

Book Reviews

Digital Humanities for Librarians. By Emma Annette Wilson. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020. 227 pp. \$115.00 (hardcover), \$50.00 (paperback), \$47.50 (e-book). ISBN 978-1-5381-1644-9 (hardcover), 978-1-5381-1645-6 (paperback), 978-1-5381-1646-3 (e-book).

Reviewed by Spencer D. C. Keralis

There is perhaps no discipline impacting librarianship that is more amenable to open educational resources than the broad range of fields that fall under the rubric of digital humanities (DH). The flagship journals in the field are gold open access, the most important projects in the field are freely available online, open data is a growing aspect of the field and encouraged by the National Endowment for the Humanities Office of Digital Humanities (NEH-ODH), monographs and edited volumes are increasingly available in open access formats, and there are over one hundred resources available on the Open Educational Resources Commons related to DH. As such, it is disappointing but not surprising to see a professor of English publish a for-profit textbook to tell librarians how to do digital humanities.

The book is well organized and accessibly, indeed often colloquially, written. The three sections are “What is Digital Humanities?,” “The Digital Part of Digital Humanities,” and “The Human Part of Digital Humanities.” Section II, “The Digital Part of Digital Humanities,” presents an overview of key technical interventions in the field, from text and music encoding, to GIS, to text data mining, to digital exhibitions and archives. The companion website <https://www.dhforlibrarians.com/> (which surprisingly does not require proof of textbook purchase to access), provides links to many of the resources and projects described in the book. The website alone might be a valuable resource for teaching DH for librarians, with some important caveats.

From the perspective of someone who has worked on digital humanities in academic libraries for more than a decade, there is much for concern in this book. On the surface, the emphasis on what Wilson describes as “the all-important human component” (p. xvi) of digital humanities is welcome. However, the way in which Wilson presents librarians’ and others’ labor in the book is broadly problematic. Wilson’s model of DH work in libraries presumes an “ideal digital humanities incubator” with a full-time DH librarian and dedicated IT support (p. 165). This ideal may be possible at well-resourced institutions but isn’t the reality even at many R1 universities. In the model presented here, and in many of the projects described as exemplars, faculty entitlement to the labor of librarians and students is presumed. Wilson posits that DH librarians should take an active role in “initiating, managing, and launching projects” (p. 164), a notion that is simply not sustainable, nor the reality for many working in this role. Aside from a pro forma recognition that emotional labor presents a “danger of burnout” for librarians (p. 196), Wilson does not acknowledge current

debates around librarians' labor (Posner, 2013; Muñoz, 2012) or student labor (DiPressi, Gorman, Posner, Sasayama, & Schmitt, 2015; Keralis, 2018). Indeed, some of the projects presented explicitly use unpaid student labor in the classroom to populate a WordPress site or other platform (e.g., Ainsworth, n.d.), a practice that is increasingly decried in DH but that seems to be valorized in this textbook.

Overall, this book offers a view of digital humanities librarianship that many in the field have been actively working against for over a decade. While a textbook like this might be tempting to LIS faculty who have never worked in an academic library, let alone as a DH librarian, I urge you find way to teach this topic that acknowledges current debates in the field and that does better by the contributions of librarians and students to digital humanities. Building a syllabus with selections from Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein's (n.d.) pathbreaking *Debates in the Digital Humanities* series and Dorothy Kim and Jesse Stommel's (2018) *Disrupting the Digital Humanities*, both of which are available open access from University of Minnesota Press/CUNY and punctum books, respectively, and supplemented with articles from OA journals like *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (<http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/>), will provide you and your students with a more nuanced view of this diverse field at a fraction of the cost. Do your students and their future colleagues a favor—do not adopt this textbook.

Spencer D. C. Keralis is assistant professor and Digital Humanities Librarian at the University of Illinois. Their current research examines the ethics of collaboration in digital humanities research and pedagogy. spencerk@illinois.edu

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