

‘The Sussex Humanities Lab and Extending DH into the Classroom’

BL Labs Roadshow 2018

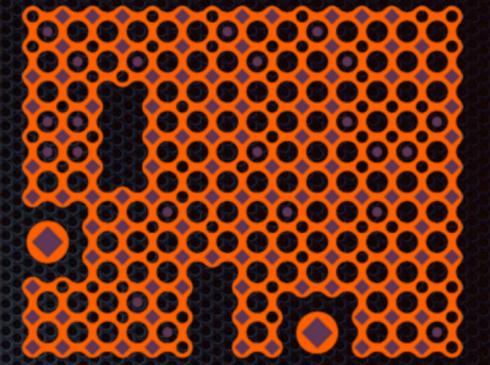
**Dr Sharon Webb,
Lecturer in Digital Humanities,
Sussex Humanities Lab,
Department of History, University of Sussex**

Point 1: Context of development (LAB, School, UK module development)



- Sussex Humanities Lab, tasked with embedding digital humanities across the university research and teaching programme.
- Multi-Disciplinary team, located/embedded in different schools, but working collaboratively
- We lobby and advocate on behalf of the Lab from within our departments & can initiate & develop digital humanities and/or digital history programmes as part of a wider programme of development (e.g. beyond the school).
- In 2015, we began the process of integrating digital & computation research skills into core (compulsory) components of the BA in History.

Point 2: Initial concept and Expectations



- “embedding” in core module helped us to frame these “skills” lectures as crucial elements of undergraduate training in a contemporary digital environment
- wanted to include “practical” sessions where possible - but class of 170+, and no seminar time
- Could not frame work around assessments, rather students did their historical modules largely as “normal”

Point 3: What we do...



- We use exemplar projects to show case good practice in DH projects - these are often projects from BL Labs
- We do theory & practice e.g. Creating data sets from primary sources & using them
- Especially interested in demonstrating the “back-ground” work involved in creating projects e.g. the challenges of working with data in archives
- We want our students to understand the process, the methods, so that they can be critical of digital projects in much the same way that there are critical of traditional historical research/sources...

Point 4: What we thought we were doing



- A consideration of “doing” history in the digital age
- Thinking about history as a practice & a method
- Asking: does the idea of history change because of the digital medium? What about sources?
- To demonstrate that critical thinking within & about our digital environment (tools, search, sources) is essential
- Constructing a sustained argument about the skills they need to be a good historian today
- Provide opportunities to apply computational techniques to the study of the past (test and critique)

Point 5: What students thought they were doing...



Q: For you, what was the main theme of the Digital History lectures?

'Using and understanding data'

'How to use data'

'Learning to identify, create, manipulate and use data, in order to stand us in good stead for second and third year when we need to carry out research'

'How use of digital sources can both help and hinder the work of historians: making data more accessible but also the expression of bias in curating and digitising primary sources'

'How to use digital history as an extra resources in your research'

'Research'

'Expanding my skills as a historian and broadening my view of what history is'

Point 5: What students thought they were doing...



Q: For you, what was the main theme of the Digital History lectures?

'To learn to digitise history'

'Skills to do with the internet in relation to history'

'How to apply data & digital skills to historical inquiries'

'Just skills really, digital skills to make our use of time more efficient and our work more effective'

'To show that the digital age is applicable to history and how it can aid our research and study'

Conclusions



- Our students benefit from thinking about process and not just final product - the method BL Labs advocate fits into this narrative.
- We don't hide complexity from students - some things are difficult!
- We want our students to think broadly about doing history in a digital, digitised, born digital age.
- We want our students to think like researchers

Thank you!

Questions, Comments, etc.?

sharon.webb@sussex.ac.uk

@wsharon145

@SussexHumsLab