

## A historical perspective on the digital humanities in Spain

by Paul Spence, Elena Gonzalez-Blanco

### Origins<sup>1</sup>

The field now called Digital Humanities can lay claim to a long history in the Spanish-speaking world, with landmark international collaborations such as *BOOST* („the Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts“), which initially emerged in the 1970s to explore the application of computer-based methodologies to the study of the Spanish language, and were then extended to provide bibliographies for medieval and early modern texts from the Iberian Peninsula under the umbrella project „Philobiblon“<sup>2</sup>. These were fundamentally U.S.-based projects but lay the foundation for the milestone „Admyte“<sup>3</sup> project and involved leading Spanish scholars such as Francisco Marcos Marin, who in 1994 published one of the first books about computing and the humanities in Spain. What followed were years of isolated research projects, often with a strong philological focus, but also encompassing bibliographic studies, multimedia and other forms of digital scholarship. Some of these projects – such as the „Miguel de Cervantes Digital Library“<sup>4</sup> and the Spanish Royal Academy’s *CORDE* and *CREA* project<sup>5</sup> – enjoyed major institutional support (occasionally with significant private funding), but many were promoted by small teams of researchers en-

<sup>1</sup>This article does not pretend to be a comprehensive review of the full history of the digital humanities in Spain, which is still to be written (and re-written in a Borgesian sense), although readers could do worse than read Rojas Castro’s recent historical survey of the field through its bibliography; Antonio Rojas Castro, *El mapa y el territorio. Una aproximación histórico-bibliográfica a la emergencia de las Humanidades Digitales en España*, 2013, in: <<http://revistacaracteres.net/revista/vol2n2noviembre2013/el-mapa-y-el-territorio/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>2</sup><[http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/philobiblon/history\\_en.html](http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/philobiblon/history_en.html)> (16.07.2014).

<sup>3</sup><<http://www.admyte.com>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>4</sup><<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/>> (16.07.2014). See also Alejandro Bia / Andrés Pedreño, *The Miguel de Cervantes Digital Library: the Hispanic Voice on the Web*, in: *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 16, 2 (2001), pp. 161–177, for a historical perspective on the digital library’s early work in the field of digital humanities.

<sup>5</sup><<http://corpus.rae.es/cordenet.html>> (16.07.2014).

thused by the new innovations made possibly by relational database technology and electronic markup in the 1980s and 1990s.



Fig. 1: Screenshot of the Biblioteca Cervantes Virtual, 12.05.2014

Some of this research connected strongly to concepts of „humanities computing“<sup>6</sup> or its Italian equivalent „informatica umanistica“<sup>7</sup>, and the Spanish term „informática humanística“ grew in currency<sup>8</sup>,

<sup>6</sup>This period also saw substantial involvement in related endeavours such as the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), where, for example, Alejandro Bia formed part of the TEI Board 2003–2006.

<sup>7</sup>With a notable influence from figures such as Tito Orlandi, Francesca Tomasi and Domenico Fiormonte, among others.

<sup>8</sup>José Manuel Lucía Megías, *La informática humanística: una puerta abierta para los estudios medievales en el siglo XXI*, in: *Revista de poética medieval* 20 (2008), accessible at <<http://eprints.ucm.es/8942/1/05-.pdf>> (16.07.14).

although many who made substantial contributions to digital scholarship in the humanities, such as José Luis Canet Vallés<sup>9</sup>, who was one of the pioneers in electronic journals, have not necessarily always self-identified as digital humanists.

Much activity in humanities computing (from now on we will use the term digital humanities, which has largely replaced it) in Spain has centred on philology, and favouring language-based research over literary research<sup>10</sup>, often focusing on the Spanish Golden Age. Examples include the „Golden Age Digital Library“<sup>11</sup>, the „Andrés de Poza“ project<sup>12</sup>, the *ARTELOPE* project<sup>13</sup>, the „Bibliography of Spanish Women Writers“<sup>14</sup>, the „Bibliography of Spanish Literature since 1980“<sup>15</sup>, the *REMETCA* project<sup>16</sup> the *ATENEA* project<sup>17</sup> and project *TESORO*.<sup>18</sup>

Although rather less connected to digital humanities than in its infancy (in Spain as elsewhere) there has been particular historic strength in computational linguistics and other computer-based techniques covering all of the languages spoken in Spain: some examples include the lexicographic databases of the Spanish Royal Academy *CREA* and *CORDE*<sup>19</sup>, research into the Basque language by the IXA group involv-

<sup>9</sup>José Luis Canet Vallés, La evolución de las revistas digitales, at: Seminar „Humanidades Digitales: Edición y Difusión“, Universidade da Coruña, 2–3 July 2012, <<http://www.bidiso.es/sielae/upload/estaticas/file/CANET2%281%29.pdf>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>10</sup>Sagrario López Poza, Humanidades digitales hispánicas, in: Cincuentenario de la AIH, A Coruña, 2014 (forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup><<http://www.bidiso.es>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>12</sup><<http://andresdepoza.com/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>13</sup><<http://artelope.uv.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>14</sup><[www.bieses.net](http://www.bieses.net)> (16.07.2014).

