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RESEARCH

Transforming DH Pedagogy

Nadine Boulay, Ashley Caranto Morford, Arun Jacob, Kush Patel,
and Kimberly O'Donnell

This essay cluster features two essays by students and faculty collaborators describing the ways in which new forms of pedagogical practices are expanding and changing the field of Digital Humanities. Each essay takes a different approach that reveals the importance of pedagogy in bringing social justice to the digital humanities. One pedagogical approach lies in the design and development of a game that shows the experience of transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming youth, and the other emphasizes the significance of the Digital Humanities Summer Institute in offering a space to develop and teach a theory of inclusive and activist digital pedagogy. Taken together, these essays demonstrate that transforming DH into a politically engaged, socially just, and inclusive field is an ongoing process of teaching and learning in new and traditional places, forms, communities, organizations, and institutions. Kimberly O'Donnell responds to these papers as a graduate student and Digital Fellow at Simon Fraser University, offering her perspective on the challenges and necessity of creating these transformative pedagogical spaces.

Keywords: social justice; digital humanities (DH); digital pedagogy; digital activism; transgender; video game technology

Ce regroupement de dissertations se compose de deux dissertations écrites par des étudiants et membres de faculté collaborateurs qui décrivent les façons dont de nouvelles types de pratiques pédagogiques étendent et changent le domaine des Humanités numériques. Chaque dissertation adopte une approche différente qui démontre l'importance de la pédagogie pour l'intégration de la justice sociale dans les humanités numériques. Pour une approche pédagogique, il s'agit de la conception et du développement d'un jeu qui montre l'expérience de jeunes transgenres, de jeunes non-binaires et de jeunes dont le genre est non conforme, tandis que l'autre approche souligne l'importance du *Digital Humanities Summer Institute* (Institut d'été des humanités numériques) dans l'offre d'un endroit pour le développement et pour l'enseignement d'une théorie pédagogique numérique inclusive et activiste. Ensemble, ces dissertations démontrent que la transformation des humanités numériques en un domaine qui est politiquement engagé et

juste au plan social et inclusif est un processus permanent d'enseignement et d'apprentissage dans de nouveaux lieux et dans des lieux traditionnels, ainsi que dans des formes, communautés, organisations et institutions. Kimberly O'Donnell répond à ces dissertations en tant qu'étudiante de cycle supérieur et en tant que *Digital Fellow* (chercheur) à l'Université Simon Fraser, en donnant sa perspective sur les défis et sur la nécessité de créer ces lieux pédagogiques transformateurs.

Mots-clés: justice sociale; humanités numériques (HN); pédagogie; numériques; activisme numériques; transgenres; technologie des jeux video

Gender Vectors of the Greater Vancouver Area: Building Digital Resources for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Nonconforming Children and Youth

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Introduction

In the past decade, calls to #TransformDH have consistently highlighted problems of exclusion and lack of diversity within the Digital Humanities (DH), stressing the necessity for DH practice, research, and pedagogy that is grounded in an anti-oppression praxis and that “[...] enact[s] critique that is at once *transformative* and *transformed*” (Ruberg 2018, 418). We do not attempt to establish or maintain a fixed definition of what “counts” as DH proper, but projects that use digital tools and that explicitly take up an intersectional praxis have the potential to challenge disciplinary norms and exclusions and provide meaningful representation for communities impacted by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of systemic oppression (Hamraie 2018, 455). This paper outlines the work of the Gender Vectors of the Greater Vancouver Area (GVGVA or GV) project—a team comprised of trans/non-binary and queer-allied researchers at Simon Fraser University, who, since 2015, have been working to develop an educational video game that makes visible the vectors of vulnerability, safety, and resiliency of transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming (T/NB/GN) young people in the Greater Vancouver Area (GVA) (Spade 2011). The GV project engages and mobilizes digital technologies as transformative pedagogical tools, offering players an inside perspective into many of the challenges and barriers that T/NB/GN children and youth experience daily. Today’s children and youth have grown up completely wired to digital technologies, and video games themselves are widely used and largely accessible, making DH tools and

gaming platforms ideal for circulating transformative knowledge and representation for marginalized communities (Liang, Commins, and Duffy 2010). Each stage of building the game itself—from design, programming, and testing—has all been done in collaboration *with* T/NB/GN, rather than on their behalf, and designed to function as a digital interactive resource for families, educators, social workers, policy makers, and potential allies alike to learn ways to provide public sector supports, or what we refer to as ‘safety nets,’ for the T/NB/GN in the Lower Mainland (LM) (see **Figure 1**).

The Gender Vectors video game

The GV team sought to create a game that would be user-friendly for audiences not necessarily versed in gaming, such as families of T/NB/GN children and youth, as well as educators, policy makers, and potential allies, to build empathy and provide support for T/NB/GN children and youth in their classrooms, communities, and public spaces. In its most current iteration, the game is a single-player role player game (RPG) with a ‘scavenger hunt’ type narrative offering three scenes/environments for the player to navigate, featuring a home setting, public transit, and an LGBTQ youth group. The main character is Aja—a 14-year-old mixed-race South Asian non-binary



Figure 1: A map of the Lower Mainland as it appears in *Gender Vectors of the Greater Vancouver Area*.

youth who uses they/them pronouns and comes to live with their Aunt Marta in Vancouver from a small town in Ontario after experiencing transphobic abuse from their white father (see **Figure 2**). In order for Aja to learn more about the city, Aunt Marta provides Aja with \$20 cash and a Compass card for transit.

The player follows Aja from Aunt Marta's house to the Skytrain, where they experience microaggressions such as being gawked at due to their gender ambiguity (see **Figure 3**). Aja then sees other T/NB/GN and queer young people (made visible by their aesthetic styles and politically explicit buttons on their bags) and follows



Figure 2: Aunt Marta's kitchen table.



Figure 3: On the Skytrain.

them to Surrey where they attend a meeting of Youth 4 A Change, an LGBTQ group for young activists (Youth4AChange 2020). As Aja enters the space, they are invited to sign in to the group with their name and pronouns. The player has the option to select what pronouns Aja enters on the sign-up page screen, such as she/her/hers; he/him/his; they/them/theirs; and ze/hir/hirs. While this is not an exhaustive list of personal pronouns, it encourages the player to think outside of the normative binary of man/woman and consider both the experience of being mis-gendered or not having chosen pronouns respected, as well as the sense of 'gender euphoria' many feel when their gender identity is affirmed and respected.

