The Teething Troubles of Teaching Digital Humanities: Sharing knowledge and mapping challenges

Lausanne DH 2014

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http://www.rebeccalynneharris.org/category/digital-humanities/

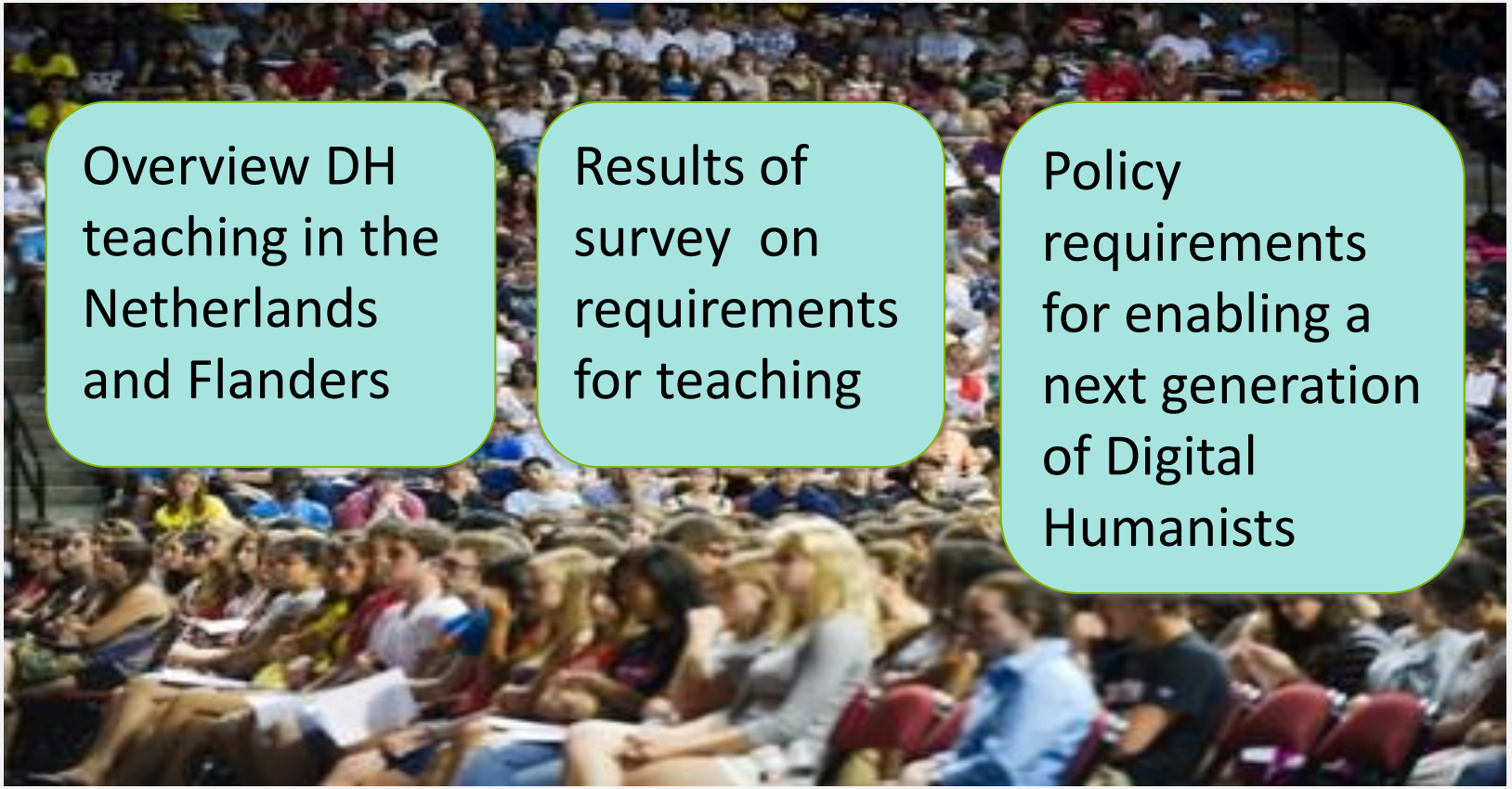
It all started in…….

Hamburg DH 2012 – workshop about DH curriculum

Main concerns:

1. Despite growth of DH, concern about enrollment
2. Courses are tied to personalities, once they leave or retire the continuity is lost
3. Faculties tend to restructure existing expertise instead of investing in new courses and lecturers
4. There are no clear professional perspectives for students, need to anticipate what the future asks of students

How is DH evolving in NL and Flanders?