<sup>15</sup><<http://ble.chadwyck.co.uk/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>16</sup><<http://www.uned.es/remetca/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>17</sup><<http://www.proyectoatenea.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>18</sup><<http://www.bib.uc3m.es/~nogales/xml/tesoro/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>19</sup>See Aurora Martín de Santa Olalla Sánchez, Una propuesta de codificación morfosintáctica para corpus de referencia en lengua española, in: Estudios de lingüística del español 3 (1999), accessible at <<http://elies.rediris.es/elies.html>> (16.07.2014); or Mercedes Sánchez Sánchez and Carlos Domínguez Cintas, El banco de datos de la RAE: CREA y CORDE, in: Per Abbat: boletín filológico de actualización académica y didáctica

ing *NLP*<sup>20</sup>, the *CICA corpus* of old Catalan<sup>21</sup> and the Centro Ramón Piñeiro, with the database *MedDB*.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, information library and science projects have played overlapping if not always precisely coterminous roles in advancing digital scholarship (the Instituto de Cultura y Tecnología Miguel de Unamuno, with its broader focus on human culture and technology, the Tecnodoc research group and the influential figure of Antonio Rodríguez de las Heras, all at Universidad de Carlos III<sup>23</sup>, have been especially relevant here) and some landmark projects such as *PARES*<sup>24</sup> (which provides access to the digital holdings of Spanish archives) and *HISPANA*<sup>25</sup> (which follows OAI principles in connecting digital holdings throughout Spanish archives, libraries and museums) have played a key part in broader digitisation initiatives.

The portal *PCDig*<sup>26</sup>, which explores connections between art, technology and digital culture, and is led by Nuria Rodríguez Ortega of the University of Malaga, is one of the more prominent illustrations of the spread of digital humanities beyond its textual roots in Spain and of the growing convergence of research into digital humanities and digital culture. And specific domains offer more focused applications of technology to humanities teaching and research, although again here there may be no formal identification with the digital humanities: examples include the „Sociedad Española de Arqueología Virtual“ (*SEAV*)<sup>27</sup>, which serves as an umbrella for a number of initiatives in

2 (2007), pp. 137–148.

<sup>20</sup><<http://ixa.si.ehu.es/Ixa>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>21</sup><<http://www.cica.cat/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>22</sup><<http://www.cirp.es/pls/bdo2/f?p=MEDDB2>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>23</sup><[http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/instituto\\_cultura\\_tecnologia\\_miguel\\_unamuno](http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/instituto_cultura_tecnologia_miguel_unamuno)> (16.07.2014).

<sup>24</sup><<http://pares.mcu.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>25</sup><<http://roai.mcu.es/es/estaticos/contenido.cmd?pagina=estaticos/presentacion>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>26</sup><<http://patrimonioyculturaldigital.uma.es/pcdig>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>27</sup><<http://www.arqueologiavirtual.com/>> (16.07.2014).



Fig. 2: Screenshot of website of HISPANA, 12.05.2014

digital archaeology in Spain, and the „Hispania Epigraphica“ project<sup>28</sup>, which offers a database of Roman Inscriptions from the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>29</sup>

Notably, there have been few experiences in teaching digital humanities as a subject, although the now defunct online Masters programme in Digital Humanities<sup>30</sup> (and associated programmes) at the

<sup>28</sup> <<http://eda-bea.es/pub/contact.php>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>29</sup> The reasons for a lack of formal identification with the „digital humanities“ label vary from country to country and from partner discipline to another, but while serious academic research often emerges, these reasons appear to be more related to pragmatic considerations than academic ones. Jeremy Huggett, Core or Periphery? Digital Humanities from an Archaeological Perspective, in: *Controversies around the Digital Humanities. A special issue from Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* Vol. 37,3 (2012), pp. 86–105, for example argues that „Digital Humanities is seen as being better-placed to respond to the kind of large-scale collaborative research programmes increasingly favoured by funding bodies, and as more oriented towards public engagement within funding regimes increasingly emphasising „impact“.

<sup>30</sup> <<http://www.mhd.posgrado.uclm.es/>> and <<http://masterhumanidadesdigitales.wordpress.com/>> (16.07.2014).

University of Castilla La Mancha UCLM, Spain, which was led by Concha Sanz Miguel and ran with some success 2005–2011, was crucial in establishing digital humanities as a subject of study in its own right in Spain, and in cementing bonds between many scholars and practitioners in the field.

