DISRUPTING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

**EDITED BY
DOROTHY KIM &
JESSE STOMMEL**

DISTRUPTING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES. Copyright © 2018 by editors and authors. This work carries a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0 International license, which means that you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, and you may also remix, transform and build upon the material, as long as you clearly attribute the work to the authors (but not in a way that suggests the authors or punctum books endorses you and your work), you do not use this work for commercial gain in any form whatsoever, and that for any remixing and transformation, you distribute your rebuild under the same license. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

First published in 2018 by punctum books, Earth, Milky Way.
<https://punctumbooks.com>

ISBN-13: 978-1-947447-71-4 (print)
ISBN-13: 978-1-947447-72-1 (ePDF)

LCCN: 2018948914

Library of Congress Cataloging Data is available from the Library of Congress

Book design: Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei

Disrupting Labor in Digital Humanities; or, The Classroom Is Not Your Crowd

Spencer D.C. Keralis

“Stick to the boat, Pip, or by the Lord, I won’t pick you up if you jump; mind that. We can’t afford to lose whales by the likes of you; a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama.”

— Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*¹

Digital humanists have a labor problem, but it’s not what you might think. It’s not about humanities faculty getting credit in tenure and promotion for digital informatics work. It’s not about the adjunctification of teaching labor. It’s not about the devaluation of humanities PhDs, the contraction of the faculty job market, the rise of #alt-ac, nor the para-professionalization of academic libraries. And while I care deeply about these problems, at least three of which affect me personally almost every day, what I am concerned with here is a type of labor that the collective preoccupation with these issues effaces: the use of student labor on digital humanities projects in and out of the classroom.

¹ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, or The White Whale* (Boston: C.H. Simonds Co., 1922), 390.

Without student labor, the academy as a whole would grind to a halt. From the office of the Registrar to the digital library, student labor keeps the wheels of the neoliberal university spinning. These students, even those in skilled technical jobs, are generally paid at or just above minimum wage. Right or wrong, this is a truth of the university that is well established, and many digital humanities projects with the funding to do so participate in the student labor economy. What isn't so widely recognized is that, in the absence of funding for student wages, some faculty use the classroom as a locus for exploiting student labor. The aim of this chapter is not to point fingers or name names, but to adumbrate a trend in disciplines I value that I, and others, find deeply troubling. In what follows, I will describe the problem of student labor in digital humanities as I see it, and examine some of the structural issues that drive the use of student labor. I will place the labor economy of digital humanities projects within the broader context of the innovation economy writ large to demonstrate how labor within the academy cannot operate under the same system of consensual participation which informs movements like crowdsourcing and crowdfunding. And in conclusion, I will offer suggestions for how ethically managed student labor in the classroom can empower students to demonstrate both cv-ready skills and humanistic knowledge in durable products for which they receive full credit.

On digital humanities panels at conferences ranging from the Modern Language Association, to the Digital Library Federation Forum, to the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations' annual Digital Humanities, to c19, to the Texas Conference on Digital Libraries, I've been struck again and again by how glibly panelists, upon describing their project, will declare something to the effect of: "[A]nd we incorporate the grunt work into a syllabus and have students do it as part of a class." Under the rubric of "skills building," these comments are usually met with nods of knowing approval by attendees. During the Q&A of the Feminist DH panel at Digital Humanities 2013 when a few audience members questioned the legitimacy of using student labor in the classroom, they were piously dismissed

both in the room and on social media, with Tweeters wielding hashtags like #pedagogicalvalue and #computationalthinking as though they expressed some ineffable, self-evident good.² This sort of dismissal is the rhetorical equivalent of #NotAllMen or #AllLivesMatter — a sleight of hand leveraged by a vocal and influential clique of DH true believers to efface the legitimacy of claims of student labor exploitation.³

This circling of the wagons is reflexive and unreflective and has more, I believe, to do with a sort of siege mentality on the part of a DH in-crowd (in particular those who have attempted to focus the conversation on recognition of digital work for tenure and promotion), than it does with those individuals' actual convictions about the use of student labor.⁴ The desire on

