Introduction

Digital Divides, Borders, and Liberatory Edges: Latinx DH (Digital Humanities) *Finally* Comes of Age

Isabel Martínez, Ángel David Nieves, Cassie Tanks

This collection of essays is not about beginnings or endings, but about *crossings*, or the intellectual and praxis-based journeys that have been long underway before we came together to "make" this volume a reality. The volume brings into conversation Maria Cotera's concept of *encuentros* and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's *undercommons* as we cross this critical moment in Latinx DH as it takes shape at the institutions represented by the authors in this volume. For the volume editors, *crossings* between Latinx Studies and Black Studies while remaining attentive to intersectional analyses and our own meaning-making with each other are only some of the benefits that the comparative critical ethnic studies frameworks found in this volume bring to the digital humanities.

"With our hearts in our hands, and our hands in the soil"[1]

Interstate 5 (colloquially known as the *5*) stretches the entire length of the Pacific Coast of the United States. It is a multilane, high-speed concrete titan that runs from the rainy and verdant *frontera* with Vancouver, Canada, to the *sol dorado*-drenched *frontera* with Tijuana, Mexico. The path that this beast cuts through San Diego, California—a city that, save for the *frontera* between the US and Mexico, is essentially a megalopolis extension of her

sister, Tijuana—is marked by enormous concrete pillars. Mythical indigenous Mesoamerican *Quinametzin* giants may have also roamed here, perhaps even along the same paths that the *5* now occupies in *Aztlán,* the sacred cultural homelands of the *Mexica* that encompass the lands from Mexico's *frontera* with Guatemala, parts of the Yucatán, up the Pacific Coast to Oregon, across Colorado, and east towards Texas. But unlike the *Quinametzin* who built sites of indigenous Mesoamerican ways of knowing, like *Pirámide de Cholula* and *Tenochtitlan,* the path of the *5* has been strategically used to destroy sites of Latinx knowing, making, and community.

In 1963, the *5* stomped through *Barrio Logan,* its giant concrete pillars and forty-foot retaining walls destroying large sections of the historically Mexican neighborhood nestled on the south side of downtown San Diego along the Pacific Ocean. In 1967, the *5* took more of *Barrio Logan* when an on-ramp to the Coronado Bridge began construction, connecting San Diego to Coronado, a small wealthy city with major military bases located on an isthmus just across the bay from the *barrio* and one of the most expensive and exclusionary zip codes in the county. Attempting to assuage the outrage of *Barrio Logan* residents, the city "promised" to build a park in the neighborhood underneath the interstate.

Two years later, in March 1969, local San Diego State College (SDSC)[2] students, alongside other Chicanx students from across the US Southwest, founded Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) at a student conference at the University of California at Santa Barbara.[3] Reconvened two months later by word of mouth and through flyers and news articles, the young Chicanx activists, led by Corky Gonzalez, drafted *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, a rallying cry of unity that unflinchingly proclaimed that "with our hearts in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the liberation of our Mestizo nation."[4] SDSC students interpreted this as it pertained to their immediate surroundings and returned ready to fight for *Barrio Logan*. Upon learning that the City of San Diego had no intention of honoring its promise and instead was planning to build a California Highway Patrol station on what little land remained below the *5* in the heart of *Barrio Logan*, SDSC student, Chicano activist, and Brown Beret Mario Solis and other community members organized and agitated to protect their space. Chicana feminist Laura Rodriguez, the barrio's matriarch and a public-health activist who would soon save the local Neighborhood House health clinic, laid her body in the dirt in protest while others came together as a community to plant trees in the land of their *parque*.[5] By 1971, the City of San Diego conceded, signing into law the establishment of *Chicano*