As Aja navigates the three scenes, the player can interact with objects and images that correspond to different resources throughout the LM that connect to an interactive map and a personal inventory. After interacting with these items—which includes things like books, art, advertisements, and posters—the player is prompted to visit a Map of the Lower Mainland, where information about each service, organization, or space is displayed. For example, in the first scene, the player can make Aja interact with a calendar on Aunt Marta's fridge that has contact and background information on a local healthcare provider in the Lower Mainland who is known to be trans-affirming. Once the player accesses this object, they can toggle to the map page and read details on that healthcare provider and how to contact them. In another example, Aja also can peruse through Aunt Marta's bookshelf which features texts such as *Stone Butch Blues* by transgender activist Leslie Feinberg and *The Remedy: Queer & Trans Voices on Health and Healthcare* edited by local author and activist Zena Sharman. Once Aja interacts with these books, the player can access their Inventory and learn more about these and other books, all of which were programmed to offer the player multiple resources to learn about LGBTQ literature and history as well as real-life resources for T/NB/GN young people throughout the Lower Mainland.

As Aja navigates these scenes and interacts with other people and objects, the player is offered a multifaceted glimpse at some of the situations that a T/NB/GN youth might encounter in their daily life, such as familial transphobia or microaggressions such as stares from strangers on public transit, as well as finding

community resources and making friends. Furthermore, through the interactive map the player is also provided with some examples of 'safety nets' across the LM. These safety nets include public sector supports such as gender and sexual diversity policies in schools; all-gender washrooms in publicly funded facilities; school breakfast/lunch programs; trans-positive health care; and the ability to self-identify gender (without limits imposed by the gender binary) in interactions with social services and criminal justice systems. These aforementioned functions of the Gender Vectors game are all geared toward generating greater support, empathy, and allyship on individual, societal, and institutional levels for T/NB/GN children and youth *as defined by* T/NB/GN children and youth themselves.

The Gender Vectors project is made up of a team of researchers—three academics and two graduate students (PhD and MA)—at Simon Fraser University in the departments of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, Sociology and Anthropology, and the Faculty of Education. We situate our work in the tradition of Social Action Research (SAR), a methodological and theoretical framework for conducting collaborative projects where researchers are accountable to community stakeholders. These stakeholders/community members actively participate in defining/co-generating the objectives, goals, methods, outcomes, and application of the project in question (Greenwood and Levin 2000, 92–96). Social Action Research seeks to disrupt the conventional and hierarchical relationship between social science researchers and the communities they work with through the action of "co-generative inquiry" (96). Social Action Research theoretically departs from more conventional academic research insofar as it requires that scholars be actively engaged in and *with* communities outside of academia *and* have an explicit agenda of promoting social change (Greenwood and Levin 2000, 2). While the project team is made up of trans and queer researchers, the decisions we have made regarding game design and programming have been done to the best of our abilities through collaboration with T/NB/GN youth themselves. Consultation and collaboration with different communities has been central through all phases of the project, from initial data collection to game development and testing.

To date, the **specific objectives** of the project have been to:

- Interview T/NB/GN children and youth and/or their parents/legal guardians in the Greater Vancouver Area in documenting and analyzing their daily experiences of safety, resilience, and vulnerability.
- Document and analyze existing **safety nets** (i.e. public sector supports for this population), and map this data to create the video game terrain.
- Develop a demonstration model of a **social justice-oriented** video game for testing by T/NB/GN children and youth, their parents, and community allies and advocates.
- **Assess dialogues** sparked during beta testing of the video game at a community workshop (held early May 2018) to understand how existing supports are taken up, and to identify interventions or strategies for enhancing this safety net.

Following our epistemological and methodological grounding in Social Action Research, the data that was used to populate the game was directly sourced from the series of interviews that the Principle Investigator (PI) Dr. Ann Travers conducted with 20+ T/NB/GN young people ages 6–21, as well as their parents/guardians, asking participants to share their experiences of navigating the LM as a T/NB/GN young person. These interviews offer a glimpse into what we refer to as participants' "self-worlds," mapping and making visible their quotidian experiences of navigating the world from their unique embodied positionality (Von Uexkull 1934). Participants described navigating a variety of environments such as schools and playgrounds, family homes, public transit, as well as interactions with medical professionals, and other gatekeepers to trans-affirming healthcare and social safety nets.

In 2015 our project was awarded a major grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) which would enable us to support a host of activities including: hiring graduate student research assistance; creating community and youth workshops; offering honoraria for youth participants; and

hiring programmers to design and build the actual game. After we had finished conducting interviews with youth, our team coded these interviews using Nvivo—a software used for project management and qualitative data analysis—to map in as much detail as possible, what ‘safety nets’ are currently available for T/NB/GN young people, and more urgently, what resources are still needed. For example, many schools across the LM do not have gender-inclusive policies that allow students to self-identify or use the washroom that fits their gender identity; there is an overwhelming lack of physicians who are publicly known to provide gender affirming care; and street involved youth often experience transphobia and discrimination at shelters that do not have proficient training in trans issues. To address this wide range of issues, we simultaneously connected with community stakeholders (policy makers, teachers, social services, etc.) to supplement the interview data on available safety nets. Additionally, we worked alongside a Youth Advisory Council made up of T/NB/GN young people who oversaw and provided feedback on game design and development.

Since 2015, we have been working alongside two different cohorts of students in the Master of Digital Media program at the Centre for Digital Media in Vancouver to design, build, and populate the game. Our research team was experienced in programming and gaming language, yet, we had not anticipated or understood the time, labour, and money that goes in to building a game that featured as many scenes, characters, or narratives as we had initially hoped. After further consultation, we adjusted our expectations, and after working with two cohorts of programmers (2015–2016 and 2016–2017) and continuing our collaboration with T/NB/GN youth and other community members, by early 2018 we had our three-scene prototype. In May 2018 we held a community workshop that brought youth and community members together to test the game and participate in group dialogue throughout the day. In line with the methodological principles of Social Action Research, the data from these discussions will be used to structure future iterations of the game. We are currently analyzing this data and looking for new networks and sources of funding to assist us in developing a second version with additional scenes, customizable avatars, and a more detailed mapping system.

While the game centers on T/NB/GN experience, its primary purpose is to be used as an educational tool for building understanding and empathy around the complex forms of precarity, vulnerability, and exclusion that shape the life changes of T/NB/NG young people. In educational settings, teachers and administrators must have the pedagogical literacy and training to be able to discuss questions of sexuality and gender difference with *all* students, regardless of whether there are any LGBTQ students in the room—which there usually are (Van Leent and Mills 2017, 401). Games like these are one of many DH pedagogical tools that has the potential to make the experiences of marginalized communities visible, while also encouraging those in positions of power with access to resources to participate in vital social justice advocacy work and community building.

