

---

## DHConnections: Examining the Growth of the Digital Humanities Summer Institute Community

Cole Crawford  
cole.crawford@oregonstate.edu  
Oregon State University

---

The Digital Humanities Summer Institute, or DHSI, provides “an ideal environment for discussing and learning about new computing technologies and how they are influencing teaching, research, dissemination, creation, and preservation in different disciplines, via a community-based approach” (DHSI). What began in 2001 as a small event at Malaspina University-College is now an annual 2-week affair at the University of Victoria which offers dozens of sessions and attracts a global audience. The growth of DHSI over the past 16 years mirrors the larger development of digital humanities as an academic (inter)discipline that has shifted from a niche endeavor for computational linguists and technology early-adopters to both a mainstream methodological approach and a distributed community of practitioners.

*DHConnections* examines DHSI attendance data. This website functions both as a tool for research about DHSI (and thus the history of disciplinary training in the digital humanities), and as a platform for DHSI alumni to connect with other researchers with similar interests, or to reconnect with contacts from previous DHSI sessions. In this way, *DHConnections* intersects with the “Collaborators” component of center-Net’s excellent *DH Commons* website, but is more explicitly focused on the distributed community of DHSI alumni.

The DHSI organizational team maintains an archive of past DHSI sessions and participants. With the permission of DHSI and the Electronic Textual Cultures Laboratory at University of Victoria, I scraped this collection and cleaned it with OpenRefine to remove typographical errors, standardize attendee and organization names, and validate the data. There is no participant data (only instructors) for 2001-2003, but since 2004 there is an accurate list matching every attendee to the session he or she attended. This information is

further broken out by role – student, instructor, speaker, or staff, with numerous specific subcategories of each. From 2006 onward, attendee institutional and organizational affiliations are also included. I also built a controlled vocabulary of DH topics and manually added topics to each session based on the session title and abstract when available. Together, these components form a temporal, topical, spatial, and biographical dataset which captures the attendance data for 2,678 individuals who collectively attended 254 sessions across 4,932 instances.

*DHConnections* allows users to access and interpret this dataset. Researchers can access the raw data via a JSON endpoint, but *DHConnections* also features numerous interactive interfaces which provide intuitive ways to understand the growth of DHSI through what Joanna Drucker calls “visual epistemologies ... ways of knowing that are presented and processed visually” (2014, 8). These include a searchable table of all participants; charts of the growth of DHSI over time by country, and by total institutional attendance; a face-table map of participants’ institutional affiliations; a graph which examines the popularity of DHSI session topics and when they were introduced (figure 1); and a searchable network graph of participants, linked by session attendance, scaled by frequency, and color-coded by participant role. These and other visualizations provide information about the growth of an international DH and DHSI constituency, identify major contributors and organizations within the field, and assist DH researchers interested in finding contacts.



Figure 1: Topics assigned to DHSI sessions, colored by year introduced and sized by frequency

*DHConnections* also helps users connect with fellow DHSI alumni and find potential collaborators. For example, users interested in organizing a maker fair could query the database for DHSI alumni within 200 miles who attended a session between 2010 and 2016

and are interested in the topics of “3D printing,” “augmented / virtual reality,” “physical computing,” or “maker culture and praxis.” While “interests” are currently established by proxy via a link to attended session topics, the accuracy of such a search will increase over time because users can claim their profile on the site via an opt-in process.

Once a user claims his or her profile, he or she can edit their institutional affiliations; research interests; projects, papers, or personal websites; and/or contact information (Twitter / email). Users are also able to quickly opt-out of *DHConnections* and anonymize their attendance. *DHConnections* is designed for eventual expansion based on the availability of additional data sources such as lists of members or participants in THATCamps, HASTAC, HILT, European Summer University, DH@Madrid, DHOxSS, and conferences such as ADHO.

This poster presentation will allow ADHO attendees to test *DHConnections*. As the creator and developer of the project, I will be able to answer any questions about *DHConnections* and the underlying dataset, and look forward to talking to users and gathering feedback to help improve the platform.

## Bibliography

**DHSI.** (2017). Digital Humanities Summer Institute Homepage. <http://dhsi.org/> (accessed March 30 2017).

**Drucker, J.** (2014). *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.