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# The Possibilities and Pitfalls of Global Digital Humanities

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# The Possibilities and Pitfalls of Global Digital Humanities

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Over the past two years, much has been made of the role of cultural critique in the digital humanities, particularly around silences and absences of race, gender, sexuality, and so forth in the digital humanities (Liu 2012; McPherson 2012; #transformDH Collective 2011; Lothian and Phillips 2013; Bailey 2011). Yet, these conversations have taken shape through a United States-centric frame of reference that often elides the larger picture of the digital humanities: its global frame. Taking up the global scope of the digital humanities, however, is to take up imbalances of power that operate in colonialist frames, visible in the dominance of United States and Western European voices within the digital humanities community writ large. Indeed, it requires heightened attention to cultural critique through a postcolonialist framework.

Reactions within the digital humanities community to cultural critique (Whitson 2012, Reid 2011) renders such critiques as problems. Indeed, the problem, as the narrative goes, lies not in gaps within the digital humanities but with the practitioners who dare to raise these issues. In this talk, I will examine the "problem" of the global in the digital humanities. I begin by outlining the stakes of attending to global participation in the digital humanities. These stakes are both intangible and tangible and include radically reimagining loci of the digital humanities beyond the current map that locates the United States and Western Europe at the center, strategizing models for global partnerships outside of neocolonial frames, and developing resources for fostering a truly global digital humanities.

As the stakes imply, attending to the global within the digital humanities requires a two-pronged approach that accounts for the complexities of both theory and praxis. Engaging these concerns, my talk provides a case study of theoretical and practical approaches: Global Outlook :: Digital Humanities (GO::DH) and Postcolonial Digital Humanities (DHPoco). GO::DH is a special interest group (SIG) of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations. GO::DH is dedicated to hacking barriers that prohibit collaboration across both disciplines and geographies (Global Outlook :: Digital Humanities 2013). Barriers include telecommunications, financial resources, human labor, and language (O'Donnell). Focusing on stated goals of "discovery, community-building, research, and advocacy," GO::DH works to foster communication and collaboration on a global scale. DHPoco is both a movement and emergent subfield of the digital humanities, invested in decolonizing digital spaces, making space for colonial critique and anti-colonial thought in the digital humanities, and writing alternative genealogies of the digital humanities (DHPoco 2013). By examining the work of GO::DH and DHPoco, I make the case for continued attention to and development of theoretical and organizational spaces for fostering the global digital humanities, as well as its benefits to the digital humanities community as a whole.

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