Utilizing Social Action Research methodologies, the GV project has been geared towards solving “practical problems in specific locations” through engaging T/NB/GN children and youth, whose knowledge of their own experiences and lives are valid and central to the game itself (Greenwood and Levin 2000, 94). Therefore, the legitimacy of our research has been established in collaboration with community members, and the development of the game has involved many stages and processes of community consultation and feedback. In addition to youth themselves, we have been in ongoing consultation with parents, friends, and families of T/NB/GN children and youth; as well as educators and policy makers to ascertain not only what safety nets exist (already existing resources such as gender affirming doctors or youth drop-in groups), but also what safety nets are still desperately needed in order to support T/NB/GN children and youth from within their families and friend groups, to schools, to public and community spaces. From 2016–2018 we worked with two different youth advisory committee (YAC) cohorts (between 5–7 people) of T/NB/GN youth 14–19, and for whom we provided honorariums, meals, and transportation to the team meetings we held. In 2016 and 2018 each YAC cohort tested the game prototype (in different phases of development) and provided the GV team with feedback that we will implement in future iterations of the game.

Our research project ties in with a longstanding tradition in humanities and social science of exposing oppressive practices, including those relating to sexuality and

gender expression (Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield 2010; Enke 2013). Following the work of Black feminist scholars and activists, we apply an intersectional analysis to our project, wherein categories such as race, gender identity, sexuality, and class cannot be understood as separate axes, but as mutually-constituting and interconnected (Crenshaw 1989). Using a single-axis framework (of gender, or race, or sexuality as separate and discrete categories) to examine forms of exclusion tends to highlight the experiences of the most-privileged members of that group (Crenshaw 1989; Bucar and Enke 2011; Skidmore 2011; Stryker, Currah and Moore 2008). Without this epistemological lens, our project would fail to make visible the complex ways in which systems such as structural racism, settler colonialism, poverty, and other factors underpin transphobia and shapes the lives of T/NB/GN young people. For example, T/NB/GN youth who are Black or Indigenous experience much higher rates of violence and social stigma than youth who are white or are not socio-economically disadvantaged. Without an intersectional framework, the lived experience of being racialized *and* transgender or living in poverty *as* a transperson would be rendered invisible. Juxtaposing and analysing the intersectionality of first-person narratives in the interviews collected provides in-depth understanding of the meanings that T/NB/GN young people make of their engagements with social systems, as well as their practices of resilience and resistance to these systems.

Emerging research reveals the vulnerability of T/NB/GN children and youth to harassment, violence, poverty, and trauma, and hence their need for social justice and social safety nets (Grossman, D'Augelli, Howell, and Hubbard 2006). T/NB/GN children and youth are vulnerable to the overwhelming pressure to conform to societal gender norms structured around a rigid gender binary, resulting in bullying and harassment by peers, and often debilitating social stigmatization. Studies also show high rates of violence by parents against T/NB/GN children and youth who, in turn, experience high rates of homelessness, increased risk of mental health concerns, substance abuse, and suicide.

Developing and providing support services for T/NB/GN children and youth can be impeded by difficulties in identifying this population. Understandably, T/NB/GN children and youth are often invisible due to their necessary efforts to avoid

teasing, harassment, and violence from those around them, including teachers, parents, family members, and other adults in positions of power. Furthermore, many institutions are unwilling or unable to engage directly with transgender communities. Institutions, social policy, and everyday cultural interactions actively maintain a rigid gender binary, resulting in both institutional and informational erasure of transgender people, thereby neglecting their unique needs for health and social services, and public education supports (Grossman, D'Augelli, Howell, and Hubbard 2006). The GV game models this critique through centering the experience of a non-binary trans youth who—as they navigate the environment—is directly confronted by transphobic microaggressions and (in future scenes) confronting explicitly binary gendered public spaces such as washrooms. Additionally, while the interactive map makes visible some of the safety nets throughout the Lower Mainland, it also makes visible the lack of a wide-range of resources that are explicitly trans-affirming *and* focused on children and youth, particularly outside of the Greater Vancouver Area.

Our engagement with digital technologies, intersectional theory, and anti-oppression politics does have precedent in the academy. The increase in availability and mass proliferation of digital technologies continues to have a far-reaching impact on both research and pedagogy throughout the humanities and social sciences, where digital tools can and have been used to “[...] augment the work of the humanities,” and to use humanities frameworks “[...] to enrich the study of the digital” (Ruberg 2018, 421). Scholars, activists, and other DH practitioners—such as those mobilizing behind the #TransformDH hashtag—have brought attention to the “structures of legitimization,” privilege, and exclusion within the field itself (Ruberg 2018, 420). While there are many DH projects that actively address histories of settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and neoliberal capitalism—highlighting the ways that institutional scholarship that uses digital tools are *symptomatic* of these systems of oppression—in their work, these projects are still largely relegated to the margins of the field.

Similarly, while there is a sizeable and increasingly vocal cohort of LGBTQ game studies scholars, programmers, activists, and gamers—working both within and

outside of academia—video game culture has largely been a hostile and often outright dangerous places for women, LGBTQ folks, and people of colour. Even before the rise of the #GamerGate campaign in 2014, gaming culture was (as it continues to be) dominated largely by white, heterosexual, cisgender men. Digital technologies such as video games, rather than being mere mediums for abstract expression or data visualization, are always already historically and socially contingent; in other words, the people who create, populate, and program digital tools—why, for whom, and to what end—shape the utility and accessibility of the data they produce and share (Hamraie 2018, 455). Critics of the ‘Digital Humanities’ (marked by the capital ‘D’ and capital ‘H’ to denote institutional embeddedness and hegemony) and gaming culture alike have called attention to the ways that digital spaces can be “marred by disabling tendencies and technologies” structured by “architectures of exclusion” that renders feminized, queer, transgender, and racialized bodies as at best, unintelligible and at worst, targets for violence (Hamraie 2018, 455–456). Yet digital spaces, technologies, and games also function as sites for marginalized youth to connect with one another, build networks of care and share information and support they may not always have with their caregivers, peers, or teachers.

Digital technologies and tools such as video gaming can and have also been used, both within and outside of academia, in service of intersectional, political, and transformational social action research and pedagogy. While the majority of funding and support for DH projects and digitizing, text encoding, archiving, and processing data occurs at large institutions and companies, digital technologies and skills such as game design and programming are more accessible than ever before, owing in part to the development of new software tools that can be learned without advanced degrees (Ruberg 2015, 548; Jagoda 2014). Although queer and trans studies as well as DH scholarship have yet to fully explore queer and trans video game culture in depth, queer and trans gamers have been participating, producing, and programming video games since the inception of this technology (Ruberg 2015, 546).

