* and *NINES*, suggest how intersectional engagement possible, even if not a primary goal. This cursory look for hints of intersectionality is intended as an opening salvo for new histories of the digital humanities that locate intersectionality at their center and intervene at the locus of theory and method. What I have offered here is the work of survey, a pre-cursor to the deep analysis necessary for further developing an intersectional history of digital humanities. Yet, I have only examined the relatively painless ways that intersectional perspectives can be integrated into scholarship: acknowledging the inclusions or exclusions of data, defining terms in inclusive ways, or adding another tag. This is the surface-level work of representation that is unlikely to destabilize the moorings of digital humanities. The pursuit of a more inclusive field only will begin by looking at these practices as ways of being thoughtful, intentional, and intersectional about digital humanities. Yet, painful work must be done too. This includes looking more closely at digital humanities projects, opening the black boxes to examine the imprints of intersectionality on archive, code, metadata, database, and more. In the writing and rewriting of these histories, digital humanities practitioners must situate them in the histories of Afrofuturism, digital textual recovery, new media studies, and science and technology studies, being careful not to erase or write over the contributions that scholars of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, or other forms of difference are making to the digital humanities – or risk reaffirming the power of Western academic hegemony. Moreover, we must develop intersectional practices for the digital humanities that account for difference from the ground up, integrating theory and method. At the juncture of the two, we must attend to discourses and histories of race and racialization, complexities of gender, complications of class, the operations of sexuality, and their intersections. In doing so, we can create projects that engage, rather than rebuff, difference.

Conclusion

The affordances of the digital humanities are often thought to reside in its ethos of building and hacking, in the pursuit of knowledge that emerge from the act of making. As this survey of theoretical and project-based traces of intersectionality within digital humanities proposes, cultural critique is perhaps misunderstood by its detractors in the field as an attempt to force a theoretical rubric onto digital humanities or to rehearse a "hack" vs. "yack" binary. Rather, theoretical moves are implicit within digital humanities projects and excavating them is necessary to ensuring intellectual diversity. We have the opportunity to build a more inclusive field, new methodologies, and new forms of analysis.

Why an intersectional approach? As Kathy Davis suggests, intersectionality is not a "normative straitjacket" or predetermined method of feminist analysis [Davis 2008, 79]. Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins's observation that intersectionality is often taken as pre-defined and ignores convergence and contradiction within intersectional scholarship, Anna Carastathis argues that intersectionality must be viewed as a provisional concept that "anticipates, rather than arrives at, the normative or theoretical goals often imputed to it" [Carastathis 2014, 60]. The axes of difference within intersectionality are dynamic and do not operate in predictable ways; rather, they are fluid and constructed, the power valances in each in flux. Intersectionality is not a prescriptive method because there isn't one particular way of "doing" intersectionality. Rather, intersectional digital humanities asks us to begin with the specificities of a data set, identify the layers of difference that intersect within it, and use that knowledge as a basis for project design.

The fluidity of intersectionality is a natural fit for the flexibility that digital humanities connotes. In its recent popularity, Patrik Svensson suggests, digital humanities has seen "a higher degree of heterogeneity and inclusion of other epistemic traditions" [Svensson 2009]. He positions such growth in broad ways, suggesting we might view information technology as "a tool, an object of study, an exploratory laboratory, an expressive medium, and an activist venue" [Svensson 2010]. Svensson proposes that a "big-tent digital humanities" would encompass this proliferation of modes [Svensson 2013]. As an alternative to the tent, however, Svensson proposes a model of digital humanities that is a "meeting place, innovation hub, and trading zone" to emphasize "commitment to interdisciplinary work and deep collaboration" [Svensson 2013]. The affordance of such a model is a "fractioned (not homogeneous) collaborative (not coerced) trading zone and a meeting space that supports deeply collaborative work, individual expression, unexpected connections, and synergetic power" [Svensson 2013]. To appreciate such benefits, Svensson argues, the digital humanities "needs to support and allow multiple modes of engagement between the humanities and the digital...[to] maximize points of interaction, tackle large research and methodology challenges, and facilitate deep integration between thinking and making" [Svensson 2013]. These are the spaces where complex negotiations between theory and method are made possible. They require "difficult thinking," which Mark Sample defines as "imagining the world from multiple perspectives and wrestling with conflicting evidence about the world" [Sample 2014]. As Sample proposes, difficult thinking does not seek easy reconcilement for conflicting ideas but "faces these ambiguities head-on and even preserves them" [Sample 2014]. Intersectionality, in its emphasis on anti-essentialism and possibilities of accounting for competing axes of difference in multiple permutations, makes difficult thinking possible and perhaps even brings Svensson's vision of digital humanities to fruition.

Working at the intersections of digital humanities and intersectionality, we can intervene in the false dichotomy between digital humanities and cultural critique. For, as Bianco reminds, "We are not required to choose between the philosophical, critical, cultural, and computational; we *are* required to integrate and to experiment" [Bianco 2013]. Existing digital humanities projects provide examples of how, in small and large ways, theory and method can be combined to address recurring questions of the role of race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, nationality, and other categories of difference within the field. These phenomena subtend the development and production of digital humanities projects but they may not be evident. Therefore, it is incumbent on us, as digital humanities practitioners, to make them legible, to move them beyond the margins. To suggest we embrace intersectionality as a critical approach for the digital humanities is not to impose a static, single model of analysis. Rather, it opens space to engage with the variety of ways difference informs our work. There is no single way of being "intersectional" – instead, intersectionality privileges exploration and innovation in feminist praxis. And aren't exploration and innovation at the very heart of digital humanities?

Acknowledgments

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