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Jay David Bolter

From writing space to designing mirrors

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INTERVIEW 11

From writing space to designing mirrors

Jay David Bolter

Jay David Bolter is well known as the author and co-author of important books on the subject of digital technology, culture and aesthetics: *Turing's Man: Western Culture in the Computer Age* (1984); *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (1991); *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999, with Richard Grusin); *Windows and Mirrors* (2003, with Diane Gromala). In addition to writing about new media, Bolter collaborates in the construction of new digital media forms and created, for example, together with Michael Joyce *Storyspace*, a pre WWW hypertext authoring system. Bolter is the Wesley Chair of New Media at the Georgia Institute of Technology and a co-Director of the Augmented Environments Lab. He works closely with Prof. Blair MacIntyre, Prof. Maria Engberg, and other AEL researchers on the design of augmented and mixed reality experiences for cultural heritage, informal education, and expression and entertainment.

Jay David Bolter talks about the (missing) embrace of digital media by the literary and academic community, about hypertext as a (failing) promise of a new kind of reflective praxis, about transparent (immediate) and reflected (hypermediate) technology. He compares the aesthetics of information with the aesthetics of spectacle in social media and notes the collapse of hierarchy and centrality in culture in the context of digital media.

Prelude

Roberto Simanowski: What is your favored neologism of digital media culture and why?

Jay David Bolter: I am not sure that I have a favorite neither in a positive or negative sense. Such neologisms as hacktivism, slacktivism and crowdsourcing are all in current circulation; they all represent contemporary views of our media culture. Insofar that is the case, we have to accept them (not necessarily of course to use them ourselves). Rather then selecting favorites, a more appropriate task would be to understand the underlying reasons why culture seems to need to create new vocabulary. One such term that I would nominate for study is “collective intelligence.” It captures a major preoccupation today, the notion that as a networked digital culture we can achieve a level of knowledge production that is not possible for an individual and indeed is of a different order from the kind of knowledge that was produced in earlier media era.

RS: If you could go back in history of new media and digital culture in order to prevent something from happening or somebody from doing something, what or who would it be?

JDB: I am really not keen to rewrite the history of digital culture. I don’t trust my own hindsight much more than I do my ability to anticipate future developments. When I think of the history of my own engagement with digital culture, however, it is clear that I often failed to grasp the importance of two key developments in digital media. The first was the advent of networked hypertext and the WWW, whose significance I didn’t appreciate until it was well underway in the 1990s. The second was the advent of social media, where I was again late to the party. Both Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 were phenomena that I did not anticipate. My only consolation here is that many others failed to appreciate the significance of the digital even longer than I. For example, the literary community failed utterly to engage with digital media in the 1990s (despite the increasingly importance of the WWW). Indeed even today the literary community remains reluctant to explore the possibilities that digital media offer.

RS: This failure was indeed surprising given the fact that with its hypertextual and multimedial techniques digital media offered very interesting forms of experimental writing. But the new literary genre that was announced quite early in academic journals (I remember Richard Ziegfeld's essay *Interactive Fiction* in New Literary History in 1989) never really took off. You were one of the earliest academics to write about new technologies of reading and writing. In your 1991 book *Writing Space* you discuss hypertext as "both a visual and a verbal representation", not writing of a place, "but rather a writing *with* places" and you reveal the link between hypertext and the literary movement of concrete poetry, a kind of *poetry in space* („Poesie der Fläche") as its German proponent Franz Mon once called it. I remember how in the late 1990s at conferences people were convinced of a bright future of hyperfictions as a literary genre once it grew in popularity. However, soon academics – such as Marie-Laure Ryan in her 2001 book *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* – addressed the internal aesthetic problem of multi-linear writing and recommended to "tame" hyperfiction by offering a more simple structure with more self-contained lexias, i.e. narrative episodes. The subversion of the cohesive structure of the text and the lack of authorial control over the readers' navigation was obviously too different from the thoroughly choreographed non-linear narration and unreliable narrators that the postmodern poetics at that time proposed. I remember how we both, over a drink at the Electronic Poetry Festival in Paris 2007, expected much more openness for experiments with digital technology from artists than from the literary community. Was it wrong to suppose the literary community to be more embracing towards digital media?

