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Citation: Priego, E., Atenas, J. & Havemann, L. (2014). Geographies of Access: Mapping the Online Attention to Digital Humanities Articles in Academic Journals. Poster presented at the Digital Humanities 2014, 7-7-2014 - 12-7-2014, Lausanne, Switzerland.

This is the published version of the paper.

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GEOGRAPHIES OF ACCESS: MAPPING THE ONLINE ATTENTION TO DIGITAL HUMANITIES ARTICLES IN ACADEMIC JOURNALS

Priego, Ernesto 

City University London, United Kingdom

Havemann, Leo 

Birkbeck College, University of London, United Kingdom

Atenas, Javiera 

SOAS, University of London, United Kingdom

Category: Poster

Session: 1

Date: 2014-07-10

Time: 14:00:00

Room: Amphipôle Common
Area

Open access refers to the free access to and reuse of scholarly works. Peter Suber, who was the principal drafter of the Budapest Open Access Initiative (February 2002), and authored the book titled Open Access (2012), defines it as academic literature that is “digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.”

What proportion of peer-reviewed digital humanities research is published in open access journals? What proportion of digital humanities monographs and edited collections are available in electronic formats, and which, if any, are available in open access form? How do open access articles about the digital humanities compare in terms of citations/downloads to their toll-access counterparts? How, when, where and why do digital humanities scholars and the public engage in online attention to online academic articles about digital humanities and why does it matter? What kind of licensing and copyright agreements are digital humanities scholars subscribing to, and of those which ones allow and encourage open collaboration and reuse, including text and data mining? What is the role of blogging in the digital humanities publishing landscape?

These are the questions guiding the research project whose findings we will visualise through an infographic. It will show the findings of a comparative, quantitative bibliometric analysis of a data set of academic articles about the digital humanities published between 2010 and 2013. The infographic will visualise the conclusions of an ongoing collaborative research project whose aims are to employ journal and article-level quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine whether alt-metrics can provide a holistic image of impact on diverse audiences.

The poster will also include a visualisation of the geographical distribution of online attention to the articles published on both journals, as well as other quantitative and qualitative data. The main objective of the poster will be to provide demographic data of online activity reflecting the attention paid to digital humanities research by other researchers, the media and the general public, providing much-needed data about where academic articles on digital humanities are published, which are the business models the chosen platforms have (toll-access, open access) as well as other information as presence or absence of digital identifiers, secure archiving, etc.

Scholars in most academic fields are increasingly using online tools and environments (social media, blogs, online reference managers, etc.) to engage with scholarly literature and other events such as lectures, conferences and symposia (Nicholas and Rowlands 2011). Digital Humanities scholars are not the exception (Ross, Terras, Warwick, Welsh, 2011; Terras 2012), but there is a paucity of bibliometric research regarding the type of publications and impact of those publications that they choose to publish their research. In spite of the extensive work by the Statistical Cybermetrics Group (University of Wolverhampton), digital humanities as a specific field of academic publishing remains largely unexplored. The poster we propose seeks to make a contribution by employing alt-metrics, the quantitative and qualitative “study and use of scholarly impact measures based on activity in online tools and environments” (Adie and Roe, 2013; Cameron 2009; Cronin 2001; Priem et al 2012) to assess the publishing landscape in digital humanities. The data about research online engagement we can obtain from them is discipline-agnostic; it is the online behaviour of researchers and interactions with the outputs from different disciplines what can significantly differ.

The poster seeks to make a contribution to the debate about the role of open access and alternative

metrics in contemporary research. The poster will be accompanied by an open access online resource including further analysis and the source data, encouraging fellow researchers to explore, reuse and visualise in different ways. This companion site will discuss how alt-metrics data could potentially contribute to –or eventually generate a culture towards– strengthening the evidence informing impact case studies for journals publishing digital humanities scholarship.

Many questions arise from looking at the data. How can we better understand and use it? Can we classify articles and journals by the kind of attention they get? Are there common patterns between themes? How do they compare to articles and journals in other disciplines? Can online attention metrics encourage specific types of online behaviour amongst digital humanities scholars and across disciplinary? What does it mean if somebody tweets a paper –what’s the tweeter trying to do? How can the studied journals maximise the online engagement with the research they publish?

This poster and its companion online site will aim to provide some answers in order to provide recommendations and best practices that might help democratise and increase the international access to peer-reviewed digital humanities research.

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