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Critical Resource Curation: A Web-Hub Design for Indian Digital Cultures and New Media

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Abstract

The Digital Humanities pedagogic data, hosted as a website at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IIT Gandhinagar), is curated out of course-related contributions from 2017-2024. The web hub was conceptualised by a course group that had pursued a Special Topics Course, “Introduction to Digital Humanities” in 2018. The website has grown since 2018 and houses projects from 2017 to 2024. The web hub contains 193 submissions from the students enrolled across three courses entitled Digital Cultures and New Media; Storytelling for the Digital Era; and Special Topics course on Introduction to Digital Humanities. These data resources on the website can be leveraged by researchers working in diverse fields such as digital studies, cultural studies, and linguistic studies with a special focus on India and South Asia. Therefore, the website is symptomatic of the rich critical resources and possibilities that Indian digital media/humanities scholars, researchers, and media practitioners may offer to the world. Furthermore, the existing data paper presents and describes the process of curating the critical resources in the field of digital studies on a website. The website will also be instrumental in guiding the learners of digital curation by exposing them to an extensive range of projects housed on the website.

Keywords: digital cultures; popular cultures; Indian digital texts; web management; cultural repository; pedagogy; digital curation

(1) Introduction

Temporal Coverage: 2017-2024

The Digital Humanities web page (<https://sites.iitgn.ac.in/digitalstudies/>) emerges from a series of course-related deliberations, assignments, seminars and individual conversations between people at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IIT Gandhinagar). This web page has focused on a broad range of thematic areas discussed within the pedagogic practices of digital studies. This site highlights role of the “digital” in the emergence of fresh discourses and analytical methods in Humanities and Social Sciences for Indian students. The DH@IIT Gandhinagar web hub goes beyond serving as a tool for researchers. It focuses on interpreting creative and critical texts from India and beyond. The website is located at the cusp of media philosophy, cultural theories, social science methods, and literary texts. Thus, it provides an open platform for creative expressions, contemplation and analyses.

This critical juncture of human civilization presents an intermixture of technocentric and technophobic attributes. The website is a pacifying space that enables first generation learners to experience cultural memory through technological tools and interfaces. While the digital civilization is no longer under the domain of science fiction, yet Humanities and Social Sciences in India and South Asia are grappling with the changing ambience of scholarly activities. This is due to the disruption posed by digital technologies. Therefore, this website and its content are designed to create a lasting dialogue based on the idea of Digital Humanities. The specific focus is on culture, media, literature, society and their crucial intersection with the “digital turn” in humanities and social sciences.

(2) Context

The Digital Humanities creative data is curated out of contributions of students who have undertaken any of the three courses entitled Digital Cultures and New Media; Storytelling for the Digital Era; and Special Topics course on Introduction to Digital Humanities. The web-hub is an example of “collaborative writing” (Landow, 1992, p. 88) as it contains 193 submissions

from the students enrolled across courses. The Chord Diagram (see **Figure 1**) has been generated from theme-based assignments that are submitted by fulltime undergraduate,

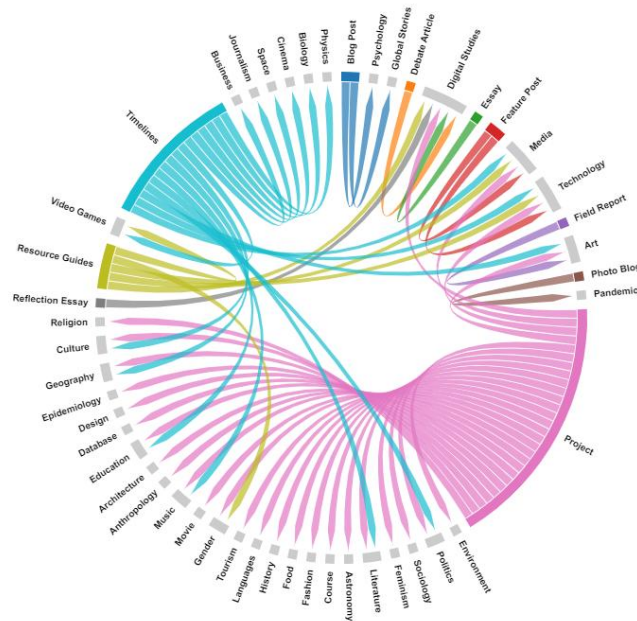


Figure 1. The Chord Diagram shows the themes covered in different categories of submissions for the Digital Cultures and New Media course from 2017-2024.

postgraduate, and doctoral scholars. In the figure, one end of the strip represents the assignment type such as Timelines (in turquoise blue), Projects (pink), Resource Guides (olive green), etc. The other end of the strip is connected to the corresponding themes covered in the assignment.

