When Does a New Role Cease To Be New?: Situating the Work Of Library-Based Digital Humanities/Scholarship Support Positions

Paige C. Morgan  
*University of Miami, p.morgan@miami.edu*

Helene Williams  
*University of Washington, helenew@uw.edu*

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When Does a New Role Cease To Be New?: Situating the Work Of Library-Based Digital Humanities/Scholarship Support Positions

Please ask us questions via Twitter! (or talk to us at the break!)
#m3a #dlfforum

Paige Morgan
Digital Scholarship Librarian and Scholarly Publishing Officer
University of Miami
p.morgan@miami.edu
@paigecmorgan

Helene Williams
Senior Lecturer
Information School
University of Washington
helenew@uw.edu
@bibliorogue
From Trevor Owens’ forward to The No-Nonsense Guide to Born-Digital Content (Heather Walker & Ryan Sampson)

"Librarians, archivists and museum professionals need to collectively move away from thinking about digital, and in particular born-digital as being niche topics for specialists. If our institutions are to meet the mounting challenges of serving the cultural memory functions of an increasingly digital first society the institutions themselves need to transition to become digital first themselves. **We can’t just keep hiring on a handful of people with the word digital in their job titles.** You don’t go to a digital doctor to get someone who uses computing as part of their medical practice and we can’t expect that the digital archivists are the ones who will be the people who do digital things in archives. The things this book covers are things that all cultural heritage professionals need to get up to speed on."
From Molly Dahl Poremski’s “Evaluating the Landscape of Digital Humanities Librarianship:”

“The current landscape of DH librarianship shows a profession that is not entirely prepared to meet the needs of its users. DH is an evolving area of scholarship, and it is difficult to support a field where clear needs of a user group have not been established.”
The primary corpus

2016

- 84 DH/DS public-facing position postings
- Gleaned from CLIR JobConnect e-mail list; #DLFjobs site; Humanist-L Archives, Wayback Machine; ARL Position Description Job Bank

2018

- 168 DH/DS postings, from 2010-July 2018 (same sources)

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How many jobs, and where?

2015: 37 ads

July 2018: 24 ads
Qualifications: Education (2010-2018)

- Require ALA accredited MLS/IS degree
- Require MLS/IS but not ALA
- Require MLS/IS prefer 2nd higher
- No MLS/IS required
- Require MLS/IS and second degree
Since 2015, approximately 32% of these positions have required an MLS/IS degree.
Are DH/DS positions still “new”?

When positions are considered new and substantially undefined, there is a risk of their continual expansion to encompass more tasks and responsibilities.
Minimum technology skill requirements over time

2010

2014

2018

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Skills/Expertise requested by year

NB: each area of expertise is counted once per institution, even if requested multiple times.

Interactive version of this visualization available online.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends</th>
<th>Presence</th>
<th>Absence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Increased requests for scholarly communication/institutional repository expertise</td>
<td>Sharp decrease in requests for documentation experience</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Increased requests for assessment experience</td>
<td>Relationship building requested more frequently since 2016, but still only in 30% of positions</td>
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<td>Falloff of teaching in minimum requirements</td>
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<td>Increase in minimum requirements for supervisory experience</td>
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Thanks! Questions or comments? Contact us!

(Many thanks to Andrew McKenna-Foster and Hadassah St. Hubert for NVivo and data wrangling work on this project.)

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