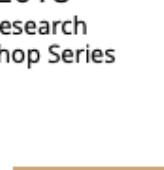




Designing a DH Project

September 26th, 2018
Institute for Humanities Research
Faculty Development Workshop Series



Elizabeth Grumbach

I'll start our workshop on "designing a digital humanities project" today by introducing myself and my background in digital humanities. I've worked as a project manager and an alternative academic (*#altac* professional) for over six years. In that time, I've served as the project manager for a number of projects and initiatives. I've worked on the Early Modern OCR Project, a Mellon-funded Grant at Texas A&M university that trained machines to generate text (read digitized images) from the first printed books, been part of the team that founded the first humanities-only visualization research center, and worked as the Project Manager for the Advanced Research Consortium, an organization that aggregates humanities data and offers peer review of scholar-produced digital projects. Since coming to ASU, I've worked on many scholar-driven research projects. Including "Arizona's Forgotten Pandemic" - a project that collected data from death certificates in 1918 to build an installation that re-embodied the stories of the Arizona communities impacted by the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.



bit.ly/design-dh-ihr

This link leads to not only our slides for today but also the script for today's workshop - because my DH is also accessible. I'll circulate these slides to everyone that wants one - so please put your email on the sign in sheet today if you'd like to receive the link (these slides will be available forever).

If you happen to have a smartphone, tablet, or computer today, following along with these slides will also enable you to click links included in this workshop and more fully participate in some of the discussions I hope to foster today. If you don't have access to this technology, no worries! We'll find solutions together as we go.

Our goal, and what I hope we all accomplish together, for today is to walk through the first steps of visioning, designing, and planning a digital humanities project. If you're already working on a project, you'll likely find today's content very familiar. If you aren't, I hope some of the steps we go through and the questions we answer together will be inspiring.

Before we begin in earnest, I would love for each of you to give a brief introduction - just a who you are and what you work on, or where you're joining us from today. If there's a specific digital project that you're thinking on or currently planning, please share a quick description.



Hannah Alpert-Abrams @hralperta · Sep 20



Going to have to define digital humanities for class today. Planning to spend less than five minutes on this crucial and tiresome topic.



3



1



21



Show this thread

And because there's no way to drive past it, I'll start today by spending a very few minutes on what digital humanities is/are - or what it can be.

“Whatever else it might be then, the digital humanities today is about a scholarship (and a pedagogy) that is publicly visible in ways to which we are generally unaccustomed, a scholarship and pedagogy that are bound up with infrastructure in ways that are deeper and more explicit than we are generally accustomed to, a scholarship and pedagogy that are collaborative and depend on networks of people....”

- Kirschenbaum, “What is Digital Humanities and What’s it Doing in English Departments?” (2010)

Elizabeth Grumbach

In 2010, Matthew Kirschenbaum wrote a bit about why digital humanities seemed so new and disruptive in the humanities, even though many humanists used digital means to conduct research online and taught and wrote using computers. The difference seemed to be that DH afforded a new kind of visibility online for the modes of scholarly knowledge production, that it was inherently about infrastructure building, and that it was collaborative in nature. I would argue myself that humanities work was always already about infrastructure and collaboration, and what the rise of digital humanities did for our scholarly communities was shine a retrospective, positive, and sometimes critical light on the ways in which we do our work.

Kirschenbaum article available here:

https://mkirschenbaum.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/kirschenbaum_ade150.pdf


“The particular contribution of the digital humanities, however, lies in its exploration of the difference that the digital can make to the kinds of work that we do as well as to the ways that we communicate with one another.....”

- Fitzpatrick, “The Humanities, Done Digitally” (2012)

Elizabeth Grumbach

Two years later, Kathleen Fitzpatrick wrote that what DH afforded the humanities was the ability to explore and experiment with the digital to form new ways of communicating humanities knowledge and communicating with other humanists.

Fitzpatrick article: <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/30>



“For me, what counts as digital humanities, ultimately, is work that doesn’t try to police the boundaries of what counts as digital humanities.”

- Jesse Stommel (2015)



Elizabeth Grumbach

And this is my absolute favorite definition of DH from Jesse Stommel, who wrote in 2015 that really, DH is work that is concerned with itself and it’s engagement with humanities and human questions - and doesn’t try to police or define what counts as DH.