JDB: I think that even in the 1980s and 1990s the literary community was predisposed to be more aesthetically conservative than the art community. Look at the rather radical broadening of the definition of art in the decades since the 1960s: performance art, installation art, media art. The experiments of the historical avant-garde of the 1910s and 1920s and the neo-avant-garde in the 1950s and 1960s had eventually affected the community as a whole. In the case of literature, postmodern writers were seldom as radical in their aesthetic revolt from modernism as were the visual artists. There were of course the concrete poets, language poets, Oulipo, and so on. But such groups were never more than small avant-gardes. Postmodern writers such as Thomas Pynchon were after all quite traditional in comparison with performance artists such as Carolee Schneemann. Thus, even in the 1990s “serious” writers could not imagine rethinking the (print-based) assumptions that lay behind their work. Those assumptions included the fixity of the text and authorial control over the text, both of which hypertext challenged.

RS: In *Writing Space* you discuss the relationship between the new form of nonlinear writing and the theory of interpretation promoted by Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish in the 1960s and also point out a philosophical correlation: namely that between hypertext and postmodern theory, which your colleague George P. Landow from Brown University at the same time proclaimed in the subtitle of his book on hypertext as *Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. A quarter of a century later postmodern theory has lost its appeal, its relativisms and transcendental homelessness are hard to endure, people yearn for reliable values and even Grand Narratives again. However, the ‘postmodern technology’ has remained and has fundamental effects on our individual and social life. How do you see the situation today with respect of your observations and expectations of 25 years ago?

JDB: When I look back at *Writing Space* and my work from that period I think I would have to characterize my position as innocent opportunistic. I was attempting to read the new possibilities of the digital technology into the framework of contemporary literary and critical analysis. I was doing this in an effort to talk to an academic community for whom that kind of analysis was the common currency. So it was natural enough to look at these new forms of non-linear writing that seemed to be promoted by digital hypertext in terms of reader response theory by Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish, in terms of even deconstruction or other forms of post-structuralist interpretation. Like George Landow in his book on hypertext I too felt that this was a legitimate way of understanding what hypertext was doing, because I myself was immersed in that same critical theoretical framework.

But that strategy didn't work very well at the time because the community was not really ready to accept the notion that digital technology could be a new medium of literary expression and academic analysis, that it could in some sense take a position aside the printed book. And therefore they saw the attempt to appropriate the reader response theory, deconstruction and so on a kind of misguided or even reductive understanding of what post-structuralist theory was trying to do. Ultimately they were right in a certain sense, because post-structuralism too was conditioned by the contemporary, still print-based media culture. The notions of the indeterminacy of the text, the death of the author, intertextuality and so on— all these notions depended for their ironic effect on the fact that text were fixed in print and did have identifiable authors and the authority of the publication system. In any case, and for whatever reason, the community refused to listen. Neither the academic community of literary scholars nor the community of writers found digital technology interesting. And neither of them saw that hypertext in particular could be a new communicative and expressive form they needed to engage with. So given that they weren't prepared to engage with the technology it was futile to try to provide a critical, theoretical basis for that engagement. The think that strikes me is that the literary community has still today refused to engage with the digital.

The whole line of argument that I was making in that period about hypertext has been superseded in a variety of ways by multiple forms of media that digital technology has developed into, by new modes of interaction and by the advent of a huge community of participants in media culture that didn't exist in the early 1990s. So with all those changes, looking back it doesn't seem as if there is much left of the notion that hypertext could be a new form of writing. To put it another way: The kind of literary hypertext culture we were envisioning never happened. On the other hand the popularization of hypertext in the form of the WWW and all the technologies that developed out of the WWW have been proven to be a tremendous success and have really changed our media culture in significant ways. That's a triumph of hypertext, but it is a triumph of hypertext not limited to or even addressed by the academic community.

