Digital History in Portugal: A Survey

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The emergence of concepts like "digital humanities" and "digital history" shows how digital technology is becoming increasingly important to the humanities and corresponding disciplines. This study is a first look into digital history in Portugal. Using information available on the Web, it is possible to see that historians are using more and more digital tools to complete and communicate their work as well as to collaborate with other researchers.

Introduction

Over the last decades, a new technological infrastructure appeared, and access to information has become increasingly important and fast, giving rise to new services, practices, and requirements in several areas, including research and development (R&D). However, the adoption of new technologies to support and to communicate science is not homogeneous in different scientific communities, and the process is influenced by the epistemic culture of each community (Knorr-Cetina, 1999). If, in the field of "hard sciences," the use of digital tools is considered natural, arts and humanities have been less keen on taking advantage of the benefits offered by the technological infrastructure to support research. Nevertheless, humanists are using more and

more digital technologies in their work (Hayles, 2012), making "digital humanities" a topic that has been attracting interest from a growing number of people (Little, 2011; Gold, 2012).

Although the association between humanities and computers has been established for quite some time, especially in linguistics and text analysis, the changes arising from the development of the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) have led to a terminological shift from "humanities computing" to "digital humanities" (Svensson, 2009; Hayles, 2012), the latter emerging not as an academic discipline, but as "a hybrid domain, crossing disciplinary boundaries and also traditional barriers between theory and practice, technological implementation and scholarly reflection" (Flanders et al., 2007).

Early on, the establishment of technological infrastructure and large-scale digitization projects were the main focus of digital humanities. Presner (2010) found that in this "first wave," digital humanities tended to be more quantitative, centered on the development of databases, text encoding, and other issues concerning text analysis. In this current second wave, digital humanities have become more "qualitative, interpretative, experimental, emotive, generative in character" (Schnapp & Presner, 2009). However, for some authors, a new wave may be in progress due to some epistemic transformations operated by the use of digital (Berry, 2011), which might lead us to a new discipline, distinct from the traditional humanities (Evans & Rees, 2012).

Because the humanities are a large field of knowledge, comprising many distinct disciplines and tribes (Becher & Trowler, 2001), which have their own traditions and cultures (Knorr-Cetina, 1999), these transformations are not all homogeneous. Thus, we chose to center our attention on one of the humanistic disciplines: history.

In the humanities in general, "new media and new technologies have challenged historians to rethink the ways that they research, write, present and teach about the past" (Cohen & Rosenzweig, 2006), leading to digital history. Although this term has been used for more than a decade—it was first used in 1997 by Ayers and Thomas (Cohen et al., 2008)—few people have tried to define it. Thus, there is no established definition. According to Andersen (2002), digital history has to do with the work developed by historians who privilege the use of digital technologies in their activities and not specifically with the use of new sources in the construction of history. Cohen et al. (2008) reiterated this through questions regarding the collaboration and interaction between historians, students, and other publics. These two dimensions—the use of digital tools and "particular ways of working" (which in-

volve collaboration as well as openness)—are referenced by Murphy (2012) when characterizing digital history and are used in this study.

However, even though digital media was seen relatively early as an opportunity to reconfigure historical science and scientific practices to attract new audiences (O'Malley & Rosenzweig, 1997; Ayer, 1999), some authors claim that this has not occurred with the expected intensity, despite the presence of its significant history in the WWW (Cohen, 2004; Cohen & Rosenzweig, 2006; Turnbull, 2010). Such behavior has many causes and is associated with the practices adopted to construct and disseminate historical knowledge as well as the entire context in which historians do their work.

Founded in the 1990s, the Virginia Center for Digital History at the University of Virginia and the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University (CHNM) were two of the earliest centers devoted to digital history in the U.S. The information available about their research projects reflects clearly the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT). Online databases enabling access to digitized primary sources (texts, images, videos, or podcasts), bibliographic, or geographical information are the most frequent mark of that significance. If in some cases the collections are built from archive material, in others the primary sources are provided by the public in general. Projects like "The September 11 Digital Archive" or "Hurricane Digital Memory Bank," developed by CHNM in partnership with other institutions, reveal the importance of collaboration outside academia, taking advantage of "crowdsourcing" by engaging with the public to help their projects.