-
- 2 Kathryn Tomasek (@KathrynTomasek): "@4Hum Hope someone is noting that not all student labor is exploitation. #pedagogicalvalue #computationalthinking #DH2013," Twitter post, 19 July 2013, 12:02 p.m..
 - 3 #notallmen is used by "men's rights" advocates to dismiss arguments about rape culture (i.e., #notallmen are violent against women). For a useful examination of how #notallmen is an impediment to serious conversation about rape, see Phil Plait, "#YesAllWomen," *Slate*, 27 May 2014. Similarly, #AllLivesMatter is used in response to #BlackLivesMatter to "take race out of the equation" and "[turn] our eyes away from acknowledging America's racist past, functioning as a form of dismissal or denial." David Bedrick, "What's the Matter with 'All Lives Matter?'" *Huffington Post*, 24 August 2015.
 - 4 The notion of a "DH in-crowd" isn't new. In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, William Pannapacker notes that "the field, as a whole, seems to be developing an in-group, out-group dynamic that threatens to replicate the culture of Big Theory back in the 80s and 90s, which was so alienating to so many people." Pannapacker notes, as I do, that this cliquishness is notable on social media, and observes that DH seems "more exclusive, more cliquish," each year. William Pannapacker, "Digital Humanities Triumphant?" in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew Gold, 233–34 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). In the same volume, Lisa Spiro resists this idea, suggesting that in-crowd is "an ironic label for a group of people who have long felt like misfits. Lisa Spiro, "'This Is Why We Fight': Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, 16–35, at 16. The two notions are not, however, mutually exclusive, since the misfit status Spiro describes is precisely what produces the smug, cliquish "cool kids' table" mentality that I and Pannapacker experience. They are different sides of the same coin with social media as their echo chamber.

the part of those attempting to deflect and dismiss criticism of practices to which they have so fiercely allied themselves comes instead from a collective defensiveness driven in part by a very real desire to ensure that digital work within the humanities is valued and recognized. Meg Worley asserts elsewhere in this volume that imbalances in power “are rarely attributable to individual action or an intent to oppress.”⁵ But decisions about student labor are often individual decisions made from a range of alternatives within institutional contexts. At some point all digital humanities practitioners choose, to a greater or lesser degree depending on institutional realities and individual values, to willingly capitulate to the logic of what Richard Grusin describes as “bottom-line economics and the need for higher education to train students for jobs[,] not to read literature or study culture.”⁶ Digital projects have the potential to allow faculty to have their neoliberal cake and teach literature and history too, and any criticism of the practices that support digital projects is rejected out of hand.

But the economic motivation goes further than simple pandering to shifts in administrative priority away from producing thoughtful citizens and toward making corporate minions. As Melville’s Stubb reminds us “man is a money-making animal, which propensity too often interferes with his benevolence,”⁷ and digital humanities has woven money into the social fabric of humanities pedagogy in unprecedented ways. The misperception of university administrators that digital humanities will bring in money has unfortunately been encouraged by the same community of practitioners who are most invested in defending the maker culture fostered by the National Endowment for Humanities Office of Digital Humanities (NEH-ODH). The ability to bring in grant money has been a key point for those fighting for recognition of informatics and computer science projects for

5 Meg Worley, “The Rhetoric of Disruption: What Are We Doing Here?,” this volume, 64.

6 Richard Grusin, “The Dark Side of the Digital Humanities — Part 2,” *Thinking C21*, 9 January 2013.

7 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 390.

tenure in humanities departments, and the fact that there really isn't much money out there to support these projects creates a culture of scarcity that fosters, among other inequities, the move of student labor from campus employment or work study into the classroom.

Let's break this down a little. NEH-ODH Digital Humanities Start up Grant Level 1 Awards, which for years were the gold standard for funding early stage humanities informatics projects, max out at \$40,000. Considering that the average indirect costs charged against grants often exceed 50%, there's very little room to fund the sort of skilled labor necessary to produce the technical innovation prioritized by the ODH. Given that hourly rates for freelancers with experience in R, Python, or other programming languages can exceed \$100/hour,⁸ the pittance remaining after universities take their facilities and administration cut might cover less than 200 hours of skilled labor, with nothing left over for hardware, hosting, travel, or other research-related costs.

The deficit internship

The solution for some scholars is to shift this work away from paid professionals, or even paid apprentice labor like graduate research assistants, and into the classroom. They provide just enough training in code, content management, and style sheets for students to contribute some basic programming, write content for blogs and wikis, transcribe manuscripts and primary source documents, or develop visualizations and design. Students that come to the classroom with skill in computing, design, or even statistics can face an undue burden compared to their peers both in terms of supporting and mentoring their less technically savvy classmates and in terms of what the instructor

8 A search for R programmers on UpWork, a web-based service that matches clients with freelancers, generates a list of hourly rates ranging from \$35 to \$250 per hour. See *UpWork*, <https://www.upwork.com/o/profiles/browse/c/web-mobile-software-dev/>.

expects them to contribute to the project. Even when students are given credit for their work, they often end up building portfolios for fields they'll never crack, or which don't help them in their chosen major (this is especially true of students outside the major in which these courses are offered, who are also sometimes the more technically skilled of the students).⁹ Under the rationale of promoting skills building and in-class collaboration, the faculty essentially gets the benefit of free labor on their projects. Free, that is, to the faculty. Students still pay tuition for these courses, making them not just unpaid internships, but deficit internships subsidized in no small part by student loan debt accrued by the students. If faculty can't get federal money to support their research, this is a back door to getting its equivalent, and students foot the bill in both their labor and their future debt burden.

