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DIGITAL FORUM

Digital Pedagogy in and beyond the Classroom

Zoe Alker and Christopher Donaldson

Five years have passed since the Digital Forum featured its first instalment dedicated to digital pedagogy. At that time, James Mussell reflected on how ‘digital resources’ were transforming teaching and learning across ‘the various disciplines that constitute nineteenth-century studies’ – both by broadening access to primary materials and by enabling the development of new projects and methodologies.¹ Today, the integration of digital resources in the teaching of Victorian literature, history, and culture is well established. Thanks to the increasing availability of online resources, and to the steady growth of social media platforms, students and teachers are more able than ever to access, to study, and to share an abundance of nineteenth-century materials within the classroom. Significantly, though, these resources and platforms are also stimulating the development of new forms of teaching and learning that carry the study of those materials outside and beyond the classroom.

The three essays collected in this edition of the Digital Forum affirm and reflect on these developments. They offer insights into how social media, virtual learning environments, and innovative online tools can expand and enrich the practices and community of the Victorian literary studies classroom. Taken together, these essays also showcase some of the creative ways that academics are using digital resources to create learning environments characterized by collaboration across geographical, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries. In her essay, ‘Open Annotation and Close Reading the Victorian Text’, Meegan Kennedy discusses her experimental incorporation of the open annotation tool, Hypothes.is, in an undergraduate course on Victorian literature and medicine that enrolled both English and Medical Science majors. Resisting the common association of digital methods with ‘distant’ reading, Kennedy’s report on her experiment suggests the potential of tools such as Hypothes.is both to create spaces for engagement outside the classroom and to help students hone their ability to engage in close textual analysis. Paul Fyfe and Richard Menke extend this reflection on the integration of digital resources to expand the space of the Victorian Studies classroom in their report on ‘Data Copperfield’, a project which connected two undergraduate classes from the University of Georgia and North Carolina State University, and enabled the students in those classes to undertake collaborative analyses of Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1849). Fyfe and Menke’s use of ‘distributed collaboration’ as a pedagogical practice not only broadens

1. James Mussell, ‘On Pedagogy: Using Digital Resources in the Classroom’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16 (2011), 83.

students' intellectual engagement by expanding the interpretive community, but also highlights how digital technologies facilitate new ways of reading nineteenth-century texts. Fyfe and Menke challenge the linear online learning models that often characterize Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and argue that new media platforms provide opportunities for collaboration between students and across institutions. This potential of new media to facilitate collaborative reading is explored further in Emma Curry and Ben Winyard's 'Our Virtual Friends: Dickens, Digital Communities, and Performative Learning'. In this essay, Curry and Winyard reflect on 'Our Mutual Friend Tweets', a project which used Twitter as a platform to examine readers' connections between text, characterization, and performance, and which indicates the potential for collaboration within and outside the confines of the university.

Collectively, the contributions to this Digital Forum affirm both how digital resources can broaden the study of nineteenth-century materials, and how the new forms of collaboration these resources facilitate can, in turn, enrich teaching and learning – both in and beyond the classroom.

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