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Goal: provide answers to the following questions:

- Student: where can I find a course that matches my interest?
- Lecturer: Where can I find course guides and best practices to set up a DH course?
- What do teachers need in the class room?
- What factors impede a fruitful development of DH in Dutch and Flemish academia?

Digitale Geisteswissenschaften

DARIAH
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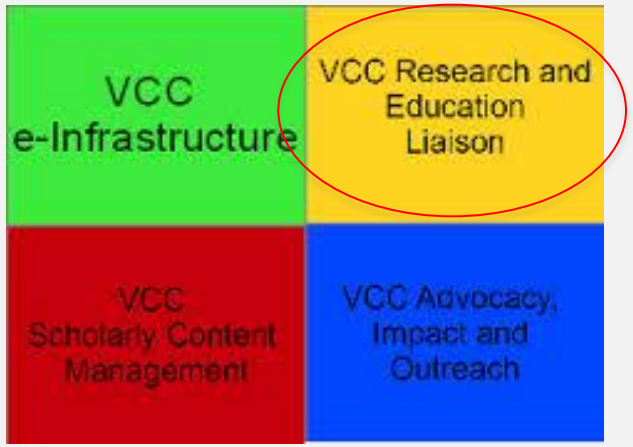


Pilot: NL/FL – online survey sent to all lecturers of subjects that in any way are related to Digital Methods/Digital Humanities

All 17 universities represented

The landscape of DH teaching

- Huge variety of courses, certificates and degrees
- Teaching general principles or engaging in specific research?
- Disciplines:

  Library and Archival Studies and Information science

  New media and Digital Culture(s)
  Literary studies and computational linguistics
  Media and Communication

  Computer Science

What is missing?

- Computer Science in Leuven: nothing!
- 14 Humanities, 2 Social and Political Science

  Lack of digital skills (both students and colleagues)
  Lack of good course materials,
  Not enough room in curriculum

Other issues:

- Affordable software
  - With some help of commercial software suppliers?
  - Open Source solutions?
- Lack of clean ready to use and uncluttered data collections
- Lack of overview of tools often used in DH teaching
- Insufficient literature and examples of DH research
- Customised online environments
- E-labs, computer labs, laptops for rent

Suggestions:

- Create space for new expertise in existing curricula
- Support the integration of Digital Humanities practices in regular courses
- Support the integration of Information Sciences in Digital Humanities
- Do not underestimate the costs in terms of time and resources for teaching DH courses in small groups