In the culture of perpetual lack that is humanities research funding, there has been very little scrutiny of these practices. They are, in fact, difficult to identify unless faculty come right out and discuss it at conferences or in other venues, which happens not infrequently. In an environmental scan of 129 syllabi gathered online we found no instances of instructors explicitly stating in their syllabi that student work would contribute to a faculty project (individual assignments, however, are generally not visible). The practice of using student labor in the classroom is naturalized into the fabric of digital pedagogy, and some large scale collaborative projects actively provide mechanisms for the effacement of student labor.

One example of this is the *History Engine*, "an educational tool that gives students the opportunity to learn history by doing the work—researching, writing, and publishing—of a historian."¹⁰ A collaborative project of the University of Richmond and a number of liberal arts colleges, the Engine is spon-

9 Spencer Roberts (@robertssw87): "@digiwonk: 'you're building a portfolio for a field you'll never break into.' how not to help students. #DH2013 fem and DH panel," Twitter post, 19 July 2013, 11:57 a.m.

10 *The History Engine*, <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/>.

sored by the University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab, the Virginia Center for Digital History, and the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE). The site has received press in *Inside Higher Ed*, *Academic Commons*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*; was awarded NITLE's 2009 Community Contribution Award; and was written up by faculty and project staff in three essays in *Perspectives on History* in 2009.

The *Engine* is based around a database of student authored "Episodes" describing moments in history. These episodes are assigned as part of courses at participating institutions, and the *Engine* provides sample assignments, lesson plans, and style guides for completing the essays in accordance with the site's standards. As an example, let's look at the episode describing the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916.¹¹ The episode is tagged with metadata including the date of the episode, location, topic tags, and the course and institution which produced the essay. There is no metadata field for author, and author is not a searchable term in the site's advanced search function. In the process of producing work for the site, work which students are "fully aware that future classrooms will engage with and critique,"¹² the student author is erased and anonymized. While the site claims it is providing students with the experience of writing and publishing as an historian, it is in fact structured to ensure that students' contributions are unidentifiable.

What this amounts to is an undergraduate student paying for the privilege of contributing his work anonymously to the project. Students at US institutions participating in the *History Engine* pay an average of \$954 per credit hour, and as much as \$2200 per credit hour to contribute, without credit, to the database. Whatever the pedagogic value of these small episode essays may be, one lesson the students must certainly internalize is that their work does not belong to them, and can be subsumed silently by a larger entity. This is great preparation for the corporate world, but it seems we should be having a more nuanced

11 "The Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916," *The History Engine*.

12 "What is the History Engine?" *The History Engine*.

conversation about intellectual property with students we hope to cultivate as future scholars. While the *Engine* purports to help students “learn history by doing the work [...] of an historian,” the way the site treats the products of that work complicates the relationship between labor and pedagogy. The *Engine* remains in use in classrooms and continues effacing the labor of its student contributors, with episodes from courses at Marist College, Richard Bland College, University of Richmond, University of Toronto Scarborough, Widener University, and Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis appearing in 2017.¹³

The networked machine

It is sometimes argued that the use of student labor in the classroom operates as a form of crowdsourcing (that is certainly the discursive angle taken in the *History Engine* documentation), and crowdsourcing has been a popular if unevenly successful method of doing some kinds of digital humanities work. But crowdsourcing operates under specific conditions of informed consent and volunteerism which labor in the classroom cannot support.

Along with crowd-funding, crowdsourcing has emerged as one the twin pillars of the neoliberal entrepreneurship economy. It is broadly accepted that the term was first coined in 2006 by *Wired* columnist Jeff Howe to describe “The new pool of cheap labor: everyday people using their spare cycles to create content, solve problems, even do corporate R&D.”¹⁴ Crowdsourcing relies on low- to no-cost labor to produce a wide variety of products, from computer code to photography, and deploys an instrumentalist ethic toward those contributing their labor — note the word “cycles” in Howe’s description, a term describing the fundamental steps a CPU performs to execute commands. Crowdsourcing dehumanizes individual contributors, reducing them effectively and affectively to anonymous components in a networked machine.

13 “Schools Using the History Engine,” *The History Engine*.

14 Jeff Howe, “The Rise of Crowdsourcing,” *Wired*, 1 June 2006.

Of course not all advocates of crowdsourcing are so transparently mechanistic in describing their labor pool. Clay Shirky describes the pool of skilled individuals willing to spend their spare time working on projects as offering a “cognitive surplus” which takes advantage of the networked social sphere and a collective spirit of generosity.¹⁵ As Shirky describes it, crowdsourcing relies on a particular social contract between labor and producer, encouraging a spirit of volunteerism to produce collaborative projects at scale. If there’s a product that can be developed collaboratively, using small slices of time contributed by people with a particular skill and interest, the internet economy has found a way to wrangle those people together to produce that product. These products range from those with potentially significant social effects — Shirky offers Wikipedia and Ushahidi, a platform that aggregates citizen reports of ethnic violence in Kenya, as examples — to the merely entertaining, like meme factory ICanHasCheezburger.com.