Stommel: <http://www.disruptingdh.com/the-public-digital-humanities/>

"Along with the digital archives, quantitative analyses, and tool-building projects that once characterized the field, DH now encompasses a wide range of methods and practices: visualizations of large image sets, 3D modeling of historical artifacts, 'born digital' dissertations, hashtag activism and the analysis thereof, alternate reality games, mobile makerspaces, and more. In what has been called 'big tent' DH, it can at times be difficult to determine with any specificity what, precisely, digital humanities work entails."

- Lauren F. Klein and Matthew K. Gold (2016)

Elizabeth Grumbach

And this last attempt at definition that I'll show today is from the second Debates in the Digital Humanities volume - Lauren Klein and Matthew Gold write that DH is now multiple. That it can and does mean digital archives, large scale quantitative analyses, and tool-building, but also "visualizations of large image sets, 3D modeling of historical artifacts, 'born digital' dissertations, hashtag activism and the analysis thereof, alternate reality games, mobile makerspaces, and more"

And so with that last definition, I hope that I've at least opened up possibilities for us today. DH is about the choices we make to explore the humanities questions we've always been interested in asking, and so...

Klein and Gold: <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/2>

1st:
Question
2nd: Tool

“Everybody working on a digital humanities project needs to be writing. I am suggesting that this is simply a fact of life. If you don’t have at least a one-pager for your project, then you don’t have a project...”

- Trevor Owens (2011)

Elizabeth Grumbach

Let’s talk about choices, and first steps, towards designing a digital project. Most, if not all, successful digital projects that I’ve encountered began with a question, with the research and the humanities perspective, and from there choose or develop a tool that can help achieve the goals of the project. In my experience, this means exactly what Trevor Owens says in this quote - that writing is at the heart of DH, and that without a rationale or a one-pager or a question at the heart of a project, there is no project. That question can be “how do I make content or materials accessible online?” or “how can I represent a dataset about the 1918 flu in a way that liberates the stories of the dead from a spreadsheet?” or or or....

Owens article: <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/please-write-it-down-by-trevor-owens/>

- PM/
1. Choose wisely. Do you really need this? (Contribution/important information)
 2. Don't assume you need a lot of time. (You'll be in better shape later.)
 3. Seek partners, not service providers.
 4. Draft a brief vision-document. Iterate and refine conditions. Iterate and refine.
 5. Set clear internal milestones. (Powered by OCD™) and stick to them. (shame as PM's motivator)
 6. What does sustainability mean to you/to this work? Secure stewardship agreements, embrace ephemerality as appropriate.
 7. Foster community (users, developers) through small-scale publicity in just the right venues. Foster serendipity by communicating outside your comfort zone.
 8. Enable decision-making on the part of every team member. Make clear and final decisions when needed. (Keep up momentum, keep up morale.)
 9. Be the buffer for administrative and financial distractions.
 10. Give all the credit away. But make it clear to your team that you'll take any blame.

SCHOLARS' LAB



Nowviskie 2012

Before we start considering questions together, I wanted to point to this invaluable document from Bethany Nowviskie. I actually have these “ten rules” taped up in my office, and while they are excellent for project manager like me, they are also perfect rules for anyone considering designing a digital humanities project. I won't go through all ten of them, but I will say that a few of them are not only incredibly good advice, but also embody the spirit of the digital humanities community.

The first rule is the most important, though we're also going to talk about vision-documents and milestones today.

Choose wisely. Designing a DH project well depends on knowing how much time you have to devote to it, if it's the right time in your career to develop your digital project idea, and/or how much you have passion for the idea. Nowviskie also implies something very important here - that if this project is a timely intervention or needed contribution to a community or discipline, then that will impact how the project develops and how it should be planned.

Nowviskie's Ten Rules Handout: <http://nowviskie.org/handouts/DH/10rules.pdf>

Visioning, Planning, Design Documents....

- What is the research question at the heart of your project?
- Who are the stakeholders involved? Who are your collaborators?
- Where/what are your sources (digitized images, text, sound files, maps, social media data, an unexplored archive, a physical object, a spreadsheet...)?
- What is the purpose of this project, and/or who is the audience for it?
- What is the ultimate goal of this project, and/or what new knowledge or perspective will this project communicate?

