



How much advertising for DH research while doing it?

Panel B5- Zurich

22.10.21, 12h00 - 12h45

Panel suggested by Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello

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Discussion leader and core topic presentation:

Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello specified that advertising may be the wrong term: saying what we are doing in research while we are doing it, is what she wanted to discuss in the panel. In that respect, the panel topic was reminiscent of Moritz Mähr's panel on micropublications. "Self marketing" was quickly introduced as a different term comprising the same questions. She then provided some "traditional" slides as a kick-off.

Main arguments in the discussion:

Digital methods are used more in some projects than in others, but in the state of the art, methodologies surely differ from traditional ones. Digital humanities (DH) research is more about:

- Rhythm: research in the area moves so fast, we can't wait 3 years to the official publication
- Collaboration: DH involves sharing time with other researchers: How much and how efficient?
- Openness to wider audiences: when and how much? E.g. via websites, advertisements via "old school" mailing lists and social networks – both of which are time consuming
- Workshops/unconferences replace traditional conferences: shared documents like the framapads are more in adequacy to what we do than single authored articles, but are they "valued" similarly?
- Showcases: present intermediary results or databases, and how much time must be spent to present codes, tools, "How Tos" etc.
- Sustainability: How long is e.g. a Facebook page thought to last?
- Specificities of DH projects evaluations?: Scientific evaluation is still based on publications in the form of the "gold standard" monographs and papers

The trade-off between "gold standard" and "alternative" forms of publications quickly emerged as the key issue in the debate.

Main issues and proposed solutions:

In Benelux (TU Delft) countries, new evaluation processes at universities are a topic: some start to measure impact of research projects in new ways including e.g. "openness" in the form of OA publications. Such mechanisms could be pushed by funding institutions like SNF who give guidelines for making results available. In that context, Isabelle misses timelines of when and what should be published.



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Some participants' experience with such "alternative" forms of output are rather frustrating. In general, peer-reviewed publications are still the key point when applying for funding, while more "visual" projects are popular to propagate research, and the evaluation of projects is based on such broader terms of output. It seems that SNF is encouraging such activities.

A participant states that "we are paying with two currencies" in DH: we need to produce traditional content, while also living up to the so-called FAIR principles - which are a big buzzword, but still lack concrete content and implementation. That is why we need both a classic track record for job applications and public networking, community building, etc. for grant applications. The challenge is to find the right balance between the two.

Consequently, universities should provide financing for social media presence, as this also needs time and human resources. However, awareness of these issues is highly dependent on the respective institutions and researchers, as these examples show:

- ETH offer in terms of science communication: <https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/organisation/departments/corporate-communications/communication-academy.html>
- Twitter for digital historians <https://twitter.com/i/lists/1180808829984022529>
- Digital Humanities by @GrandjeanMartin <https://twitter.com/i/lists/103524224>
- Digital Humanities by @normanlippert <https://twitter.com/i/lists/92600340>

Quality of science communication is another issue, and depends on the platform used: Something on Google Scholar probably needs to look different from something on Facebook. In general, Twitter probably is the one social media to use for science communication.

Where to publish intermediary results can be a problematic issue as well, especially on privately held platforms. The same is true for infrastructures of big publishers: they are economically interested in our personal reading routines, and we as researchers are, in fact, the products for these platforms. We probably need a dual model in that respect, too: we need to decide on where to put our output and where to promote it.

With regard to platforms for scientific communication, blogs tend to have been replaced by social media platforms. Yet, they also have a huge potential to connect groups of experts, like Wiki does, but here, again, it is difficult to decide on how much time to invest in that.

One participant switched from blogs to traditional media like newspaper articles - which in turn are then discussed on social media. Traditional media surely are a good way to publicise own research to a wide public. In that context, it is important to remember that public history/public science means creating a public, not just communicating to a public already out there.

At the moment, "self-marketing" depends both on traditional output like publications and conference participation as well as on reaching out to a wider public via traditional means, and social media, Open Access publications, etc. To do all that at once is terribly time-consuming. That is why



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we need to raise awareness in our institutions to contribute financing and resources for publicising results, in different ways.