But this engagement is not limited to the building of collections. "Transcribe Bentham" is a project launched in 2010 by the University College London (UCL) "with the aim of recruiting volunteers from around the world, whatever their background, to help transcribe the unpublished manuscripts of Jeremy Bentham" (Causer, 2012), a British philosopher who lived from 1748 to 1832. This project is one of the best-known examples of "crowdsourcing" in the academic context.

Another project that includes a collaboration component is "London Lives 1690 to 1800," developed by the Universities of Hertfordshire and Sheffield. It makes available, in a fully digitized and searchable form, a wide range of primary sources about eighteenth-century London. By providing access to a large number of archive documents and datasets created by several other projects, it is possible for users "to link together records relating to the same individual, and to compile biographies of the best documented individuals" using a wiki available on the project Web site. To make digitized documents searchable, encoding schemes are used, and the text is marked up in XML.

Encoding text is also used in many other projects, such as "1641 Depositions," a collaborative project between Trinity College, Dublin, the University of Aberdeen, and the University of Cambridge, which aims to conserve, digitize, transcribe, and make available online witness testimonies by Protestants and some Catholics concerning their experiences of the 1641 Irish rebellion.

Building prosopographical databases is very common in historical research since these databases allow historians to obtain information specific to individuals by analyzing common characteristics of a group and learn about patterns of relationships and activities. Various prosopographical databases are available on the Web.

Historical Geographical Information Systems (historical GIS) associate spatial data with other data included in standard databases (attribute data). By combining them with visualization and analytic tools, they allow historians to georeference historical events, identify changes in the geographic space over time, or respond to specific research problems such as the relationship between some diseases and water sources. "Mapping Medieval Chester," by Swansea University, Queen's University Belfast, and the Centre for Computing in the Humanities at King's College London, and "A Vision of Britain between 1801 and 2001," by the University of Portsmouth, are two examples of projects with those characteristics.

With the development of ICT, visualization techniques became more and more used in history research projects. King's Visualization Lab (KVL), based at the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London, is a lab that specializes in visual representations of archaeology, historic buildings, cultural heritage organizations, and academic research and that uses 3D modeling, among other techniques, in several projects.

Research Design and Preliminary Findings

In Portugal, the available data shows that almost the entire national scientific community has access to the national research and education network, which supports numerous applications and services related to collaboration, knowledge, and safety (UMIC, 2011). Nonetheless, studies about the adoption of technologies by the scientific community are scarce.

The study presented here is part of ongoing research that aims to understand the impact of digital media in the mechanisms of production and dissemination of scientific knowledge within a specific epistemic community: historians. This paper will look at whether and how digital technologies are being used in history research projects.

Considering that scientific research in Portugal is mainly developed in Research & Development Units (R&D Units), funded and evaluated by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), this was the setting chosen for our study. Thirteen out of the 17 history R&D Units currently funded by FCT (Mattoso et al., 2011) were chosen (see Appendix, Table 2). These units integrate around a thousand researchers. The four remaining R&D Units were excluded for two reasons: two for being specialized in archaeology; the other two because they are specialized in history and philosophy of science and integrate mainly researchers from other scientific fields, with epistemic cultures and scientific practices that differ from those of historians.

To identify potential digital history projects, the 13 R&D Units were contacted and asked to provide information about the projects in development. Because the responses were few, our attention fell on the Web sites of the R&D Units. Some Web pages had not been updated (in some cases the information about the research projects was two or more years out of date), making it difficult to obtain a clear idea about ongoing projects, so it was necessary to undertake some complementary research to confirm the information retrieved. During this process, carried out between May and July 2012, we considered numerous research projects, but only ongoing projects (except those for which it was not possible to find more information than the designation)—those finished within the last two years or those that reveal the use of ICT and are hosted by the R&D Units.