### The state of the art

This brief summary of digital humanities activity in Spain is by no means comprehensive. It shows the range and depth of digital humanities initiatives in Spain over the years, but this activity neither constitutes smooth and unchallenged development – Lucía Megías observes moments of relative silence<sup>31</sup> – nor does it constitute a recognisable whole in its current form, but rather a series of loosely interwoven patches of digital scholarship and technical development. Spanish digital humanists have generally not received the kind of international attention afforded by some of their counterparts in other fields related to digital culture (such as Laura Borràs in digital literature), although they have played important roles in some initiatives with a Southern European focus (such as the CLiP seminar which operated around the turn of the millennium<sup>32</sup>) and have responded well to certain initiatives such as „Who are you, Digital Humanists?“ survey, where respondents living in Spain ranked fourth in the list of participants by country.<sup>33</sup>

This picture of relatively disconnected initiatives has changed significantly in the last few years, and this transformation is particularly visible in the number of events (including meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences) exploring the relationship between humanities and digital technology, which has accelerated since 2011. In February of that year a conference was held in Barcelona on humanities

wordpress.com/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>31</sup> José Manuel Lucía Megías, La informática humanística: una puerta abierta para los estudios medievales en el siglo XXI, in: *Revista de poética medieval* 20 (2008), accessible at <<http://eprints.ucm.es/8942/1/05-.pdf>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>32</sup> <<http://www.cch.kcl.ac.uk/clip2006/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>33</sup> <<http://blog.homo-numericus.net/article11138.html>> (16.07.2014).

and the internet from a medieval perspective („Humanidades en la Red: mundo medieval“)<sup>34</sup>, which provided both a link back to the origins of digital humanities in Spain (through the Catalan language project *Biteca*, incorporated under *Philobiblon*) and forward through a common reflection on the state of the art in digital scholarship in the humanities at that moment in time. 2011 also saw a *THATCamp* in Madrid<sup>35</sup>, an international seminar on digital libraries and Spanish literary research databases at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid<sup>36</sup>, a workshop in „Digital Art History“ at the University of Malaga and two seminars in digital edition (one organised by Carmen Isasi at the University of Deusto<sup>37</sup>, and the other by Sagrario López at the University of A Coruña<sup>38</sup>) which were to be crucial in laying the seeds of a Hispanic<sup>39</sup> association in digital humanities<sup>40</sup>, followed by a meeting in Elche in November 2012<sup>41</sup>, where the new association „Humanidades Digitales Hispánicas“<sup>42</sup>, or Hispanic Digital Humanities, was formally presented. Earlier that year, the Mexican organisation RedHD („Red de Humanidades Digitales“, or „Digital Humanities Network“ in full)<sup>43</sup> had organised the first major international con-

<sup>34</sup> <<http://www.biteca.net/sim2011/index.html>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>35</sup> <<http://madrid2011.thatcamp.org/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>36</sup> Seminario Internacional sobre Bibliotecas Digitales y Bases de Datos Especializadas para la Investigación en Literaturas Hispánicas (BIDESLITE), whose proceedings are summarized at <<http://eprints.ucm.es/21207/>>, and from which the project Red Aracne <<http://www.red-aracne.es>> arose (16.07.2014).

<sup>37</sup> <<http://carmenisasi.es/2011/simposio-sobre-edicion-digital-de-textos-multiples/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>38</sup> <<http://www.dfel.udc.es/upload/estaticas/file/Carteseinarioteidef.pdf>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that the term „hispanic“, while having slightly different connotations to its Spanish equivalent „hispánica“, does however share some of the ambiguities which allow for different interpretations along geographic, cultural or disciplinary boundaries.

<sup>40</sup> Sagrario López Poza, Humanidades digitales hispánicas, in: Cincuentenario de la AIH, A Coruña, 2014 (forthcoming).

<sup>41</sup> <<http://dhw.umh.es/humdig2012/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>42</sup> <<http://www.humanidadesdigitales.com>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>43</sup> <<http://humanidadesdigitales.net/>> (16.07.2014).

ference on Digital Humanities in Spanish in May 2012<sup>44</sup>, but the first conference in Digital Humanities in Spain did not take place until May 2013 at the University of Navarre<sup>45</sup>, with themes related to research visibility and dissemination. This was followed by the inaugural conference „HDH2013“ (with the theme „Digital Humanities: challenges, achievements and future perspectives“) of the newly-formed HDH association, in A Coruña in July 2013.<sup>46</sup>

The HDH2013 conference brought together 103 attendees, with 59 papers and posters accepted from nine different countries (Canada, Colombia, France, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United States) and covering a wide range of subject matter, including lexicology, digital libraries, art history, information retrieval, pedagogy, e-learning, digital edition, crowdsourcing, text encoding, digital archives and preservation. In addition to the papers, posters and a pre-conference workshop called „Digital Humanities: focal points and applications“, the conference hosted roundtable discussions about the state of digital scholarship in Spain, the institutional requirements to ensure that digital humanities research achieves due recognition and strategies for promoting education in the field, and the conference ended with the formal constitution of HDH as an international association promoting Spanish language Digital Humanities.

