



Digital History

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Abstract— *Digital history describes the blend of computers and history. It is the use of digital tools for the practice, creation, enhancement or presentation of history in ways impossible without the computer. It encourages historians to work with data-driven techniques and visualization. This paper presents a brief introduction to digital history.*

Keywords— *Digital history, digital archives, multimedia history, spatial history*

I. INTRODUCTION

The field of history is undergoing a radical change in the way historians use and access information. Traditionally, historians rely on diaries, journals, biographies, libraries, museums, memoirs, archives, and newspapers as important sources of historical information. The advent of commercial computer networks and applications, particularly the World Wide Web, has inspired an interest in using them for historical purposes. Starting from the 1960s, a number of historians began to use computer networks on large databases to get quantitative results. Due to the growing resources available on online, there is an explosion and usability of digital resources for historians. Digitalization is going on in all disciplines, and historians should not be left out.

Digital history refers to the application of digital technologies for the analysis and research of history. It has emerged as a subset of digital humanities. Digital historians use computers or digital tools to analyze historical records. These tools include web development tools, Wikipedia, databases, text analysis, data and text mining, mapping, data visualization, and big data analysis. For example, Wikipedia is the most frequently visited website for scholars seeking historical knowledge or wishing to verify historical facts [1]. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), flash animation, XML coding, digital video, blogs, and wikis are being employed by digital historians. These tools enable scholars to approach familiar territories in exciting ways.

II. APPLICATIONS

The digital computer was invented as a tool for scientific and engineering computation.

Historians of science have been rather slow in taking digital computer seriously [2].

By combining the benefits to the use of digital history with traditional historical methods, the following applications can be made [3]:

- Combining traditional historical methods and new research methods in order to come to new conclusions.
- Using different tools to extract and analyze larger amounts of data that would not be manageable otherwise.
- Data extracted and analyzed can be visualized and placed alongside existing historiography.

Researchers have suggested that integrating technology into history instruction has the potential of encouraging active student inquiry and interest. The strategies for integrating digital technologies into history classroom may include student-produced digital narratives. Digital history narrative creation embraces technology and evokes student emotion. Today students are eager to make the most of digital tools for historical production. Students learn effectively about digital history by researching using online resources and making their own histories [4]. Students should be encouraged to learn from multiple sources and perspectives because we live in a pluralistic democracy. As technologies continue to dominate all aspects of life, they tend to engage students and provide the skills required to succeed in the 21st century.

III. ISSUES FACING DIGITAL HISTORY

Digitization of archival, analogue material offers unique advantages, as well as limitations. A major advantage of digital media for historians is that digital media can store unparalleled amounts of data into small spaces. The emergence of ubiquitous computer networks such as the Internet makes accessibility and distribution of history projects and publications easy and convenient. Online digital archives can combine text, images, sounds, and moving pictures. Placing historical documents online allows student to have a unique learner-centric experience.

Questions have been raised over the validity of digital history and the digital technology that produces it. Technologies appear and change over time. They tend to widen the gap between those who have access to new information and those who do not.

The use of digital historical resources can create the problems of abundance and information overload.

In spite of the importance of digital history, very little attention has been paid to it from the mainstream profession. Some are skeptical about the lasting value of "digital history" as a term. Most historians use computer sparingly and conservatively. The refusal by historians to incorporate true digital historical technologies in their work is perhaps due to their lack of familiarity with the digital technologies. Most historians are used to working by themselves, in isolation, but the new digital scholarship requires collaboratively effort [5].

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Digital, multimedia history is an approach to examining and representing the past using the new communication technologies. The digital revolution is changing the way we do historical scholarship and teaching. Digital history does not replace traditional historical writing but compliments it. As digital history matures, it is marked by three main characteristics: new access to archival materials, collaboration among historians, and new types of scholarship [6].

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