This model can provide a significant return for the companies leveraging this diffuse labor force. Aside from being “incredibly cheap,”¹⁶ the company benefits from greater intellectual diversity than any one workforce could support. The benefits to workers are less tangible. In those rare instances where the labor is paid, the pay is minimal. Contributions to crowdsourced projects have a similarly minimal impact as cv padding, and are designed to rely on the experience of workers rather than providing experience for them. While one study finds that offering financial incentive is one of the most reliable means of soliciting participants in crowdsourced projects, interest in the topic, ease of participation, altruism, and the desire to share knowledge are also motivators. Interestingly, the perceived sincerity of the project organizers is also highly valued by participants, and projects that

15 Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

16 Howe, “The Rise of Crowdsourcing.”

“appreciate and celebrate their community” are more likely to be perceived as an “honest beneficiary” of crowdsourced labor.¹⁷

Despite the benefits companies can derive from crowdsourced labor, one of the essential assumptions of crowdsourcing from Howe’s first elaboration of the term, is that “The crowd produces mostly crap.” As Howe describes it, “Any open call for submissions — whether for scientific solutions, new product designs, or funny home videos — will elicit mostly junk. Smart companies install cheap, effective filters to separate the wheat from the chaff.”¹⁸ Paradoxically, one of those filters is the crowd itself, as “a networked community [...] ferrets out the best material and corrects errors. Wikipedia enthusiasts quickly fix inaccuracies in the online content.”¹⁹

Both situations are certainly true of humanities data generated by crowdsourcing. Begun in 2001, the New York Public Library’s “What’s on the Menu?” project invites users to help transcribe historical restaurant menus.²⁰ User-entered information is recorded in large open datasets that can be accessed through the website. In terms of engagement, the project has been incredibly successful, with 1,331,934 dishes transcribed from 17,545 menus as of this writing. However, these transcriptions are notoriously messy. The Digital Humanities Data Curation Institute instructors Trevor Muñoz and Dorothea Salo used the NYPL data sets as object lessons in how to curate and clean up crowdsourced data using tools like OpenRefine.²¹ In an elegant response to the economies of scale inherent to the project, the “cheap, effective filter” the NYPL deploys to fix this messy crowd-produced data

17 Piotr Organisciak, “Why Bother? Examining the Motivations of Users in Large-Scale Crowd-Powered Online Initiatives” (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 2010).

18 Jeff Howe, “5 Rules of the New Labor Pool,” *Wired*, 1 June 2006.

19 Ibid.

20 “What’s on the Menu?” *New York Public Library*, <http://menus.nypl.org/>.

21 Digital Humanities Data Curation Institute, <http://www.dhcurator.org/institute/> (accessed 21 June 2016). For Muñoz’s exploratory work using the data, see Trevor Muñoz, “What is on the Menu? More Work on NYPL’s Open Data — Part 1, blog post, 8 August 2013 and “Refining the Problem — More Work with NYPL’s Open Data — Part 2,” blog post, 19 August 2013.

is the crowd itself. They invite users to help review transcribed menus invites to “fix misspellings, fill in missing data.”²² There’s something a little utopian about the notion of crowdsourcing being a sort of self-healing system in which the crowd fixes errors the crowd produced, but on some level the benefit received by the project or organization outweighs the crap generated by the user base, otherwise the practice would long since have died out.

Even under apparently ideal conditions of pure volunteerism as in the NYPL’s case, or modestly compensated contributions to Human Intelligence Tasks (HITS) on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk marketplace,²³ crowdsourcing is not without its ethical pitfalls. I’ve alluded to one above in describing how contributors are dehumanized as part of an anonymous labor network, and Jonathan Zintan, co-founder of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard, argues that there is a “Tom Sawyer syndrome” involved in crowdsourcing labor “in which people are suckered into doing work thinking that it’s something to be enjoyed,” and criticizes the gamification aspect of crowdsourcing in which contributors are given points or badges for recognition within the volunteer community in lieu of compensation.²⁴ Other critics focus on issues of data privacy and data integrity that crowdsourcing input and analysis of research data may involve. In terms of issues in crowdsourcing in the humanities, Julie McDonough Dolmaya argues that the use of crowdsourced labor for translation devalues the work of translation, and lowers the “occupational status” of professional translators.²⁵ This critique offers an analogue for the devaluation of labor in the humanities at large: does, for example, the *History Engine* devalue the work of historians by shifting the labor of content production onto

22 “What’s on the Menu.”