Particularly in the past decade, LGBTQ, feminist, and anti-racist gamers have been carving out both physical and digital spaces to reimagine “[...] video games and game culture through a broad range of LGBTQ perspectives” and anti-oppression theory and

praxis (Ruberg 2015, 548). The Queerness and Games Conference (QGCon) and the queer gaming convention GaymerX are run by a mix of academics, professional game developers, and activists alike. While there is no unifying definition of what exactly makes a game queer/trans, these cohorts tend to produce content that: i) includes or is centred around LGBTQ characters or avatars; ii) studies the issues of LGBTQ identity, representation, culture, and history; and iii) troubles gaming narratives and storylines that are explicitly heteronormative or cis-normative (Ruberg 2015, 548–550; Chess 2016, 84). The LGBTQ Video Game Archive launched and moderated by media studies scholar Adrienne Shaw documents the history of LGBTQ content in the past three decades of video game history, providing a publicly accessible database of LGBTQ game designers, programmers, characters, and themes (Shaw 2017, 89). The Gender Vectors project is indebted to and builds upon the decades of research, designing, and programming conducted by queer and trans gamers, scholars, and activists who continue to demonstrate the necessity of bringing together digital technologies and anti-oppression politics.

The potentialities of social justice video gaming

Mobilizing the educational, research and social justice potentials of digital technologies by creating social justice video games is not new. Examples include “Darfur is dying” (Darfur is Dying 2020); “SOS slaves: changing the trafficking game” (SOS_SLAVES 2020); “Third World Farmer: A Simulation to Make You Think” (Third World Farmer 2020), and two games designed to enable citizen engagement and student learning about sustainability: “Sustainable City Block by Block” (Sustainable City 2020), and “SimCityEDU” (SimCityEDU 2020).

Previous studies have demonstrated how transgender young people have used digital tools such as vlogging to “tell stories of trans[ness] that can animate and motivate others to dare to be visible or claim and identity as trans” (Raun 2015, 365). Those who identify as LGBTQ and other sexual or gender dissidents have long used the internet both to connect with others and create visible digital community spaces— from chat rooms, Listserv’s, and forums to more contemporary social media apps like Tumblr, YouTube, and Instagram (Raun 2015, 368; Ruberg 2015, 547). Our project is also not the first to use video game technology to explore transgender

issues: “Dys4ia” (Dys4ia Game 2020) and “Transitory” are two of a number of video games that explicitly address themes of gender nonconformity and transitioning (Dale 2020).

Today’s children and youth are the first generational cohort to have grown up fully wired to digital technology; and therefore, we consider gaming technology as an ideal means and medium to foster social justice (Liang, Commins and Duffy 2010, 13). Studies have shown that LGBTQ people use the virtual world as a resource for safety, building community, enjoying anonymity, exploring sexual and gender identities. Moreover, virtual spaces can and have served as potential “staging areas” for identity and community formation (Bryson, MacIntosh, Jordan, and Lin 2009; Horvath, Iantaffi, Grey, and Bockting 2012, 457). Video games are also generally flexible and user friendly and can be a platform for building empathy and understanding through experiencing a social world from a unique perspective. This project employs the flexibility of gaming to produce a digital resource intended to enhance the wellbeing and life chances of specific, unique subgroups of marginalized youth. The development and interface of future iterations of the video game will involve and engage those often overlooked even within transgender or LGBTQ research projects, such as questioning, genderfluid, racialized, and working-class youth. Our game is unique due to its foundation in Social Action Research, as it focuses on, and is designed with and for, T/GN children and youth. To our knowledge, no other game has used community-centred research to focus on the needs of T/GN children and youth, and our application of intersectionality and SAR coupled with Digital Humanities technologies is also original.

The Gender Vectors game is emblematic of what transformative DH pedagogy and scholarship can look like, utilizing Social Action Research methods of collaboration with communities outside of the University, as well as intersectional theory to make visible the vectors of vulnerability, precarity, and resilience of T/NB/GN children and youth. The game is a digital educational tool designed for, and in collaboration *with*, T/NB/GN children and youth, seeking to bring the everyday experiences and perspectives of T/NB/GN young people into critical dialogue with current social services practice, both highlighting existent safety nets and those that are urgently

needed. The game itself has been designed to provide parents, teachers, policy makers, friends, and allies a complex yet accessible understanding of the experiences facing T/NB/GN young people as they navigate the world around them, illustrating what social supports and resources are available locally to support T/NB/NG young people, and what resources are desperately needed. Future iterations of the game will continue to build upon the ongoing collaborative work with T/NB/GN children and youth and their communities.

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Competing interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed: Futurities, Imaginings, Responsibilities, and Ethics for Anti-colonial DH Praxis

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“It is really kind of sinking in now. WE DID IT. WE ARE TEACHING OUR COURSE NEXT YEAR!!!!” Ashley voiced these words two days after we learned that our seminar on anti-colonial digital pedagogy—which we had proposed for the 2020 Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) and entitled, “Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed: Anti-Colonial DH Critiques and Praxis”—had officially been approved. Over the last two years, we had been practicing a collaborative approach to teaching the digital humanities, an approach that raised hard questions of ourselves and our ethical imperatives as scholars and teachers in addressing the colonial legacies and discursive practices pervading contemporary technoscapes. We had been meeting in conference spaces and online hangouts, in compressed times and pre-scheduled moments, in groups and networks both personal and connected to our disciplinary movements in North America and India. We had been laying bare our precarities and positionalities in the context of anti-colonial DH work and exploring ways to transform how we learn in historically white and upper caste environments. The news of our course selection followed these deliberate engagements and endless labour, and therefore, as Kush articulated, felt like a long emotional and epistemological pause for us, reminding us of the stakes of this partnership for a more affirming environment for digital humanists inside and outside the academy. Our work is: to move the discourses on anti-colonial DH from critique to praxis by focusing on, and building coalitions across, micro-specific infrastructural and community contexts. Our work is: iterative and incomplete.

The “Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed” partnership is named after and centred around Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, 2009), wherein Freire discusses pedagogy as a political tool and practice commonly used for domination. We cite the knowledges and lived consciousness of our own and those of our collaborators and wider scholars to “unveil” what Freire called “the reality of oppression,” both as we see it and as is framed for us (2009, 53). We keep in mind that Freire’s work was a deeply concrete project and an explicitly anti-colonial praxis. We continuously reflect on and strive to act on how we might build with Freirean insights and hold ourselves accountable in this work lest we reproduce the very hegemonies that we struggle against. Honouring and engaging with the “Freirean tradition” of critical pedagogy, the major tasks we outline and take on with and through our partnership and its hashtag network #AnticolonialDH are ideological critiques and practices of radically transformative and anti-oppressive digital pedagogy. Our critical pedagogical engagement is an attempt to connect kindred souls and relevant resources within digital humanities communities for resisting, interrupting, and, hopefully, ultimately undoing the relations of domination and the apparatuses that reproduce the status quo. We believe that digital humanities ought to function as scholarly, community, and activist engagements that enable open and critical discussion as a way to revitalize democracy, that is, a digital conscientization. In “Cultural Action and Conscientization” (1970), Paulo Freire defines conscientization as the process of becoming aware of the sources of one’s oppression and the values of the oppressor that one has internalized, and critically reflecting on the reality in order to actively engage in being an agent of change (452).

