Empathy map of postgraduate students on information science: A reflection on the relationship between students and digital humanities

Adriana Calegari Crispim
Postgraduate Program of Information Science
Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil.
Email: adricrispim@gmail.com
Orcid: 0009-0007-6213-5532

Eliana Maria dos Santos Bahia Jacintho
Postgraduate Program of Information Science
Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil.
Email: elianambahia@gmail.com
Orcid: 0000-0003-4037-3189

ABSTRACT
The digital humanities (DH) subject is a significant opportunity to learn about what encompasses DH for the postgraduate academic community. This research aimed to observe the DH discipline and its students of the postgraduate course in Information Science at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. This is an exploratory, descriptive character of a qualitative nature. The empathy map model, developed by Xplane, was used to analyze the results. From this research model, it was possible to understand and explore the real expectations and thinking of students attending the DH course.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the learning environment have become evident, as well as the search for the assertiveness of knowledge in the academic community regarding the discipline of digital humanities – it is an opportunity for the development of knowledge on the historical, theoretical, and epistemological bases of the arising and development of digital humanities and its central concepts, definitions, and projects. The discipline of digital humanities is where it can be analyzed, from the perspective of Information Science and its inter and transdisciplinary ability, the dialogue established between emerging technologies and the research in the field of human sciences.

According to Damian *et al.* (2015), "the exploratory study of Digital Humanities becomes relevant and stimulating for the area of Information Science, once it is in the interest of both areas, the use of technologies that allow the mediation and higher accessibility to information" (p.80). Damian *et al.* (2015) also state that:

> The term "Digital Humanities," although it can be seen as one more generalist label, appears as an interdisciplinary area that gives place to the reflections and practices that had been raised by the changes caused by the introduction of digital technologies in the universe of culture and of the Units of Information and Culture (p. 8).

Studies that have been held reflect the increasing rise of the term digital humanities, defined as a disciplinary field,

formation profile, or a movement linked to open access (Rodríguez-Yunta, 2013, p. 37). Rodríguez-Yunta (2013) questions:

> Why talk about digital humanities? Why digital humanities and not digital science or digital academy? It is worth asking oneself what to precisely emphasize in the so-called human sciences (although DH also encompasses the social sciences) when it is not, exactly, an area that stands out from the domain of new technologies among its researchers (p. 13).

However, reflecting on the relationship between students and the discipline of Digital Humanities is necessary to understand what is thought, felt, said, and seen about it. The objective of the research was to elaborate an empathy map focusing on the student's expectations and understandings regarding the Discipline of Digital Humanities in the Post – Graduation Course on Information Science, second semester/2021, through a critical and empathetic view of the online debates in classrooms.

An empathy map is a method that helps to imagine a persona (character) that helps its clients. The name does not matter – knowing the client to establish an empathetic relationship profoundly is essential. As the name itself says: Empathy Map, that is, put yourself in the shoes of your client and try to see life through the client's universe (Quaiser, 2017). In the case of the Discipline of Digital Humanities case, this instrument allowed adherence to a procedure of visual and dynamic diagnosis, which can be reconsidered. According to Valdrich and Cândido (2018), six needed different reflections to fill in an empathy map (p. 114):

- What he Hears: Here, it is essential to reflect upon what your students' friends say, as well as the professor, classmates, influencers, etc.
- What he Sees: At this point, we have to see the environment your student attends.
- What he Thinks and Feels: One of the most challenging points is understanding what crosses the student's mind. To understand what matters, main worries and aspirations, informational needs, and thoughts that keep their heads busy.
- What he Says and Does: Understanding what he says and does is, above all, an exercise of observation, appearance, and behavior that are considered.
- Weaknesses: What are the main obstacles students face to meet their informational needs and achieve success? What are their fears, frustrations, and obstacles?
- Gains: Usually, everything is aimed once the fears are overcome. What are their desires, needs, ways of measuring success, etc?

Following, there are the methodological procedures of this study.

2. DEVELOPMENT

The research is qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory regarding its objectives. According to Gil (2017), the experimental study has as its characteristic of getting to know a fact or phenomenon yet little known by science, and the researcher aims to get acquainted with the phenomenon intended to be studied. Yet, according to the author, descriptive research describes a population's characteristics, context, sample, or phenomenon. The objective was to draw an Empathy Map to reflect on the relationship be-

tween the Discipline of Digital Humanities students from the Post – Graduation course in Information Science at UFSC and the understanding of Digital Humanities.

