Compiling Resources for IDEP241: Gateway to the Digital Humanities
Evan Hoyt, 2015

My task this summer was to assist in the planning of a new interdisciplinary course to be offered in the Fall of 2013. The class, Gateway to the Digital Humanities, teaches computational programming approaches to humanistic research, or simply put, how to use computers to do humanities research in new and insightful ways. Five people worked together to assemble the syllabus. Professor Eric Chown, the Chair of the Computer Science department, Professor Pamela Fletcher, Chair of the Art History department, and Professor Crystal Hall, the Post-Doctorate in the Humanities will each be teaching the class in the fall. In addition to the three professors were myself, adding a computer science student’s point of view, and James Miller ’14, who is an Art History major and provided a humanist point of view. The five of us had different levels of experience with programming, computing, and the humanities and each tried to make the class as accessible as possible. One challenge of designing the course was that it will be open to anyone including incoming First Years, so we had to take care to thoroughly teach the basics of both programming and a humanistic approach so that any student can fully appreciate the digital humanities.

For James and I, the first portion of the summer consisted of resource compilation. This meant collecting ad summarizing every project, reading, and software we could find on the internet pertaining to the digital humanities. When we found a digital humanities project published on the authors web page James or I would read about it, interact with it, and summarize and review it. Published readings were James specialty as the humanists, and similarly he would read them and then summarize them. Tools were my specialty as the computer science major. My day often consisted of downloading software that was potentially useful for digital humanists, installing it, and testing it. After reviewing its installation, ease of use, and capabilities, I would summarize the tool. All of the summaries, reviews, and links were posted to a WikiMedia-based site created by James and I. Each project, reading, and tool had its own page, similar to a Wikipedia page, with all relevant information. The website is currently only accessible by James, the professors, and I but we hope to make it available to students taking that class so they can use our documentation to make completing their final project in the course easier. Additionally, we hope to one day make the website available for all of Bowdoin as the center for its Digital Humanities research, to be used by professors when teaching or doing their own research, and students who are hoping to use computers to aid their own endeavors.

Time that was not used for resource allocation was spent organizing the material, defining the digital humanities, and working Professors Chown, Hall, and Fletcher to design and a syllabus for the course. The five of use determined that it would be best to divide the content into categories based on method, meaning what the computers were used to do. These categories, Image Analysis, Text Analysis, Spatial Analysis, and Networking Analysis were each allocated about two weeks of class time, leaving space for a final project, which will hopefully incorporate two or more of the methods.

Moving forward, we hope to make the class as effective as possible at teaching a variety of digital humanities methods, as well as making sure students have a hands-on experience. We also hope to improve the Bowdoin Digital Humanities website and make
it a resource for faculty and students in a variety of departments at Bowdoin.

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