23 *Amazon Mechanical Turk*, <https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>.

24 Aminda, “Crowdsourcing: an ethics dilemma?” *ideaconnection*, 23 April 2011.

25 Julie McDonough Dolmaya, “The Ethics of Crowdsourcing,” *Linguistica Antverpiensia: New Series — Themes in Translation Studies* 10 (2011): 97–111. See also Mia Ridge, ed., *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

anonymous student authors? The staff and teachers involved in the Engine would likely argue that it does not, but what if these student-authored texts were cited instead of other scholarly works? How much authority do they want the entries to accrue, and how much does this anxiety contribute to the decision to keep the texts anonymous?

Amanda Fucking Palmer: A cautionary tale

Even under what appear to be the most clearly voluntary of circumstances, when the social contract of a crowdsourcing engagement seems obvious to the participants, the practice is not exempt from the criticism that crowdsourcing devalues professional practice. One of the most visible examples of this is the controversy that erupted in 2012 around Amanda Palmer's invitation to musicians in towns visited by her tour to play onstage for free. In August 2012, Palmer posted a call on her blog: "Wanted: Horny-y and String-y Volunteers for the Grand Theft Orchestra Tour!!!!" The post asked for "professional-ish horns and strings for EVERY CITY to hop up on stage with us for a couple of tunes" and in return, "we will feed you beer, hug/high-five you up and down (pick your poison), give you merch, and thank you mightily for adding to the big noise we are planning to make."²⁶ This had been Palmer's practice for years. Her punk cabaret act The Dresden Dolls relied in part on volunteer musicians when touring. She toured Australia in 2008 with The Danger Ensemble, four performance artists and a violinist who traveled with her for room and board, and they passed the hat at each gig. Palmer espouses an ethic of sharing and giving-what-you-will developed in her years busking as the 8-Foot Bride in Harvard Square, or playing her ukulele for change, and elaborated in a 2013 TED talk and her 2014 book *The Art of Asking*.

What was different about the Grand Theft Orchestra Tour was that Palmer had just completed a wildly successful Kick-

26 Amanda Palmer, "Wanted: Horny-y and String-y Volunteers for the Grand Theft Orchestra Tour!!!!" blog post, 21 August 2012.

starter campaign to support the recording of the LP *Theatre Is Evil* and the tour to promote the record. The campaign was supported by 24,883 backers and raised \$1,192,793 — the highest-grossing musical campaign on the platform at the time. These funds were intended to cover recording and distribution costs for the record (Palmer has self-released her work since her acrimonious split from Roadrunner Records in 2010), and to pay a salary to the core band that would accompany her on tour. Professional musicians were outraged and blasted her website with comments decrying her use of volunteer players. Industry heavy hitters like Raymond Hair Jr., president of the American Federation of Musicians weighed in, and producer Steve Albini published a particularly vitriolic post on the message board for his studio Electrical Audio, which was reproduced on *Pitchfork* and subsequently went viral.²⁷ The crux of the arguments against Palmer, aside from those that just called her an idiot or worse in a downward spiral of grotesque misogyny, was that asking musicians to play for free, when she had the resources to pay them, devalued professional musicianship. Palmer found herself on the defensive, explaining the request to the *New York Times*, and claiming, “If you could see the enthusiasm of these people, the argument would become invalid [...]. They’re all incredibly happy to be here.”²⁸ Palmer wrote on her blog that none of the volunteer musicians dropped out, but she ultimately moved money from the Kickstarter campaign around and paid those who played with her on the tour.

For Palmer and her proponents, including if not especially the musicians who stuck with her, volunteerism, community, and informed consent were more important than the perceptions of their critics. For the critics, the threat to professionalization and the devaluing of the labor of musicians trumped the social contract between Palmer and her community. The par-

27 Carrie Battan, “Steve Albini Slams Amanda Palmer for Asking Fans to Play in Her Band for Free,” *Pitchfork*, 13 September 2012.

28 Daniel J. Wakin, “Rockers Playing for Beer: Fair Play?” *Arts Beat; The New York Times*, 12 September 2012.

allels between the Palmer controversy and what I'm critiquing in the DH classroom should, I think, be fairly obvious. In both cases a practitioner relies on unpaid labor to complete a project for which funding is available to compensate that labor. What may not be so obvious is why I empathize with Amanda Palmer, and reject out of hand the professors who use student labor in the classroom.

Palmer and the musicians who chose to play with her were operating within a social contract in which both perceived a benefit to themselves and agreed to participate under conditions of informed consent. The musicians knew in advance the situation they were entering into and did so willingly, eyes open. Despite the economic disparity between Palmer and the musicians who volunteered for her (the fact that Palmer had accounted for the entirety of the Kickstarter funds—which were also given willingly under conditions of informed consent—for the operation of her business and her brand notwithstanding), Palmer had absolutely no power to coerce or compel labor from these musicians, and articulated no expectations beyond those in the original call: show up early, practice a little, play your hearts out, get some beer and hugs.

