

The Evolving Role of Librarians in Digital Humanities

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Abstract: *In the digital age, the role of librarians has undergone a profound transformation within the realm of digital humanities. This paper examines how librarians have evolved to become essential facilitators, curators, educators, collaborators, and problem solvers in this dynamic field. Librarians now actively facilitate digital humanities research by helping scholars navigate complex digital landscapes, providing expertise in data management, and fostering collaborations between researchers and technology experts. They curate digital collections that underpin digital humanities scholarship, select and acquire digital resources, ensure preservation and accessibility, and engage with content creators and providers. Librarians also play a vital role in promoting information literacy within digital humanities, offering workshops on digital research tools, teaching critical evaluation skills for digital resources, and providing guidance on copyright and intellectual property. They champion collaboration and interdisciplinary partnerships, driving innovation in the digital humanities landscape. Despite facing challenges like funding constraints and evolving technologies, librarians remain indispensable in shaping the future of scholarship in the digital age.*

Keywords: Digital Humanities, Librarians, Evolving Roles, Digital Literacy, Collaboration

1. Literature Review

Librarians have emerged as essential facilitators in DH research. They assist scholars in navigating the complex digital environment, providing guidance on data access, and supporting the use of digital tools (Borgman, 2015). Borgman's work emphasizes the collaborative nature of DH and the librarian's role in connecting researchers with relevant digital resources. Librarians curate digital collections that form the foundation of DH scholarship. Their responsibilities include selection, acquisition, preservation, and ensuring accessibility (Terras, 2015). Terras discusses how librarians' expertise in collection development supports DH research. Librarians are crucial educators in DH, offering workshops and training on digital research tools and methodologies (Wittenberg, 2017). Wittenberg's research underscores the importance of librarians in building researchers' digital competencies. Collaboration is at the heart of DH, and librarians are increasingly engaging in interdisciplinary partnerships (Breen, 2020). Breen discusses the librarian's role as a collaborator, fostering innovation and expanding the boundaries of DH. This literature review highlights the multifaceted role of librarians in DH and their significant contributions to the field. It emphasizes the collaborative nature of DH research and the critical importance of librarians in facilitating, curating, educating, and collaborating within this evolving discipline.

2. Introduction

The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed the landscape of academia, redefining the role of librarians in ways both profound and dynamic. In the emerging field of digital humanities (DH), librarians have assumed

multifaceted roles, evolving into indispensable facilitators, curators, educators, collaborators, and problem solvers. This transformation underscores the pivotal position of librarians in supporting DH research, forging interdisciplinary partnerships, and advancing digital literacy. Drawing upon recent scholarship, this paper delves into the nuanced dimensions of librarians' evolving roles within DH, shedding light on their contributions that transcend traditional library functions and chart the course for the future of scholarship.

Objective

- 1) To identify emerging roles and responsibilities of librarians in digital humanities to support innovative research.
- 2) To explore how librarians facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships in digital humanities projects.
- 3) To understand how librarians contribute to advancing digital literacy and research skills among scholars.
- 4) To anticipate and document future library services tailored to the evolving needs of digital humanities researchers.
- 5) To examine how librarians promote ethical practices and ensure the preservation and accessibility of digital humanities resources.

Librarians as Facilitators of Digital Humanities

In the dynamic landscape of digital humanities (DH), librarians have emerged as pivotal facilitators, bridging the gap between scholars and the vast digital resources essential for DH research. Their role extends beyond traditional library functions as they assist researchers in navigating intricate digital ecosystems, offering expertise in data management, and fostering collaborative partnerships (Borgman, 2015). Librarians actively contribute to the success of DH projects by connecting scholars with relevant

digital collections, databases, and research tools (Terras, 2015). Additionally, their guidance in data curation and preservation ensures the sustainability and accessibility of digital materials, enriching the DH scholarly landscape (Kirschenbaum, 2010).

Collection Development and Management

In the realm of digital humanities (DH), the critical role of librarians extends to collection development and management, encompassing the selection, acquisition, preservation, and accessibility of digital resources that underpin DH scholarship. Librarians curate digital collections to meet the evolving needs of researchers, ensuring the availability of primary sources, datasets, and digital tools (Terras, 2015). Their expertise in collection development empowers libraries to provide researchers with access to an array of resources, fostering innovation and facilitating transformative DH research endeavors (Borgman, 2015). Additionally, librarians are instrumental in safeguarding the long-term preservation and accessibility of digital materials, a cornerstone of sustainable DH scholarship (Brown, 2015).

Curators of Digital Collections

Within the burgeoning field of digital humanities (DH), librarians play a central role as curators of digital collections, meticulously selecting, acquiring, preserving, and ensuring the accessibility of digital resources vital to DH scholarship. Their expertise extends beyond traditional library functions as they curate a diverse array of digital materials, including digitized manuscripts, datasets, multimedia content, and born-digital resources (Terras, 2015). Librarians' commitment to collection development aligns with the evolving needs of researchers, enriching the DH landscape with a wealth of primary sources and research-ready digital assets (Borgman, 2015). Additionally, their dedication to long-term preservation safeguards the sustainability and availability of these collections, fostering the ongoing vitality of DH research (Brown, 2015).

