

of the humanities to large literary systems—for example, Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees* and Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*. Both of these remarkable books, which participate in what James F. English calls the "new sociology of literature," frame their corporate- or system-scale analyses of literature in cultural criticism—specifically, a combination of Braudelian historiography, Marxist sociology (in Casanova's case, an Immanuel Wallerstein-like "core versus periphery" analysis of world literature), and global-scale literary comparatism. The lesson to digital humanists should be clear. While digital humanists have the practical tools and data, they will never be in the same league as Moretti, Casanova, and others unless they can move seamlessly between text analysis and cultural analysis. After all, it can be said that digital materials on the scale of corpora, databases, distributed repositories, and so on—specialties of the digital humanities—are ipso facto cultural phenomena. The people behind Google Books Ngram Viewer say it. In their groundbreaking *Science* article (paralleled by Google's release of its Ngram Viewer), Jean-Baptiste Michel and Erez Lieberman Aiden (with their collaborators) call their quantitative analyses of Google Books a contribution to "culturomics." So, too, the Software Studies Initiative at the University of California, San Diego, is well advanced in developing what it calls "cultural analytics."¹⁴ Where are the digital humanists in the picture? To be an equal partner—rather than, again, just a servant—at the table, digital humanists will need to show that thinking critically about metadata, for instance, scales into thinking critically about the power, finance, and other governance protocols of the world.

2. The digital humanities can transcend their "servant" role in the humanities through leadership in advocating for the humanities.

Engagement with cultural criticism, I am saying, is necessary for the digital humanities to be a full partner of the mainstream humanities today. But it is not enough for digital humanists to add cultural criticism to their brief in a "me too" way. Partners are not just followers. They become partners only by being able to rotate into the leadership role when their special competencies are needed. Truly to partner with the mainstream humanities, digital humanists now need to incorporate cultural criticism in a way that shows leadership in the humanities.

I believe that the service function of the digital humanities—as literal as running the actual servers, if need be—can convert into leadership if such service can be extended beyond facilitating research in the academy (the usual digital humanities remit) to assisting in advocacy *outside* the academy in the humanities' present hour of social, economic, and political need. I refer to the economic recession beginning in 2007 that gave warrant to nations, regional governments, and universities to cut funding for the humanities and arts in favor of fields perceived to apply more directly to society's well-being, especially the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics).¹⁵ Of course, this is an old story that goes back as far as the

“two cultures” problem named by C. P. Snow. What is new is that the scale of the Great Recession of 2007—bringing a climax to decades of neoliberal and postindustrial trends that shift the work and value of knowledge away from the academy—is leading to a changed paradigm. Especially in public university systems, which are exposed most directly to changing social, economic, and political attitudes, the new normal threatens to solve the two cultures problem by effectively subtracting one of the cultures. The humanities, arts, and other disciplines that rely disproportionately on funds not supplied by industry or national agencies for science, medicine, and defense are in peril of systematic defunding.

Simultaneous with such defunding, another peril threatens the humanities: the continuing breakdown in their ability to communicate with the public. This, too, is an old story that extends back, for instance, to the decline of the fabled “public intellectual” in the twentieth century. What is new today is that the Internet and, most recently, Web 2.0 have altered the very idea of effective public communication by changing the relation between “experts,” traditionally those with something valuable to communicate, and the public, who traditionally listened to expertise (or at least media reports about expertise) and responded with votes, tuition dollars, fees, and so on to support the various expert institutions and professions. As perhaps best exemplified by Wikipedia, the new networked public is now developing its own faculty of expertise through bottom-up processes of credentialing (e.g., Wikipedia’s “administrators”), refereeing, governance, and so on. It will take at least a generation for the academy (and mediating agencies such as journalism) to create or adapt the institutional protocols, practices, and technologies that can negotiate a new compact of knowledge between expertise and networked public knowledge—for example, between the standards of peer review and crowdsourcing. In the meantime, the humanities are caught in a particularly vicious form of the communicational impasse of expertise. While the networked public still tolerates specialized knowledge from scientists, engineers, doctors, and others, it seems to have ever less patience for specialized humanities knowledge, since in the domain of “human” experience everyman with his blog is an autodidact. And this is not even to mention the ridiculous mismatch between the forms of humanities knowledge and the new networked public knowledge—for example, between the scale, structure, and cadence of a humanities monograph and those of a blog post or tweet.¹⁶

In short, just when the humanities need more than ever to communicate their vision of humanity (and so their own value) to the public, they find themselves increasingly cut off from the modes of communication that produce some of today’s most robust discourses of public knowledge. While able like anyone else to reach out through the new media, humanities scholars by and large must do so as *individuals* unsupported by any of the institutional and professional structures that afford them their particular identity qua humanists or scholars.