Park.[6] Plans to create an outdoor gallery of murals celebrating the history of the barrio, Mexican heritage, and Chicano futurity immediately went into motion. Painting began in 1973 and, in spite of the gender politics of the Chicano Movement spilling over into this project, many Chicano students and alumni from SDSC and San Diego City College contributed. Perhaps best known for her *Guadalupe Triptych*, which reimagines the iconic Virgen de Guadalupe as herself, her mother, and her grandmother asserting themselves while also uplifting working-class Mexican women, San Diego born Chicana artivist Yolanda Lopez, faced repeated rejection by the all-male steering committee to paint a mural in the park. Other local young women who collectively became known as Las Mujeres Muralistas including Julietta A. Garcia-Torres, Cecilia de la Torre, Rosa de la Torre, and Eva Craig, also encountered resistance for their mural proposals that spoke to their experiences as Chicanas.[7] It took Lopez's determination to obtain approval, five years after other male painters were able to begin contributing to the park. In 1978, the women were finally "granted permission" to create *Chicanas/Escuela* on one of the pillars and they quickly began their project.[8] These young women "understood exactly," Lopez recalled in a 2021 interview, "to them, it was, I think, too natural . . . it was like, We're ready to go! [laughs] They were ready to go."[9]

In New York City, Puerto Rican students were also joining African-American students in solidarity to protest discriminatory conditions in the city and its higher education system. By the mid-late 1960s, Puerto Rican and Black students were taking their places in campuses across the City University of New York (CUNY) and challenging the university system to revise policies and practices to increase admissions of and support the knowledge-building of their peoples via curriculum and engagement with the surrounding communities. This came to a head in April 1969, when students at Harlem-based City College led a campus-wide occupation and formed their own free university, the University of Harlem, for two weeks. Advertised by word of mouth and hand-sketched, mimeographed flyers, students were joined by their elders including Betty Shabazz and Adam Clayton Powell and sponsored a free breakfast program, held political education classes about anti-colonial efforts across the world, hosted free walk-in clinics, and more. Students also distributed typewritten flyers that laid out their Five Demands, which included the establishment of Black and Puerto Rican/Third World Studies. By the following year, Professor Federico Aquino-Bermúdez, along with other Puerto Rican educators, were tapped as faculty to staff this new department of Urban and Ethnic Studies (UES)

(Reed 2021). Efforts such as these were occurring across CUNY including at Brooklyn College where students in the Puerto Rican Alliance (PRA) and the Brooklyn League of Afro-American Collegians also presented a list of eighteen demands to the administration to transform the admissions policies and curriculum to support Puerto Rican and Black students.

Hostos-CUNY professor Inmaculada Lara-Bonilla points out, however, that Puerto Rican and Latinx activists consciously kept the unique needs of their communities separate, though were still supportive of, African-American specific needs in the movement.[10] The colonization of Puerto Rico, bilingual education, and need for "Latina/o interethnic inclusiveness" were concerns that bridged community, students, and higher education. This solidarity facilitated the establishment of Eugenio María de Hostos Community College (Hostos), the first fully bilingual college in the northeastern region of the United States that symbolized that culturally responsive and decolonialized higher education is not only a civil right, but a right of "(im)migrant communities."[11] In a very real sense, these Latinx students and faculty, with the many others across the United States, began, long before their designations, creating the frameworks for what Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Latinx Studies programs and departments could and should be.

¡Ya estábamos aqui!

These are just two examples of how, even before HSIs and Latinx Studies programs officially emerged, Latinx students and supportive educators combined media, scholarship, and activism to remain rooted to their history while working towards a more expansive future. Long before being recognized as best practices for first-generation Latinx students, these educational activists enacted liberating pedagogical and institutional principles while integrating interdisciplinary multimedia scholarship that were not yet labeled *digital humanities*. In doing so, however, Latinx students and educators have had to cross many *fronteras*, including digital ones of today, that, like the manufactured US-Mexico border, are social constructions that were instantiated and perpetuated by educational institutions to privilege whiteness and dehumanize Afro-, Indigenous, and Mestiza Latinx students.

