

Ramón Reichert

Digital Humanities: the Analysis of the Digital Transformation of Knowledge, Media and Technology

(summary)

Digital Humanities is a heterogenic field of research between IT, cultural theory and humanities. Recently, it has gained even more importance predominantly due to the simplified and wider access to the digital data. The term “Digital Humanities” was introduced with the widespread use of the Internet. It replaced the terms such as Computational Science or Humanities Computing that were in use since the appearance of computers in the 60s. In the first place these terms referred to the methodological and practical development of digital tools, infrastructures and archives.

Digital Humanities can be divided into three basic theoretical approaches-directions which can also mark the phases of its historical development and the changes of the focus in the field of research conditioned by the scientific policy:

- (1) The use of computers in cultural studies and humanities and the digitization of “primary data” are in the center of Digital Humanities. On the one hand, the digitization projects include the digitized portfolios. On the other hand, they include user tools in computer philology for the application of secondary data or results. These basic methods of Digital Humanities carry on philological tradition according to which the evidence-driven collection and management of data is the basis of hermeneutics and interpretation. Surpassing narrow professional discussions about the methodology, computer-based measuring within humanities and cultural studies reestablishes the media postulates of objectivity in modern sciences. Unlike the curriculum of text studies in the 50s and 60s within the “Humanities Computing” (McCarthy 2005) the research area of this discipline has become more versatile so it has expanded to the history of art, culture and society, media theory, ethnology, archaeology, history and musicology.
- (2) In the second phase, in addition to the quantitative digitization of texts, research practices dealing with the methods and processes of production, analysis and the modeling of digital research environments are being developed for the purpose of working with digital data in humanities. This approach is described by the term Enhanced Humanities and it tries to find new methodological approaches for qualitative application of generated, processed and archived data for the purpose of reconceptualization of traditional research subjects.
- (3) The development from humanities 1.0 to humanities 2.0 (Davidson 2008:707–717) marks the transition from the digital development of methods in the field of “Enhanced Humanities” to the “Social Humanities” which use the features of web 2.0 to construct networked research infrastructure. Social Humanities use interaction and interdisciplinarity of scientific knowledge, Open-Access and Social-Reading platforms’ offers and Open-Knowledge-Software by making cooperative and collaboration research work and development scientifically useful and by making them available for network use. Based on the new digital infrastructure of social networks (such as hypertext systems, Wiki tools, Crowdfunding software etc.) these projects transfer the scientific processes from the

earlier phase of digital humanities development to the network culture of the social humanities by using computers. Today it is Blogging Humanities (digital publishing and mediation in peer-to-peer networks) and Multimodal Humanities (presentation and representation of knowledge in multimedia software environments) that stand for the technical modernization of academic knowledge and that contributed to Digital Humanities becoming the representative of paradigmatic alternative in knowledge creation. In this sense it is necessary that one reflects on the foundations of technical and media culture of the computer-based process of gaining insights into the research of humanities and cultural studies by critically considering knowledge genealogy and media history in order to evaluate properly the understanding of its role in the context of digital knowledge production and distribution.