In this piece, we openly reflect on our ongoing partnership and journey, its successes and challenges, the ideologies that shape this process, and our next intentions. In so doing, our hope is to make transparent what a digital pedagogy committed to anti-colonialism might look like for others wishing to do this type of work and, also, to recognize, make open for dialogue, and continue to learn from individuals and collectives working at the intersections of DH and anti-colonialism

about where there may be shortcomings to our current approach and vision. Our partnership seeks to transform DH pedagogy by concretely addressing: how colonial ideologies and extractive research methods are naturalized within hegemonic DH principles and practices; how to incorporate anti-colonial DH pedagogies and what Métis scholar Adam Gaudry (2011) calls “insurgent research” practices into contexts of digital humanities knowledge-making; how to ethically mobilize open-access non-profit digital platforms for anti-colonial and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) resurgence; how to collectively create spaces for anti-colonial healing and community building within institutional infrastructures; and how to envision “queer futurit[ies] of data” (Zeffiro 2019, 16).

Building upon Freire’s writings and aligning with Third World feminist; Black, Indigenous, Dalit-Bahujan, and women of colour feminist; and queer and crip justice work, we imagine what Henry Giroux (2017) defines as “militant hope”—that is, “a new force of collective resistance and a vehicle for anger transformed into collective struggle” (905)—to help bring into being the anti-colonial possibilities of classroom and community teaching for a bolder, more ethical context of learning in and with the digital. Our partnership is committed to upholding the values of Indigenous studies, which are respect, reciprocity, responsibility, relationship, and relevance (Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991; Pidgeon 2008, 2014, 2016; Restoule 2008; Tessaro et al. 2018), and to Jill Dolan’s work (2012) in “critical generosity,” which builds upon David Román’s analysis (1998) of performance-based interventions by gay and queer persons in response to the AIDS crisis in America. Dolan’s reading of Román’s work is particularly salient for us in both orientation and practice, in allowing us to slow down the process of analysis towards cultivating a deeper understanding of the social and political production of digital artefacts and of each other’s scholarship. We are also guided by bell hooks’ work (1989) on education and class, on the importance of never losing sight of who our work is for and how our connections to community and kin—conflictual and affirming—might guide us to become better educators and scholars. Equally, our work draws from the writings of Aryn Martin et al. on a politics of care, wherein they define a politics of care in technoscience as a critical

knowledge-making practice articulated within a “feminist ethic of response-ability” (2015, 628). Through these teachings and values, we collectively work to support and further an ongoing process of un-learning, re-learning, and co-learning in the context of digital humanities pedagogy.

While mainstream digital humanities tends to focus its attention on computing technologies, an anti-colonial approach to digital technologies must recognize, honour, and encompass more than simply computer-based tools. As an example, scholars like Cherokee scholar Angela M. Haas (2007) have emphasized that the original digital technologies are the fingers (i.e. one's digits) (87). As such, long-standing Indigenous technologies like wampum belts, which bear culturally and historically significant patterns (what we might read or conceptualize as a form of digital coding) created through the intimate work of the fingers, are digital technologies (Haas 2007). That is to say, digital humanities can and must encompass the full gamut of human cultural vernaculars, namely what Donna Haraway (1988) has called “situated knowledge” practices that are socially metabolized in what Adeline Koh describes as “networked digital ecologies” (Koh 2016, 379). Conceived thusly, digital humanities as a practice could facilitate much needed interdisciplinary conversations among already converging fields and cross-pollinating ideas from numerous disciplines and communities. Therefore, transforming digital humanities pedagogy includes looking beyond the inculcation of conceptual fluencies, technical skills, and digital literacies. We suggest a pedagogical approach that, to draw on the work of Roopika Risam (2019), “challenges myths of democratized digital knowledge” (25). This challenge should include interrogating the totalizing effect capital and technology have on contemporary digital subjectivities and explicating how power/knowledge relationships are reconfigured under the materiality of the digital. Our pedagogical praxis attempts to offer this challenge in and through questions of community-centered storytelling, online knowledge creation, and their democratic mobilization (Nussbaum 2010, 130).

By incorporating an #AnticolonialDH lens to digital pedagogy, we aspire to embolden digital humanists to question the role played by the publicly funded

university as an ideologeme which naturalizes and rationalizes the proliferation of precarious labour in academia (Boyles et al. 2018) and conjoins political fear with economic austerity. We also strive to examine both the internal and external social forces that define the purpose of educating the polity in an unequal and unjust society. #AnticolonialDH pedagogy pulls together voices and positionalities of those located outside the periphery of power and privilege to offer the intellectual scaffolding for socially minded, culturally engaged learners to develop an “infrastructure of dissent” (Sears 2014, 33). It offers the scholar-activist the conceptual means to act as a moral and radical bulwark against the academic-corporate interests that have seeped into post-secondary educational practices and to take on the challenge of radically transforming the academy, disallowing capital to inform academic disciplines (Robinson 2016). By infusing a cultural techniques approach, one which views media as both practices and processes rather than as static objects, digital humanities students will be afforded the agency to engage in a critical cross-disciplinary reading of media history and media analysis that is conceptually sutured to socio-political history and cultural analysis (Sayers 2018). By situating cultural production in the context of “multiple colonialisms,” as Da Costa and Da Costa (2019) advocate, our pedagogical praxis strives to examine the multiple and complex colonial relational convergences that take place in cultural productions over space and time. Lastly, we will encourage digital humanists to uncover the “hidden curriculum” (Margolis 2001) of digital humanities, that is, the culture and values that are inculcated through the infrastructural stack of disciplinary regimes, institutional structures, curricular design, and technological affordances.

While mainstream academia often encourages distance between a researcher and their research—or between a teacher and the topic that they are teaching—the act of situating ourselves within the work that we do is a critical part of our pedagogical partnership and praxis. Clearly situating ourselves is an acknowledgment that our subjectivities and our relationships to the territories we work within shape the work that we do. It is a recognition of the communities we are part of and accountable to, and of the responsibilities that we bear to these communities (while also importantly

emphasizing that we as individuals cannot and do not speak for our communities). Further, through being transparent about our distinct subject positionings, we strive to recognize the interdisciplinarity, the strengths, and also the limitations in our pedagogical work—specifically whose voices, histories, and perspectives are absent from or underrepresented in our partnership—and are making clear what we do and do not have the ability to speak about authoritatively or from lived experience (Morra and Reder 2016, 7–110).

Ashley Caranto Morford (she/her) is a Pinay-British settler, living in unsundered Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe territories (Toronto, Ontario). While her mother grew up in precarity in the Philippines, Ashley was raised in a middle-class household in the colonially called USA and Canada. Due to the colonial violences that render the Philippines a precarious place to live, Ashley's mother left the archipelago with hopes of a better life elsewhere; her emigrating to so-called North America and Ashley's father's status as middle-class white settler have enabled Ashley to benefit from settler colonialism. She strives for her pedagogy to aid in responsibly challenging settler colonialism.

