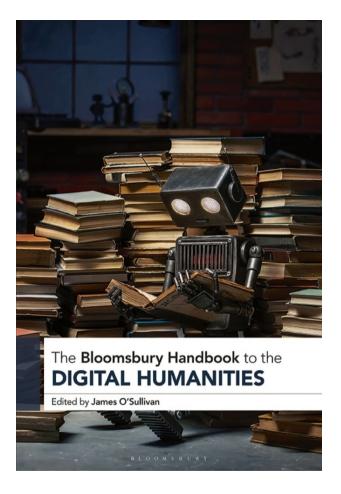# The Bloomsbury Handbook to the Digital Humanities: A Review



**The Bloomsbury Handbook to the Digital Humanities;** edited by James O'Sullivan (Ed.), Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023, ISBN 9781350232112.

The Digital Humanities (DH) have evolved into a significant force shaping contemporary academic landscapes, prompting both enthusiasm and skepticism. The DH denotes an interdisciplinary domain that amalgamates computational methods and technologies with conventional humanities research and scholarship. This field engages with the utilization of digital tools, techniques, and methodologies to scrutinize, interpret, and present data pertinent to cultural, historical, and linguistic domains. The spectrum of activities within DH is expansive, spanning text analysis, data visualization, digital archiving, and the creation of digital platforms tailored for scholarly inquiry. According to Gold (2012) "Digital Humanities involves the use of computational methods to analyze, model, and represent humanistic phenomena, as well as to explore new questions at the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities".[1]

Digital Humanities (DH) has its roots in the 1940s when scholars began using computing technology for (humanistic data analysis) linguistic and literary analysis.[2,3] Scholars like Roberto Busa pioneered the application of computers to digitize, analyze and index the classical works of Thomas Aquinas, laying the groundwork for computational approaches in humanities research.[4,5] Initially, computers facilitated textual analysis, expediting content examination. In the 1960s and 1970s, the field of humanities computing gained recognition, reaching a significant milestone with the establishment of the Association

for Literary and Linguistic Computing (ALLC) in 1973. This period marked a pivotal moment for the discipline, emphasizing a concentration on activities such as text analysis, concordances, and the creation of specialized tools tailored for scholars. However, the impact remained minimal, and the transition involved replicating traditional practices with innovative tools.

During the 1980s, there was a notable transition towards the digitization of cultural heritage materials and the establishment of digital archives. Initiatives such as the Perseus Digital Library aimed to digitally preserve classical texts and artifacts, thereby broadening accessibility to a wider audience.[6] In tandem, the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) played a pivotal role in formulating standards for encoding humanities texts.[7,8] The subsequent decade, the 1990s, witnessed an escalation in collaborative efforts between scholars in the humanities and computer scientists. This era laid the groundwork for a symbiotic relationship, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between traditionally distinct disciplines. Advancing into the 2000s, there was a pronounced increase in interdisciplinary collaboration within the digital humanities community. Various methodologies, encompassing data visualization, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and social network analysis, were embraced to enhance scholarly inquiry. In recent years, the field of Digital Humanities has undergone a transformative phase, incorporating cutting-edge technologies such as big data analytics, machine learning, and other advanced computational methods. This evolution has been paralleled by a surge in global collaborations and the prominence of open access initiatives. These developments have facilitated the creation of shared resources and tools, contributing to the democratization of knowledge.[9,10] However, the ongoing efforts are directed towards addressing ethical considerations, promoting inclusivity, and comprehensively understanding the implications of technology on scholarly practices. The dynamic nature of the DH underscores its continual evolution and adaptability to the changing landscape of academia.

In this critical context, James O'Sullivan, a lecturer in the Department of Digital Humanities at University College Cork, Ireland, edited "The Bloomsbury Handbook to the Digital Humanities." Within this multifaceted book, 54 eminent scholars have contributed 43 essays covering various aspects of this emerging subject. Through a meticulous examination, the book provides readers with a comprehensive overview, critical insights, and considerations for the future. Drawing on his expertise, James O'Sullivan, brings a wealth of experience to the forefront. With a background in esteemed academic positions and substantial contributions to the global discourse on digital humanities, O'Sullivan serves as a fitting guide through the diverse perspectives presented in the book.

The book examines contemporary debates in DH, emphasizing crucial perspectives on issues such as viewpoint, methodology, accessibility, capacity, and sustainability. It reconsiders and envisions the past, present, and future of the digital humanities, employing an intuitive structure that categorizes topics into five sections: "Perspectives and Polemics," "Methods, Tools and Techniques," "Public Digital Humanities," "Institutional Contexts," and "DH Futures." This structure enhances accessibility, allowing readers to navigate key debates, methodologies, and future considerations seamlessly. With its comprehensive scope and accessible yet scholarly writing, this book is indispensable for students, scholars, and practitioners working within the digital humanities and broader arts and humanities.

The book critically reexamines key debates, methodologies, potentials, and shortcomings within the digital humanities, providing a timely exploration of the current and future landscape of the arts and humanities in the digital era. With contributions from leading scholars and practitioners in the field, this extensive collection delves into various subjects, including the emergence and ongoing evolution of DH, postcolonial DH, queer DH, feminist DH, race and DH, multilingual DH, media studies within the DH framework, the shortcomings of DH, critical digital humanities, the future of text encoding, cultural analytics, natural language processing, social media and DH, analyzing and visualization humanities data, audio/visual data, open access and digital publishing, digital cultural heritage, archiving and editing, sustainability, DH pedagogy, labor, artificial intelligence, the cultural economy, and the role of DH in addressing climate change.

O'Sullivan's call for a renewed engagement with fundamental questions about the purpose and direction of digital humanities is a central theme. The collection encourages readers to critically assess the current state of the digital humanities, acknowledging its impact while also considering its failings and future possibilities. The book features contributions from both established scholars and emerging voices, ensuring a diversity of perspectives. Scholars and practitioners in the digital humanities will appreciate the insights from leading figures, providing a roadmap for navigating the complexities and opportunities within the field. The book offers an invaluable resource for students, scholars, and practitioners seeking a deeper understanding of the evolving landscape of digital humanities. Its thoughtful structure, diverse themes, and critical engagements make it an essential read for anyone interested in the intersections of technology and the humanities. The book successfully navigates the complexities of the digital humanities, providing a roadmap for future exploration and scholarly endeavors.

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