The web hub was conceptualized in 2018 by a course group. The website has grown since 2018 and has displayed projects from 2017 until 2024. Resources have been arranged in tabs as per yearly batches. A graphical representation (see **Figure 2**) of the year-wise division of the broad type of submissions shows that the website hosts the maximum number of resource guides. The overall categorisation of the submission type is as follows: resource guides (52), timelines (34), final projects (46), feature posts (15), photo blogs (12), reflection essays (12), field reports (10),

debate articles (5), analytical essays (5), and blog posts (2).

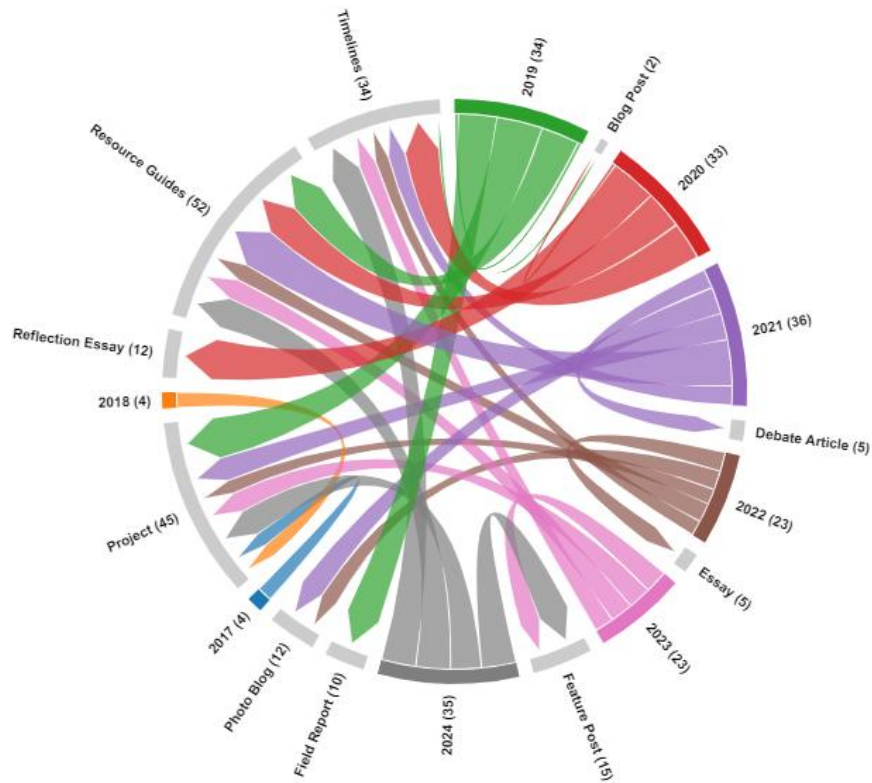


Figure 2. The Chord Diagram shows the year-wise division (2017-2024) of the types of submission in the course.

(3) Value of the Data

The purpose of the data showcased on the web pages is to evaluate the role of Internet and New Media technologies in the changing scenario of the world. We also look at the shift from the “old” to the “new” (Flew, 2008, p. 2) when we talk of New Media. The creative texts that are visualized by students revolve around both form and content. The course is thematically arranged around issues that are pertinent to the “digital civilization” (Buckingham, 2006).

The individuals, who have contributed to the web hub, come from diverse disciplines such as engineering, social sciences, and the humanities. The website offers a free space for theoretical as well as application related deliberations. The scope of the data housed on the website is not restricted to a particular type or format. The website presents viewpoints that encompass social

media analyses, digitization of texts, creative hypertextuality, media research, and artistic representations. Different tools and platforms have been used by the digital creators to create and host data including HTML, Timeline JS, StoryMap JS, PHP files, JPEG, MP4, YouTube, Animaker, Pixton, and many more. Furthermore, the web hub houses projects in languages including English, Hindi, Odia, Bengali, etc.