Kush Patel (they/he) is a savarna queer feminist educator, writer, and public scholar, working at the intersections of architecture and the digital public humanities. "Savarna" is a marker of individuals with caste privilege; a privilege that is sustained by Hindu social structures both in India and among members of the South Asian diaspora. In our collaborative practice, Kush remains committed to naming the privileges that provided them access to higher education in India and the US, to thinking about the forms that campus-community projects with the digital might take to engage specific lives and infrastructural struggles in our deeply unequal and violent contexts of heteronormative and casteist patriarchy.

Arun Jacob (he/him) is a cisgender graduate student studying media, culture, and technology, and is a precariously employed academic in Hamilton, Ontario. As a first-generation immigrant, he became critically aware of how racial hierarchies and social orders are maintained through education and work. Shaista Patel, Ghaida Moussa, and Nishant Upadhyay's poignant sentiment that, "some of us came here

from post-colonies where we received a colonial education that instilled in us all the skills required for upholding white supremacy” (Patel et al. 2015, 12) informs Arun’s teaching and learning practices. Arun’s commitment to working-class education, labour rights, and workers solidarity fuels his collaborative engagement in the Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed praxis.

The raw emotion and the inability to fully comprehend that the “Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed” course had been approved for the The Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) 2020—expressed in Ashley’s words that opened this piece—make material and perceivable the affective labour, precarity, and stakes that are part of the process of concretely interrogating colonial legacies in the digital humanities and of anti-colonially transforming dominant pedagogical approaches to digital humanities, particularly within the university setting. Indeed, the process of pushing the mainstream academy to provide space and support for the non-traditional and community-grounded pedagogical approach we proposed for our course has been a multi-year, many stepped, laborious process, one that is ongoing.

The Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed partnership began to take shape through a series of unconference sessions, which were held at DHSI and which focused on the topic of anti-colonial digital humanities. The Digital Humanities Summer Institute is an internationally recognized scholarly gathering held at the University of Victoria in Lkwungen territory (colonially called Victoria, BC) every June. The territory that the university occupies has been the unsundered lands of various sovereign Indigenous peoples since time immemorial, though it is currently colonially occupied by the Canadian regime. Thus, the work of anti-colonial DH practice becomes even more pressing in this geography and political climate, given the longstanding realities of oppression and knowledge extraction involving traditional (i.e. Western) sites and forms of academic scholarship.

Every year, the Institute holds the promise to bring together academic faculty, students, librarians, other university staff, and independent scholars from around the world and from a range of scholarly disciplines who can work on and with this reality. Through week-long courses, lunchtime unconference sessions, and half-day or full-day workshops, attendees teach and learn about digital technologies in interdisciplinary

ways. Attendees also have the opportunity to share digital work through evening and weekend conference panels. Traditionally, DHSI has offered digital training and discussion that is focused on learning how to use computer-based tools to teach, create, preserve, share, and sharpen humanities scholarship. However, more recently, anti-racist, queer, intersectional feminist, and anti-surveillance DH scholars at DHSI have pushed against this instrumentalist focus to re-imagine the theoretical frameworks that guide digital humanities work in anti-oppressive ways. As such, we have seen the development of DHSI courses that include Race DH, Feminist DH, Surveillance and DH, and Queer DH practices. Our course is in direct conversation with each of these approaches to critical DH pedagogy and scholarship. Together, we have formed a collective of scholars and creative practitioners who remain committed to producing scholarships that are reciprocal, reflective, collaborative, and iterative.

The first Anti-colonial DH unconference session was proposed, planned, and hosted by Ashley during week one of DHSI 2017 and the second was collaboratively proposed, planned, and hosted by Ashley and Arun during week two of the same gathering. Unconferences are a venue for participants to propose DH topics of community interest and/or further emerging inquiries and practices within a supportive community of peers, thought partners, and potential project-based collaborators. This second meeting, in particular, brought queer, trans, disabled, and BIPOC participants together to imagine and discuss the question of de-/anti-/post-colonial DH work. The ability to attend and gather at DHSI is an extreme privilege that many do not have the opportunity to take part in due to personal and institutional instability, including conditions enforced on individuals through their citizenship status. Nevertheless, what was particularly special and transformative about the unconference sessions was that they were envisioned, facilitated, attended, and cared for by some of the most precarious attendees to DHSI. Many folks who attended the unconference sessions and brought their voices, perspectives, and stories to the discussions were people experiencing multiple layers of precarity: through their identities as members of systemically oppressed communities as well as through being in the tenuous and unstable academic positions of graduate students or post-doctoral fellows, often as international students and often in highly

conservative and historically white departments. For instance, Ashley was at an early stage in her doctoral studies, Arun was finishing up MA studies, and Kush had just begun their yearlong post-doctoral fellowship. Additionally, various participants to these unconference gatherings were attending DHSI without financial support from their academic institutions. It was at these unconference sessions that all three of us connected through our shared vision of transforming digital humanities pedagogy in specifically anti-colonial ways, became friends, and began to teach and write about this process together.

Thus far, our pedagogical praxis has included facilitating workshops, delivering talks, producing writings, and teaching courses. We are privileged to have sharpened this work through active participation in the Race, Social Justice, and DH course taught by Drs. Dorothy Kim and Angel David Nieves at the 2018 DHSI gathering in unsundered Lkwungen territories. We have subsequently taken our work to the 2018 Digital Pedagogy Network gathering at Simon Fraser University's Harbour Centre in the unsundered territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam nations; Michigan State University's 2019 Global DH conference in the territories of the Anishinaabeg Three Fires Confederacy; the 2019 Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC) conference, hosted in unsundered Musqueam territories; and again at the DHSI 2018 and DHSI 2019 gatherings. While not solely focused on digital pedagogy, these forums are attended, by and large, by current and emerging DH instructors. Further, many of the panels and workshops offered at these forums are explicitly centered on the topic of teaching in the digital humanities. These forums have been valuable spaces of accountability and collective learning, wherein fellow scholar-activists and community-engaged thinkers have caringly and generously critiqued our pedagogical work, have made clear the unacknowledged openings in our work thus far so that we can begin to address them, and have pushed our partnership and its ethics in new and transformative ways. For example, at the 2019 HASTAC conference where we discussed the politics and practices of online knowledge creation and mobilization using Wikipedia, it was quickly pointed out to us how limited this work can begin to feel if languages other than English are not acknowledged or brought into our

pedagogies towards highlighting a critical comparative context of content flows and movements.

