

“Open Sciences in Public Libraries: Let (Digital) Humanities Come In!” Workshop

Mathilde DUMAINE: Student in Library and Information Sciences (Master degree), Enssib (Lyon, France), mathilde.dumaine@gmail.com

Cécile ETESSE: Student in Library and Information Sciences (Master degree), Enssib (Lyon, France), cecile.ettesse@gmail.com

Eva LEGRAS: Student in Library and Information Sciences (Master degree), Enssib (Lyon, France), eva_lgrs@hotmail.com

Anita SINGA-SARAGBA: Student in Library and Information Science (Master degree) Exchange program Enssib (Lyon, France), GSLIS (Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA), singa.anita@gmail.com

***Summary:** The IFLA’s Statement on Libraries and Sustainable Development advocated that “library and information services promote sustainable development by ensuring freedom of access to information”, and that “library and information professionals acknowledge the importance of education in various forms for all” (IFLA, 2002). We would like to explore this political aspect of sustainable development, specifically regarding the difficulties to spread academic knowledge among non-specialists, although many seem keen on learning more, especially on humanities. We feel that it is a crucial issue for public libraries whose main purpose is to provide access to information to all.*

Therefore, we propose a workshop to think this problem over and consider how libraries can partake in the diffusion of digital humanities resources to the best of their abilities and raise awareness of the multiplicity of riches at hand.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Public Libraries, Digital Humanities, Diffusion, Research.

Extended Abstract:

The concept of sustainable development is often linked to biological or environmental issues, in which libraries have a role to play as we will see during this symposium. However, this notion is complex and addresses political realities as well. Indeed, seeking sustainable development can also mean fighting social and economic inequalities in order to share resources on a fairer ground. Even if this can apply to any types of resources, we would like to focus on information resources, with which libraries are dealing.

The IFLA’s Statement on Libraries and Sustainable Development advocated that “library and information services promote sustainable development by ensuring freedom of access to information”, and that “library and information professionals acknowledge the importance of education in various forms for all” (IFLA, 2002). Keeping this statement in mind, it seems that one of the biggest remaining obstacles to our access to information are the difficulties to spread academic knowledge among lay-people, even though many of them are expressing interest.

Humanities seem, in France at least, to be a good example of this phenomenon since a study led by the CREDOC (Center of research for the study and observation of living conditions in France) in 2013 has shown that 54 % of the respondents would be interested in the perspective of deepening their knowledge in history (CREDOC, 2013).

Numerous opportunities are now available for curious people to get access to this kind of information. Indeed, Humanities are currently undergoing a deep evolution through the development of Digital Humanities. This movement was described by Marin Dacos in his *Manifesto for Digital Humanities* as an evolving, pragmatical and collaborative approach to the diffusion of research in human and social sciences (Dacos, 2011). As such, innovative online resources can be found in a large range of disciplines, and researchers are using an increasing amount of online tools such as blogs, social networks and platforms to share their work with a wider audience.

The ever growing presence of research data online should make them more accessible. However, many users are not aware of their existence, and their great diversity brings to light the importance of mediation. This endeavor is consistent with libraries' concerns, since these institutions engage considerable efforts in the creation of effective online services which can provide access to reliable digital resources. In order to become actual gateways to culture, libraries' websites are usually already gathering different databases and various links to carefully selected blogs or social networks' accounts. Thus, one can only wonder why digital humanities wouldn't find their place in libraries' digital offers.

Therefore, we would like to highlight the connections between Digital Humanities and libraries in order to see how academic and public libraries throughout the world can take part in these exploratory means to promote open access to research through digital resources. Doing so, we would like to focus especially on the work of city libraries as they touch a broader audience and yet might be less inclined than university's libraries to collaborate with scientists.

Our workshop would begin with a short presentation of Digital Humanities while keeping a public library perspective. We would then reflect on the consequences of their combination before reviewing some stimulating experiments. In a nutshell, this workshop would invite the audience to consider how public libraries can act as a go-between to try out and propose adequate ways to communicate the results of research in humanities to their patrons.

