Suzanne Magnanini [1]

Research Project

Background

In a review of digital humanities projects in *Renaissance Quarterly* (2013), Michael Ullyot observed, "New digital publishing platforms will place our interpretations alongside these digital surrogates of our archives, giving our readers access to the same data that we used. The knowledge and the data, research and its objects, will productively commingle. The best future research will combine the openness and provisionality of Wikipedia with the substantive domain-expertise of peer-reviewed publications." This two-part research project aims to engage undergraduate students directly in the "productive comingling of knowledge and data."

Pedagogical Research Questions: How does public writing connected to a hands-on humanities project affect both student attitudes toward writing and the quality of their writing?

Part One: I will work with Special Collections Librarian Sean Babbs to construct the digital framework for a Digital Visual Bibliography of Norlin Library's Fairy Tale Collection. Norlin currently holds some 1500 fairy tale pieces (books, sheet music, stereoscopic cards) published between the 16th and 21st centuries. These texts are currently spread across four different collections and are not easily searchable. We hope to build on past experiments to create the digital framework for a database of holdings that would be searchable by ATU Folklore Classification (e.g. ATU 510A Cinderella), date of publication, and place of publication. Currently, a unit of each of my fairy tale courses is dedicated to teaching students to utilize this classification system to identify examples of tale types (Sleeping Beauty, Dragon Slayers). This portion of the project changes classwork into fieldwork, into "hands-on humanities," by having students practice their classification skills in the context of adding texts to the database. I will assess student attitudes toward "hands-on humanities" through pre- and post-activity surveys. Since I teach fairy tales at both the 1000- and 4000-level, and there are fairy tale courses taught in other departments (RUSS/ITAL 2271; RUSS 2231; GRMN 2205), there is the potential to repeat the surveys with different groups of students, should the professors agree to utilize the Visual Bibliography in their courses.

Part Two: There has been a good deal of pedagogical research exploring how public writing affects the quality of student writing. In most of these studies, "public writing" is understood as writing that enters a public discussion on a political or social issue, or using one's rhetorical skills to serve an organization. With this experiment, I will ask how a different kind of public writing, the publication of humanist research in the form of an open access research tool, shapes student writing. A typical assignment in my fairy tale courses requires students to write a brief analysis of a fairy tale that in which they analyze the author's use of a given tale type we have studied in class. For the experiment, I will ask students to write two analyses, one to

be submitted as a traditional paper and the other to be published on the Visual Bibliography as a critical annotation for a specific text. Utilizing anonymous submissions and the ACC & U Rubric for Written Communication Skills, I will measure whether and how the nature of the assignment, public or private, affects written output.

Groups audience:
President's Teaching Scholars Program

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