Media Literacy

RS: An unexpected triumph and maybe an unwelcomed one. This at least is the question if one considers the contemporary concerns about hyper-reading which popular writers – such as Nicholas Carr in his 2011 book *The Shallows – What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* – but also academics – for example Katherine N. Hayles in her 2007 article in *Profession* “Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes” – address as a potential threat to deep reading. Doesn't the hypertextual technique – of multiple offers to leave the text at hand for another one – practice a form of nervous, inpatient reading unable to engage in one particular issue? Doesn't hyper-reading – if it discourages a sustained engagement with the text – ultimately also hinder deep thinking? This grim picture is quite the opposite of what was expected from hypertext technology in the 1990s when the structure of the variable cross-linkages not only was celebrated as liberation from the ‘tyranny of the author’ but also welcomed as destabilization of the signifier and as emphasis on the ambivalence and relativity of propositions. Hypertext was seen as an ally in the efforts to promote and practice reflection. Today hypertext technology and its cultural equivalent hyper-reading are rather seen – for instance by the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler – as collaborators of the culture industry. Did this promising technology betray us? Is Hypertext a Trojan Horse appearing as a tool of critical thinking while actually undermining it?

JDB: My view of this issue is more fatalistic or more accepting of the inevitability of certain kinds of cultural change. First of all, yes, the predictions hat we were making for hypertext as a new kind of reflective praxis didn't come true. Literary hypertext never became a generalized cultural form of expression. What we did get was the WWW, where linking was unidirectional and for many of the first generation hypertext writers a simplification and reduction that in fact didn't foster reflective practice. But it was tremendously successful incorporating visual and audio forms into writing as never before creating a much larger set of communities of writers and that was true even in the 1990s when writing on the web meant designing your own website and became exponentially more the case in the 2000s with the advent of social media.

So that is the fact of contemporary media culture. In response to this fact of extraordinary broadening of participation but also the changing of writing forms that constitute that participation we have a set of academics and popular writers who are deeply critical to what happened like Nicholas Carr's popularization of this point of view that writing and reading are changing our brains to make it less reflective. The academic community has agreed in its own way with this judgment, at least the older, more traditional academics, for example Stanley Fish, Jonathan Culler and many others have written negatively about the new form of reading that seems to be practiced in the digital realm nowadays.

I would say that the criticism is both right and wrong. Right in the sense that it certainly does seem to be the case that the kind of writing and reading that was highly valued in the age of print were different and there was a kind of valorization of reflective or deep or close reading. That is clearly not being practiced by the huge community of readers and writers on social media today. But does this mean that close or reflective reading has disappeared? No, there is still a community that practices that form of writing and reading. It is still welcomed, indeed required as a kind of ticket of entry into the literary academic community. But what happened is that this form of reflective reading and writing no longer has the status and claim to centrality that it had in the 20th century. So instead of a single community of readers and writers we have an interlocking set of communities of readers and writers, some much larger than others none of which can claim a kind of centrality or importance that eclipses the other. So what the critics really are complaining about is the loss of centrality of certain ways of reading and writing.

RS: Your account of the situation may be fatalistic, as you said, but doesn't strike me as very pessimistic. Rather you address the claim of centrality and invite us to be open to several forms of practices of reading and writing. However, if one formerly dominant mode becomes decentralized it is not certain that afterwards importance is equally distributed among more candidates or cultural techniques. More often in history – of social movements as well as media development – we see a recentralization of power and importance. Of course, for the issue at hand, even this must not be bad. In fact, one could argue that a non-linear reading which is more attuned to multi-tasking and serendipity allows easier for productive (mis)understandings and intuitive intelligence.

However, I have the feeling you are more concerned about the loss of reflection in the culture of the 21st century than you are willing to admit. This is at least my impression when looking at your 2003 book *Windows and Mirrors: Interaction Design, Digital Art, and the Myth of Transparency*, which you co-author with your colleague at in the School of Literature, Communication, and Culture at Georgia Tech University Diane Gromala. In this book you describe the positions of the two professions of graphic designers and HCI professionals with the metaphors window and mirror: the transparent versus the reflected technology. This extends the distinction between immediacy and hypermediacy from *Remediation. Understanding New Media* (1999), the book you co-wrote with Richard Grusin. Like Grusin, who since then has become increasingly critical towards the significance of digital technology to our culture (he speaks of a "dark side" of the Digital Humanities) you are equally skeptical of the possible pitfalls of digital media in *Windows and Mirrors* requesting an approach to design that turns digital media into an object of reflection rather than making them transparent. To play the ignorant: Why should we be afraid of the disappearance of the computer through transparent interfaces? Don't we also want letters to be invisible so we can reflect on what the text says rather than on how it looks like?