These *fronteras*, however, are not fixed, and in many cases Latinx students and scholars have had to navigate constantly shifting borders that *cross them*. Pushed to the margins, Latinx students and scholars are oftentimes systematically denied the digital tools needed to realize their scholarly

creativity and liberation. Ironically, however, Latinx students and scholars are disproportionately subject to weaponized technologies utilized to surveil them, at the US-Mexico border but also across all the other geopolitical spaces discussed in this volume. In spite of these violences, Latinx students and scholars have persisted against neoliberal forces, creating and curating radical knowledge-building in the face of the more palatable "multicultural" foci that are creeping into Ethnic Studies spaces.[12]

Crossing Digital Fronteras is concerned with challenging these shifting neoliberal borders aimed at weakening Latinx Studies and other studies of power and empowering students and scholars to take on digital humanities work that advances Latinx ways of knowing that explicitly disrupt these divides. This means thinking and even working outside the confines of existing structures of higher education in order to promote critical student self-empowerment at all grades through more sustainable, long-term strategies for self-discovery, and self-definition. The essayists in this volume provide us with pedagogical interventions, guidelines for new approaches, and pathways for working in ethically engaged practice within our own Latinx communities.

Digital Humanities?

What is digital humanities? Some authors dedicate entire sections of their essays to digital humanities, while others do not mention the term once. Yet, all of the *Crossing Digital Fronteras* essayists engage deeply *with,* and contribute *to,* the digital humanities. How is this so? Let's begin by unpacking the term and exploring the problems with *digital* before reviewing how HSIs and Latinx Studies programs are in a unique position to push the field forward.

Attempting to provide a definition for *digital humanities* has been, and remains, elusive and highly subjective. This debate remains relevant only because Latina/o or Latinx Studies in the United States, much as Afro-American Studies, African-American Studies, and Africana Studies, was resistant to digital humanities as a project of whiteness as originally conceived and defined until it was harnessed by coming from across critical ethnic studies in the 2010s. So much so, that it has become a comedic (for many) point of discussion amongst practitioners. Twitter account "DH Defined" is a bot that aggregates definitions of digital humanities and randomly tweets them out, at once complicating and making light of the difficulty of defining the field.[13] On March 18, 2009, digital humanists attempted

to define it by organizing the first "Day in the Life of the Digital Humanities" (Day of DH), a social media event that invited scholars to share, in English, how they conceptualize digital humanities and how the projects they were working on with each other embody their definitions.[14] Growing from eighty-five participants to thousands, Day of DH has created the space (in Spanish and French versions as well) to (re)define and (re)imagine DH annually on social media. In 2014, Jason Heppler compiled the Day of DH responses into a spreadsheet and created What Is Digital Humanities?,[15] a website that randomly displays definitions scraped from Twitter. Responses range from the data driven "I see the digital humanities as a set of methods that apply information technologies to humanities problems. For me, DH presents a set of tools to use when collecting, analyzing, and visualizing data—whether that data is derived from text, images, code, sound, or any other medium."[16] To the humanities focused "A range of definitions (or rather, ways of understanding): humanities explored using a range of digital technologies for explanation, expression, reflection and knowledge production/creation."[17] To the future focused "Digital Humanities are the first step towards Future Humanities."[18] The range of these responses represents the evolution of digital humanities as both a subfield of the humanities and medium for expressing humanities knowledge. Rooted in what is called *humanities computing*, an academic pursuit that developed in tandem with the development of computers, DH first emerged during the mid-twentieth century when emerging computer companies like International Business Machines (IBM) were interested in digitizing literature in partnership with institutions of higher education. Over the decades, the computing company developed various machines for test taking, personalized education, and, of course, data processing. By 1964, IBM gathered together scholars interested in humanities computing at a conference to discuss ideas, possibilities, and problems to overcome.[19] Soon after, English and Western European literature were first digitized on punch cards that could be put into early computers and read on screens with hypertext capabilities utilized to make the digitized text more interactive. As digital media became more sophisticated—thanks to the evolution from punch cards, to floppy disks, to CD-ROMs—so too did the means of using the digital for academic inquiry.