With that in mind, I have quite a few questions here - which are honestly questions that I've developed for myself, in consultation and collaboration over years, to start shaping a digital project.

The first is the research question itself - and this could also be a problem or issue. For example, the early modern ocr project had a problem to solve, and that problem was: how do we, as humanists, know what's contained in our archive of digitized page images from 1473-1800 if we can't search the text contained within it?

It's also incredibly important to know who your stakeholders are and who your collaborators are - and how to tell the difference between them. A stakeholder might be a granting institution, or future researchers that use your project, or students. But collaborators are the individuals that can help you actively achieve your goals (and should be credited for that work).

It's equally important to define what your sources for the project are - specifically here, data sources, but also individuals who might have the stories you need to tell. And both of these sources can help you define project goals or your intended audience.

And maybe most importantly and therefore last: what is the anticipated outcome, which honestly might change as the project develops, but is always helpful to have clearly defined at the outset. What new knowledge or perspective will be generated?

3 minutes! Write it down....

- What is the research question at the heart of your project?
- Who are the stakeholders involved? Who are your collaborators?
- Where/what are your sources?
 - Examples: digitized images, text, sound files, video files, maps, social media data, an unexplored archive, a physical object, oral histories, a spreadsheet...
- What is the purpose of this project, and/or who is the audience for it?
- What is the ultimate goal of this project, and/or what new knowledge or perspective will this project communicate?

For the next 3 minutes, there are paper and writing utensils scattered around the room, and I would love it if you would answer a few of these questions for me - or at least the highlighted questions.

If you aren't currently working or thinking about a project, no worries! Perhaps there's a digital project that you admire - it would be excellent to hear how you think another digital project team would answer these questions.

After this, I'll ask you to share with someone sitting next to you for a bit. And then I'll ask for any brave volunteers that want to share and get feedback from this whole group.

5 minutes! Share it out loud...

- What is the research question at the heart of your project?
- Who are the stakeholders involved? Who are your collaborators?
- Where/what are your sources?
 - Examples: digitized images, text, sound files, video files, maps, social media data, an unexplored archive, a physical object, oral histories, a spreadsheet...
- What is the purpose of this project, and/or who is the audience for it?
- What is the ultimate goal of this project, and/or what new knowledge or perspective will this project communicate?

1 minute or less! Share it out loud...

- What is the research question at the heart of your project?
- What is the ultimate goal of this project, and/or what new knowledge or perspective will this project communicate?

Thank you all for sharing.

Best Practices

sources & data collection

Where is your data/content?

How will you compile, retrieve, and/or create this data/content?

Are there any privacy, security, or legal issues involved in using this data/content?

How does this data/content relate to your research question?

If any of you were able to ask yourself or your partner about sources, then your next step in project planning is likely to be thinking about data collection - and by data here I mean many things. Like texts, or oral histories, images, sound files, information able to be processed by machines, citations or a bibliography.

And so these are some of those next step questions - the most important of which are I think:

- 1) where will you find your data? is it easily compiled? (I have a horror story from EMOP about this)
- 2) are there any ethical, legal, or security issues to consider when compiling this data, or when presenting this data?

This is a step in which usually, in project planning/designing, goals and project timelines shift - the earlier they are considered, the more prepared you'll be to begin creating.

Best Practices

a brief & incomplete list

Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)

Music Encoding Initiative (MEI)

HTML5

Metadata

Minimal Computing & Markdown

User-centered web design

Clean(ed) text files / unicode

Site Documentation

If also be completely out of line if I didn't mention best practices that currently exist for digital projects. And I list and mention these today for two reasons:

- 1) committing to using community standards for development is also a commitment to sustainability (TEI, MEI, HTML5 for interactive web content instead of Adobe Flash)
- 2) Should this project will be reviewed by a discipline-specific journal, or a DH organization, or submitted in a promotion/tenure binder, committing to best practices ensures the success of this review

Academic organizations like the MLA have resources for the development of digital projects, as well.

Guidelines for Authors of Digital Resources: <https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Committees/Committee-Listings/Professional-Issues/Committee-on-Information-Technology/Guidelines-for-Authors-of-Digital-Resources>

Getting Started

vision/planning document

[Project Name] Planning Document

Authored by [name]
[Date document started]

Project Team

Project Stakeholders

Project Deadlines

Project Description [internal use]

Goals

Needs [technology, materials, digitization costs, etc.]