JDB: First let me say that I don't think there is any danger of the disappearance of the computer. The notion of the transparent interface and the disappearing computer is one that we can see most prevalent in interface design in the 1990s and indeed still today. But in fact what is happening belies the notion that our digital technologies are burying themselves into the world. The internet of things, ubiquitous computing, these are technological and cultural manifestations that are growing in importance. But the computer as a platform for media is in fact not disappearing at all. If we look around we see the last thing that people want to do is their technology to disappear. They want it to be seen. People buy the iPhone because it's a beautiful object which then can also be a status symbol that they can proudly present to others. We see these media devices everywhere and not at all burying themselves.

Secondly there has always been a dichotomy between visibility or invisibility, or what Richard and I called between hypermediacy and immediacy in the history of media culture. Even in the age of print after all we saw both manifestations. Indeed when the typography makes the medium as transparent as possible at the same time we have the tradition of the artist book, advertising, graphic design in which the way that a text looks *is* what the text says.

RS: Combining your first and second notion I would say: Yes, people also used (and some maybe still do) books as a status symbol furnishing their home with them but still preferring the book itself to be transparent so they have direct access to the world behind the interface. Art books are the exception in the world of books. Why should this be different in the realm of digital media?

JDB: Digital transmission and presentation is indeed used for all sorts of communication. Often the user does simply want to get the gist of the text or view an image. But a number of factors contribute to a stronger emphasis, at least at present, on hypermediacy in the digital realm. One of the most important (and most remarked) factors, is the tendency to process multiple channels at the same time. A typical user may be moving back and forth among open windows or multiple apps on her phone. While she is reading or interacting with one window or app, she may focus on the context displayed. But each time she moves from one to another, she becomes aware again of the multiplicity that her media environment offers her. The multitasking is of course exactly what traditionalists such as Nicholas Carr criticize about our use of computers, claiming that it destroys our ability to concentrate. Whether that is true or not, the critics are right in suggesting that this mode of consumption diverges from the traditional practice of reading in the age of print. In the age of print one did tend to read only one book, magazine, or newspaper at a time.

Art and Aesthetics

RS: *Windows and Mirrors* considers digital art as the corrective to the assumption that the computer should disappear. Hence, art seems to be an inevitable part of any media literacy precisely because, by its very nature, art draws attention to the language system it employs. Digital art thus makes us aware of how digital technology works on a semiotic as well as cultural level. Would you then, if you were a minister of education, make art to the center of any courses on media literacy?

JDB: Given the position that I take in my new book concerning the current state of media culture, it would be hypocritical of me as a minister of education to try to dictate anything about art and media literacy. I don't think there can be a coherent policy because such a policy would be predicated on an ultimate goal or standard to which our community as a whole could subscribe. There is no universal agreement on a standard. In the case of art, the term has become so vague as to be almost meaningless: it is now applied to most any activity of making. The kind of critical art that I discussed in *Windows and Mirrors* has significance only for a particular community.

RS: "The internet once belonged exclusively to the Structuralists", you write in *Windows and Mirrors*, describing this community as composed mostly of graduate students and professors in computer science with a culture "highly developed in mathematics but not in art". Many people may of course not see the lack of art as deficit. However, as somebody who, after the tenth grade, decided to let his mathematical skills die and rather pursued his interest in literature and art I am prone to agree with your perspective. Nevertheless, or rather for that reason, I want to play the devil's advocate by considering the opposition of structuralists and designers as one between information and spectacle. Let me explain what I mean by this and mention some sources that make me think this way.

My reference are three texts from the 1990 about the "breakout of the visual" in the digital world, as you – this is my first text – write in your 1996 essay "Ekphrasis, Virtual Reality, and the Future of Writing." In multimedia, you observe, the relationship between word and image is becoming as unstable as it is in the popular press, where images are no longer subordinate to the word and "we are no longer certain that words deserve the cultural authority they have been given". Three years later, Robert Coover, also a very early advocate of hypertext and hyperfiction, declared the passing of its golden age. The constant threat of hypermedia, Coover wrote, is “to suck the substance out of a work of lettered art, reduce it to surface spectacle.” One element of this aesthetics of the spectacle is the “post-alphabetic text”, a term which Matthew Kirschenbaum 1999 in a paper entitled *The Other End of Print: David Carson, Graphic Design, and the Aesthetics of Media* used to describe David Carson’s design style that “refashions information as an aesthetic event.” Carson represents the shift from the reader to the sensualist even before the takeoff of digital media in design and typography between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. His counterpart in the digital world may be Macromedia’s Flash, the opposition to any iconoclastic position and the enemy of all hardcore structuralists.