The rich dataset (see **Figure 1** for a view of the themes explored) of the website provides a clear possibility to explore novel methods for studying foundational cultural texts from India and the world. The multiple approaches to curation of these sets are related to cultural memories, data management, and visualization. The creators use open-source tools that can be an interesting way of engaging students for interactive learning in the classroom and beyond.

These dataset may help develop familiarity with close reading practices and represent interdisciplinary fields in an immersive web environment. The visualizations of individual students would help in creating a reference platform for other learners who may not have English as their native language. They also provide a space for accommodating cross-disciplinary dialogues. For example, a Ham/Spam data set project has helped learners who are not familiar with technology-based jargon to acquaint themselves with new modes of learning. This method of interactive learning generates enthusiasm among students across disciplines. Therefore, the digital repository is symptomatic of the rich critical resources and possibilities that Indian digital media/humanities scholars, researchers, and media practitioners may offer to the world.

(3) Methods

The curation entails collecting student-led datasets based on assignments, and requesting them for reuse on the website with permission. Processing of the data collected is pursued through arrangement in tabs that are classified according to batch year and sub classified according to themes. The sub-classification methods are; (a) designing resource guides based on specific thematic concerns. Every year ‘Resource Guides’ are generated keeping in mind the pedagogic

need within Digital Studies for Indian students; (b) use of two staple digital tools by each batch. The themes may change every year. The first tool pertains to Timelines using either Story Map JS or Timeline JS of Open Source Knightlabs; second tool involves free-thinking projects that are submitted as final assignments in Unity or ArcGIS or QGIS or Open-Source Coding such as CodeChef, or any other Visualization tool. These projects are the intellectual property of the students enrolled. The rawness of texture in the projects are meant to be deliberate.

The steps to designing the website are as follows:

Step One: The elective courses based on Digital Studies are offered in January-April semester.

The projects are announced at the start of the semester. In addition to the announcements in offline mode, all the projects/assignments are elaborated on Google Classroom interface (see **Figure 3**). These classroom interfaces are presented to the students and step-wise instructions are provided for assignment submission (see **Figure 4**).

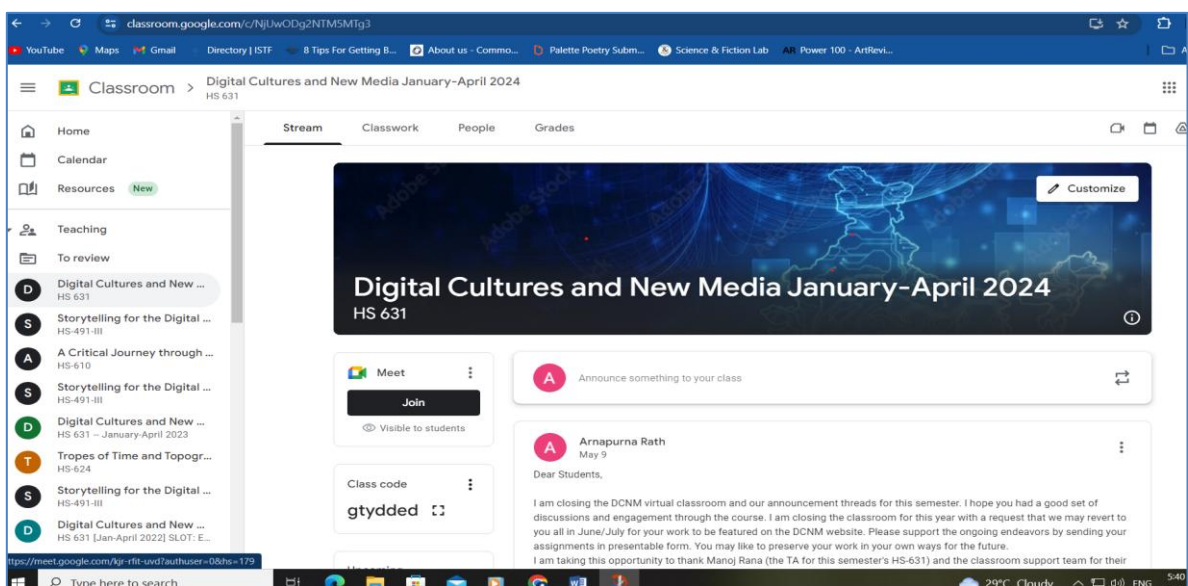


Figure 3. Screenshot of classroom interface for Digital Cultures and New Media course.