Conversely, student labor in the classroom is never not coerced. Other critics of student labor in the classroom suggest that alternate assignments could be offered in lieu of project-oriented or public-facing work. While this may be possible if students are doing work as individual contributors for the assignment, I believe that under circumstances where students are expected to work on a professor's project, even if an alternative assignment is offered, students will feel coerced to participate in the professor's project, or that students choosing the alternative project will be penalized for not contributing. The power dynamic of the classroom is such that student choice in this situation cannot be unequivocal, and that faculty objectivity will always be suspect. Miriam Posner in collaboration with her students at UCLA recently developed "A Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights" which articulates these principles quite clearly: "It's important [...] to recognize that students and more senior

scholars don't operate from positions of equal power in the academic hierarchy. In particular, students' DH mentors may be the same people who give them grades, recommend them for jobs, and hold other kinds of power over their futures."²⁹

The social contract of the classroom

The social contract of the professor-student relationship only allows for limited roles in which the two parties may operate ethically: teacher-student, mentor-mentee, and sometimes employer-employee. In the teacher-student relationship, the professor is responsible for imparting information, knowledge, and skills as defined by a syllabus and course description, and evaluating student work according to an established rubric. The student is responsible for attending class, completing reading and other assignments as described in the syllabus, and demonstrating subject mastery in exams or assignments to meet the requirements defined in the grading rubric. The student (or their proxy in the form of scholarships, grants, or other financial aid) is paying to participate in the course, and while I strenuously resist the neoliberal notion that students are customers engaging in a classroom-based market transaction, the fact that students are paying at least implies that their labor in the classroom, including intellectual property for the work they produce, should belong to them at the end of the day.

The mentor-mentee role involves the professor or other advisor supporting the student in their professional development, providing opportunities to build expertise and gain professional exposure, and supporting their psychic welfare as they progress toward their occupation. The mentee is responsible for articulating their needs, evaluating and implementing their mentor's advice, and taking necessary steps to advance in the profession.

The employer-employee relationship has arguably the strongest delineation, in which the employer supervises the

29 Miriam Posner et al., "A Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights," *UCLA Digital Humanities*, 8 June 2015.

work of the employee as defined by a job description, provides training as needed for the employee to perform their job, and pays the employee for their labor in accordance with an agreed-upon wage and schedule. The employee must be present and punctual, represent their skills accurately in order to perform the job, learn what they need to do their duties, and complete their duties as assigned and in a timely manner. This labor may be in the service of a professor's research or project development, funded either with departmental or grant money.

These roles may overlap in that a professor may be teacher, mentor, and employer for a given student, but under distinct circumstances. For example a student may be in a seminar taught by the professor for whom they TA in another class, who is also their dissertation director. But these roles must remain distinct in order for the professor to adequately fulfill their responsibilities to their student, their mentee, and their employee. The social contract of each of these roles allows for distinct expectations for credit and compensation. In the teacher-student relationship, the student has the right to expect that their work is evaluated fairly, that they retain intellectual property, and will receive attribution for the work they produce. If these expectations cannot be met, then the social contract of the classroom has been violated. A grade is neither credit nor compensation. The mentee should not be expected to contribute to the professor's research or project in exchange for their mentorship, unless other arrangements for compensation and credit are made. And even if the employee is paid, they have a right to receive credit for the labor they perform on a project.

The neoliberal university is an easy straw man on which to blame inequities in the treatment of student labor, since it is the values of the neoliberal university that drive both the culture of lack and the shift from a pedagogical to a consumer model. But it is individual faculty who are responsible for the content of their courses and their conduct toward their students, and those most able to report on violations of the social contract of the classroom are also those most liable to be subject to these depredations. As Posner and her student colleagues note, "Students may

not feel entirely comfortable raising objections to certain practices if they feel these objections could endanger their academic or career prospects;" an understatement if ever there was one.³⁰

Therefore it is up to the community of digital humanities practitioners to acknowledge and engage constructively with this problem. In a positive sense, as a community we can adopt and endorse the principles outlined in the Student Collaborator's Bill of Rights and work to socialize them throughout our institutions, much as many of us have striven to advocate for the principles of open access, or promoted the guidelines for professional collaboration outlined in the Collaborators' Bill of Rights.³¹ We can develop and share resources for constructively encouraging students to produce durable public work in the classroom, and for engaging student labor in digital projects in a way that is meaningful to students, as well as to the faculty.