Data analysis shows that the use of digital tools in history research projects is prevalent even though the information available is frequently vague and the tools used are often not specified. Of the 38 projects considered (see Table 1), only three are not associated with the use of ICT. However, as ongoing projects, they were included in the research.

As stated before, a database is a digital tool frequently used in historical research and is associated with 58% of the projects. There are several cases in which prosopographical databases were, or are being, built. For example, "Corpo do Estado Maior do Exército Português," carried out by researchers from Centro de Estudos de História Contemporânea Portuguesa (CEHCP), focuses on the elite staff of the Portuguese Army from the 1940s to 1974 and identifies the most influential officers. Another project that gave rise to a prosopographical database was "Fasti Ecclesiae Portugaliae" (Project 4). This project, developed by the Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa (CEHR) between 2002 and 2006, gave historians the opportunity to identify the bishops, dignitaries, and canons who served in Portuguese cathedrals during the Middle Ages. Findings were published in some books, although the database has not yet been finished. The project's Web page states that when complet-

ed, the prosopographical database will be disclosed. Nevertheless, there is no information stating whether it will be available online.

The use of prosopographical information is frequently associated with social network analysis and representation (using graph models), which occurs in three of the nine projects that use that type of data.

Besides prosopographical databases, other databases are mentioned in projects such as "Engenho e Obra" (Project 35) and "Marconi em Lisboa" (Project 38) from the Instituto de História Contemporânea (IHC) or "Grupos intermédios em Portugal e no Império Português" (Project 22), from the Centro Interdisciplinar de História, Culturas e Sociedades (CIDEHUS). However, no details about those databases or the tools used are displayed in either case. "Nobreza Medieval Hispânica" (Project 28), developed by the Centro de Estudos da População Economia e Sociedade (CEPESE), produces a database with prosopographical and bibliographic information to publish a biographical dictionary on medieval Galician-Portuguese nobility.

There are, however, some databases available online. For example, the "Project LITTERA" (Project 33), at Instituto de Estudos Medievais (IEM), created a database freely accessible on the WWW; the *cantigas* (songs) contained in the medieval Galician-Portuguese *Cancioneiros* (songbooks) can be searched for by author, title, *cancioneiro*, genre, type, or subject. Also available is bibliographic information about the troubadours and the persons mentioned in the songs as well as digitizations of the manuscripts, musical scores, and audio files.

The transcription and publication of historical sources is frequent in Portuguese research projects. For instance, in a CEHR project entitled "Portugaliae Monumenta Misericordiarum" (Project 9), developed between 2001 and 2011, ten volumes were published. These volumes gathered not only the most significant documents in the study of the Portuguese *misericórdias* (assistance institutions existing in Portugal since the fifteenth century), but also some thematic bibliographies, guides from the archives of those institutions, and some unpublished studies (Paiva, 2010). Moreover, the Centro de Estudos Históricos (CEH) is planning to publish several textual primary historical sources (Project 11). However, they do not mention whether they intend to use the print or the electronic format.

The data available shows that the results of the research projects are frequently presented in books, conference proceedings, and other traditional formats. However, a Centro de História de Além-Mar (CHAM) project intends to create a *Virtual Encyclopedia of Portuguese Expansion* from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century (Project 13); a preliminary version is already available. In the same R&D Unit, another project is being developed

for the virtual environment. "De todas as Partes do Mundo" (Project 14), based on the inventory of the estate of a Portuguese noble from the sixteenth century, creates a virtual exhibition and a 3D virtual rebuilding of the Palace of Vila Viçosa, built by the Duke.