A year of intense activity ended with a *THATCamp* on digital humanities and social sciences organised in Granada<sup>47</sup> and a series of seminars taking a critical look at the digital humanities at the University of Salamanca throughout the autumn.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to these conferences and seminars, there have been numerous other initiatives including a Spanish language edition of the „Day of Digital Humanities“ event in June 2013, called „Día de

<sup>44</sup> <<http://www.humanidadesdigitales.mx/index.php/encuentro>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>45</sup> <<http://www.unav.edu/congreso/humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>46</sup> <<http://hdh2013.humanidadesdigitales.org/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>47</sup> <<http://grinugr.org/noticias-de-eventos/i-jornadas-de-ciencias-sociales-y-humanidades-digitales-de-la-universidad-de-granada/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>48</sup> <<http://medialab.usal.es/blog/humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

humanidades digitales<sup>49</sup> hosted by the UNAM university in Mexico but co-ordinated by a number of institutions in Spain, Portugal and Latin America, and involving 56 bloggers.

Finally, it is worth noting a number of events not directly labelled under digital humanities, but nevertheless with strong overlap, such as the fourth edition of the „Learnovation day IV: „Digital Humanities“<sup>50</sup> (an initiative mainly focused on e-learning) with „digital humanities“ as its theme, organised by Centro Superior para la Enseñanza Virtual (CSEV) and Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), the main distance learning university in Spain.

Another area which has seen a recent surge of activity is the scholarly journal, with a number of journals which include digital humanities themes emerging in the last few years, although there is still no formal journal for digital humanities in Spain or in Spanish at this moment in time. Current journals in Spain covering DH themes include Janus (fundamentally relating to Golden Age studies)<sup>51</sup>, „Digithum“ (focusing on humanities in the digital age)<sup>52</sup>, „Scriptum digital,“ (about digital edition and computer-based historical corpora in Ibero-Romance languages)<sup>53</sup> and the Caracteres journal (which covers critical cultural studies in the digital age).<sup>54</sup> Recent years have seen an increasing number of special editions of conventional journals dedicating special issues to digital themes, such as the „Anuario Lope de Vega“, which dedicated its twentieth volume to „Digital and Critical Editions“<sup>55</sup> or the forthcoming issue of „Profesional de la Información“.<sup>56</sup>

What is striking is that there are, as yet, very few books about the field in Spain, or indeed, in Spanish, and those that exist, with the

possible exception of „Elogio del texto“ by Lucía Megías<sup>57</sup> (which is in any case essentially a rather broader essay on the history and future of text), are mostly edited volumes such as the recently published monograph based on the HDH2013 conference or „Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades Digitales“ („Digital Humanities and Social Sciences“).<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, there is rather more to report in the realm of informal publications, especially with blogs such as „Filología Digital“ by Javier Espejo Surós<sup>59</sup>, „Investigar y Redactar en la Red“ by José Manuel Fradejas<sup>60</sup>, „Morflog“ by Elena Azofra<sup>61</sup>, Unweaving the web/Destejiendo la red by Esteban Romero<sup>62</sup> and „Filología e innovación en Humanidades digitales“ by Elena González-Blanco<sup>63</sup>.

There is no doubt, that at the time of writing (early 2014), there is substantial interest in the digital humanities in Spain, but, as elsewhere, the growth in interest has not served to provide a stable account of the broader academic contribution of the digital humanities, nor to establish a stable location within the broader academic enterprise. There is little sign, as yet, of the kind of long-lasting epistemic angst common in Anglophone digital humanities<sup>64</sup>, but the surge in interest, notably including considerable attention from information scientists, has served to raise questions about the core epistemic commitments. Should, for example, the field be expanded to cover the social sciences, as is the case in the forthcoming book on e-research and collaborative

<sup>57</sup>José Manuel Lucía Megías, *El elogio del texto*, Madrid 2012.

<sup>58</sup><http://grinugr.org/grin/adelanto-de-publicacion-del-libro-ciencias-sociales-y-humanidades-digitales/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>59</sup><http://fildigital.hypotheses.org/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>60</sup><http://investigaryredactar.blogspot.com.es/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>61</sup><http://morflog.hypotheses.org/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>62</sup><http://estebanromero.com/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>63</sup><http://filindig.hypotheses.org/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>64</sup>See for example Stephen Ramsay's blogpost of 2013 „DH Types One and Two“, <http://stephenramsay.us/2013/05/03/dh-one-and-two/> (16.07.2014) or the writings of Willard McCarty, including „Humanities computing as interdiscipline“, 1999, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/hcs/mccarty.html> or his Busa prize presentation „Getting there from here: Remembering the future of digital humanities“, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTHa1rDR680> (16.07.2014).

