

Reflection

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DH865 has been on my “courses to take” list for two years, and I am very glad that I took it in Spring Semester 2021. The readings, digital methods, discussions, and training in grant writing are exactly what I need at this stage of my study in the field of digital humanities. In this reflection, I will talk about one thing that surprised me the most, my biggest gain, and where do I see myself going in the field.

Methods and tools are what drew me to DH at the very beginning. I am always looking for sustainable platforms that can better present textual, audio, and video content. For the first two years learning and working on digital projects, learning about the tools has been my main interest and focus. In Unit 1, I felt comfortable with the readings and content presented by the guest speakers and I am quite familiar with the tools and methods. Things certainly became more challenging for me when we started Unit 3. I have heard about “open access” here and there, but never considered the significance of open access, let alone how it will be implemented in my own research. Later on, when I started to work on the grant proposal, I noticed how NEH reiterates the importance of open access to the proposed project. While the readings discuss reimagining the publication revenue and scholarly communication, I was shocked by the idea of granting access to any users to read, download, and print scholarly work via the internet. Reflecting on my own experience, I can see how open access will benefit students from less-privileged backgrounds to conduct research. Before joining MSU, my local institute did not have many licenses for me to browse through databases. There were many hoops I had to jump through just to get access to research papers that might be useful for me, including first using VPN to access google scholar, then taking notes on the scholars (and their works), seeking help in social media/close friends circles, or even purchasing papers with my own money via a local service similar to ebay. It is sad to say, but sometimes it was easier to give up and write a research paper based on what materials that were accessible to me. Looking back, it was not a research questions driven research, but more of a compromise. Now I am studying at a big R1 university and for the most part, I can easily access materials based on my interest and I have been encouraged to conduct research based on my interest. Yet, I have not forgotten the days where I was locked outside of the paywall and spent hours trying to get some knowledge. With more scholars pushing for open access, I sincerely hope future young scholars from

less-privileged backgrounds can conduct research based on their interests rather than accessibility. Once I start my dissertation writing process, I will make sure my work also follows the same guidelines and contributes to the larger scholarly community.

My biggest gain from this course is now I have seen a variety of subfields within DH, I found out that text analysis is what interested me the most. As a relatively new and interdisciplinary field, DH develops very quickly and it scares me that I won't be able to catch up with all new developments. However, I learned that I can focus on one thing and continue to learn about it. Panicking and trying to cover them all does not help me grow as a scholar. Within text analysis, I can either build a customized corpus or use existing corpora. Through the grant proposal writing process, I learned how to build my own corpus from scratch. On the one hand, I learned about how time consuming building a corpus can be and how much labor goes into a corpus. On the other hand, I enjoy having a customized corpus because I know exactly how information is selected and stored. This experience helps me reconsider my time schedule for the next research abroad year: keeping it manageable and planning ahead.

In terms of my next steps, I am still waiting to hear back from Tapi and Dream Lab and see whether I can participate in their text analysis sessions. My plan is to use these summer training sessions as an opportunity to enhance my skills on practicing NLT with Python. Using what I acquired at the sessions as a base, I plan to conduct a trial run of my dissertation methodology: collect a small dataset from social media, clean it up, and run a pilot project using text mining methods. Even if I was not selected to participate in these sessions, I am confident that I am able to figure things out with the resources listed in DH865's syllabus. I plan to start from working through the [NLTK book](#). Melanie Walsh's work [Introduction to Cultural Analytics and Python](#) will also be a good tutorial to follow. Although I dislike being trapped at home and having to learn everything via a tiny screen, I do enjoy the uninterrupted learning time and do not miss much of the social component of summer sessions. Overall, this course provides me the information I need to continue my learning in DH (more specifically in text analysis), opens my eyes to scholarly communication and makes me want to be part of the conversation and help move things forward. Additionally, it also offers training on grant proposal writing. The scale of this funding is much larger than anything I have seen and I learned how to read the "Notice of Funding Opportunity" document, write a narrative, and use the data management tool ([dmptool](#)). All these skills are going to help me succeed in graduate school and eventually in the job market.