Target Audience:

This workshop is designed to allow librarians (both public and academic librarians are welcomed), students and scholars (mainly from LIS and humanities fields) to think these issues over.

Method

After a quick dynamic presentation, we will ask the participants to consider a few hypothetical situations regarding the diffusion of digital humanities in libraries. In order to induce interactive thinking, we will form small groups designed to act as "think tank", so to speak. This part of the workshop is rather flexible and meant to be adapted accordingly to the audience's profile.

A fictional scenario will be submitted to the participants: Imagine a public library of a medium city, with an university. This library's team is thinking about including some digital humanities material to its digital resources and wants to make these known and useful to the widest audience possible. To this end, the team plans on working with scholars and / or academic librarians. The workshop participants will have to think of how to propose an

efficient mediation, while taking profit of the collaborative process. The point is to put forth reasonable ways of promoting digital humanities resources in public libraries.

Workshop:

The topics to be covered in our workshop are the following:

- Digital Humanities in academic and public libraries
- Open Science

Objectives / Outcomes:

- Raise awareness
- Offer a transdisciplinary space of discussion and reflexion
- Encourage productive exchanges between the various actors involved
- Propose ideas to imagine and encourage the evolution of libraries

Duration:

Presentation : 20'

Workshop : 70'

Number of participants and Prerequisites:

15 participants minimum - 30 maximum.

It might be best for the participants to be familiar (if only a little) with digital humanities. Neophytes can acquaint themselves with the subject reading the following:

- Dacos, M. (2011). *Manifesto for the Digital Humanities*. Retrieved September 16, 2013 from <http://dhdhi.hypotheses.org/1855>
- DHI Paris (2013). *Young researchers in Digital Humanities : a manifesto*. Retrieved September 20, 2013 from <http://dhdhi.hypotheses.org/1855>

Equipment needed:

- One laptop (for the workshop instructors)
- An overhead projector
- Wireless internet

References:

Bigot, R., Daudey E., & Hoibian S. (2013). *La curiosité scientifique des français et leur désir de développer leurs connaissances*. Collection des rapports. R289. Paris: CREDOC.

Dacos, M. (2011). *Manifesto for the Digital Humanities*. Retrieved September 16, 2013 from <http://tcp.hypotheses.org/411>

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Curriculum Vitae:

Mathilde Dumaine

2012- 2014 Master of Library and Information Sciences, ENSSIB (Villeurbanne , France)

2010-2011 Master of Irish History, University College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland)

2007-2010 Bachelor of Humanities and Arts, History, University Lumière Lyon II (Lyon, France)

Cécile Etesse

2012-2014 Master of Library and Information Sciences , ENSSIB (Villeurbanne , France)

2011-2012 Bachelor of Librarianship, information and library management, University Institute of Technology Paris Descartes (Paris, France) and Northumbria University (Newcastle, England)

2009-2011 DUT, a two-year university degree in Communication specialized in book publishing (Diploma of Higher Education equivalent), University Institute of Technology Paris Descartes (Paris, France)

February to April 2012 Intern at Newcastle City Libraries (Newcastle Upon Tyne, England)

April and May 2011 Intern at a Canadian university library (Bibliothèque du Cégep de Trois-Rivières, Trois Rivières, Québec, Canada)

August 2010 Intern at the library Nelson Mandela (Vitry-sur-Seine, France)

June 2010 Intern at the library Marguerite Yourcenar (Paris, France)

Eva Legras

2012-2014 : Master of Library and Information Sciences, Enssib (Villeurbanne, France)

2010-2012 : Master of Medieval History, Université Lumière Lyon 2 (Lyon, France)

2007-2010 : Bachelor Degree in History, Université Pierre Mendès France (Saint-Martin d'Hères, France)

Summer 2013 : Internship in Public Library of Lyon.

Anita Singa-Saragba

2012-2014 Master of Library and Information Sciences, ENSSIB (Villeurbanne, France) and
GSLIS (Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences) of the University of Illinois
(Urbana-Champaign,
United States of America)

2011-2012 Master of Information and Record Management, Vincennes Saint-Denis
University (Saint-Denis, France)

2008-2011 Bachelor of French Literature, Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Paris, France)