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## **Digital Humanities at Berkeley Course Program Assessment**

### **Project Summary**

#### Program Context and Assessment Team

I am a Ph.D. student in the History Department, and I was chosen as Digital Humanities Assessment Fellow to assist Project Leader Claudia von Vacano in assessing the reach and effectiveness of the Digital Humanities program's investment in new courses and new components for existing courses that use digital humanities methods. Stakeholders for the project were spread across the Humanities Division at UC Berkeley, including Dean of Arts & Humanities Anthony Cascardi as well as professors in a variety of humanities departments, including Music, Spanish & Portuguese, Classics, Near Eastern Studies, and History of Art. Stakeholders were engaged in the project through regular meetings, email correspondence, and Qualtrics surveys, which served as project updates.

#### Impetus/Motivation

This project was motivated by a desire to see what the Digital Humanities at Berkeley program has managed to accomplish in the area of course development and funding over the last year, the program's second year as a Mellon Foundation-funded initiative. The goal was to provide concrete evidence of our outreach success as an initiative in affecting how digital methods are taught in humanities courses at Berkeley and improving instructor qualification to teach such courses. We wished to be able to provide the Mellon with a year-end report showcasing what we have achieved so far, and what we plan to do in our third and final year of funding from them next fall.

#### Purpose and Intended Use

The assessment data was designed to inform future distribution of Digital Humanities at Berkeley funds to see what types of courses are most effective and successful, and also to allow us to improve on any future offerings in terms of how courses are structured around digital elements and how these elements are utilized to meet the students' needs both academically and, in the future, professionally. We wished to resolve issues of communication and reporting that had prevented us from getting useful results in the past, and we felt that year-end evaluations were not sufficient to provide the evidence we needed.

#### Guiding Questions

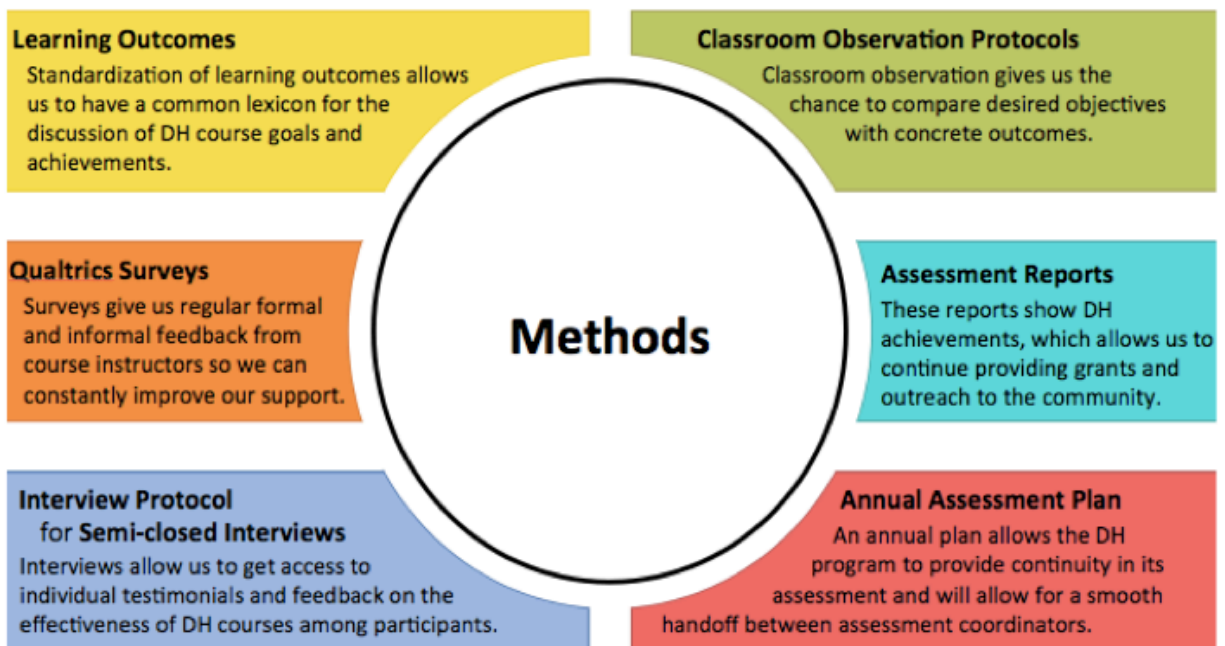
The guiding questions that informed our assessment study were as follows:

- How are Digital Humanities methods being implemented into learning outcomes for new and existing courses?

- What effects are these Digital Humanities methods having on the students' experience of participating in the courses?
- What are the positive takeaways that both instructors and students are experiencing through the addition of Digital Humanities grant funding to course design and implementation efforts?
- How can we improve the experience of both instructors and students participating in future Digital Humanities-funded courses?
- How can we present the results of our course-funding program in a way that highlights our annual achievements to the Mellon Foundation?

