

# HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF DIGITAL CULTURES

Lüneburg Summer School for Digital Cultures 2018

**September 16-19, 2018 - Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany**

Hosted by the Centre for Digital Cultures

Organized by Daniela Wentz

Hosted by the Centre for Digital Cultures (CDC), the Lüneburg Summer School for Digital Cultures provides advanced training in the study of media, their theory, aesthetics and history. Focusing on one special topic annually, it affords a select group of graduate students the opportunity to work with international scholars from all fields of media studies in an intimate and highly focused context. It also provides a platform for participants to engage in dialogue with other doctoral students from around the world working in similar or related fields. The 2018 summer school deals with the challenges of histories and historiographies of digital cultures. It will be followed by an international conference on "Digital Cultures: Knowledge / Culture / Technology". Participants will also be required to attend the conference, which takes place from 19 - 22 September, and are highly encouraged to submit a paper to the respective call, which will be made public shortly.

To suggest that we now live in digital cultures, characterized by the ubiquity and seemingly ineluctability of digital media technologies and their influence on almost every form of life and experience, is always already a historiographic argument. It means that something is now fundamentally different from before. At the same time, this implicitness of digital technologies as well as the breathlessness of many attempts to describe their newness and nowness – the contemporaneity of digital cultures – seems to make it difficult to understand this difference and thus the historic specificity of digital cultures. Describing digital media, technologies and cultures with regard to their history provides a counterbalance to the perceived nowness and newness of digital cultures. At the same time, it provides a way to come closer to discerning the epochal change that the unfolding of digital cultures most certainly represents. However, media historical approaches involve a whole set of challenges this years' CDC-summer school seeks to identify and address.

1. To think of digital cultures as an epoch immediately raises fundamental questions and problems regarding their historicity. As an ongoing and open process neither is its end predictable nor is its beginning once and for all determinable. Its dating and genesis are historiographical problems that require careful methodological consideration and re-consideration. Intriguing questions for example deal with the lessons the 'early digital' of the first programmable computers teach us about computing today. Today, wherever we go, there is talk about the process of moving from 'analog' to 'digital' (the omnipresent so-called digitisation). What are the artifacts and practices these terms, 'analog' and 'digital', refer to in those statements? What would a media

theoretical and media historical perspective perceive differently? Conversely, and of equal interest are questions on how the study of technologies and media can help us to understand a certain historical moment or epoch.

2. As has often been said, every media determines the perspective on the stages of its pre-history and thus prefigures the parameters of its historiography. Hence, the history and historiography of digital cultures have to deal with a digital apriori. Digital media and technologies cannot only be the object under investigation in this endeavour, they always act at the same time as the conditions of possibility of historiographic work. Basic media operations – like writing, collecting and retrieving – frame and shape historiographic work. Those media operations of research themselves undergo constant, more or less radical change, which is again a historic process demanding consideration.
3. As a consequence, history as an academic discipline faces the emergence of a new area of research, calling itself digital history. Digital history can be understood as a field of research that uses the potential of digital media technologies for historical research, teaching and presentation. Digital history scholars work with big data analysis, computer simulations and visualizations and of course digital repositories and archives, and proclaim nothing less than a paradigm shift for historiography. This new trend raises an awareness of the question of how digital technologies are altering the study of history. However, the impact of these new methods on the historic narratives lacks a critique thoroughly informed by media theory.

Following the research interests and methodology of the CDC, we especially invite project proposals that are dealing with "counter"-histories and with concrete, situated questions bringing among others feminist and postcolonial approaches into play. Of particular interest are project proposals addressing one or more of the following sets of problems:

### **Concepts and Theories**

What are the theoretical models that are able to contribute to a better understanding of the history and historiography of digital cultures? But also: How do digital cultures affect and shape common and current theoretical models of (media) historiographies?

### **Methods and Methodologies**

What are the methods that meet the challenge of bridging digital media technologies with the field of history? How do the methods of the digital humanities affect the methodology of historic research?

### **Critical Revision of the So-Called Digital History**

Does the source under digital conditions also change the construction of history and the rhetorics of its narration? Which "politics of the archive" can be observed in the course of or as a result of digitization?

## **Faculty**

Monika Dommann

Thomas Haigh

Ben Peters

Claus Pias

Daniela Wentz

## **Application**

All applications must be submitted electronically in PDF format. Please submit your (short) CV along with a 500-word abstract of your dissertation, and a 500-word letter of intent explaining why you would like to attend this summer school.

Please use the following naming convention for your application files:

Lastname\_CV.pdf

Lastname\_Abstract.pdf

Lastname\_Letter\_of\_Intent.pdf

Please email your applications to [digi.summer@leuphana.de](mailto:digi.summer@leuphana.de)

The deadline for applications for the summer school is 15 March 2018.

All applicants will be informed about the selection of participants in the end of March.

Childcare will be provided for those who desire it. Please state your needs and the number and age of your children in your application letter. There is no participation fee. The organizers will cover accommodation costs for the time of the summer school and the conference. We have a limited amount of needs-based travel funding available. Please indicate in your application letter if you wish to apply for travel funding.

The working language of the summer school will be English.