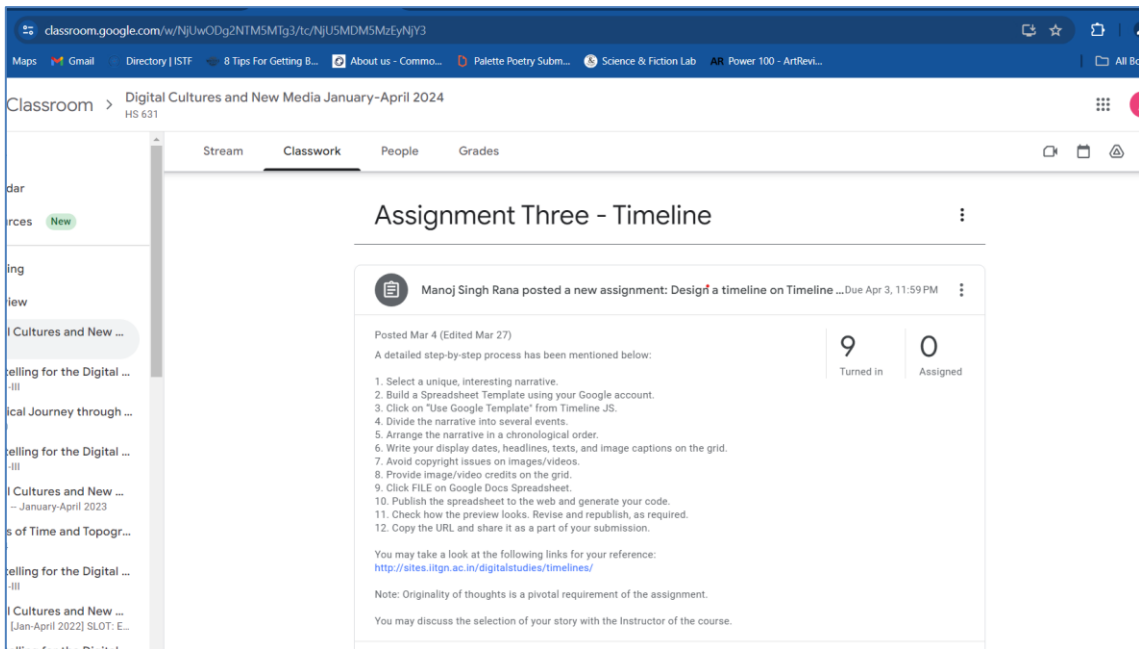


Figure 4. Screenshot of stepwise instructions shared with students at the start of the semester prepping them for the website-based open source assignment submission.

Step Two: Students work both individually or in groups throughout the semester on projects assigned, and submit these assignments once every month.

Step Three: The assignments are graded and students are given detailed feedback (see **Figure 5**) to improve their work during summer vacations and they resubmit their final text.

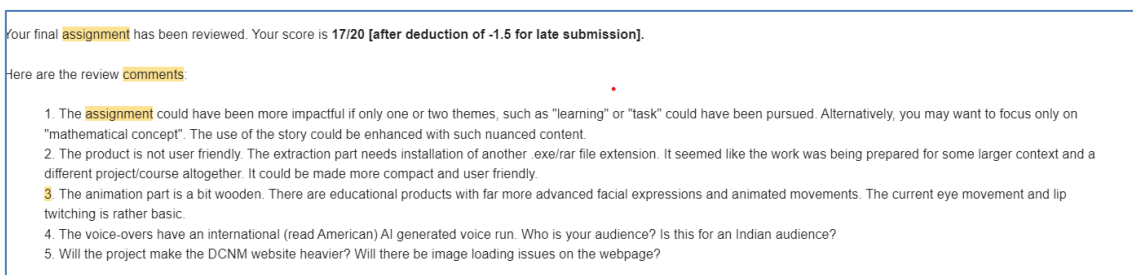


Figure 5. Screenshot of email based comments sent to students to improve their work

Step Four: The final assignments are uploaded on the website (see **Figure 6**) and are shared with the community or on social media pages for maximum traffic.

