I am a brown Puerto Rican female, first-generation graduate with a PhD. Until recently, I worked within academia, and now I am an independent scholar and editor for an online publication on sound studies. Despite my scholarly history, I hesitate to call myself a digital humanist. Twitter was my introduction to digital humanities, very much like Annemarie Pérez states in her contribution “Lowriding through the Digital Humanities.” I joined Twitter in 2009 out of curiosity but didn’t become an avid user until mid 2010, when I moved to Kansas City and started a new job while still having a dissertation to finish. I found an academic and professional community on Twitter that filled a void I had in my offline life. On Twitter I felt seen and heard in academic circles in a way I hadn’t before.

By virtue of being a humanist and the academics I followed on Twitter, I quickly learned that there was a thing called “digital humanities.” I had never heard the term in my college classroom or from my professors or college peers. I came across the short-hand DH and the hashtags #DH, #digitalhumanities and later #TransformDH. The medium, which lended itself to casual conversations as well as bite-sized insights, made me feel com-

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comfortable enough to follow along with these conversations and occasionally even chime in on the latest DH topic of the week.

In the meantime, as I waded through the Twitter waters of DH, I switched career tracks and eventually finished a PhD. I also became Managing Editor of the sound studies blog *Sounding Out!* and started asking questions about what publishing about sound in a digital medium means. Questions such as “why a blog and not a journal?” would send us down a rabbit hole of what each word entailed and the heft of our editorial choices. Editing for the blog enabled me to learn about the field of sound studies through practice: by engaging with the ideas of our writers and pressing questions about how power affects the way we interpret sound. As I thought about the conversations I saw on Twitter among digital humanists and under the hashtags, I often thought, “we are doing digital humanities… I think.”

I struggled to articulate our connection to DH. I could sense it… but whenever it came time for me to explain why we “did” digital humanities, I drew a blank. Imposter syndrome quickly flared up when the best response I could come up with in Twitter, Facebook, and face-to-face conversations was “we’re a blog, all of our content is available digitally” and I had “established” digital humanists tell me “making a blog is not digital humanities.” I focused on the digital aspect instead of the humanities aspect. For me, the digital in *Sounding Out!* was what made us relevant to digital humanities, and all I could see was the word-press.com blog where *Sounding Out!* has lived for over six years. By digital humanities standards, our site wasn’t anything new. I took it personally.

I hesitate to call myself a digital humanist because of the nagging feeling that I am always in disguise, always playing at being something I am not. The circular conversations about what is digital humanities (as well as who is a digital humanist, like Tressie McMillan Cottom pointed out) feed this feeling that somehow, I will never know enough or that I am not well versed enough in the theory of digital humanities in order to practice

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it. In the rhetoric of “hack versus yack,” yack (or lack thereof) can be used as a way to isolate and exclude those who want to participate, even if they are hacking.

In reality, I have been hacking, for some time. Although I heard time and time again that a blog did not constitute “doing digital humanities,” the blog has allowed us to push against the limits of digital writing about sound. In academic humanities, conversations about sound often happen on paper and in person at conferences and in classrooms. As a Managing Editor, I work side by side (virtually) with my writers, let their arguments sit in my head as they do in the heads of the writers, and engage with their point’s one on one.

However, trying to figure out what side of the hack & yack coin *Sounding Out!* was on took me away from one of *Sounding Out!*’s major contributions: we have rendered visible and audible to a broad, intellectual audience conversations about sound and sound studies. As a member of the editorial committee, I have worked for years in thinking and rethinking what academic scholarship looks like and how to give voice (no pun intended) to people who write about sound. In the process, we have helped our writers/bloggers think about what it means to practice sound studies and what are the questions sound studies is thinking about. On the other hand, our bloggers have also opened up our views and pushed our thinking about what “counts” as sound studies and who is doing sound studies.

But I know that my work as a humanist (in the digital?) should not remain only in writing, only from the sidelines of editorial work. I know that my mere presence in the academy makes a statement. The editorial committee I am a part of (comprised by all minorities: women, freelancer, junior faculty, once-upon-a-time grad students, Latina, African American) makes the statement that difference matters, and that pretending not to

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3 Tressie Cottom, “Digital Humanities: Egalitarian or Just A New Elite?” blog post, 1 November 2012.
see difference or operating from the premise that difference will make the whole weaker is just another way to silence difference.

True story that I rarely tell: as a college instructor in Upstate New York, I remember teaching in classrooms where I was the only person of color. I remember one time when I gasped quietly while my students worked. I have always wondered, how did my presence in the classroom affect them? And that leads me to think: how could my presence in the classroom, nay, in the academy, affect those who are just like me: first-generation Latinas? Like Annemarie Pérez in “Textual Communities: Writing, Editing, and Generation in Chicana Feminism,” I wonder how being a Latina editor helps me step into academic conversations I otherwise would find myself excluded from.5

And that is why I decided to be a part of a collection of essays on digital humanities, even though I still struggle to fully articulate what about my work makes me a digital humanist. People need to at least hear my voice. More importantly, other Latinas who have considered what the humanities can offer them must see me and hear me. They must know they are not alone, and that their experience, skills, and knowledge are valued.

When Tara McPherson asks “why are the digital humanities so white?”6 I want to respond with “we’re not all white. We’re just looking for a place to stand.” I offer this solution to readers today: when you approach your next digital humanities meeting or next digital humanities project, ask yourself, who is missing here? Who do I not see? More importantly, ask yourself, who do I not hear? Start with questions. It’s what we humanists do best.

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Bibliography