<sup>49</sup><http://dhd2013.filos.unam.mx/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>50</sup>[http://www.eventoscsev.org/learnovation/?page\\_id=1184](http://www.eventoscsev.org/learnovation/?page_id=1184) (16.07.2014).

<sup>51</sup><http://www.janusdigital.es/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>52</sup><http://journals.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/digithum/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>53</sup><http://scriptumdigital.org/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>54</sup><http://revistacaracteres.net/> (16.07.2014).

<sup>55</sup><http://revistes.uab.cat/anuariolopedevega/issue/view/v20> (16.07.2014).

<sup>56</sup><http://www.elprofesionaldelainformacion.com> (16.07.2014).

research<sup>65</sup> which looks at Digital Cultures from the perspective of the Social Sciences and Humanities, the focus of research by the *Grin-UGR* group? What is the relationship between digital humanities and other fields interested in the effects of digital technology on human culture?<sup>66</sup> Can „digital humanities“ function as a formal discipline (or interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary area) within Spanish academia, or is it simply a label of convenience for a series of discussions and practices which explore the fast-moving but ultimately long-lasting transitions brought about by the complex relationship between human enquiry and digital cultures and technology?

### Institutional challenges

Institutional recognition has been a major obstacle to the advancement of the digital humanities in Spain until the present time, and there is little evidence that this will change much in the foreseeable future. There is little or no official recognition or support from the national ministry or regional councils, from the various funding regimes in operation in Spain, or from those responsible for formal academic accreditation, and this is exacerbated by the rather more formal and inflexible structures which make interdisciplinary collaboration much more difficult. We note, in particular, the sharp divide between the academic researcher (who leads the research but supposedly does not „need“ to engage properly with the technologies) and the technologist (who performs a supporting „service“ role), and this is one of the many reasons why there has been far less of an emphasis on building tools in digital humanities in Spain than has been the case in many English-speaking countries<sup>67</sup>, with digital innovations typically result-

<sup>65</sup>Esteban Romero / María Sánchez (eds.), *Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades Digitales: técnicas, herramientas y experiencias de e-research e investigación en colaboración*, forthcoming, accessible at <<http://grinugr.org/grin/adelanto-de-publicacion-del-libro-ciencias-sociales-y-humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>66</sup>Paul Spence, *Centros y fronteras: el panorama internacional de las humanidades digitales*, in: *Humanidades Digitales: desafíos, logros y perspectivas de futuro*, ed. Sagrario López Poza y Nieves Pena Sueiro, Janus [online], Anexo 1 (2014), pp. 37–61, available at <http://www.janusdigital.es/anexos/contribucion.htm?id=6> (16.07.2014).

<sup>67</sup>As observed, for example by Priani in his review of the HDH2013 confer-

ence from fragile and unstable partnerships with computational science researchers offering their time on a volunteer basis or from commercial agreements with software companies.<sup>68</sup> Neither is there a strong connection with innovations in the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector (such as Spanish National Library/BNE's linked data research project<sup>69</sup>), where digital humanists have largely been marginal, with honourable exceptions (such as the early stages of the „Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes“). While Spanish cultural heritage institutions typically play a role in the major international consortia and initiatives such as Europeana, The European Library and the World Digital Library, Spain is typically absent from equivalent initiatives relating to digital infrastructure in the arts and humanities (such as *NeDiMaH*<sup>70</sup> or *DARIAH*<sup>71</sup>), and under-represented in international digital humanities fora such as *ADHO*<sup>72</sup> or *EADH*.<sup>73</sup>

In teaching too, the coverage of digital humanities has been patchy and inconsistent, with no formal digital humanities teaching since the unexpected suspension of the UCLM's online Masters in Digital Humanities in 2011 at the height of the financial crisis in Spain (with no apparent suggestion that this was a decision based on academic criteria) although there are now plans to introduce a Masters in DH at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona<sup>74</sup> and a number of post-graduate courses do exist in overlapping areas, such as the Masters

ence: Ernesto Priani, blogpost 27 July 2013, „España y las humanidades digitales“, in: <<http://humanidadesdigitales.net/blog/2013/07/27/espana-y-las-humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>68</sup>With a few notable exceptions, such as the international collaboration Succeed <<http://succeed-project.eu/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>69</sup><<http://datos.bne.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>70</sup><<http://www.nedimah.eu/Contributing-Organisations>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>71</sup><<http://dariah.eu/about/our-partners.html>> (16.07.2014). This contrasts with its participation in the European body associated with language resources and technologies, CLARIN, where Spain has been highly active <<http://clarin-es.iula.upf.edu/es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>72</sup><<http://adho.org/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>73</sup><<http://eadh.org/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>74</sup><<http://dhd2013.filos.unam.mx/masterhd/>> (16.07.2014).





