

EDITORIAL

SVMMA Editorial Board

e-mail: revistasvmma.ircvm@ub.edu

doi: 10.1344/Svmma2019.14.10

For many years now, the use of digital tools in the field of humanities has been an undeniable fact. Long gone are those pioneers who, at the turn of the millennium, experimented with the possibilities offered by limited applications that required almost artisanal work. Digital tools have gradually made their way into the field of humanities and nowadays it is difficult to find a single research project in which they do not play a prominent role. The same is true in the field of teaching and, especially, in the dissemination and social use of the results of our research.

This is not the place to list the most widely used applications or their contributions to certain fields of humanities. If we did, we would surely leave out more than one, for the diversity of our disciplines has led us to implement many different digital resources, always seeking the one that best suits our needs.

Tampoc creiem necessari presentar casos concrets de projectes, iniciatives, equips o persones que han apostat per les eines digitals, ni seleccionar aquells que ens semblen més espectaculars o innovadors.

Nor do we believe it is necessary to present specific cases of projects, initiatives, teams or individuals who have embraced digital tools, or to select those that seem to us to be the most spectacular or innovative.

The most senior researchers based their approaches on different readings, from the classics to the most innovative texts that, drawing on the classics, brought a new vision to each of our disciplines. Some of the veterans found it hard to adapt to the digital wave that offered us computerised bureaucracy, the most basic link of which was and still is electronic mail. Others managed to keep up with the pace imposed by Information Technology with difficulty, while still claiming analogue as an essential resource for the development of the humanities.

The most adventurous opted to take the so-called “new technologies” into their hands and in many cases turned them into the main objective of their actions –the means became the ends. Some, however, enjoyed a backbone of their training as humanists, based on reading, which gave them a solid base on which to incorporate IT applications with criteria and analytical capacity, to

evolve in their use and to provide digital resources with contents that were linked to the global knowledge forged in Western culture over millennia.

The younger generations have contributed an important dose of daring, incorporating more digital tools and conceiving teaching, research and dissemination activities from a digital perspective. Their proximity to the older generation has allowed them to understand the importance of reading and training based on accumulated knowledge, and joint and collaborative work has produced results that would have been unthinkable only a few decades ago.

Everything seems to indicate a promising future for the humanities, were it not for the fact that for some years now we have been beginning to detect something that is not quite right. The young people currently entering universities are born in the 21st century. Their basic training is increasingly moving away from reading long, complex texts and is based on short, synthetic sentences, and, above all, on short, forceful and, above all, simple slogans. The digital world is their usual learning environment, which they have accessed without any need for prior reflection. A conversation with them on any subject of study reveals a worrying lack of depth, which can also be detected in their written and oral work. One could say that they are constantly discovering what we call in Catalan “la sopa d’all” (reinventing the wheel), as if knowledge began with them and before them there was nothing. Thus the progressive advance of knowledge, based on what our predecessors said and did, is being thwarted. Now everything starts online, everything has to be immediate, nothing needs to be planned, there is no time to read long and complex texts, there is no time to reflect, the slogan summarises everything.

It is often rumoured, however, that in the schools where the elites of the future are trained, people do read, and read a lot. If this is so, perhaps we need to start thinking that the digitalisation of the world is aimed at keeping a large part of society distracted and happy, while the elite have more solid knowledge that allows them to run the world. Students of Humanities are comfortable with an uncomplicated digital culture, in fact they are already privileged because they have access to a more elaborated knowledge than those who only have access to digital platforms for series and alienating video games.

In no case can we doubt the magnificent opportunity that digital tools offer us for the development of humanistic knowledge, as long as we are aware that they are nothing more than tools and that the use we make of them depends exclusively on us. Perhaps we should reflect on how we should use them and how to reverse the negative effects they can have in our areas of knowledge. It is now more necessary than ever to encourage the reading of long and complex texts, and for this reason we need to develop applications with content in order to turn them into our allies. The challenge, therefore, is to strike a balance between the enormous potential of digital tools and the

quality contribution of analytical ones, to take advantage of the positive aspects that both offer us in order to advance in research, training and the dissemination of the Humanities. Any step in this direction will contribute to maintaining the backbone of our knowledge, critical, reflective, analytical, and capable of keeping society alert in order to avoid, definitively, the degradation of our cultural heritage.