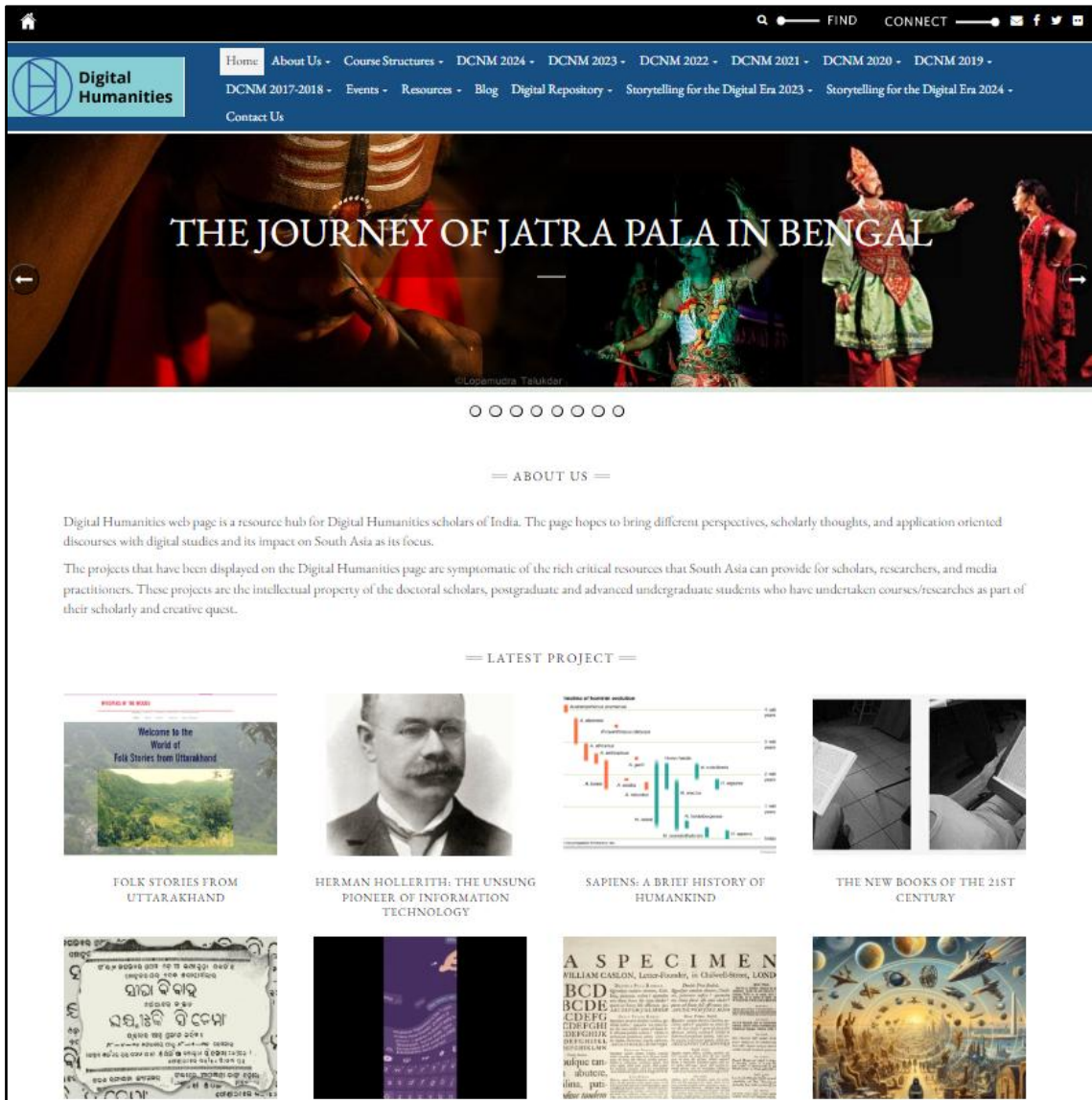


Figure 6. A screenshot of the DH website of IIT Gandhinagar

Note: The rough edges of the submissions have been preserved keeping in view intuitive expressions and creative output.

Conclusion

The existing data paper presents and describes the process of curating the critical resources in the field of digital studies with the help of a web hub. We hope that the researchers of digital studies, particularly interested in the cultural and linguistic study from India and South Asia, will find the dataset useful. Furthermore, the paper will be instrumental in guiding the learners of digital curation by exposing them to an extensive range of projects housed on the website.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization/Supervision and Writing: Arnapurna Rath; Data Curation: Manoj Singh Rana' and Software: Royson Rajan and Tej Gurung.

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Conflict of Interest

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