

Digital Disciplines, Digital Publics

CHCI Digital Humanities Affinity Group Meeting
Sunday 13 June 2010, Brown University

The **Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes** (CHCI) and **centerNet** announce their agreement to pursue joint activities in the digital humanities over the next five years. The focus of this initiative will be the relation of digital technologies to the disciplines in higher education and to the formation of new collaborations and publics.

Established in 1988, the CHCI serves as a site for the discussion of issues germane to the fostering of crossdisciplinary activity and as a network for the circulation of information and the sharing of resources within the humanities and interpretive social sciences.

Established in 2007, centerNet is an international network of digital humanities centers formed for cooperative and collaborative action that benefits the digital humanities and allied fields in general, and has special resources in the domain of cyberinfrastructure to offer humanities centers in particular.

This initiative recognizes a strong connection that follows from CHCI's commitment to innovative research and from centerNet's linkage of new technologies with work in the humanities. Under the terms of the agreement, the two organizations that represent interdisciplinary humanities centers and digital humanities centers will partner to explore matters of mutual interest, including:

Digital Disciplines: how digital practices might or might not become disciplinary in themselves and/or reshape humanities disciplines.

Digital Publics: how digital scholarship engages groups of scholars within universities and colleges, between universities and colleges, and with publics beyond academia.

Questions about Digital Disciplines that will guide our initiative include:

- What is the idea of the digital? What is the utility of the notion of "digital humanities"?
- What is the relation between digital practices and disciplinary expertise?
- How should digital practices be incorporated into the disciplinary structures of the 21st-century university?
- To what extent should digital techniques and methods be granted autonomous disciplinary status in the coming university? To what extent should we think of their impact as distributed in existing (or emergent) disciplines, i.e., disciplines otherwise constituted. Alternatively, how are digital practices affecting research practices in the humanities and the arts? How are "traditional" disciplines and fields challenged to renew themselves? How are newer disciplines and fields shaped and enabled? How have the relations between disciplines been transformed?

In relation to Digital Publics, there is a second set of questions:

- How can digital technologies facilitate a broader engagement with a wide range of publics?
- What are the implications for universities and colleges of the "democratization of knowledge" presented by the new digital media?

- How do new-media artistic practices as well as new work in the humanities deploying digital technologies affect the question of what counts as knowledge and what counts as public?
- And finally, the largest question: what sort of humanities will be accessible to the next generation?

The two affiliated organizations will pursue these questions with a five-year plan to support a number of activities:

- Organizing shared events at our respective conferences
- Developing proposals to funding agencies to support research and initiatives across centers from both organizations
- Developing opportunities for joint inquiry into questions across the humanities, arts, and digital Technologies
- Engaging discussions about how structures of the academy and disciplines are adapting appropriately to digital culture and technologies
- Developing training in digital practice across centers as a way to build capacity.

The affiliation of CHCI and centerNet was developed at a series of three meetings sponsored by the **Scholarly Communication Institute** (SCI) in 2008-9. The SCI provides opportunities for leaders in scholarly disciplines, academic libraries, advanced technologies, and higher education administration to study, develop, and implement creative and innovative strategies to advance scholarly communication in the context of the ongoing digital revolution. Generously funded by the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, SCI events are hosted annually by the **University of Virginia Library**.