The arrival of Flash may – despite Lev Manovich’s description of the *Generation Flash* as neo-minimalists – be seen as the return of the baroque logic of mannerism, spectacle and sensory experiences also into the digital world, which had been announced by some scholars in the early 2000s, i.e. Andrew Darley (*Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres*, 2000) or Angela Ndalianis (*Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*, 2004). As *Windows and Mirrors* notes, in June 2002 even Nielsen declared his collaboration with Macromedia Flash and Norman muses about emotional design. Is this the overcoming of an unproductive opposition or rather the surrendering of text-purists to the power of the visual? You note in *Windows and Mirrors* that the goal is “to establish an appropriate rhythm between being transparent and reflective” and write: “No matter how flashy, every digital design must convey a message to its viewer and user.” And to be sure, your book advertises the reflective rather than the sensory. How do you see the situation today? Did more Flash bring more mirrors?

JDB: Like all analytic dichotomies (since Hegel?), my dichotomy between structuralists and designers can at best serve to indicate the ends of more nuanced spectrum. What we see today in our media economy, and even on the Web and other Internet-media services is a range of relationships between information and spectacle. As we noted above, web-based practices have not rendered obsolete the desire for the transparency of information. If the spectrum of possible practices extends from pure information (whatever that might be) at one end to pure surface spectacle (again if that is possible) on the other, then we see an enormous range in the middle. Highly designed web sites still exist, but the templates of social networking sites such as Facebook constitute a messy compromise between information and spectacle. Even Nielsen was not entirely wrong when he predicted the return of textual interfaces. After all, text messages and Twitter are among the most popular digital practices today, and they consist of nothing but alphabetic symbols and links. The baroque impulse toward spectacle and sensory experience today seems to be in a state of permanent but productive tension with the impulse for structured representation and communication.

RS: Messy compromise between information and spectacle is a great description for what is going on on Facebook. I would even go further and consider most of the updates – even if textual – in the light of spectacle rather than information or "phatic communication" as the linguistic term reads communication for communication's sake. The deeper meaning of the shallow sharing, however, may be the desire to hand over the burden of experience to others to whom our experience naturally is no trouble at all but an information which can easily be 'processed' via likes, shares and one word comments. The psychological explanation for this outsourcing of experience is, I would argue, that we can't endure the present time because we can no longer anchor it within a timeline that connects our past and our future in a meaningful way – which in a way resembles the baroque experience of being out of center brought by the Copernican system. But this perspective is my own idiosyncratic approach which needs to be justified at length elsewhere. For our conversation at hand I want to move to your next book, *The Digital Plenitude*, planned for 2016 with MIT Press. This book discusses the status of art and culture in an era of digital media. What will be the main thesis of your book?

JDB: The goal of my book is to examine two developments in the second half of the 20th century that I think have helped to define our media culture in the 21st century. One of them is the advent of digital media, websites, video games, social media, mobile media and all the remediation of so called traditional media like film and print that now appear in digital form. Digital media are everywhere and they provoke our constant interest and attention. The other development is the end of our collective belief in Culture with a capital c. The collapse of the agreed on hierarchy in the visual arts, music, literature and scholarship and even politics. This collapse is a sort of open secret in the sense that we all know implicitly that it is happening. But many of us are unwilling to acknowledge the consequences of it. Many of us write about media culture today in a way that seems to be determined to ignore that history, taking extreme positions seeing digital media either as utopia or dystopia and utopias and dystopias are always measured in terms of implicit cultural standards. So when we examine the period that with digital culture has arisen we see that this change in our attitude towards culture interacts in very interesting ways with digital media. I think we can see the breakdown of hierarchy and centrality in culture is happening throughout the 20th century, accelerating after the Second World War. At the same time that the computer is being invented but prior to the advent of digital media, in the 1950 and 1960s, we see strong forces to promote what was called popular culture. Not only the rise of the economic status of rock music, popular films, comic books, television shows but also an increasing sense that these media and cultural forms are legitimately important in ways that we used to accord only to high literary and high artistic forms.