Another project that has exploited the potential of digital technologies is "DynCoopNet[PT]" (Project 17). In fact, this was the Portuguese part of a larger project entitled "DynCoopNet: Dynamic Complexity of Cooperation-Based Self-Organizing Networks in the First Global Age," founded by the European Science Foundation, and involved several institutions, including Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar "Cultura, Espaço e Memória" (CITCEM). This was a truly multidisciplinary project that used several digital technologies, such as structured databases, historical GIS, and mathematical modeling. The main tool used was Time Link, a software "specially developed to support micro-historical research with a strong emphasis on network analysis and prosopography" at the University of Coimbra (DynCoopNet[PT], 2009).

As stated above, one of the characteristics of digital history is collaboration. An analysis of the R&D Unit Web sites shows that in more than 61% of the projects, people from different disciplines, units, universities, institutions, and countries integrate research teams. Nevertheless, this collaboration does not seem to involve the general public. When using collaborative tools, such as Google Docs, data analysis does not allow us to conclude whether they are being used. The few units that responded to the e-mailed questionnaire reported using Dropbox to share files.

Conclusions and Further Research

The adoption of ICT to support and to communicate science is a reality in all scientific fields, including the humanities, which are less keen on taking advantage of the technological infrastructure.

As a result of this new reality, the concepts of digital humanities and digital history emerged, indicating an increased use of technologies by humanists in general and by historians in particular. In spite of this new trend, the use of new technologies by the scientific community is still quite unknown in Portugal.

In the case of historians, data shows that researchers are increasingly using digital tools to do their work. When compared to international history research projects, the Portuguese projects make use of the same tools and techniques. The major difference is related to patterns of collaboration. In a number of non-Portuguese projects, public participation is one of the main

characteristics, while in Portugal the collaboration is mainly inside the scientific community, involving historians and other researchers.

In the future, we aim to cross the data obtained in this study with data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with the directors of the selected R&D Units and through a survey applied to individual researchers. This will allow us to better understand how Portuguese historians perceive digital history and what strategies and tools are being used in the construction of historical knowledge in Portugal in the digital age.

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Appendix

Table 1. Projects considered

Project	Host R&D Unit	In collaboration	Digital tools used				Project outputs															
			databases	historical GIS	3 D visualization	network graph	Monographs / book chapters			Dictionaries / encyclopedias			Other publications			Exhibition		Database			audiovisual materials	conferences / scientific meetings / workshops
							print	electronic	not specified	print	electronic	not specified	print	electronic	not specified	virtual	traditional	online	offline	not specified		
1.	CEHCP	•	•												•						•	
2.	CEHCP	•	•				•							•								•
3.	CEHR	•								•												•
4.	CEHR		•				•														•	•
5.	CEHR	•												•								•
6.	CEHR	•							•													
7.	CEHR	•					•															
8.	CEHR	•																				
9.	CEHR	•	•				•															
10.	CEHR	•					•	•														
11.	CEH									•												
12.	CEIS 20		•											•								•
13.	CHAM	•		•						•												
14.	CHAM	•	•	•	•		•						•	•		•	•				•	•
15.	CHAM		•				•											•				•
16.	CHAM	•	•	•	•		•											•				•
17.	CITCEM	•	•	•		•	•						•	•				•				•
18.	CITCEM												•	•								
19.	CIDEHUS	•	•						•					•							•	
20.	CIDEHUS	•					•						•	•								•
21.	CIDEHUS	•											•	•			•					
22.	CIDEHUS	•	•		•																•	
23.	CIDEHUS	•		•										•								
24.	CIDEHUS	•	•		•									•					•			
25.	CIDEHUS	•					•															
26.	CIDEHUS		•																		•	
27.	CIDEHUS	•	•				•						•								•	
28.	CEPESE		•									•									•	
29.	GHES	•	•																		•	
30.	GHES							•														
31.	GHES	•						•														
32.	IEM	•	•				•											•				
33.	IEM	•	•															•				
34.	IEM	•											•	•								•
35.	IHC	•	•				•										•	•			•	
36.	IHC		•															•				
37.	IHC	•											•	•				•				
38.	IHC		•				•							•		•						•