The Empathy Map is a tool that belongs to the *Canvas* methodology for Business Models, and it was created by the consultancy of *Design Thinking* at Xplane, which aims that put ourselves in the business clients' shoes.[1] Therefore, the tool exercises reflections about what the client says, does, sees, thinks, feels, hears, and yet lists the pains and the possible gains in this relationship between the client and the investigated person, aiming to help in the business model. This survey aims for a critical and empathetic look at data and information that can clarify the relationship between users and the analyzed context. In addition, it provides the notion of new actions or the improvement of the already implemented activities. In this regard, the empathy map can serve as a parameter for planning short, medium, and long-term actions, whose focus is the users that belong to a specific context, to provide a beneficial and attractive experience with the environment in which it is inserted.

The empathy map can be used in other contexts of action to reflect the relationship between the individual or a specific group inserted in a scene. Given the above, the analyzed context for this work is the Discipline of Digital Humanities, more specifically, the students in the Post – Graduation course on Information Science at UFSC, including Master's Degree and Doctorate students of diverse formations, who are registered in the discipline in the second semester/2021. This public was chosen because the

---

1   Pereira, D. (2021). *Mapa da Empatia*: o que é? In: *O Analista de Modelos de Negócios*. http://analistamodelosdenegocios.com.br/mapa.

author studies the discipline and facilitates data collection. The empathy map aims at gathering information through the other look. In this respect, this work's author watched the recorded classes' videos to reflect on the relationship between the students and the Discipline of Digital Humanities, having as a base theoretical references that had been presented in the discipline.

For the drawing of the empathy map, some stages were followed – firstly, a bibliographic survey on Digital Humanities and Empathy Map was held for the theoretical foundation. The following stage refers to filling in a picture that contemplates all the quadrants of the Empathy Map drawn in a Word document. The information collection period happened in December 2021. After filling in the map's stage, the terms or words that represented the central idea of each note made were selected to be added to the graphic picture that represents the empathy map. Table 1 relates to the six quadrants that form the empathy map.

Table 1. Parts of the empathy map. **Note:** Elaborated by the authors and based on Xplane (2017).

	Reflections
What does he hear?	Reflect on what other people say about Digital Humanities - DH
What does he see?	How does he see DH?
What does he think and feel?	What are the worries and expectations of DH?
What does he say and do?	How does it work? Observe what he already knows about DH and if it is applicable.
Weaknesses	What are the difficulties in understanding, fears, frustrations, and obstacles?
Gains	What are the earnings? What is it aimed?

As we can observe, each part of the empathy map allows the reflection in a critical and empathetic way, listing points to be improved and the ones that can be preserved in the discipline of DH. Through this table, the author reflects on how the relationships between students and the discipline of Digital Humanities occur, running through each part of the empathy map. They present the following result: The proposed map gives us an overview of how Postgraduate students in Information Science at UFSC perceive Digital Humanities (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Empathy map on digital humanities. **Note:** Elaborated by the authors and based on Xplane. (2017).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the analysis and discussion of results, each quadrant of the Empathy Map is presented. The first analyzed quadrant of the map referred to what students hear about

Digital Humanities. According to some cited authors in the discipline's theoretical framework, the concept of DH was listed, and it was observed what the students debated in the classroom.

Damian *et al.* (2015) say:

> Digital humanities appear as an interdisciplinary field aimed at the reflections and practices raised by the changes resulting from the introduction of digital technologies in the universes of culture and Information Units. Then, the emergence of Digital Humanities points to the difference in the communication process as a whole (p. 79).

According to the students, in the type of debates in the classroom, Digital Humanities are human and social sciences linked to technology; it is an area of knowledge in technology, and there is no clear definition of digital humanities. The second analyzed quadrant refers to what is seen. It is considered the concept of Digital Humanities discussed in the classroom, and students' diverse opinions about DH, as the act of being and seeing the world through technologies, the used technologies for spreading social humanities, and the relationship between technology and the environment.