Project Development Phases

Project Description [outreach, publicity statement]

And now we're approaching the fun part of DH project development - after considering these questions, you likely have a one-page or a project description. I've put my personal template here as an example of where I start with every collaboration.

Your document does not have to look like mine, but having a working map for a project is always a brilliant idea. If you're writing a grant, to begin or eventually, having an initial design document is important, too.



bit.ly/design-dh-ihr

The next few slides are a bit intense, so I'll recommend again that you follow along, should you have a tablet, smartphone, or computer with you today!

The sincerest form of flattery....



Photo by Amy Pickup, UT Dallas

Analyzing other DH projects - Imitation is definitely a form of flattery (maybe not the most sincere), but being inspired by a digital project is definitely the best form of flattery.

Fashioning Circuits - wearables, fashion, and communicating humanities data via tangible, embodied experiences

Counting the Dead project - being inside a space where data can be interacted with in an embodied experience via touch, sight, and/or sound

The sincerest form of flattery....

Digital Publishing

- Unghosting Apparitional Histories (bit.ly/unghosting)

Digital Archives

- Bracero Archive (braceroarchive.org)
- dc1968 (dc1968project.com)

Digital Companions

- Becoming Richard Pryor (bit.ly/ryor-peoria)

Social Media

- Documenting the Now (docnow.io)

Text Analysis

- Viral Texts (viraltxts.org)

Text Mining

- Quantifying Kissinger (quantifyingkissinger.com)

Large Scale Visualization

- On Broadway (on-broadway.nyc)

Mapping

- Borderlands Archives Cartography (bacartography.org)
- Baldwin's Paris (baldwinsparis.com)

Networks

- Six Degrees of Francis Bacon (bit.ly/6-d-bacon)
- Linked Jazz (linkedjazz.org/network)

The bulk of the rest of our workshop is going to be spent on this page, and I hope you'll join me in discussion.

If everyone/most people have access to this powerpoint via tablet, computer, or smartphone, I'd really like to treat this like a choose your own adventure exercise. I've put somewhat descriptive and fairly arbitrary DH boxes on this slide, along with example projects that may be inspirational. If you don't see a DH box that applies to your goals, please let me know!

If most people don't have access to this PowerPoint, we'll take suggestions and walk through some examples together - which we would do anyway as a group after some individual or group explorations.

When exploring these examples:

- 1) what do these projects do well?
- 2) what is missing?
- 3) is anything particularly attractive in the way they represent information or data?
- 4) or perhaps in the tools that they've decided to use?
- 5) do these projects describe how they were made?

Getting Started

platform choices

—

to host
host...

or not to

Reclaim Hosting
(reclaimhosting.com)

Pantheon (pantheon.io)

Dreamhost (dreamhost.com)

Amazon Web Services
(aws.amazon.com)

Scalar (scalar.usc.edu)

Omeka.net (omeka.net)

Wordpress.com (wordpress.com)

ESRI StoryMaps
(storymaps.arcgis.com)

Humanities Commons
(hcommons.org)

Making choices about platforms and tools requires a consideration of not only funding and the sustainability/ephemerality (or planned **obsolescence**) of the project, but also take into account audience and the ultimate goals of the project. When possible, using a known and community-supported platform with the ability to interact with the “front-end” of an application is always best - especially for projects that have specific goals.

Publishing a multi-media or digital book in the open Scalar community, where you can request a user account and immediately start building a narrative, is useful to both the prototyping phase of a project and, perhaps, the finished project itself. Using a free account on Omeka.net is excellent if the goal is to make more accessible and form exhibits around a smaller number of digitized archive materials. And a free wordpress.com site or blog is a great way to have a front-facing project website for any stage of a project (and now - you can sign up for an account with Humanities Commons and build your website within a Humanities-focused digital community!).

[Click through Humanities Commons] - learn more in the October IHR workshop!
(<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/faculty-development-workshop-using-digital-commons-platforms-tickets-48965527210>)

In the left-hand side column here, however - I have some recommendations for hosting options. The first two options, both Reclaim Hosting and Pantheon, have point-and-click installation for content management systems. For a fee, Pantheon will

host a WordPress or Drupal project and allow access to a development dashboard that is slightly more intuitive for scholars not familiar with versioning systems or development workflows. For a much more reasonable fee (but with less customer support), Reclaim Hosting has point-and-click installation option for WordPress and Drupal, but also for platforms like Scalar and Omeka. If you have massive amounts of data, or if you want to customize the look and feel of your digital project, then Reclaim Hosting is an excellent choice.