During the late 1980s, scholars began developing markup languages that allowed a string of symbols, or tags, to be added to sections of digital text that indicated what that section of text was and its relationship to the text as a whole. A group of academics from the United States and Canada worked to create a standard for using markup languages for academic

inquiry and, in 1994, the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), which grew from humanities computing, published guidelines on systematically categorizing and defining sections of humanities text for scholars.[20] These guidelines are largely considered the beginning of as well as a point of division in contemporary digital humanities. Emphasizing hybridity, Susan Hockey argues that "humanities computing has had to embrace 'the two cultures,' to bring the rigor and systematic unambiguous procedural methodologies characteristic of the sciences to address problems within the humanities that had hitherto been most often treated in a serendipitous fashion."[21] The combination of "the two cultures" of computing and humanities establishes interdisciplinarity as a feature, but it also introduces assumptions that it is the *computing* aspect that made the pursuit rigorous, not humanities inquiry. Additionally, it establishes a primacy of the English language and cultural interpretations rooted in Western thought. Marking up digital text significantly affects how it is read, interpreted, processed, and interacted with—especially by students. Ernesto Priani Saisó and Ana María Guzmán Olmos, both scholars of philosophy, technology, and digital humanities at la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, argue,

> Pero lo más significativo de colocar una etiqueta en una palabra es que esa operación interpretativa queda registrada y es puesta a prueba con el procesamiento del texto. De cierta forma, con el marcado, hacemos algo muy parecido a lo que hacía la persona de la que hablábamos al principio: marcar significa hacer ese procedimiento de selección y de decisión sobre lo que sería deseable encontrar en un texto sin tener que leerlo todo detenidamente. Pero, a diferencia de marcar poniendo una línea o un color, lo que hacemos al usar TEI es utilizar palabras para etiquetar. Las palabras con las que marcamos tienen un sentido, no son formas o colores, sino conceptos que agrupan los objetos marcados adhiriéndose a ellos. Poner <name> a un objeto que también es una palabra, significa el surgimiento de un nuevo sentido que acontece en esa unión.[22]

> (But the most significant thing about placing a label on a word is that this interpretive operation is recorded and is tested with the processing of the text. In a way, with marking, we do something very similar to what the person we were talking about at the beginning did: marking means carrying out that selection and

decision procedure about what would be desirable to find in a text without having to read it all carefully. But, unlike marking by putting a line or a color, what we do when using TEI is put words to label. The words with which we mark have a meaning, they are not shapes or colors, but concepts that group the marked objects by adhering to them. Putting <name> to an object that is also a word, means the emergence of a new meaning that occurs in that union.)

Because using TEI text and standards does some of the "thinking" for students and allows them to skim text without deeply reading or engaging in a culturally informed heuristic process, variations "in the interpretation, selection and application of those codes by different groups, individuals and cultures" is minimized in favor of a "universalizing, Western-centric approach to the representation of cultural artifacts."[23]

Thanks to college teachers and scholars who continue to push against the racialized whiteness of the field, digital humanities has advanced beyond purely data-driven and computationally dependent investigation of the humanities. In recent years, DH has shifted its focus here in the US and is now changing its recent, largely Eurocentric text-based scholarship to begin to address racial injustice and anti-colonialism. That focus has propelled a radical shift in scholarship, and through an intersectional and feminist framework that examines factors of race, class, gender, and sexuality, has allowed humanists to research messier and more complex relationships between people, power, and the state across a whole range of scales and time periods. Digital humanities is increasingly a field that can be used to more fully explore the potentials of interdisciplinary academic inquiry, knowledge creation, pedagogy, and public engagement that the essayists detail in this volume. Multimedia storytelling, critical digital archiving, and podcasting are just a few examples of how the digital humanities are leveraged by faculty found in Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Latinx Studies programs and departments to enhance the cultural and linguistic experiences and learning of Latinx students specifically, and can improve outcomes for all BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) students, generally.

Los problemas con "lo digital"

Digital humanities projects and pedagogy now receive much attention and accolades by colleges and universities (though much less appreciation when

it relates to faculty tenure or advancement, an issue that is outside the scope of the volume but tangentially related). However, the emphasis on digital work and digital productions compounds the deep-rooted and structural problems with *the digital* in the United States. Dan Greene argues that the United States' emphasis on combating poverty by providing access to the digital and wedding the funding of organizations *to* this "access doctrine" is deeply neoliberal and forces traditional sites of information access, such a public libraries and schools, to massively reconfigure their organizations to attempt to reproduce the culture of tech start-ups.[24] This is "how the problem of poverty is transformed into a problem of technology" and "bootstrapping" in order to cross the "digital divide,"[25] inequalities that all worsened during the Trump administration and the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Latinx DH: Defining a Situatedness