## Methods and Tools

We decided to utilize a variety of assessment methods to collect data on the Digital Humanities courses, desiring to get equal amounts of information from participating students and instructors. Tools were also chosen with an eye to producing something quantifiable for submission to the Mellon Foundation at the end of June, a process which we hope to continue in upcoming years. To implement these methods, we used email correspondence, group meetings, and online surveys. Most of the data that we collected has not yet been finalized in a presentable form, but efforts are currently underway to create a report of quantifiable data, such as categorization of key terms in learning outcomes collected through online surveys.



## Results and Next Steps

During this academic year we came far in our efforts to finalize comprehensive evaluation and assessment program for Digital Humanities at Berkeley, an effort that should leave us in a good position to continue our assessment project next year. Unfortunately, creating assessment protocols and learning outcomes while simultaneously attempting to implement them

proved more time-consuming than expected, and we were not able to implement interview and classroom observation plans at a consistent level throughout the second semester of this academic year. We also plan to continue standardizing these observation and interview protocols and learning outcomes across all Digital Humanities funded courses in order to make implementation in future years smoother. We would also like to do more to maintain a supportive environment for instructors teaching Digital Humanities courses in future semesters, and find ways to modify our support throughout the academic semester as needed.

### Tips and Strategies for Engagement

The most important areas of emphasis for an assessment projects are early and often communication. Goals need to be articulated clearly from the beginning, and hoped for milestones and achievements must be followed up on regularly to ensure that things are moving along at an adequate pace to achieve the goal within the desired time frame. Communication does not need to be insistent or invasive – short but frequent surveys are enough to make sure that every participant is on the same page. Another important aspect to emphasize in a good assessment project is consistency. From the beginning of the project, participants being assessed should be able to expect regular contact from the assessors – it is a problem if participants are suddenly faced with a host of assessment initiatives at the end of the semester that they had not been prepared for or informed of throughout the preceding weeks. I would also recommend making sure that your framework for the assessment project is already in place before you start collecting data, as doing so on the fly while you are still in the process of ironing out what exactly you are trying to assess can be confusing for all involved. In sum, a bit of foresight and planning can go a long way in creating a project that is easy to implement and will allow you to achieve consistent and useful results.

**Appendix: Long-Term Annual Digital Humanities Assessment and Evaluation Plan (2016-2017)**

Date	Event	Participants	Objectives	Desired Outcomes (output)
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Plan introductory meeting for DH course grantees to discuss learning outcomes and course protocols</li> <li>-schedule course observations in different courses across the semester</li> <li>-Prepare report for Mellon Foundation regarding grant, due in September</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-DH course grantees, DH project director, Assessment coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-set standards for regular communication and reporting across concurrently running DH courses at Berkeley</li> <li>-get in touch early to make expectations clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-help DH course grantees feel prepared for assessment involvement in their courses</li> <li>-develop frequent and open communication with DH course grantees</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Review last year's reports and documentation, have brainstorming session about what can be improved this year</li> <li>-Submit grant report to Mellon Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-DH project director, assessment coordinator, liaison from Center for Teaching &amp; Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-implement any necessary improvements in assessment, communication, and reporting practices from the previous year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-create a more streamlined assessment and reporting process overtime and create standards for future years, help build our portfolio of positive change</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-get final writeup of learning objectives from all of the DH courses of the semester, input into report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Assessment coordinator, with data collected from DH course grantees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-allow for the comparison of the learning objectives with actual outcomes in the classroom through later</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-standardized and improved classroom observation protocol that allows for comparison with</li> </ul>

	-conduct classroom observation of courses		observations	previous semesters
November	-prepare end of semester follow-up survey for DH course grantees -plan in-person meeting if desired	-Assessment coordinator	-get feedback on extent to which DH grantee expectations and needs are being met by the program	-use this feedback to improve the program's interactions with grantees in future years of the program
Winter Break (December - January)	-consolidate results from assessment work over the semester to create summary report -Update glossy tri-fold describing the program's assessment goals	-Assessment coordinator	-circulate report internally to project director and communications liaison	-come up with ways to improve reach of program assessment and streamline efficiency in the coming semester
February	-meet with grantees from previous semester to conduct exit interviews	-Assessment coordinator, DH course grantees	-compile testimonials and strengths and weaknesses of the program in audio/video format	-check strengths and weaknesses of interview protocol and compare responses to earlier semesters
March	-Meet with grantees teaching new spring semester DH courses, discuss learning outcomes and course protocols	-Assessment coordinator, DH project coordinator, new Spring semester DH course grantees	-compare results from this semester to the previous one, get in touch to make expectations clear and standardized	-compare needs/plans of grantees this semester to previous semesters, add to data for reporting
April	-compile final writeup of learning outcomes for	-Assessment coordinator	-allow for comparison with earlier semesters' outcomes, add to	-improve our overall reporting capabilities through the

	Spring DH courses		body of data for DH courses	addition of more data
end of year (May - June)	-conduct classroom observation of Spring semester DH courses	-Assessment coordinator, DH project director	-allow for comparison with last semester's classroom observation	-brainstorm improvements to in-class implementation of DH methods
Over the summer (June - August)	-Prepare final end of year report on DH assessment program for DH courses at Berkeley	-Assessment coordinator, submitting to DH project director	-allow for submission to funding sources and broader oversight organs	-create a bird's eye view of program achievements and areas needing improvement