If you're developing from the code up, or if you're customizing code or a new platform, or if you want absolute full control (called root access) to a virtual server, both Dreamhost and Amazon Web Services offer these capabilities for a yearly fee. These are for large-scale, resource heavy digital projects that need large amounts of computing power or storage space. For example, before moving the data to physical servers, a project I worked on considered indexing our 2.5 million metadata records and about 1 millions text files with associated digitized book page images on Amazon Web Services.

We're going to return to Reclaim before I advance these slides to explore hosting options.

Getting Started

setting milestones

—

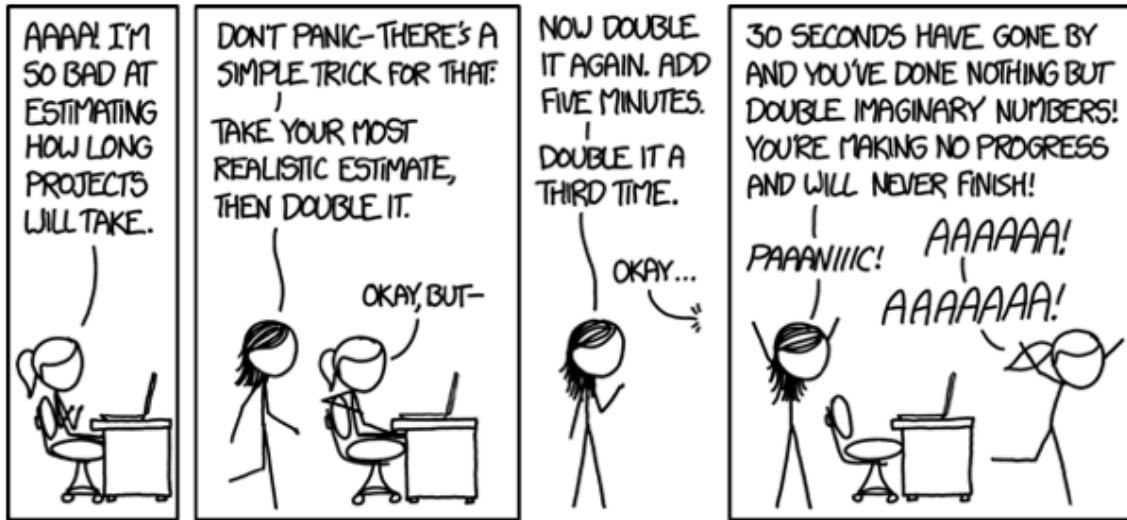


Image Source: xkcd.com/1658

I think about this xkcd comic almost once a week.

S - Specific
M - Measurable
A - Attainable
R - Relevant
T - Timebound

UPCOMING AND RECENTLY-ACHIEVED
SELF-DRIVING CAR MILESTONES

- AUTOMATIC EMERGENCY BRAKING
- HIGHWAY LANE-KEEPING
- SELF-PARKING
- FULL HIGHWAY AUTONOMY
- FIRST SEX IN A SELF-DRIVING CAR
- FULL TRIPS WITH NO INPUT FROM DRIVER
- FULL TRIPS BY EMPTY CARS
- SELF-REFUELING OF EMPTY CARS
- AN EMPTY CAR WANDERING THE HIGHWAYS FOR MONTHS OR YEARS UNTIL SOMEONE NOTICES THE CREDIT CARD FUEL CHARGES
- CARS THAT READ OTHER CARS' BUMPER STICKERS BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO CUT THEM OFF
- AUTONOMOUS ENGINE REVVING AT RED LIGHTS
- SELF-LOADING CARS
- AUTONOMOUS CANYON JUMPING
- CARS CAPABLE OF ARGUING ABOUT THE TROLLEY PROBLEM ON FACEBOOK

Image Source: xkcd.com/1658

Every project milestone must fulfill all of the SMART criteria.

Specific: What specific need does this milestone fulfill?

Measurable: How do I measure success?

