

Collaborative research in the digital humanities. Edited by Marilyn Deegan and Willard McCarty. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. 248 pp £55.50 hard cover ISBN 978-1-4094-1068-3

This volume is a festschrift for Harold Short who established and led the noted Digital Humanities program at King's College London. Under Harold, the program evolved from a computing service group into an academic department which offered the world's first Master's degree in Digital Humanities.

Harold Short's essential contribution was in nurturing others in their work; thus, these essays presented in recognition of his career address a particularly broad range of issues. As McCarty notes in his opening chapter, "Collaborative Research in the Digital Humanities", the phrase "collaborative research" is a catch all. Chapters 3 and 6 provide examples of research collaborations. Chapters 9, 11, and 12 discuss tools and techniques for supporting collaborative research. Chapters 4, 7, and 10 consider aspects of markup and annotation, including standards and crowd-sourcing. Chapters 2, 5, 8, 13, and 14 discuss academic communities and academic politics, topics which are particularly salient for a volume honoring Harold Short.

The greatest value of the essays is in their thoughtful reflection on the opportunities and tensions that the digital approach to humanities is creating. One example of this is in the discussion in Chapter 4 of the well-known Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). While standards support communication and consistency, the TEI has developed mechanisms to allow flexibility when needed. The goal is not so much consensus as it is constructive dissensus.

The volume is a snapshot of a rapidly evolving field. It remains unclear whether there is a distinct discipline of Digital Humanities. Some of these issues are raised in an insightful discussion in Chapter 13 which concerns the nature of disciplines and whether digital humanities should be considered a discipline or an "interdiscipline". In some cases, digital humanities seems to fit best under the umbrella of Information Studies. After all, much of the research in digital humanities involve Information Studies approaches such as text processing, linguistics, cognitive science, and digital preservation. In some cases, those connections need to be explored even more fully. For example, the Delta technique described in Chapter 3 for disentangling authorships of collaborative works should be tied into mainstream Bayesian approaches (F. Mosteller and D.I. Wallace, *Inference and Disputed Authorship: The Federalist*, Addison-Wesley, 1964) and it should build a conceptual integration with contemporary work in information retrieval on document language models.

Digital humanities also needs to expand beyond its current emphasis on relational databases (e.g., Chp 2), to take full advantage of developments in computing. For instance, object-oriented approaches and even multi-agent models need to be considered. Similarly, popular culture needs to be better represented in academic digital humanities. An example is recognition of the debate raging in the digital games community about the relevance of Aristotle's *Poetics* for gaming (see for example, Brenda Laurel's *Computers as Theater*, Addison-Wesley, 1991).

When computing comes in contact with other fields, it has a way of turning them inside out. It has dramatically changed the landscape of fields ranging from archaeology to zoology. In part, this is due to

tendency of computer scientists to ignore and then reinvent the established literature. This can be exceedingly frustrating for the traditional scholars who have long understood the complexities of some of these issues. However, computing technologies also often bring energy and resources. The camel of digital change now has its nose under the tent of humanities. This is likely to be disruptive, but it may eventually lead to a golden age for humanities. Indeed, because humanities has a highly nuanced view of the world it may even help produce a maturation of computing.

Overall, this volume serves two purposes admirably. It honors Harold Short by providing a reflective view of the emergence of the field of Digital Humanities. It will be of value to scholars seeking to understand of the issues. While it is not the final word on the field, it is a clear analysis of some current issues and it is a fitting tribute to a scholar and leader who has built a haven for digital humanities in a turbulent world.