One outstanding example of this is the *Perseus Project* which incorporates student-translated texts into its database. The Perseids platform "offers students an opportunity to produce original scholarly work, which they can then list on their resumes in the context of a job search or when seeking admission to graduate school." Student translators are credited by name, and the site provides durable URIs to student work which can be incorporated into cvs or e-portfolios.³² The *Perseus Project* offers a model of digital pedagogy that combines academic rigor with technical innovation, allowing students to produce durable products demonstrating their skills and to receive equally durable credit for their labor.³³

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Collaborators' Bill of Rights," *Off the Tracks: Laying New Lines for Digital Humanities Scholars*, <http://mcpress.media-commons.org/offthetracks/part-one-models-for-collaboration-career-paths-acquiring-institutional-support-and-transformation-in-the-field/a-collaboration/collaborators%E2%80%99bill-of-rights/>.

³² Bridget Almas and Marie-Claire Beaulieu, "Developing a New Integrated Editing Platform for Source Documents in Classics," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 28, no. 4 (2013): 493–503, at 502.

³³ It must be noted that there are Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) implications for requiring students to produce publicly

But positive methods are unlikely to have a universal impact on the misuse of student labor in the DH classroom. Regardless of the adoption of principled declarations like the Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights by organizations or institutions, there will always be faculty who can justify using student labor in the classroom. In those cases, negative remedies may be necessary. The Collaborators' Bill of Rights includes the provision that "Funders should take an aggressive stance on unfair institutional policies that undermine the principles of this bill of rights."³⁴ A similar approach should be taken in fostering the ethical use of student labor (which is not addressed in the Collaborators' Bill of Rights). But if we as a community have to wait for funders, particularly those most invested in promoting the maker culture that has enabled these practices, to intervene, we're already lost. Faculty members, librarians, administrators and staff should actively promote the principles of ethical student engagement described by Posner and her collaborators, going so far as to establish Provost-level policies governing this behavior with serious implications for tenure, promotion, and eligibility for Principle Investigator status for violations. This may seem extreme, but students learn what's permissible in the academy and in society from how they are treated in the classroom. Students who experience the anonymization and devaluation of their labor in the classroom will be well equipped to justify labor alienation in their careers as leaders in business, industry, and the academy. This is not a future I want to see and am eager to resist, though it may well be already inevitable.

visible work in the classroom — from translations to participation in class blogs, wikis, and Twitter discussions. The University of Oregon Libraries have developed models for informed consent releases that allow students to participate and still protect their privacy. See "For Instructors: Student Privacy and FERPA Compliance," *University of Oregon Libraries*, <http://library.uoregon.edu/cmet/blogprivacy.html>. Thanks to Charlotte Nunes for bringing these resources to my attention. Other models for FERPA release forms have been developed and are in use elsewhere.

34 "Collaborators' Bill of Rights," *Off the Tracks*.

If, as the DH true believers contend, digital scholarship is the future of the humanities and the academy, we as a community have a responsibility to our students and ourselves to ensure the future DH produces is one we all can live with.³⁵

35 This chapter is derived and expanded from a talk I gave as part of the Mini-Symposium on DH and Collaboration at THATCamp DHCollaborate at Texas A&M University on May 16, 2014. I was respondent for a roundtable discussion on “Digital Humanities in the Classroom: Students as Collaborators” with Amy Earhart and Toniesha Taylor. My remarks were inspired by the lively Q&A that followed Digital Humanities 2012 session #PS08 “Excavating Feminisms: Digital Humanities and Feminist Scholarship” with Katherine D. Harris (whose paper was read by George Williams), Jacqueline Wernimont, Kathi Inman Berens, and Dene Grigar.

I am grateful to Amy, Toniesha, Sarah Potvin, Liz Grumbach, and Ann Hawkins for their responses to my comments at Texas A&M and subsequent conversations on this topic. The conversation from THATCamp DHCollaborate is storied here: <https://storify.com/trueXstory/thatcamp-dh-collaborate-2014#publicize>.

Miriam Posner is a collegial and generous interlocutor, and was kind enough to share a draft of the “Student Collaborators’ Bill of Rights” she developed with her students. The final document is here: <http://cdh.ucla.edu/news/a-student-collaborators-bill-of-rights/>

This work would be impossible without the labor of my talented and chaos-tolerant student assistants, past and present. Jeanette Laredo in particular was invaluable to developing the data set for the ongoing research inspired by this topic. Braden Weinmann has provided moral support and a fresh eye as we brought this project over the finish line. My student workers are collaborators in the truest sense, and I’m honored that they choose to work with me and proud to credit them for their efforts. I’m also grateful that my institution enables me to pay them, though not nearly as much as they are worth.