Fig. 3: Screenshot of the Linked data project at the BNE, 12.05.2014

in Digital Library and Information Services at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid<sup>75</sup> or the Specialisation in Digital Art History at the University of Malaga.<sup>76</sup> There has been rather more success in organising unofficial courses and workshops, often with a practical component, including the workshop in digital humanities held at the HDH2013 conference<sup>77</sup> and the forthcoming DH@Madrid Summer School, part of a series of new initiatives in digital humanities soon to be offered

<sup>75</sup>Máster en bibliotecas y servicios de información digital <[http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/postgrado\\_mast\\_doct/masters/Master\\_Bibliotecas\\_y\\_Servicios\\_Informacion\\_Digital](http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/postgrado_mast_doct/masters/Master_Bibliotecas_y_Servicios_Informacion_Digital)> (16.07.2014).

<sup>76</sup><<http://historiadelartemalaga.es/cehad/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>77</sup><<http://hdh2013.humanidadesdigitales.org/estaticas/ver.htm?jsessionid=AF3FE3DB47864B575A1503F7258591F1?id=8>> (16.07.2014).

by UNED, including a new Diploma.<sup>78</sup>

The move to establishing events and other activities formally identified under the „digital humanities“ banner has helped to compensate for the poor representation of the field at a formal institutional level, and the establishment of professional associations, and in particular HDH, has no doubt made a significant contribution to the consolidation of digital humanities as a field in the Spanish context. Also filling this vacuum are a number of domain-specific communities of practice such as the TC12 partnership for research involving Spanish early modern theatre studies<sup>79</sup> or the CHARTA network, led by Pedro Sánchez Prieto-Borja, which unites research into the history of the Spanish language, although any technical innovations here are highly dependent on major grants.<sup>80</sup>

As Priani<sup>81</sup> has shown, the kind of interdisciplinary centre common in some countries is hard to formalise within Spanish academic structures, which are firmly marked by disciplinary boundaries, although one area where this kind of research has flourished (with different degrees of connection to the digital humanities) is within the Institute, Laboratory or MediaLab models applied in MediaLab USAL (Salamanca)<sup>82</sup>, MediaLab Prado<sup>83</sup>, GrinUGR<sup>84</sup>, CCCBLAB<sup>85</sup> and Instituto de Cultura y Tecnología Miguel de Unamuno de la Universidad Carlos III.<sup>86</sup> These satellite entities have more autonomy but are to a greater or lesser degree detached from the core academic structure. Some entities show strong leanings towards private enterprise, such as the Tecnodoc

<sup>78</sup><<http://www.uned.es/humanidadesdigitales>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>79</sup><<http://tc12.uv.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>80</sup><<http://www.charta.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>81</sup>Ernesto Priani, blogpost 27 July 2013, „España y las humanidades digitales“, in: <<http://humanidadesdigitales.net/blog/2013/07/27/espana-y-las-humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>82</sup><<http://medialab.usal.es/blog/humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>83</sup><<http://medialab-prado.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>84</sup><<http://grinugr.org/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>85</sup><<http://blogs.cccb.org/lab/es>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>86</sup><[http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/instituto\\_cultura\\_tecnologia\\_miguel\\_unamuno](http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/instituto_cultura_tecnologia_miguel_unamuno)> (16.07.2014).

research group<sup>87</sup>, or Liceus<sup>88</sup>, which provides education programmes on a commercial footing, while independent foundations like the Ignacio Larramendi have also played key roles in related areas of digital scholarship.<sup>89</sup>

Until recently, there has been no identifiable centre which specifically identifies itself as a digital humanities centre in Spain, in spite of the calls of people like Lucía Megías<sup>90</sup> for a formal institutional presence of this kind, but there are signs that this may be changing, with the creation of LINHD (Laboratorio de Innovación en Humanidades Digitales), launched in April 2014 as a hub for developing projects, offering information and orientation to researchers and preparing teaching programs to boost DH in Spain, with a strong Linked Data component.<sup>91</sup>

It is impossible to list all the initiatives which have arisen in Spanish digital humanities in the last years, but the lack of centralised information about the field has led to numerous attempts to catalogue or publicise them<sup>92</sup> and researchers like Rojas have started to fill the historiographical gap with his article mapping the territory of Spanish digital humanities from a bibliographic perspective<sup>93</sup> (in part based on research carried out within a Zotero group created by the author

<sup>87</sup> <<http://klingon.uc3m.es/drupal/en/node/7>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>88</sup> <<http://www.liceus.com/formacion/publica/index.asp>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>89</sup> <<http://www.larramendi.es>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>90</sup> José Manuel Lucía Megías, *La informática humanística: una puerta abierta para los estudios medievales en el siglo XXI*, in: *Revista de poética medieval* 20 (2008), accessible at <<http://eprints.ucm.es/8942/1/05-.pdf>> (16.07.14).