As suggested earlier, SDSC and Hostos are just two examples of where we might begin the story of Latinx Studies, here in the US, on the West Coast and East Coast, respectively. Beginnings are by their very nature sites of contestation, most often politically, and in these spaces over the rights to claim ownership over new knowledge construction and field formation. The debates over What is DH? have filled volumes and made important contributions to our understanding of the needs for more accountability concerning power, privilege, and access, while also remaining particularly attentive to intersectional frameworks of analysis and community engaged methodologies but have remained relatively silent about DH's place in Hispanic-Serving Institutions and on Latinx issues. Situating the precise moment when and where Latinx DH began isn't the task at hand here, but instead we are focused on bringing to light the ways in which digital technologies have always been an important part of educational reform in our communities and have been reflexively built into the various sorts of activism we have undertaken to promote social change. Social movements tied to higher education reform, especially those in Chicana/o Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, Black Studies, and Dominican Studies have always included multimodal tools and multimedia forms of production including zines, use of photocopiers, mimeograph machines, large format printing, and other "technologies" that help expand our definition of digital humanities in relation to social justice. As Lorena Gauthereau has argued, a US Latinx Digital Humanities must consist of certain methods, and "Critical to work in this field is a methodology that prioritizes community narratives and puts

into practice an ethics of care when dealing with data. Rather than create projects about or on the community, ethically conscious projects should approach history with and for the community. This means protecting data and the people represented by these data, as well as presenting material in ways that are accessible to the community they are meant to serve and represent."[26] Methodologically, we would agree with Gauthereau, but her definition is primarily focused on the ways in which Western scholarship has situated Latinx communities as static communities to be studied rather than the dynamic, autonomous communities that they are, subject to shifting border lines or colonial expansion. This is where the work of scholars like Vicki Ruiz, Fred Moten, Edward Soja, bell hooks, Mary Pat Brady, and la paperson begins to talk to one another and suggests that another way forward is possible (a third way?), and always has been, when we return to the methodologies of community engagement, social justice, and practices of care from which so much of our work originated before the neoliberal turn and the over professionalization (where we are only agents of accreditation) through the liberal arts, writ large. In other words, a Latinx DH that articulates a clear methodological framework that prioritizes community engagement, ethical practices, complex narratives, archival preservation, data protection, and community asset management all maintained by community organizations might actually move the much-needed conversations forward. The essays in this volume move us in that direction.

Several projects are however worth noting because they have historically been long-standing Latinx DH projects that have not received proper scholarly attention, or the kinds of resources that other more mainstream projects have garnered with less attention to community engagement. Maria Cotera's Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory project, formerly at the University of Michigan, now at The University of Texas at Austin, is a project that brings together "researchers, educators, students, archivists and technologists dedicated to preserving imperiled Chicanx and Latinx histories of the long Civil Rights Era."[27] The CPMR has modeled how a digital history project can involve undergraduate students in high-level humanities-based research while also maintaining connections with community leaders and former activists across the country involved in the long multiethnic Civil Rights Movement. The archival collection maintains over seven thousand digital records and over five hundred video clips in what Cotero describes as *encuentro* and exchange of new knowledge(s). An earlier project that did receive NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities) support, the Bracero History Archive: Collaborative Documentation in the Digital Age,

developed at George Mason University in 2007 by Roy Rosenzweig, Jack R. Censer, and Tom Scheinfeldt was one of the first collaborative, bilingual, online archives documenting the Bracero Program, which brought Mexican guest workers to the United States between 1942 and 1964. The Bracero History Archive brought critical attention to contemporary debates on immigration policy and made clear to many in Latino Studies, at the time, how understudied the Bracero Program had been in our understanding of border studies, masculinity studies, race relations, and transnational studies, more generally.