Bibliography

- Almas, Bridget, and Marie-Claire Beaulieu. "Developing a New Integrated Editing Platform for Source Documents in Classics." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 28, no. 4 (2013): 493–503. DOI: 10.1093/llc/fqt046.
- Amazon Mechanical Turk. <https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>.
- Aminda. "Crowdsourcing: an ethics dilemma?" *ideaconnection*. 23 April 2011. <http://www.ideaconnection.com/blog/2011/04/crowdsourcing-an-ethics-dilemma/>.
- Battan, Carrie. "Steve Albini Slams Amanda Palmer for Asking Fans to Play in Her Band for Free." *Pitchfork*. 13 September 2012. <http://pitchfork.com/news/47845-steve-albini-slams-amanda-palmer-for-asking-fans-to-play-in-her-band-for-free/>.
- Bedrick, David. "What's the Matter with 'All Lives Matter?'" *Huffington Post*. 24 August 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-bedrick/whats-the-matter-with-all-lives-matter_b_7922482.html.
- "Collaborators' Bill of Rights." *Off the Tracks: Laying New Lines for Digital Humanities Scholars*. 2011. <http://mcpress.media-commons.org/offthetracks/part-one-models-for-collaboration-career-paths-acquiring-institutional-support-and-transformation-in-the-field/a-collaboration/collaborators%E2%80%99bill-of-rights/>.
- Digital Humanities Data Curation Institute. <http://www.dhcuration.org/institute/>.
- Dolmaya, Julie McDonough. "The Ethics of Crowdsourcing." *Linguistica Antverpiensia: New Series — Themes in Translation Studies* 10 (2011): 97–111.
- "For Instructors: Student Privacy and FERPA Compliance." University of Oregon Libraries. <http://library.uoregon.edu/cmet/blogprivacy.html>.
- Grusin, Richard. "The Dark Side of the Digital Humanities — Part 2." *Thinking C21*. 9 January 2013. <http://>

- www.c21uwm.com/2013/01/09/dark-side-of-the-digital-humanities-part-2/.
- The History Engine*. <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/>.
- Howe, Jeff. "The Rise of Crowdsourcing." *Wired*. 1 June 2006. <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html>.
- . "5 Rules of the New Labor Pool." *Wired*. 1 June 2006. <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/labor.html>.
- "The Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916." *The History Engine*. <https://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/5309>.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick, or The White Whale*. Boston: C.H. Simonds Co., 1922.
- Moby Dick*. Princeton University. <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/batke/moby/>.
- Muñoz, Trevor. "What is on the Menu? More Work on NYPL's Open Data — Part 1." Blog post. 8 August 2013. <http://www.trevormunoz.com/notebook/2013/08/08/what-is-on-the-menu-more-work-with-nypl-open-data-part-one.html>.
- . "Refining the Problem — More Work with NYPL's Open Data — Part 2." Blog post. 19 August 2013. <http://www.trevormunoz.com/notebook/2013/08/19/refining-the-problem-more-work-with-nypl-open-data-part-two.html>.
- Organisciak, Piotr. "Why Bother? Examining the Motivations of Users in Large Scale Crowd-Powered Online Initiatives." MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 2010. <https://era.library.ualberta.ca/downloads/c821gk82p>.
- Palmer, Amanda. "Wanted: Horny-y and String-y Volunteers for the Grand Theft Orchestra Tour!!!!" Blog post. 21 August 2012. <http://blog.amandapalmer.net/20120821/>.
- Pannapacker, William. "Digital Humanities Triumphant?" In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew Gold, 233–34. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/46>.
- Plait, Phil. "#YesAllWomen." *Slate*. 27 May 2014. http://www.slate.com/blogs/bad_astronomy/2014/05/27/not_all_men_how_discussing_women_s_issues_gets_derailed.html.

- Posner, Miriam, Haley Di Pressi, Stephanie Gorman, Raphael Sasayama, and Tori Schmitt. "A Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights." *UCLA Digital Humanities*. 8 June 2015. <http://www.cdh.ucla.edu/news-events/a-student-collaborators-bill-of-rights/>.
- Ridge, Mia, ed. *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Roberts, Spencer (@robertssw87). Twitter post. 19 July 2013, 11:57 a.m. <https://twitter.com/robertssw87/status/35826939551789056>.
- Shirky, Clay. *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010.
- Spiro, Lisa. "'This Is Why We Fight': Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities." In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew Gold, 16–35. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/13>.
- Tomasek, Kathryn (@KathrynTomasek). Twitter post. 19 Jul 2013, 12:02 p.m. <https://twitter.com/KathrynTomasek/status/358270653708763137>.
- UpWork. <https://www.upwork.com/o/profiles/browse/c/web-mobile-software-dev/>.
- Wakin, Daniel J. "Rockers Playing for Beer: Fair Play?" *Arts Beat; The New York Times*. 12 September 2012. <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/12/rockers-playing-for-beer-fair-play/>.
- "What Is the History Engine?" *The History Engine*. https://historyengine.richmond.edu/pages/about/what_is_the_history_engine.
- "What's on the Menu?" *New York Public Library*. <http://menus.nypl.org/>.