Table 2. R&D Units considered

Abbreviation	Unit designation	Institutional affiliation
CEHCP	Centro de Estudos de História Contemporânea Portuguesa	ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa
CEHR	Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa	Universidade Católica Portuguesa
CEH	Centro de Estudos Históricos	Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
CEIS 20	Centro de Estudos Interdisciplinares do Século XX – CEIS 20	Universidade de Coimbra
CHC	Centro de História da Cultura	Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
CHSC	Centro de História da Sociedade e da Cultura	Universidade de Coimbra. Faculdade de Letras
CHAM	Centro de História de Além-Mar	Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas and Universidade dos Açores
CITCEM	Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar "Cultura, Espaço e Memória"	Universidade do Porto and Universidade do Minho
CIDEUS	Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar de História, Culturas e Sociedades da Universidade de Évora	Universidade de Évora
CEPESE	Centro de Estudos da População, Economia e Sociedade	Universidade do Porto
GHES	Gabinete de História Económica e Social	Universidade Técnica de Lisboa. Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão
IEM	Instituto de Estudos Medievais	Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
IHC	Instituto de História Contemporânea	Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas

Table 3. Project titles

Nr.	Project title
1	O Corpo do estado maior do exército português: apogeu e queda
2	Terras Além dos Mares: Direitos de Propriedade no Império Português Moderno
3	Centenário da República e da Lei de Separação
4	Fasti Ecclesiae Portugaliae: prosopografia do clero catedralicio portugues (1071- 1325)
5	História e Memória Local
6	A Igreja Católica e o Estado Português no século XX: os Cardeais Mendes Belo (1907-1929), Gonçalves Cerejeira (1929-1971), António Ribeiro (1971-1998) e a República Portuguesa
7	Memória e História de Fátima
8	A Participação da Igreja Portuguesa no Concílio Vaticano II
9	Portugaliae Monumenta Misericordiarum
10	Religião, Sociedade e Laicidade nos Países Ibero-Americanos
11	Publication of historical primary sources
12	Pró-Memória Portugal Vinte
13	Enciclopédia Virtual da Expansão Portuguesa
14	De Todas as Partes do Mundo, O Património do 5º Duque de Bragança, D. Teodósio I
15	A Nobreza e Estado da Índia no século XVI
16	Portugal e o Sul de Marrocos: contactos e confrontos (séculos XVI-XVIII)
17	DynCoopNet[PT]
18	Espaços Urbanos: dinâmicas demográficas e sociais (séculos XVII-XX)
19	Decisão Política, necessidades colectivas e afirmação profissional: o Hospital de Todos os Santos em perspectiva
20	Engenharia, Tecnologia, Cultura Material e Património
21	Espaços urbanos: história e património cultural
22	Grupos intermédios em Portugal e no Império Português: as familiaturas do Santo Ofício (c. 1570- 1773)
23	História do Alentejo, séculos XII-XX
24	Inquirir da honra: comissários do Santo Ofício e das Ordens Militares em Portugal (1570-1773)
25	O sistema de caridade e assistência: apropriação social, trajectórias sociais, discursos institucionais. O caso da região de Évora (séculos XV-XVIII)
26	Os utentes do sistema de assistência entre a população de Évora: a importância das bases de dados demográficas (1535-1800)
27	Viagens, Turismo, Lazer e Património no Sul em perspectiva histórica. Dos finais do século XVII à primeira metade do século XX
28	Nobreza Medieval Hispânica: séculos VIII-XVI
29	Corporate Responses to European Integration, 1957-2007
30	História do Sistema Bancário (séculos XIX e XX)
31	O ouro do Brasil – agentes, remessas e conjunturas (1720-1807)
32	Projecto Imago
33	Littera, edição, atualização e preservação do património literário medieval português
34	Regnum Regis - As inquirições de 1220 e a génese da memória documental do reino medieval português
35	Engenho e Obra. História da Engenharia em Portugal no Século XX
36	Guia Bibliográfico da I República
37	História da Emigração e das Comunidades Portuguesas
38	Marconi em Lisboa