Most recently, at 2019's DHSI, we facilitated a full-day workshop on anti-colonial DH pedagogy and praxis, wherein we discussed how colonial ideologies and methods are naturalized within mainstream DH practices and, equipped with and accountable to this increased awareness, we reconceptualized how DH instructors might approach the process of teaching digital skills and digital tools in ways that destabilize or reject these ideologies and methods. We focused this discussion through a set of three interrelated framings: 1) media archaeology, in which we examined the often colonial and racist histories and ongoing political economies of the computer-based tools most commonly employed by teachers in DH classrooms; 2) community-focused digital storytelling, in which we discussed the ethics of teaching emerging digital humanists how to create stories in computer-based platforms and distinct community contexts; and 3) online public knowledge writing, in which we talked about the politics of using Wikipedia as a pedagogical tool in our classrooms to teach students about transforming public and open source online platforms towards mobilizing historically silenced and marginalized knowledges. The conversations that began in these classroom spaces are ongoing. For instance, participants utilize the hashtag #AnticolonialDH to continue these conversations and learnings via social media, and DH practitioners and instructors have contacted us to seek permission to incorporate our course materials and handouts in their own DH projects and classroom spaces. Indeed, through these forums, we have fostered and have come to know the extreme importance of communities of support and care.

Through the process of planning and facilitating the DHSI workshop, as well as giving a talk on the workshop's focus at the DHSI Colloquium a few days later, we collectively reflected on, discussed, and made transparent our responsibilities as educators dedicated to practicing and teaching an honestly and ethically anti-colonial approach to digital humanities. We shared strategies for continuing this work across institutional and geographical difference; affirmed our commitment to anti-colonial DH pedagogies and to the growing community of digital humanists striving to do socially aware and anti-oppressive DH; and named and articulated still unanswered

questions of epistemology in the context of digital humanities pedagogies, namely: whose knowledges and bodies are currently central to our scholarly and pedagogical practices; whose knowledges and experiences are not yet centred but *must* be central to our work; what are the institutional and disciplinary challenges of keeping alive necessary critiques of computer-based tools and their colonial origins and biases; what is the ongoing process of opening up ways for community formations and learning to come into being; and how might we meaningfully and lastingly challenge mainstream academic definitions of what does and does not constitute a digital technology?

Our week-long course on anti-colonial DH at DHSI 2020 will deepen these conversations around a set of five DH critiques, namely: 1) community, wherein we will develop a collective understanding of the continuities with/in anticolonial organizing, the humanities, and the digital pedagogy realm; 2) storytelling, wherein we will mobilize digital platforms such as Twine and WeVideo as tools for teaching about anti-colonial storytelling while also reflecting on the risks and limitations of these platforms for transformation; 3) data and archives, wherein we will understand approaches to reprogram digital archives to disrupt the colonialism of both the digital humanities classroom space and collaborative digital project-making processes; 4) algorithms, wherein we will draw on works like Safiya Umoja Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018) and Virginia Eubanks' *Automating Inequality* (2018) to discuss how algorithms reinforce colonialism and to envision how to be mindful of and accountable to this issue in our teaching and DH practice; and 5) collaboration, wherein we will share and cumulatively reflect on group projects and on a class-built collaborative and living community document of keywords, heuristics, and actionable plans.

Conclusion

We recognize that, at this point, our work has been quite “North America” focused. Thus, a key commitment for the future must be to work within deeper coalitional frameworks between the Global North and the Global South, including frameworks situated beyond the infrastructures of the university and that critically challenge

the overlapping injustices of historically white, upper class, upper caste, and heteropatriarchal orders, whilst illuminating the specificities of those injustices and education-centered counternarratives in place. To heed to Kathleen Fitzpatrick's clarion call (2011), how can we tear down the walls between the creative and the critical, between the scholarly and the activist, and conceive of an engagement that equivocally champions creativity, deep listening, and critical awareness? (para. 9).

As we foster #AnticolonialDH connections in and through our projects and pedagogies moving forward, we remain mindful of the connections between critique and praxis, and remain committed to making visible the stakes of this undertaking. We take care not to position #OurDHIs #AnticolonialDH as a singular moment, but rather as a supportive, critical, and living framework that interconnects our layered histories, sites, and communities of digital humanities scholarship. We conclude this paper with an invitation to further this movement and deepen its reach lest we lose its epistemological focus and emancipatory orientation in and with "the community." Towards that end, we also recognize the importance of Global North-Global South collaborations in this praxis, particularly as we think about resisting the increasingly neoliberal, surveillance-centered frameworks of critical education in and with the digital.

Finally, to build upon Jacqueline Wernimont's call to action at the recently concluded DHSI (2019), "What are you doing to make sure your kin, human and non-human, are free?" and to Angel David Nieves' addition to that call (2019), "and to empower themselves?", we humbly place: "How might we sustain these critical questions in our kinship and scholarly networks and position ourselves as collaborators and mutual learners in anti-colonial world-transforming?"

#OurDHIs #AnticolonialDH. Please join us.

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Our work is in conversation with writings and pedagogies from the cross-disciplinary fields of Literature, Indigenous, and Filipinx/a/o Studies; Critical Information Studies; and Architectural Theory, History, and Design Studies; as well as from community-based and grassroots work. In our work, we strive to honour

the Citations Practice Challenge as inspired by the writings of Sara Ahmed and organized by Eve Tuck (Unangax), K. Wayne Yang, and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (Taino/mestizo), which calls on writers and educators to “stop erasing Indigenous, Black, brown, trans*, disabled POC, QT*POC, feminist, activist, and disability/crip contributions from our intellectual genealogies” (Ahmed 2013; Tuck et al 2015). Dave Gaertner (2019) emphasizes that a digital humanities which is anti-colonial at its core galvanizes relationship and is focused on community and collectivization. #AnticolonialDH strives to be grounded in community, kinship, and collectivity, in giving thanks to and overtly recognizing the communities of people who continue to shape and inform our work in the best ways. We recognize—as Pinay educator-activists like Ruby Ibarra (2019) have emphasized—that we are able to do the work that we are doing because of the labour and love of many other Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) scholars, artists, and organizers, including BIPOC LGBTQ2IA+ and disabled thinkers and activists, as well as the support of allies who are also working at the intersections of feminism, social justice, and anti-colonialism.

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Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Editorial contributions

DSCN Student Issue 2020 Guest Editors: Colette Colligan, Kimberly O'Donnell and Kandice Sharren, Simon Fraser University (SFU), Canada.

Section Editor/Copy Editor: Darcy Tamayose, The Journal Incubator, University of Lethbridge, Canada.

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Author contributions

Our work is deeply collaborative, and all three authors are primary authors of this piece.