This volume was originally conceived only a few short months after the Trump administration was sworn in, when its insidious campaign of legislative policy decisions and social media attacks on Black and Brown communities across the US had not been yet fully rolled out. This was also years before this administration bungled responses to the double pandemic of COVID-19 and white supremacy reflected in the murder of George Floyd and the anti-Asian racism following the advent of the public health crisis.[28] Still only partially understood today, this campaign against minority communities persisted throughout the length of Trump's presidency, resurrecting and repurposing the earlier culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. The culture wars of those decades had been coupled with a policy of Reaganomics and neoliberalism that disavowed progressive social policies and took aim squarely at communities of color. With the selection of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education and Ajit Pai as FCC chairman, President Trump was clearly signaling a return to a model of educational reforms that would be cash-strapped by design and would continue to downplay the need for access to resources and services that would help alleviate existing disparities and repair crumbling infrastructure—both physical and technological—in public schools across the country.[29] This neglect would be laid bare during the pandemic when the image of two Salinas City Elementary School District girls sitting on the pavement outside a local Taco Bell—huddled together, cross-legged on the short sidewalk outside the restaurant and using some low hedges as back support, with one nearby adult presumably supervising—while working on their homework assignments and attempting to access the restaurant's free Wi-Fi, circulated. In Salinas Valley of California, just south of the resource-rich home of tech start-ups, the Bay Area, the digital divide among Latinx communities couldn't have been made more apparent, as school districts there worked to provide access to free hot spots to families. The Salinas Valley—the social and political epicenter of the Latinx and Filipino civil rights movements for farm workers of the 1940s—remains

one of the most culturally diverse areas in the US today, and here as well as elsewhere, Black and Hispanic[30] adults remain less likely than whites to say they own a traditional computer or have high-speed internet access at home. According to a Pew Research Center fact sheet, between 2019 and 2021, little progress was made to close the digital divide with Black and Latinx adults still lagging behind whites in terms of desktop or laptop computer ownership and home broadband access.[31] While Black adults increased their home broadband access from 66–71 percent during this time period, only 65 percent of Latinx adults reported possessing home broadband by 2021; 80 percent of white adults possessed home broadband in 2021, an increase of only one percent over the two-year period. In particular, access to digital technologies including higher-speed broadband service, cable, or fiber optics is most often found among those who are US-born Latinx, or in English-dominant households.

Additionally, the zero tolerance disciplinary policies—just one aspect of the school-to-prison pipeline—were reinforced by DeVos's own appointees, and helped to increase incidences of violence that further criminalized Black, Afro-Latinx, Indigenous Latinx, Native and Indigenous, and Southeast Asian children and youth.[32] However, this revival of culture and "Border Wars" of the 1990s and the reassertion of Republican right-wing rhetoric about Brown bodies across the southern border also suggest to us opportunities to understand the space of the *fronteras* as places where contestation and the liberatory and rehumanizing potential of the digital exist simultaneously. The interdisciplinarity of the digital humanities, and more broadly of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) ways of knowing that predate the field, make this field especially critical to this work.

Despite the digital humanities turn to embrace interdisciplinarity and "deep collaboration" as argued by Patrik Svensson in his 2011 essay "Beyond the Big Tent," it is BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) faculty and students who often conduct this kind of digital work more regularly and expertly.[33] However, digital humanities in general has not been particularly attentive to Latinx communities or improving their outcomes, nor has it devoted energies to propose theories, methods, and practices for engaging in a Latinx DH.

For us personally, the emergence of the *Big Tent* as a metaphor for a bounded digital humanities also provided a certain amount of intellectual cover to the generation of students who had succeeded an earlier generation of students who, in turn, had openly rejected the institutionalizing of feminist theory and cultural and ethnic studies in academe—a topic

Martha Nell Smith has expounded upon elsewhere.[34] We would argue that this next generation of scholars also used the idea of the *Big Tent* to avoid engaging with discussions about race and racial inequalities in the field's history and ongoing exclusionary practices in faculty and staff mentoring, review, and funding. In the absence of race and any kind of racial analysis, or an implicit belief in the post-racial myth of America, DH has been working "to normalize racial inequity and deny that racism is dividing and devastating our society."[35] To borrow from colleague Ibram X. Kendi's essay in *The Atlantic*, "Our New Postracial Myth," DH scholars such as Dorothy Kim, David Golumbia, and others have similarly echoed this sentiment as they describe the systemic impact of "everyday whiteness" and entrenched color blindness.[36] Even in a field-changing volume such as Kim and Koh's *Alternative Historiographies of the Digital Humanities*, Latinx DH is only mentioned once and in relation to a 2018 special issue of *American Quarterly*.[37]