These two important streams or phenomena – the rise of pop culture and the development of digital media – interact in all sorts of interesting ways today so that digital media become a matrix for this cultural condition that we have today in which instead of a center we have a plentitude of cultural communities each with their own sets of standards and practices, interlocking, overlapping, conflicting, competing in various ways. What

I want to do in this book is to explore some of the ramifications what it means to live in the age of such plentitude in which we can no longer say this is the right form of reading, this is the most important form of music, this is the function of art. All these kinds of assertions have moved from a discussion of our culture as a whole to a discussion within the communities.

RS: A very postmodern perspective, I think, that applies the insights of postmodern philosophy that there is not the one right way to see or do things to aesthetic taste and cultural techniques.

JDB: I think we can now see looking back that those were right who saw postmodernism as the continuation of modernism in other terms. The concerns that postmodernism had, even when postmodernists pretended to be incorporating popular culture into their analysis, it was still the case that postmodernism was really exploring the final gasp of elite modernist culture. And right now we see that that expiration has come to its conclusion, that we really are at the end of modernism. And this is what that end looks like, not the triumph of a new ism but a multiplicity – or cacophony from a modernist perspective – of different forms and aesthetics and assumptions about the function of art and cultural expressions that are not reconciled or reconcilable.

RS: I like your notion of the contamination of postmodernism with modernism. Even though the postmodern attitude – as Frederic Jameson holds in his 1988 essay *Postmodernism and Consumer Society* – replaced parody (which always implies to know it better) with irony and pastiche (as the helpless approval of "anything goes"), Lyotard's aesthetics of the sublime certainly still contains the idea of emancipation – and if only by stopping the consumption of meaning. Your answer makes me wonder whether if not hypertext has been the practical equivalent to postmodern theory, digital media at least turns out to be the fulfillment of the postmodern impulse? But let me come back to your notion of a plentitude of cultural communities each with their own sets of standards and practices. You say these communities overlap, conflict, and compete in various ways. There are academics who are concerned that digital media is shifting society more to the situation of closed communities that – as “echo chamber” and “daily we” – don’t overlap and conflict with each other anymore but rather simply end the discussion about the right set of cultural values and practice that exist in modernism and even in postmodernism. Is the era of digital plenitude an era where “anything goes” consequently means “mind your own business”?

JDB: Let me say that this collapse of the center doesn’t look the same to all communities. In fact for many communities the center is still there it happens to be co-extensive with the center of their own community. And if they look out at that confused media world they see chaos; they see the breakdown of culture as they understand it. That’s exactly what people like Nicholas Carr on the popular level or some conservative academics on the scholarly level are concerned about when they complain about the loss of reflective reading or the ability to think and make arguments. So I don’t believe that there is a future policy that can be pursued to direct or guide the development of this interplay of media and culture that we see today. I think we just have to understand that within our own communities we can still act coherently with assumption about what kind of standards we have to pursue. But we have to understand that outside our community this discourse isn’t necessarily going to make much sense.

RS: I conclude that your book about digital plentitude is not a book about the abundance of data – or “big data” as the buzzword nowadays reads. I hence assume you see your work closer to “Digital Media Studies” than to “Digital Humanities”; provided you see a difference between both concepts.

JDB: For me the two terms denote different, though overlapping, fields and practices. DMS is connected with the longer tradition of media studies, as it was practiced by scholars such as Innis and McLuhan. That generation of writers and scholars educated the next generation, who explore the relationships among various technologies and forms in our complex media economy today, including but not limited to digital media. Media archeology is a branch of media studies. DH is a term that I associate with a longstanding project of employing the computer to facilitate humanistic research: literary studies, text traditions, lexicography, other kinds of archival work that had been done previously by hand. I realize that now DH has become a broad term for a whole range of different kinds of theoretical and practical engagements by humanists with digital media and digital culture activities.