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Response

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In the summer of 2018, I led a small but enthusiastic discussion group on critical digital humanities called @Us through the Digital Humanities Innovation Lab (DHIL) at Simon Fraser University (SFU) Library. At the time, I was a graduate student in the English Department at SFU and a Digital Fellow at the DHIL. I have always been interested in the political implications of the tools we use and the choices we make in creating digital humanities archives, databases, networks, and maps, but I was not always sure how to frame or find those often-obscured politics, or how to engage critically with exciting but new forms of humanities analysis. Moreover, the digital humanities largely operate under the principles of community, collaboration, and creation. I was worried critical engagement could be seen as negative, as the opposite of the making, building, forward-looking culture of DH. As Brian Massumi wrote in 2002, at the height of the turn towards affect theory in the humanities, “when you are busy critiquing, you are that less busy augmenting. You are that much less fostering” (13). In “Beyond the Margins: Intersectionality and the Digital Humanities,” Roopika Risam (2015) acknowledges this concern as she outlines the need for digital humanities scholars to engage with intersectionality, “the ways that oppression manifests through multiple facets of identity that confer or withhold privilege” (para. 5). Risam notes that “[t]hose of us who work with issues of difference often perceive the ways that many digital humanities projects fail to engage with race, gender, disability, class, sexuality, or a combination thereof” (para. 4). However, Risam also acknowledges that critiquing this lack and engaging with the politics of difference might result in “tensions” in a field that “is beleaguered by its own creation myths and investment in ‘niceness,’ ‘collegiality,’ and ‘openness’” (para. 17). In other words, it might not be seen as nice, collegial, or open to suggest that the

digital humanities needs cultural criticism as much as any other field; it might be seen as less positive, creative, and constructive to point out what may be excluded, oppressive, or marginalizing.

The authors in this cluster put to practice the idea that critical engagement does, indeed, augment, foster, create, and construct through their pedagogical practices and experiences. There is nothing more productive than to use one's critical skills to transform DH. These authors show that it is nice and collegial and open to be aware of barriers to access, to include those that have previously been omitted, and to think carefully and fully about the digital humanities' "material practices" (Risam para. 4). They embody what Amy E. Earnhart and Toniesha L. Taylor (2016) call a commitment to be "invested in the development of a practice-based digital humanities that attends to the crucial issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the undergraduate classroom and beyond" (251) and they honour Risam's call to attend to these issues through intersectional analysis. Nadine Boulay seeks to "make visible the complex ways in which systems such as structural racism, settler colonialism, poverty, and other factors underpin transphobia and shapes the lives of T/NB/GN [transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming] young people" as she helps to create a video game with a protagonist whose identity is neither singular nor reductive (para. 13). Ashley Caranto Morford, Arun Jacob, and Kush Patel also explicitly note that they are in conversation with the work of DH scholars of intersectional feminism (Acknowledgements) as they engage in anti-colonial work that includes the politics of race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and labour, and also as they make clear their own subject positions.

The essays in this section also offer multiple perspectives on transformative pedagogical experiences that disrupt the traditional distinction between teacher and student, academic and non-academic. In "Reflections on a Movement: #transformDH, Growing Up," Moya Bailey, Anne Cong-Huyen, Alexis Lothian, and Amanda Phillips (2016) discuss the history of the hashtag #transformDH, used by those on social media involved in "queer studies, critical race studies, disability

studies, or other forms of activist scholarship in relation to digital humanities” “to highlight marginalized work or issues in the field” (72–73). They note that a part of #transformDH’s manifesto is that “feminist, queer, and antiracist” work occurs outside of academia, “contributes to digital studies,” and “productively destabilizes the norms and standards of institutionally recognized academic work” (71). The authors here show how this destabilization can be a constructive pedagogy with transformative potential.

Boulay’s *Gender Vectors of the Greater Vancouver Area* game teaches and fosters allyship as it offers players both in and out of the classroom—students, teachers, and beyond—“inside perspective into many of the challenges and barriers that T/NB/GN children and youth experience daily” (para. 1). In order to do so, Boulay and her project team explicitly sought the collaboration of T/NB/GN children and youth, creating a game with rather than for them (para. 1). In this way, the GVGVA project’s group of academic and graduate student researchers subverts hierarchies that would see them as teachers with institutional authority and youth as learning and benefitting from such scholarly work. Instead, T/NB/GN children and youth are central to the creation of the game and their experiences are considered authoritative. They become experts and teachers, too.

Morford, Jacob, and Patel place the disruption of traditional hierarchies and boundaries at the heart of their essay. They write that their “critical pedagogical engagement is an attempt to connect kindred souls and relevant resources within digital humanities communities for resisting, interrupting, and undoing the relations of domination and the apparatuses that reproduce the status quo” (para. 2). Their essay highlights their multiple roles as educators and students, within the academy and outside it, as they emphasize the importance of learning from each other and from communities of precarious and underrepresented scholars, writers, thinkers, and activists. While on one hand it is a challenge to the status quo to find one’s educators in other students, on the other, it is also a form of hierarchical disruption to locate them as BIPOC and queer scholars, as Morford, Jacob, and Patel build a citational tradition of anti-colonial and intersectional pedagogy. The Digital

Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) occupies what seems to me a contested space in this status quo. Hosted as it is at a university and largely by academics, the DHSI represents an important commitment of the “mainstream academy to provide space and support for the non-traditional and community-grounded pedagogical approach” (para. 10), evidenced by Morford, Jacob, and Patel’s recognition that teaching a course there will enable them to continue “to move the discourses on anti-colonial DH from critique to praxis” (para. 1). The DHSI is also open to non-academics, and initially provided the space for the authors’ emerging community of “queer, trans, disabled, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of colour) participants” to gather, share, learn, and form community (para. 11). Although this could and does happen in all types of colonial institutions, it seems to me that DHSI offers a liminal space for challenge and disruption.

When I have taught English literature to undergraduates, I have been hopeful that my classroom might be one such place. There, I have considered politics inseparable from the literature I teach and from the approaches we take to the text. When my students leave the classroom, I know some of them may not consider those texts again, but what I hope remains with them—what I hope transforms—includes the pedagogical space to always consider intersectional politics, where we are open to critique and are not afraid to keep learning about both the politics we see in the text and, as Edward Said (1994) reminds us, the politics we don’t. As the authors in this cluster affirm, the form of transformational pedagogy is always intersectional and is always a process of both teaching and learning. I am grateful to the generous authors of these essays and to the members of my discussion group for modeling how the same principles that should be practiced in the humanities classroom are also central to digital humanities pedagogy. Like Wendy Chun (2016), I believe that “the kind of critical thinking (close textual analysis) that the humanities have always been engaged in is and has always been central to crafting technology and society” (495). However, in the Digital Humanities, critical analysis is often subordinated to the newness, real difficulty, and allure of tools and methods. Because of this, and because we may not have encountered these tools and methods in our undergraduate

educations—or, if encountered, we are still learning how they are built, what or who they omit, and whose politics they reproduce—transforming DH pedagogy remains urgently necessary for the humanities today.

Competing interests

The author has no competing interests to declare

Editorial contributions

DSCN Student Issue 2020 Guest Editors: Colette Colligan, Kimberly O'Donnell and Kandice Sharren, Simon Fraser University (SFU), Canada.

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