DIGITAL
HUMANITIES

Monograph coordinated by Teresa Ferrer Valls

Over the past thirty years, a new discipline has been slowly but surely gaining ground in the humanities. It has come to be known as the *digital humanities*. At first sight, the concepts of the *humanities* and *digital technologies* do not seem to go well together, and it is precisely this prejudice that has led to its gradual acceptance in the academic world in Spain. Today, however, there are master's degrees, specialised courses, and even bachelor's degrees that include related subjects. Some Spanish universities have been pioneers in promoting the convergence of humanistic and technological disciplines, creating laboratories and infrastructures that activate and promote interdisciplinarity. In 2012, the International Association of Hispanic Digital Humanities was founded, which organises a biennial congress and various activities to disseminate and recognise research in this new field, such as the prize for the best doctoral thesis in digital humanities, in collaboration with the BBVA Foundation.

The research questions posed by this new discipline are not necessarily new, and continue to focus on the study of human interaction with culture and the environment, and the processes, transformations, and products that this interaction generates. But digital tools offer new ways of storing, accessing, organising, linking, and visualising data, making it possible to provide answers based on a volume of information and a capacity for association between data that would be impossible to achieve by traditional means and in such a short space of time. The digital processing of the collections of archives, libraries, and museums, which is increasing every day, is a revolution in itself, allowing researchers to establish new links and relationships between data and objects. On the other hand, the computerised processing of texts, by marking the various elements of meaning and structure that make them up, has made it possible to create large linguistic corpora and libraries of literary texts, the thorough labelling of which facilitates the extraction of data and the solution of problems in an extensively informed manner. Artificial intelligence has been applied, for example, to the transcription of music or the automatic reading of texts – not only printed texts, but also manuscripts from different periods – and opens the door to a heritage that is often in danger of being obscured by the dynamics of an increasingly accelerated society. This acceleration also affects the development times of research careers. The use of scanning, modelling, and 3D printing techniques, for example, facilitates the recovery and study of artistic heritage in new formats.

This monograph introduces us to some of the possibilities that the partnership between technologies and the humanities has opened up, but it also invites us to reflect critically on the scope of this relationship over time, which requires a commitment to preservation on the part of institutions.

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