

Medievalist in the Loop: Putting the Humanities back into the Digital Humanities

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BIO

Dr Katarzyna Anna Kapitan is a manuscript scholar and digital humanist specialising in Old Norse-Icelandic literature and culture. Currently, she is Junior Research Fellow at Linacre College and Postdoctoral Fellow in Digital Scholarship at the University of Oxford. She is incoming Junior Chair in Computational Analysis of Written Cultures in Western Space at the École Nationale des Chartes, PSL Université. Her most recent research project involves a digital reconstruction and book-archaeological exploration of a dispersed manuscript library.

ABSTRACT

The digital turn of the past century transformed the methods of collecting, storing, and analysing information. This transformation is evident not only in the natural sciences but also in the humanities. The emergence of digital humanities has successfully integrated digital technologies with humanities disciplines, including medieval studies. The capability to aggregate data from various sources enables the formulation of novel research questions, and the application of digital tools and methods facilitates their exploration on an unprecedented scale. In my lecture, I will demonstrate that the primary limitation for digital medieval studies today lies in the quality and granularity of the data available for digital analysis. There is an urgent need to produce high-quality datasets to unlock new research avenues. Consequently, I will argue for the increasing significance of comprehensive training in both the humanities disciplines and digital methodologies. Students of medieval studies have to learn how to think about manuscripts or literary texts as data sources, how to systematically collect and manage information, and how to make their research reusable and reproducible. More importantly, they also need to gain a solid understanding of traditional disciplines such as linguistics, codicology, and textual criticism to produce datasets that enable conducting innovative research, as there is no future of digital humanities without the humanities.