Writing Sprints: An Academic Author Perspective

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Inspiration behind writing sprint

- Research into digital culture in Latin America
- Research into new forms of the (literary) book
- Modern Languages Open
Focus of the Sprint

- key topic: Modern Languages and the Digital
- how digital technologies are changing the shape of Modern Languages research and publishing:
- How are the conceptual, methodological and practical bases of Modern Languages research having to adapt to the challenges of the digital?
- What are the main transformations in our practice as Modern Linguists?
- How is the digital central to ML’s (re-)conceptualization of itself as a trans-disciplinary enterprise?
- How can Modern Languages have a transformative effect at the cutting edge of digital humanities?
The Process

- During Academic Book Week (9-13 Nov)
- 7 commissioned pieces of c.500 words from experts in their field
- each assigned particular question
- Broader group of respondents: dialogue with each piece, nuance it, and shape the debate
- all participants respond to main question
- By end of week: finalized piece emerged
- subsequently published on Liverpool University Press’s MLO platform
The Questions

- Main Question: Modern Languages and the Digital: the Shape of the Discipline
  1. (Big?) Data and ML
  2. ML and Digital Archives
  3. ML Digital as Object of Study
  4. Modern Languages and Digital Ethnography
  5. Users and Interfaces
  6. ML Research and Process
What we aimed to achieve

- Collaboration in the writing process
- New ways of thinking about academic writing
- Reflecting on the process as much as the content
- New ways of thinking the peer review process
- Make use of digital transformations in our writing process
Main Challenges

- Re-assuring contributors (visibility of the process)
- Reaching a consistent tone/authorial voice
- Timescale
- Some technical challenges
- Herding cats? Not really...
The Advantages

- Bringing academics out of their silos and working collaboratively
- Opportunities for reflection built into the process
- Various iterations of the piece
- Record of the process, as much as the end result
- A much richer output (whole definitely greater than sum of parts)
The Result...

CATEGORIES
- Main Question
- Question 1: (Big?) Data and ML
- Question 2: ML and Digital Archives
- Question 3: ML Digital as Object of Study
- Question 4: Modern Languages and Digital Ethnography
- Question 5: Users and Interface
- Question 6: ML Research and Process

RESPONDENTS AND COMMENTS
- jordanablejmar on Question 3: ML Digital as Obje...
- Emanuela Patti on Question 3: ML Digital as Obje...
- ejcayley on Kay's response to Q2: ML...
- Thea Pitman on Main Question: Modern Language...
- Thea Pitman on Tori's response to Quest...

CONTRIBUTOR DISCUSSION
- Kay's response to Q2: ML and digital archives
  November 9, 2015
- Daniel's response to question 6: ML Research and Process
  November 8, 2015
- Tori's response to Question 4: Modern Languages and Digital Ethnography
  November 8, 2015
- Claire's response to question 3: Modern Languages and the Digital as Object of Study
What We Learnt

- Advance planning is essential
- Select and brief your contributors with plenty of time
- Think through authorship and how it will work
- Writing Sprints are exhausting! But worth it...