

Digital humanities: A broader reach for ethnography

Kristine Muños

Rationale. Many colleges and universities both within the US and internationally have increased their expectations for faculty to disseminate their research beyond scholarly audiences and their students. One way to do so that makes particularly good use of ethnographic fieldwork is a wide spectrum enterprise known as digital humanities. With some adjustments to the ways we describe the work we have honed for generations and models drawn from familiar fieldwork-based scholarship, ethnographers can compete for generous funding, become more visible within and beyond their institutions, and design a broad range of new course assignments that excite our students' interests. This workshop is intended to introduce some connections between digital humanities projects and traditional ethnography, both research and teaching focused. The intended audiences are aspiring and practicing ethnographers interested in expanding their repertoires in the field and in the classroom.

Description. I will draw on four years' immersion in the world of digital humanities that came as a result of transferring into a department of Spanish. Although I still write social science articles based on 35 years of ethnographic work conducted primarily in Colombia, I found models of publicly engaged scholarship to be compelling directions for fieldwork materials I had never found a place for. Sounds and images, in particular, were cultural phenomena that I had struggled to describe in words for decades, and some communication studies colleagues had encouraged me to learn video and sound production to explore social worlds in more multidimensional ways.

With encouragement from grant-funded workshops, I finally began to do so, and this workshop is about sharing what I have learned. I will show examples of digital work I have learned and taught students in my classes to do as ethnographic analysis: digital storytelling, anthropological linguistics podcasts, and virtual posters to present findings of their studies. The advantage of these and other digital projects are that they force both me and the students to address audiences beyond each other. The challenge of audience adaptation lies at the heart of all communication efforts. That continues to be the basis of everything I teach, and students and I both find it never gets any simpler. Similarly, students master the technology much more easily than I have, but struggle as always to articulate cultural norms, premises, differences, and patterns in evidence-based ways.

In terms of my research, my institution considers well-constructed, widely accessible and (someday) solidly marketed free public digital resources to be valuable service to the community. There are national grant agencies in the US such as the National Endowment for the Humanities that agree, and educational funding agencies ready to support dissemination of materials to schools. I will construct a website for this workshop that includes examples of funded public digital humanities projects that ethnographers might emulate. We will conclude

the session in small groups, brainstorming how the public humanities might be an avenue some participants could pursue in their own work.

I will be the only presenter in this workshop.