Hence the unique leadership opportunity for the digital humanities. As digital humanists simultaneously evolve institutional identities for themselves tied to the

mainstream humanities and explore new technologies, they become ideally positioned to create, adapt, and disseminate new methods for communicating between the humanities and the public. At a minimum, digital humanists—perhaps in alliance with social scientists who study Internet social activism—might facilitate innovative uses of new media for such traditional forms of advocacy as essays, editorials, petitions, letter-writing campaigns, and so on. But really, digital humanists should create technologies that fundamentally reimagine humanities advocacy. The goal, I suggest, is to build advocacy into the ordinary work of the humanities, so that research and teaching organically generate advocacy in the form of publicly meaningful representations of the humanities. As a starting point, for example, consider how something like the Open Journal Systems (OJS) publication platform might be extended for this purpose. Created by the Public Knowledge Project, OJS facilitates the publication and management of online journals while also providing “reading tools” that assist users in pursuing additional research (e.g., looking beyond an individual text through search and aggregation tools that give a glimpse of the relevant context). Imagine that OJS could be mashed up with text analysis and extraction tools as well as output platforms like OMEKA or the Simile Exhibit and Timeline widgets designed to break scholarship free of the “document” format, with the result that the publication process automatically generates from every article a “capture” of humanities scholarship that is not just an abstract but something more akin to a brochure, poster, video, or other high-impact brief—that is, something that could expose the gist of scholarship for public view and use.

The idea is to create ways to allow humanities scholars deliberately, spontaneously, or collaboratively to generate a bow wave of public awareness about their research and teaching that propagates outward as part of the natural process of research and teaching. After all, millions tune in each week to watch crab fishermen on the Discovery Channel (*Deadliest Catch*). Humanists may not be salt-of-the-earth crabbers, and archives may not be as stormy as the high seas. But surely, humanists ought on occasion to try to share the excitement of the chase by which breakthrough intellectual discoveries and movements occur. A beautifully designed, visually rich report published by the United Kingdom’s JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) in 2010 titled “Inspiring Research, Inspiring Scholarship: The Value and Benefits of Digitised Resources for Learning, Teaching, Research and Enjoyment” gives the flavor of what I mean (Tanner). The text of the brochure begins in an everyman-as-researcher mode as follows: “Imagine walking into one of Britain’s great cathedrals. As you take in the architectural, cultural and religious ambience, your personal mobile device automatically engages with content on your behalf.” Similarly, one of my initiatives while participating during 2009 through 2010 in a working group of the University of California (UC) Commission on the Future (convened by the regents of the UC system to explore new paradigms for the university in a bleak future of permanently reduced state funding) was to canvass humanities, arts, and social science scholars throughout UC for showcase research

examples that might be presented to the public in an advocacy effort. The results, which I mocked up as a document full of blurbs and pictures for each example, are not ready for publication, but I can attest that the examples are definitively there. Sample headlines include “Treasure of Previously Unknown Letters by Benjamin Franklin,” “World History For Us All,” “Students Learn from California Holocaust Survivors,” “The Prehistory of Multitasking,” “UC and Human Rights Around the World,” and “What is the Community Reading?” (Liu, “UC Research Contributions to the Public”). While humanities scholarship can sometimes seem abstruse, minute, or nonsensical to the public (true of all fields), there are also a stunning number of projects that intuitively, profoundly, and movingly demonstrate the public value of the humanities—many of them, not incidentally, designed around or otherwise centrally facilitated by digital technologies.

3. Beyond acting in an instrumental role, the digital humanities can most profoundly advocate for the humanities by helping to broaden the very idea of instrumentalism, technological, and otherwise. This could be its unique contribution to cultural criticism.

Earlier, I deprecated the idea of “service.” The digital humanities, I said, need to transcend their role as “just a servant” of the humanities to take a leadership role. Yet, in apparent contradiction, my imagination of such leadership has so far been instrumental in a manner that does not exceed a narrow, if cutting-edge, service concept. The digital humanities, I argued, can create, adapt, and disseminate new tools and methods for reestablishing communication between the humanities and the public. This contradiction brings to view a complex matrix of issues that is both a problem and an opportunity for the digital humanities, since ultimately it shows digital humanists to occupy a strategic niche in the humanities and even society as a whole, where the same issues are in play.

Within the digital humanities, to start with, we observe that service and instrumentalism are part of a tangle of related concepts—including functionalism, tool-based, and (as I earlier deployed the term) practice—about which the field is deeply insecure. On the one hand, digital humanists worry that their field is too instrumental. Witness the vigorous thread on the *Humanist* list in 2010 on “Industrialisation of the Digital Humanities?” (McCarty, “Industrialisation”). Willard McCarty, the list’s moderator, touched off the discussion by reflecting, “I fear that the digital humanities is becoming dominated by purely technical concerns of implementation. . . . One sign of this industrialization is the spread of technological orthodoxy under the banner of technical standards.” Just as rambunctious was the *Humanist* thread that McCarty triggered the next year with his post entitled “In Denial?” where—to use Internet parlance—he trolled (i.e., baited) the list with the statement, “I’d be interested to know if you have recently heard anyone assert that the computer is ‘just a tool’ and what you think [they] may have been meant by that