<sup>91</sup> <<http://linhd.uned.es>> (30.04.2014).

<sup>92</sup> Including the GRINUgr atlas of digital humanities <<http://grinugr.org/>>, the PCDig portal <<http://patrimonioyкультурadigital.uma.es/mapa-PCDig>>, and the summary maintained infrequently by one of the authors of this article <<http://hd.paulspence.org/recursos/hh-dd-es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>93</sup> See also Elena González-Blanco García, *Actualidad de las Humanidades Digitales y un ejemplo de ensamblaje poético en la red: ReMetCa*, in: *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 761 (2013), pp. 53–67, accessible at <[http://www.academia.edu/5068889/Actualidad\\_de\\_las\\_Humanidades\\_Digitales\\_y\\_un\\_ejemplo\\_de\\_ensamblaje\\_poetico\\_en\\_la\\_red\\_ReMetCa](http://www.academia.edu/5068889/Actualidad_de_las_Humanidades_Digitales_y_un_ejemplo_de_ensamblaje_poetico_en_la_red_ReMetCa)> (16.07.2014).

and dedicated to the field from a Spanish perspective<sup>94</sup>).

### **Towards a definition of digital humanities in Spain**

We might ask why the field of digital humanities has suddenly started to gain traction in the last few years. Why now? Without any doubt, part of the answer lies in broader technological changes, which have had a profound impact on the Spanish society's relationship with digital culture, not to mention on scholarly communications (including a sudden and rising perception of a huge divide between knowledge creation in academia and in society at large), although we also wish to highlight some factors which are only now starting to be researched properly.

In 2006, Isabelle Leibrandt<sup>95</sup> asked if „humanidades digitales“ was science fiction or an imminent reality. Now there can be little doubt that digital humanities has a role to play in Spain, but the question is what that will be, and up to now there has been little attempt to define an intellectual agenda for the digital humanities in Spain or in Spanish, although that has recently started to change.<sup>96</sup>

In the information sheet for the digital humanities workshop organised in Elche in December 2012, digital humanities was described as an area of study, research, teaching and innovation which is at the intersection between technology and humanities, defined broadly, but focusing on digitisation and the analysis of materials related to traditional disciplines in humanities<sup>97</sup>. The distinction between digitisation and digital humanities research is not always clear in Spain

<sup>94</sup> <[https://www.zotero.org/groups/humanidades\\_digitales](https://www.zotero.org/groups/humanidades_digitales)> (16.07.2014).

<sup>95</sup> Isabelle Leibrandt, *Humanidades digitales, ¿ciencia ficción o realidad inminente?*, in: *Espéculo. Revista de estudios literarios* (2006), accessible at <<http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero33/humadigi.html>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>96</sup> Sagrario López Poza, *Humanidades digitales hispánicas*, in: *Cincuentenario de la AIH, A Coruña, 2014* (forthcoming); Esteban Romero / María Sánchez (eds.), *Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades Digitales: técnicas, herramientas y experiencias de e-research e investigación en colaboración*, forthcoming, accessible at <<http://grinugr.org/grin/adelanto-de-publicacion-del-libro-ciencias-sociales-y-humanidades-digitales/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>97</sup> Translation by Spence.



(as is the case to a greater or lesser extent elsewhere) and the historical bias towards text-based disciplines is still evident<sup>98</sup>, with a particular bias towards language<sup>99</sup>, but recent developments have seen much stronger connections to an open scholarship agenda and to a broader sense of belonging to a global knowledge economy.

What is important for the digital humanities in Spain is that there has also been a growing sense that the field can both address the technical deficit in the humanities<sup>100</sup> and offer a dialogue about the effects of digital culture on changing economic and academic conditions<sup>101</sup>, with one important strand taking a critical look at multicultural perspectives within the digital humanities, and focusing on the role of non-Anglophone academic communities in digital knowledge creation.<sup>102</sup>

Spanish digital humanities still faces significant challenges in the years ahead. In spite of recent positive developments, the field still suf-

---

<sup>98</sup>Rojas Castro notes for example, that the eight founding members of HDH were researchers from philology or literature; Antonio Rojas Castro, *El mapa y el territorio. Una aproximación histórico-bibliográfica a la emergencia de las Humanidades Digitales en España*, 2013, in: <<http://revistacaracteres.net/revista/vol2n2noviembre2013/el-mapa-y-el-territorio/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>99</sup>Sagrario López Poza, *Humanidades digitales hispánicas*, in: *Cincuentenario de la AIH*, A Coruña, 2014 (forthcoming).