After, the analyzed quadrant is related to what is thought and felt. There were considered the discipline's pre-concepts, first understanding and last one. Thinking and feeling in students' Digital Humanities were initially expressed as ICTs – Information and Communication Technology, the use of technology that is applied to humanities and, in the end, it is concluded that it produces real effects for the society. The further quadrant in the map is linked to what is said and done. At this moment, the student could

present what he says and does on DH. It is noted that Digital Humanities had already been applied in the past but with a different name. Digital Humanities has multiple uses, strengthened through existing groups and research.

Guerreiro & Borbinha (2014) corroborates with the ideas debated by the students in the Post-Graduation course on Information Science from the second semester of 2021. He says:

Digital Humanities are consolidated as a new field of knowledge and, as such, show the indexes of a new field that has been reached through numerous associations, study centers, departments, teaching programs, specialized journals, and congresses (p. 2).

Then, there are the weaknesses and gains that students feel in the scope of understanding and use of the concept of Digital Humanities. The lack of knowledge with a theoretical basis initially mistakes for understanding what is related to technology; the most significant weakness is understanding DH as a digital project and making "digital" typical and expected. And, finally, the quadrant that refers to the gains: the incorporation of technology in humanities and disclosure of the culture of many countries, the access to information, sharing, and humanities that benefit from technologies.

Through this initial analysis, we can consider the Empathy Map as a supporting tool in planning actions for developing new content for the Digital Humanities discipline. Teachers' performance was primordial because it supports students in understanding the teachings provided during the classes through the contact with bibliography and debates among classmates. The following actions in the discipline were suggested: a group project configuring the use of the concept of Digital Humanities. All students

presented their projects which another group of classmates evaluated in the discipline, the professor, and the moderator of the presentations.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discipline of Digital Humanities is an essential part of the academy, broadening the debate around the main concepts, definitions, and projects in Digital Humanities. It analyzes the role and participation of the professional and the information institutions in the development of research and projects. Since Digital Humanities, it has been gaining prominence in the scientific community. The objective of the study was to elaborate an empathy map to reflect on the relationships between students from the Discipline of Digital Humanities in the Post –Graduation course on Information Science in the second semester – 2021 and the presented discipline, which has been reached and can be used as a parameter for future actions.

The Empathy Map was elaborated by considering all its quadrants, and it was presented in this study in the development section. In the end, the unit of analysis and discussion of results was introduced, in which each item from the Empathy Map was listed under the author's perspective. The methodology of the empathy map is very rich because it allows a reflection under the student's view, bringing his experiences and appropriations regarding the understanding of Digital Humanities. In short, reflecting on the empathy map under DH's scope made exchanging ideas and experiences about this relationship possible and a new look at Digital Humanities and Information Science.

REFERENCES

DAMIAN, I. P. M.; ALAMEIDA, M. A. DE; MELLO, T. A. V. DE & RODRIGUES, P. B. (2015). Convergências entre as Humanidades Digitais e a Ciência da Informação. *Ibersid*. 9, (79-82)

GIL, A. C. (2017). *Como Elaborar Projetos de Pesquisa*. Atlas.

GUERREIRO, D. & BORBINHA, J. L. (2014). Humanidades digitais: novos desafios e oportunidades. *Revista Internacional del Libro, Digitalización y Bibliotecas*. 2, <http://sobreellibro.com>.

PEREIRA, D. (2021). *Mapa da Empatia*: o que é?. In: O Analista de Modelos de Negócios. <http://analistamodelosdenegocios.com.br/mapa>

QUAISER, P. (2017). Mapa de Empatia, o que é? *Canvas Academy*. [S.I]. <http://canvasacademy.com.br/mapa-de-empatia-2/>.

RODRIGUEZ-YUNTA, L. (2013). Humanidades digitales, ¿una mera etiqueta o un campo por el que deben apostar las ciencias de la documentación?". *Anuario ThinkEPI, 7*, 37-43.

VALDRICH, T. & CÂNDIDO, A. C. (2018). Mapa de empatia como proposta de instrumento em estudos de usuários: aplicação realizada na biblioteca pública de SC. *Revista ACB*: *Biblioteconomia em Santa Catarina, 23*, 107-124.