



Call for Papers: Revolutionary, disruptive, or just repeating itself? Tracing the History of Digital History #dhiha9

Organised by: Mareike König (IHA/GHI), Julianne Nyhan (TU Darmstadt), Sébastien Poublanc (univ. Toulouse Jean Jaurès), Jane Winters (School of Advanced Study), Gerben Zaagsma (C²DH)

Date: October 23rd 2024 to October 25th 2024 - starting Wednesday at 2 pm, ending Friday at 1 pm

Place: Institut historique allemand (IHA)/German Historical Institute (GHI), Paris

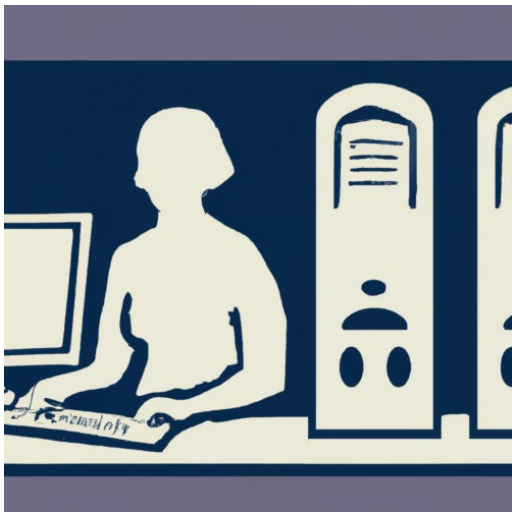
Languages: English

Mail for inquiries: dh@dhi-paris.fr

Upload your proposal here: <http://conftool.pro/history-of-digital-history-2024>

Deadline CFP: January 10th, 2024, 23:59 (CET)

Free participation. Online presentation/participation possible.



Computing in the humanities is far from a new phenomenon, yet the highly diverse genealogies of what we now call digital history seem to have only little resonance among digital historians. A decade ago Turkel et al. observed that “digital history currently lacks an established historiography”¹, and judging from Adam Crymble’s observations about the “blind spot of digital historians” in relation to their own past, we still have some way to go.² This is not unique to digital history. As Nyhan, Flinn and Welsh have noted, much discourse about digital humanities in the past twenty years is characterised by a revolutionary rhetoric in which the complex history of computing in the humanities is effectively erased.³

As a result, it seems as if every new generation of historians rediscovers the promise of digital history, with all of its attendant hopes, visions and ambitions for reinventing and reshaping historical research. Yet, the very fact that historical knowledge production and historical research practices have always been affected by new and emerging technologies is often forgotten. Similarly, the fact that key epistemological and methodological questions in what we

¹ Turkel, W J, S Muhammedi, and M B Start. "Grounding Digital History in the History of Computing." *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 36, no. 2 (2014): doi:10.1109/MAHC.2014.

² Crymble, Adam. *Technology and the Historian. Transformations in the Digital Age*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021.

³ Nyhan, Julianne, Andrew Flinn, and Anne Welsh. "Oral History and the Hidden Histories Project: Towards Histories of Computing in the Humanities." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 30, no. 1 (2015): doi:10.1093/lc/fqt044.

now call digital history were already debated decades ago by earlier generations of computing historians (analog and digital) is mostly overlooked. Manfred Thaller has written how this repetition of old debates and so-called new solutions of the very same problem feels like a “remake of Groundhog Day”, the well-known movie in which the main character, Bill Murray, is caught in a time loop and has to relive the same day over and over.⁴

This forgetfulness of our own history is not only ironic (we are historians, after all) but risks harming the field. Many of the epistemological and methodological questions and problems we face today were already debated or solved decades ago, even if many applications of computing by today’s digital historians might seem radically different. To avoid repeating past debates and reinventing the wheel, and to learn from earlier solutions, it is therefore imperative to build upon the accumulated expertise of our predecessors and the vast literature on historical computing produced since the 1950s. Doing so will help ground our field as we learn from past successes and failures.

In recent years, interest in the history of the digital humanities has grown. These endeavours can be seen as part of a broader process of consolidating the field by excavating its historical and intellectual underpinnings. The conference at the German Historical Institute Paris from 23-25 October 2024 will connect to this growing interest by exploring the history of digital history from different perspectives and providing an overview of ongoing research on the field.

To do so we invite papers on the following questions and topics, including but not limited to:

- Theorising the human-machine encounter in historical research (for example by applying insights from the history of technology and media history).
- The history of digital history in the context of the history of historiography (how to situate the field, historically, within the broader discipline).
- Consideration of how the history of digital history can illuminate wider conversations and cognate fields, such as the history of the humanities and the history and philosophy of knowledge.
- Local/national case studies of computing in historical research.
- Transnational dimensions and entangled histories of digital history.
- Genealogy of theories and concepts of digital history and historical computing (including definitions in various languages and, for example, concepts such as digital hermeneutics).
- Socio-cultural and other dimensions, including how race, gender and labour have co-constituted such histories.
- Development of digital practices, methods, and tools in historical perspective.
- Development of teaching methods of digital history in historical perspective.

We envision pre-circulation of papers. Presentations will be 10-minutes, followed by 5-minutes comment, allowing ample time for discussion.

Please upload your paper submission (in English, max. 500 words) and a short CV (max 2 pages) on the conference webpage <http://conftool.pro/history-of-digital-history-2024> by **January**

⁴ Thaller, Manfred. From History to Applied Computer Science in the Humanities. Edited by Manfred Thaller. HSR Supplement. Köln: Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2017: <https://www.gesis.org/en/hsr/full-text-archive/2017/suppl-29-from-history-to-applied-computer-science-in-the-humanities>.

10th, 2024, 23:59 (CET) together in one PDF-file. Submissions will be peer reviewed. The organisers and the programme committee will choose from among the proposals and deliver the outcome by the end of February 2024. We encourage doctoral students and early career researchers to apply. Depending on available funding, travel and accommodation costs for speakers will be covered by the organisers. We favour in-person attendance of presenters but will provide facilities for hybrid participation to make the event as inclusive as possible.

This conference will be the ninth in the series of “Digital Humanities at the GHI, dhiha”, which received great international attention and which has been presented by the Digital History Department of GHI Paris from 2011 onwards.

Programme Committee

Olivier le Deuff (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)
Torsten Hiltmann (HU Berlin)
Mareike König (GHI Paris)
Stéphane Lamassé (Université Paris 1)
Hélène Noizet (Université de Paris 1)
Julianne Nyhan (TU Darmstadt)
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Helle Strandgaard Jensen (Aarhus University)
Jane Winters (School of Advanced Study)
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Blog of the conference: <https://dhdhi.hypotheses.org/>

Image: Created with AI image generator "[Simplified](#)", prompt: "A pictogram in white, background blue, of a female historian, a computer showing a screen with books and punch cards.", 26/10/2023.