Insights on scholarly primitives from Digital Humanities research in Spain

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Abstract:

Digital Humanities are experiencing a growing interest in Spain, especially in the last decade, becoming a leading trend in research, either as a field of study or as a preferential financing topic. At the same time, because of their novelty, they are under scrutiny by the research community and government institutions because the return of investment is not understood neither the role that Spanish researchers can play within European-wide research infrastructures, such as DARIAH.

In order to provide the global community of scholars working in this field with a greater understanding of the current Spanish scenario, LINHD has recently promoted a research on the evolution of Digital Humanities in Spain in the last 25 years, a timeframe comparable with Unsworth first formulation of scholarly primitives. The immediate goals of the study were to identify researchers in the field of Digital Humanities and to explore their financing, institutional affiliations, research projects and developed resources. The research has been very much data oriented and quantitative at its core, in order to quantify and describe initiatives, researchers, projects, digital resources, educational courses and scientific publications, connected among themselves and spanning from the nineties to the latest contributions. From a quantitative point of view, we collected bibliographical records from over 400 authors, that represent a good approximation of the available literature produced by researchers affiliated with Spanish institutions and a quantifiable measure of the impact and interest in DH within the Spanish research community in the Humanities. More than 360 projects have been mapped, generally small from the point of view of economic resources, but that together represent a significant amount of research funds dedicated, in the last twenty years and by a variety of public and private funding bodies, to research in this field (over 20 million euros). Finally, a dozen educational courses and over 80 digital resources of diverse nature (repositories of documents, collections of artefacts, crowdsourcing platforms, dictionaries, etc.) have been analyzed, the latter, most of the time, produced with the aim to publish a service to improve the basic of day-to-day research in the Humanities.

In the context of this contribution, we plan to explore and exploit this relatively vast amount of data in order to identify how the introduction of digital tools and methods from Computer Science has affected the basic functions of research in the Humanities in Spain. Among the types of records collected, we believe that digital resources in particular will be able to provide insights, because they speak more about the reality of research workflows. To perform this analysis, resources will be classified and described according to classical scholarly primitives (discovering, annotating, comparing, referring, sampling, illustrating and representing), in order to highlight presences, absence and recurring associations of these categories, at certain specific stages and over time.

Additionally, being resources already classified by discipline (Philology, History, Archaeology, History of Arts, …) and typology, we will be able to visualize the relationships between scholarly primitives and other dimensions in our data. This taxonomy exercise will also provide an opportunity to reflect about the need for new possible classifications, and on how classical primitives can assume different meanings depending on the scope of a project.

We think that the poster format will better suit this presentation, as it will offer opportunities to exchange ideas one-on-one with attendees and stimulate conversations.