DIGITAL HUMANITIES FOR INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

A consultation hosted by:

Higher Education Innovation and Research Applications Programme at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (HEIRA-CSCS), Bangalore

Centre for Education and Research, Tumkur University

Centre for Indian Languages in Higher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Centre for Contemporary Studies, Indian Institute of Science (CCS-IISc), Bangalore

Access to Knowledge Programme, Centre for Internet and Society (A2K-CIS),

Bangalore

Date: July 13, 2013: 10 am to 6 pm

Venue: CCS-IISc, Bangalore

The digital age has had a huge impact on higher education in the last decade, transforming the modalities of both teaching and research. Consequently the very foundations of the systems of knowledge production and dissemination are being re-examined. This is due to the impact that the digital turn has had on already established systems, and to the exciting possibilities that it offers for radically transforming these systems. In tertiary education for instance, one of the ways in which the digital impact has made itself felt is to move the classroom online or to make resources freely available online, thereby providing access for new constituencies. For researchers, digital archiving and digital publishing has made possible the same widening of access, while also enabling innovative ways of reading traditional objects of inquiry through the use of computational methods. While these developments are not confined to a specific domain of knowledge, the term most often used to reference them has been 'Digital Humanities'. The term has gained currency worldwide perhaps because of the seeming incongruity of the relationship between the conventional humanities disciplines and what is deemed a technological development. This is a relationship that has not only produced new approaches to old material, but perhaps - even more significantly - reconfigured the objects and domains of inquiry themselves, and re-tooled the modes by which we conduct our research.

The five host institutions have engaged with each other in different collaborative initiatives over the years. Most significant among them have been (a) the exploration of integration, inter-disciplinarity and dialogue between the natural sciences and the social sciences/humanities; and (b) the production and deployment of critical resources in Indian

languages in the higher education sector. We seek to bring these interests together in the proposed consultation aimed at setting agendas for digital humanities in India.

Exploring the possible connections between the human sciences and the digital domain could throw up many productive directions for the higher education system. One of the biggest challenges facing the system in India today is the issue of access and the quality of that access. In the coming decade, Indian higher education is estimated to achieve a Gross Enrolment Ratio of at least 20% (from the existing 12%). This immense new inflow into the education system poses significant institutional and pedagogic challenges. With English emerging as the global language for knowledge production, there is pressure on the Indian higher education system to move towards English-based teaching and learning. Simultaneously, here is a cognitive issue: of effective comprehension. Students who are first-generation learners are finding it increasingly difficult to negotiate with the English-only curriculum that presents itself to many as an insurmountable hurdle.

A new set of possibilities could open up if one were to examine this issue from the perspective of the Indian languages. For over 150 years these languages have been used in all modern institutions and practices (from banking to statecraft) and have developed their own concept ecologies and rich traditions of public intellectual discourse. Currently these languages and practices are being thrust into the background by the globalization of higher education. Re-inserting them into our classrooms and institutional arrangements would be crucial from two perspectives: a) providing newer avenues for students to re-negotiate curricular content which is predominantly in English and b) infusing new source materials into social, political, economic and cultural research on India, thereby increasing the relevance and dynamism of Indian social sciences and humanities. Needless to say, technology will play a major role in this context. Not only will technology figure prominently in addressing the question of access, equity and outreach, it will also help in bringing hitherto inaccessible intellectual resources into easily available and distributable forms. Also crucial to the question of access is the scalability that digital technology offers.

Through this interdisciplinary consultation, we hope to chart out the possible directions for digital humanities in India, which would include, among others, a strong engagement with Indian languages as well as a rethinking of how the sciences and the humanities could intersect. All of this is likely to hold paradigm-changing consequences for higher education: involving for example online learning, technologically enhanced learning, archival practices, new research methodologies, and the production of new and locally relevant knowledges.

We invite participants to make short presentations of 15 minutes each reflecting on the questions raised in this note, and bringing to the table issues raised by the initiatives in which they have taken part so far.

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Title	Moderators & Resource Persons	Timings
Introduction	**Tejaswini Niranjana, HEIRA-CSCS & TISS** **T.Vishnu Vardhan, CIS**	**10:00 - 10:30 AM**
Curricularising Digital Humanities in India	**Amlan Dasgupta, Jadavpur University**	**10:30 - 11:00 AM**
Intimating the Archive	**Ravi Sundaram, CSDS**	**11:00 – 11:30 AM**
Tea Break		**11:30 – 11:45 PM**
Digital Humanities – Possibilities and Challenges	**Nishant Shah, CIS (on skype)**	**11:45 – 12:15 PM**
Language and Technology in the UG Space	**Tanveer Hasan and Sneha PP, HEIRA-CSCS**	**12:15 – 12:45 PM**
LUNCH		**1:00 - 1:45 PM**

Brief responses from participants	**Asha Achuthan, Bindu KC, Ritesh Khunyakari, Shruti Tambe, Anivar Aravind, Prashant Kulkarni, SV Srinivas, Rajan Gurukkal, V.Gopakumar, Bindu Thirumalai**	**1:45 - 3:15 PM**
Digital Ecosystems: The Identity Project	**Ashish Rajadhyaksha, CSCS**	**3:15 – 3:45 PM**
Tea Break		**3:45 - 4:00 PM**
A Technologised Humanities – Reconnecting to Science?	**Arun Menon, CSCS**	**4:00 – 4:30 PM**
To Have and to Hold: Conjoining Unequal Pairings for the Digital Humanities	**James Nye, South Asia Librarian, University of Chicago (on Skype)**	**4:30 - 5:00 PM**
Digital Humanities, or what you will: The (non) Boundaries of DH and Curriculum Development	**Souvik Mukherjee, Presidency University**	**5:00 – 5:30 PM**
Closing Response	**Ashwin Kumar AP, Tumkur University**	**5:30 - 6:00 PM**
Consultation Dinner	**Centre for Internet and Society**	**7: 30 PM onwards**