

SWOT Analysis of the State of Digital Humanities Education in the St. Louis Region

STRENGTHS

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Many active DH projects in the STL region
- Local network of instructors practicing DH
- Extensive resource of expertise
- Many STL institutions internationally known for research and publishing in DH
- Wealth of community partners
- Geographical proximity allowing for physical meetings/joint ventures

IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Publisher-sourced resources (at some institutions)
- Instructional and technology coaches
- Support from school libraries and librarians
- Engaged educators thinking intentionally about pedagogical objectives and how technology can interface with/support them; diversity of opinions and approaches

OPPORTUNITIES

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Building a resource database for assignments and technology that can be shared across institutions
- Leveraging existing expertise, perhaps through the same database
- Linking together DH labs for more efficient sharing of resources/information
- Generating more collaboration among both faculty and students by sharing information about active DH projects each term
- Engaging with the growing awareness and changing discourses about issues of equity and inclusion in higher ed to promote DH
- Making interdisciplinary connections with other programs within institutions
- Bringing VPs of research and compliance together to streamline grant processes

IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Engaging actively with regional universities
- Engaging with the wealth of established, ongoing, and completed projects
- Working with local libraries that are involved in and support secondary education
- Using open access resources
- Using freeware that facilitates collaboration

ACROSS BOTH CONTEXTS

- Developing a set of DH “Do No Harm” guidelines
- Establishing a regional DH consortium showcase
- Ensuring administrators understand value by recognizing efforts made towards the consortium (evidence for evals)
- Making STL DH official by deciding on name, claiming domain name, create LinkedIn profile, etc. Make involvement official and worthwhile to external entities

WEAKNESSES

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Poor student perception of the value of humanities
- Students often anxious about engaging in DH work for a variety of reasons
- Negative perception of DH among many humanities faculty
- Tendency among humanists toward dystopian fears of technology or, conversely, utopian idealizations of it
- Colleagues' and supervisors' metrics and assessments do not appropriately credit DH work
- Insufficient professional development opportunities
- Lack of interdepartmental and interinstitutional communication
- Some IRB and grant offices do not have much interest in the humanities
- Tendency for DH projects to go defunct due to poor sustainability
- Insufficient active DH projects seeking collaborators, or, insufficient awareness of such projects

IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Virtually no resources within institutions
- School firewalls that restrict technologies students can use
- Students who aren't allowed to bring devices at bring-your-own-device schools; logistical challenges in one-to-one schools
- Dependence on unreliable infrastructure (for example, spotty wifi in classrooms)
- Not currently teaching information and foundational tech skills that would empower students to leverage existing resources (for example, navigating directories)
- Limited by prevailing metrics and assumptions about what and how students should learn

THREATS

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Poor public perception of the value of the humanities
- Insufficient state and federal funding for humanities projects
- Insufficient institutional support for humanities, especially humanities research
- Proprietary nature of much common LMS/app software
- Challenge of remaining current with the constant updates to technology
- Advances in artificial intelligence may render certain humanist skillsets obsolete

IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Freeware switching to paywalls and subscriptions
- Economic pressures on students and schools
- Lack of student ownership over materials published on platforms; twin concerns over attribution and privacy
- Need students to understand systems behind interfaces (for example, algorithms that dictate search results)