Attainable: Is this goal realistic, especially for my set time frame and the support or funding I currently have?

Relevant: Does this milestone actually help me reach the finish line?

Time-bound: This is related closely to measuring - how do I know when this milestone has been achieved (when you *stop* iterating or perfecting). This is the "draw a line in the sand" criteria.

Example project milestones can be things like:

- finish initial research on primary/secondary source materials
- conduct a specific number of oral history interviews
- plot geographic data points in a mapping tool (or record geographic coordinates into a spreadsheet for migration into a mapping tool)
- get feedback from stakeholders or the community

Getting Started

sharing out & sharing credit

Sharing out: You're done (according to your project planning document and milestones)! Now what?

Attend a discipline-specific conference or a DH conference and share your work. Or share the project on social media, or via an ASU Now article, or by simply sharing it with the stakeholders, collaborators, and consultants who've helped you develop, build, and achieve the project's goals. Especially be sure to share it with any communities or community members that are featured in the project. But before doing that, make sure that your collaborators are appropriately credited in the project.

Collaborators' Bill of Rights

- ¶ 1 1) All kinds of work on a project are equally deserving of credit (though the amount of work and expression of credit may differ). And all collaborators should be empowered to take credit for their work.
- ¶ 2 2) The DH community should default to the most comprehensive model of attribution of credit: credit should take the form of a legible trail that articulates the nature, extent, and dates of the contribution. (Models in the sciences and the arts may be useful.)
- ¶ 3 a) Descriptive Papers & Project reports: Anyone who collaborated on the project should be listed as author in a fair ordering based on emerging community conventions.
- ¶ 4 b) Websites: There should be a prominent "credits" link on the main page with PIs or project leads listed first. This should include current staff as well as past staff with their dates of employment.
- ¶ 5 c) CVs: Your CV is **your** place for articulating your contribution to a collaboration. All collaborators should feel empowered to express their contributions honestly and comprehensively.
- ¶ 6 3) Universities, museums, libraries, and archives are locations of creativity and innovation. Intellectual property policies should be equally applied to all employees regardless of employment status. Credit for collaborative work should be portable and legible. Collaborators should retain access to the work of the collaboration.
- ¶ 7 4) Funders should take an aggressive stance on unfair institutional policies that undermine the principles of this bill of rights. Such policies may include inequities in intellectual property rights or the inability of certain classes of employees to serve as PIs.

In 2011, a group of scholars came together to work on a number of things, including the Collaborators' Bill of Rights. This bill of rights expresses not only how collaborators on a project should likely be represented (e.g., through a legible trail, on a prominent "credits and acknowledgements" page on the project website), but also how funding agencies, cultural heritage institutions, and universities should treat the intellectual property of collaborators.

A Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights

bit.ly/Collab-Rights-Students



By [CDH Guest Author](#) on June 8, 2015

By Haley Di Pressi, Stephanie Gorman, Miriam Posner, Raphael Sasayama, and Tori Schmitt, with contributions from Roderic Crooks, Megan Driscoll, Amy Earhart, Spencer Keralls, Tiffany Naiman, and Todd Presner

UCLA's Digital Humanities program emphasizes cross-disciplinary, cross-hierarchy collaboration among students, faculty, and staff. We've created this Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights as a statement of our values and principles in the UCLA DH program.

And I'll wrap up today and lead into questions with the incredibly important Student Collaborators' Bill of Right, written in 2015. I actually couldn't fit the entire Bill of Rights on this slide because of the length, but if you plan to work with students of any level, from any institution, I urge you to take a look at these principles and values - which cover everything from unpaid labor, to the rights of students to list projects on their resumes, to mentorship recommendations and more.

More Resources

The Programming Historian (peer-reviewed tutorials)

programminghistorian.org

“How Did They Make That” (Miriam Posner)

miriamposner.com/blog/how-did-they-make-that

DiRT Directory (registry of digital tools and platforms)

dirtdirectory.org

“Where to Start? On Research Questions in The Digital Humanities” (Trevor Owens)

bit.ly/2OUNMHR

Elizabeth Grumbach

Thank you for your time. And always happy to answer questions!

What are your hesitations with doing a DH project?

What are the barriers or roadblocks or intimidations?

How can we build resources or a community that supports DH efforts here at ASU?