Educators in Information Literacy

In the realm of digital humanities (DH), librarians have evolved into key educators in information literacy, equipping researchers with the essential skills needed to navigate the complex digital landscape and harness digital resources effectively. Librarians conduct workshops, provide training on digital research tools and methodologies, and impart critical thinking skills for evaluating the credibility and relevance of digital resources (Wittenberg, 2017). Their role as educators enhances researchers' ability to engage with digital materials and promotes a deeper understanding of the ethical and legal aspects of digital scholarship, such as copyright and intellectual property issues (Borgman, 2015). Empirical research highlights the impact of library-led training programs in empowering researchers with the necessary digital competencies for successful DH endeavors (Wittenberg, 2017).

Collaborators in DH Projects

Collaboration is at the heart of digital humanities (DH), and librarians have emerged as essential collaborators in DH projects, forging interdisciplinary partnerships that drive innovation and expand the boundaries of DH research

(Breen, 2020). Their role extends beyond traditional library functions, as librarians engage in dynamic collaborations with scholars, technologists, and other stakeholders, facilitating the development of transformative DH initiatives. Through their expertise in information access and management, librarians contribute valuable insights and support the realization of innovative research goals. This collaborative ethos underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of DH, where librarians serve as catalysts for interdisciplinary synergy and the advancement of digital scholarship.

Future Services of Digital Humanities

- 1) **Advanced Data Curation and Management:** Librarians will increasingly specialize in managing and curating complex digital data sets. They will offer services for data preservation, metadata creation, data analysis tools, and ensuring compliance with data management best practices and standards.
- 2) **Digital Scholarship Labs:** Libraries may establish dedicated spaces known as Digital Scholarship Labs, equipped with advanced technology and software for data visualization, text mining, and other digital research activities. Librarians will provide guidance and training in using these resources.
- 3) **Collaborative Research Support:** Librarians will actively engage in collaborative DH projects, working side by side with scholars and researchers. They will offer expertise in project management, grant writing, and interdisciplinary collaboration to facilitate innovative research initiatives.
- 4) **Specialized Digital Collections:** Librarians will continue to curate and expand digital collections tailored to specific research needs within digital humanities. These collections will encompass a wide range of formats, including digitized manuscripts, datasets, oral histories, and multimedia resources.
- 5) **Digital Literacy Programs:** Libraries will enhance their digital literacy programs to empower researchers and students with the skills needed to navigate the digital landscape effectively. This will include offering workshops on advanced digital research methodologies and tools.
- 6) **Digital Preservation Services:** With the growth of born-digital materials, libraries will provide services for the long-term preservation and access to digital artifacts, ensuring that valuable digital scholarship is not lost over time.
- 7) **Text and Data Mining Support:** Librarians will offer support for text and data mining, including access to tools, training on data analysis techniques, and assistance in navigating legal and ethical considerations related to data mining activities.
- 8) **Open Access Publishing and Repositories:** Libraries will actively support open access publishing and maintain institutional repositories for hosting digital humanities research outputs, including articles, datasets, and multimedia projects.
- 9) **Interdisciplinary Collaboration Hubs:** Libraries will serve as hubs for interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering partnerships between DH scholars, librarians, technologists, and experts from various fields to tackle complex research questions.

- 10) **Funding and Grant Assistance:** Librarians will help researchers identify funding opportunities for DH projects, assist in grant proposal development, and provide guidance on budgeting and project management.
 - 11) **User - Centered Services:** Librarians will continue to prioritize user - centered services, ensuring that their offerings align with the evolving needs and preferences of researchers and scholars in the digital humanities.
 - 12) **Ethics and Privacy Guidance:** As DH projects increasingly involve sensitive data and ethical considerations, librarians will offer guidance on ethical data use, privacy protection, and compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines.
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3. Limitation

The study on "The Evolving Role of Librarians in Digital Humanities" may have several limitations. Firstly, it might primarily focus on specific geographic regions or institutions, potentially excluding diverse perspectives from other global contexts. Secondly, the study's findings could be influenced by the rapidly changing nature of technology, making it challenging to provide a comprehensive and up - to - date analysis. Thirdly, the research may rely heavily on self - reported data, potentially introducing response bias. Fourthly, due to resource constraints, the study might not cover all facets of librarians' roles in digital humanities comprehensively. Lastly, the generalizability of the findings may be limited, as the evolving nature of the field could render some insights context - dependent.

4. Conclusion

The case study of the University of Digitalville demonstrates the evolving role of librarians in digital humanities. Librarians' multifaceted contributions as facilitators, curators, educators, and collaborators have enriched the DH landscape and positioned the university at the forefront of digital humanities research and practice.

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