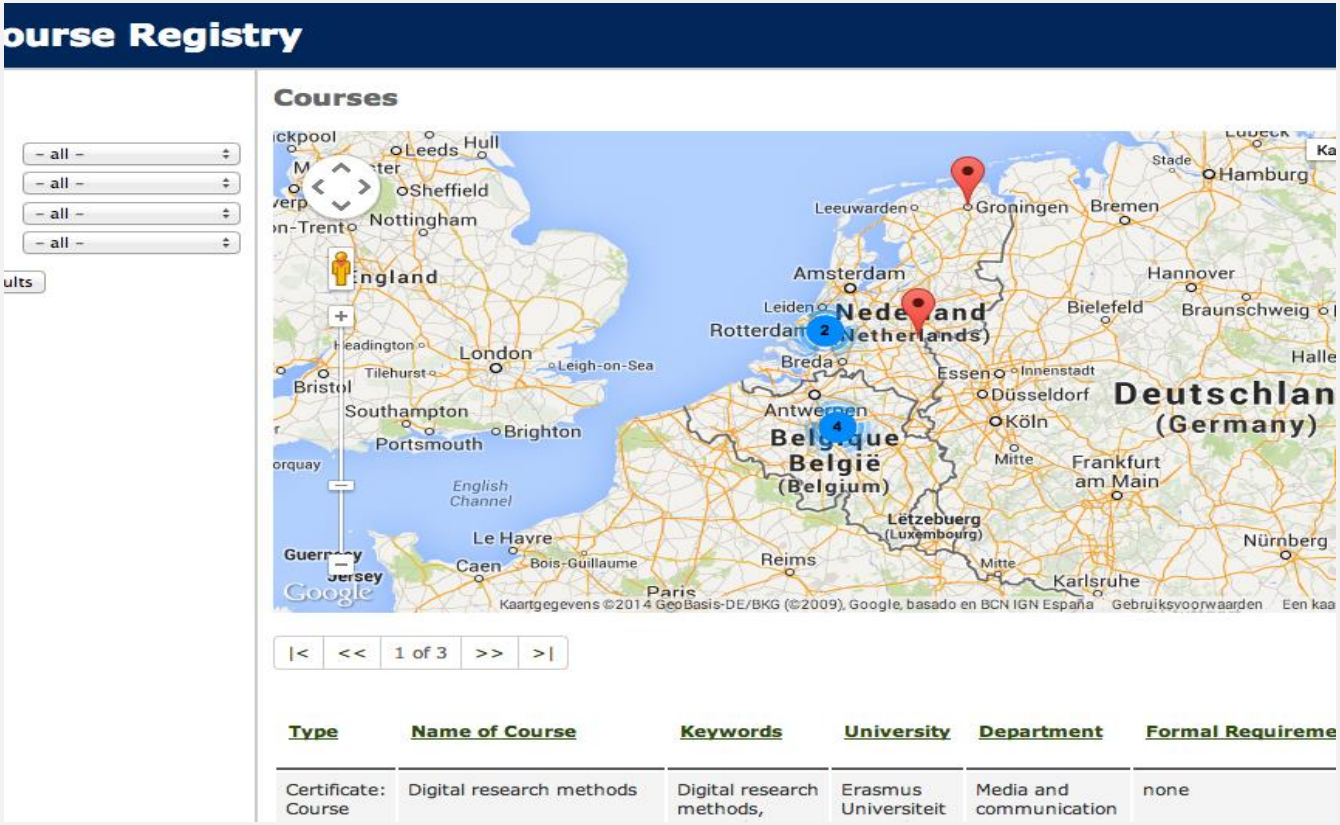
Why is it necessary to join forces across universities?

- To avoid overlap in courses
- To combine rather than divide the scarce expertise of teachers and limited student interest so far
- To share best practices and course materials, to improve the quality of courses
- Digital Humanities benefit from group efforts

How to place Digital Humanities on the agendas of deans?

- Emphasise the unique position of deans : only they can bring about nation-wide cooperation
- Emphasise the need for more Digital Humanities researchers: a population that will not grow without support
- Platform for Teaching DH will be set up in September 2014

Overview DH teaching in the NL. and Fl.



http://dhcoursereg.hki.uni-koeln.de

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VCC e-Infrastructure | VCC Research and Education Liaison | VCC Scholarly Content Management | VCC Advocacy, Impact and Outreach

NL/FL survey

1st phase – June, Benelux 2014
The Hague, pilot registry Nl/Fl

Common Lab Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities
CL@RIAH

Need your help

International survey + enrich and clean Dariah Course Registry

2nd phase – September, Dariah 2014
Rome, registry of Europe

Feedback since Benelux The Hague 13-6-2014

- Additional respondents English Survey: 9
- Variety of subjects:
  - Digital media, Digital Scholarly Editing, Foundations of internet, Preservation, Visual Culture, Digital Philology, Web Applications, Legal aspects of digital media and internet, Visualisation
- What should change? 4 - no difficulties, 4 - lack of skills and knowledge in department
- What do you need most? : 7 good examples of succeful teaching - 5 Reference curricula
- Should DH be integrated in every curriculum as part of basic digital skills? 6 - yes

My personal opinion:

- late adapter to DH
- educated as historian in the analog era
- no background in maths

- Accept heterogenous character of DH
  - Clearly defined and rigorous definitions of DH to have a clearer view of what the essence of DH curriculum should be are useless in an non-hierarchical inclusive DH landscape
  - Universities try to connect through existing expertise, it is the reality of the transition phase
  - Universities try to connect to job perspectives: analyzing social media, games industies,

- Catch up the backlog in digital skills before entering the university
  - Fundamental for any education in 21st century
    - Digital source criticism
    - Understand basics of programming
  - Press for investment in **digital skills at pre-university level**

- Make sure basics of digital skills are integrated **in all methodological** subjects at universities
  - This will form a strong basis to build on for specific DH modules at higher level within Humanities or Social Sciences faculties
  - less differences in levels of knowledge

- Monitor **career opportunities** of former DH students: where do they work and how are they doing?
  - Within and outside academia
  - What skills do they have that are needed in 21st century?
  - Use this information to increase enrollment

Thank you