<sup>100</sup>In the words of José Manuel Lucía Megías, *El elogio del texto*, Madrid 2012, providing academic humanities scholars a chance to recover a social space which they consistently lost over the course of the twentieth century, and to recuperate a dynamic role in knowledge creation within society. Sagrario López Poza, *Humanidades digitales hispánicas*, in: *Cincuentenario de la AIH*, A Coruña, 2014 (forthcoming).

<sup>101</sup>Cf. Patrik Svensson, *The digital humanities as a humanities project*, in: *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 11 (2012), pp. 42–60.

<sup>102</sup>See, for examples, Amelia Sainz Cabrerizo at a MediaLab Prado lecture *Digital Humanities or Hypercolonial Studies*, in: *March 2013* <<http://medialab-prado.es/mmedia/10614/view>> (16.07.2014). This has significant resonance with broader multicultural agendas, including the Latin American perspective provided by Galina, who in her keynote speech to DH2013 started to outline some of the challenges in envisioning a truly global field of digital humanities, asking if DH is as open and universal as it claims to be; Isabel Galina blogpost 19 July 2013, *Is There Anybody Out There? Building a global Digital Humanities community*, <<http://humanidadesdigitales.net/blog/2013/07/19/is-there-anybody-out-there-building-a-global-digital-humanities-community/>> (16.07.2014).

fers from a degree of atomisation, lacks a clear identity and is in urgent need of more communication channels across disciplines, across career stages and across human/technological knowledge spaces. The academic system does not currently favour the development of the kind of interdisciplinary collaboration which is central to the digital humanities elsewhere, and organisations such as HDH will need to lobby hard for research to be recognised: recognition for digital humanities work by peers exist at disciplinary level, but is fragmented, and at national level many digital outcomes are not formally recognised properly by national (ANECA) or regional councils, and underplay the collaborative role of digital humanists mediating between humanities and technology. Similarly, thought will need to be given to opportunities for early career researchers<sup>103</sup> and to career incentives/paths for digital humanists, something identified way back in 2002 as a challenge.<sup>104</sup>

The discovery of a new play attributed to Lope de Vega play previously assumed to be missing by the Spanish researcher Alejandro García-Reidy early in 2014 demonstrated the wider potential value of the digital humanities in developing innovative research methods and tools for the humanities which may have a clear broader social impact. The newly discovered play was a result of two research projects, one based in the U.S.<sup>105</sup> and the other led by Teresa Ferrer at the University of Valencia, whose *CATCOM* database of Spanish theatre performances in the early modern period<sup>106</sup> alerted Reidy to the play in the first place, and its publication by the Prolope research group has garnered both significant public attention and academic debate.<sup>107</sup>

There are both reasons to be optimistic and pessimistic about the future of the digital humanities in Spain in the near future, and the

---

<sup>103</sup>„Young Researchers in Digital Humanities: A Manifiesto“ is one recent initiative in this area, <<http://dhdhi.hypotheses.org/1855>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>104</sup>Ángela Celis, *El humanista como tecnólogo del futuro*, in: *Lamusa* 2002, 1, pp. 31–34, accessible at <<http://bit.ly/1AYiVNh>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>105</sup><<http://manosteatrales.org/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>106</sup><<http://catcom.uv.es/>> (16.07.2014).

<sup>107</sup><[http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2014/02/03/actualidad/1391459859\\_701623.html](http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2014/02/03/actualidad/1391459859_701623.html)> (16.07.2014).

tension between the dynamics pushing for (including innovation, connection to wider digital cultural changes in society and perceived facilitation of public engagement) and against (academic traditions, political realities and lack of consensus over its concrete academic contribution) the advancement of the field, is far from resolved. The institutional and infrastructural challenges are significant, but the combination identified by Rodríguez-Yunta<sup>108</sup> of an ample demand for humanities-focused sources and documentation, the benefit of a permanent reflection on its own epistemology at a time of rapid and significant cultural transformations and the implied role of the humanities in „humanizing“ technology augurs well for a field which offers both practical and reflective perspectives on digital culture and technology.

---

<sup>108</sup>Luis Rodríguez-Yunta, Las humanidades digitales, ¿una mera etiqueta o un campo por el que deben apostar las ciencias de la documentación?, in: Notas ThinkEPI 2013, 12 September 2012, <<http://www.thinkepi.net/humanidades-digitales-etiqueta-campo-apostar-ciencias-documentacion>>, (16.07.2014).