Today, it is no longer acceptable that a legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized color blindness persists—one that has erased from the history of digital humanities the contributions of BIPOC faculty, professional staff, and students across the academy. Scholars including Jessica Marie Johnson, Eduard Arriaga, Alex Gil, Lorena Gauthereau, and Lisette Acosta-Corniel—to name a few key researchers (who appear either as essayists or are mentioned in the pages of this volume)—have each made significant scholarly proposals as to the contours of a Latinx DH, its practice, its engagement, and its purpose for liberation and rehumanization of Latinx students not just at HSIs or enrolled in Latinx Studies, but across the United States.[38] At its center, as scholar Jessica Marie Johnson articulated in conversation with Melissa Dinsman,

> The digital—doing digital work—has created and facilitated insurgent and maroon knowledge creation within the ivory tower. It's imperfect and it's problematic—and we are all imperfect and problematic. But in that sense I think the digital humanities, or doing digital work period, has helped people create maroon— free, black, liberatory, radical—spaces in the academy. I feel like there is a tension between thinking about digital humanities as an academic construct and thinking about what people do with these tools and digital ways of thinking. DH has offered people the means and opportunity to create new communities. And this type of community building should not be overlooked; it has

literally saved lives as far as I'm concerned. People—those who have felt alone or maligned or those who have been marginalized or discriminated against or bullied—have used digital tools to survive and live. That's not academic. If there isn't a place for this type of work within what we are talking about as digital humanities, then I think we are having a faulty conversation.[39]

The tools, pedagogies, and methods used by the authors of this volume exemplify the importance of using the digital humanities to resist neoliberal *bootstrapping* and the *access doctrine*, both of which are entrenched in whiteness, especially at Hispanic-Serving Institutions and in Latinx Studies curriculum. A return to our pedagogical and methodological roots in community engagement and multiethnic organizing can inform a Latinx DH that centers on the historical narratives of our communities while also engaging in future social change.

Latinx-Serving Digital Humanities

According to leading HSI scholar Dr. Gina Ann Garcia, to move beyond the institutional definition of Hispanic-Serving that focuses solely on 25 percent Latinx student enrollment, to be *truly* Latinx-Serving, colleges and universities must exhibit both high levels of outcomes *and* high levels of cultural support for Latinx students. To do this, educators must embrace that Latinx students are, as expressed by cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa in her essay "La Conciencia de la Mestiza," caught between (at least) one culture and another while also being in all cultures at the same time.[40] This way of being, simultaneously between and among different worlds, captures the ways in which Latinx college-age students maneuver their complex racial and ethnic identities and their stratified socio-political standing in the two United States. Understanding better ways of engaging Latinx students in higher education requires a critically informed engagement with their origin stories and their current lived experiences, not just merely enrolling them in high numbers. Employing these methods can push digital humanities centers, Latinx Studies programs, and, ideally, entire campuses towards becoming a supportive, rather than ostracizing, third space for Latinx students. Significantly, their personal goals as they work to secure their degrees often means something very different from what their families and even traditional faculty,

staff, and administrators might expect. Students are constantly crisscrossing borders, moving beyond those borders, and making new sites for exploring identity, shared experiences, nation, citizenship, labor, and humanity. Simply securing larger enrollments of Latinx students in higher education but failing to meet the specific needs of these students is unacceptable.

It is also in this *third space* that access to digital technologies remains as divided as access to innovative pedagogies in higher education. It is our belief, however, that here, Latinx digital humanities also possesses its most liberatory promise. By advocating for additional and distributing available resources in equitable and innovative ways, we can better ensure that all our students are exposed to justice and belonging and not only neoliberal policies of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The authors of *Crossing Digital Fronteras* are practitioners of pedagogy and theory that use the digital humanities to authentically and wholly serve their Latinx students by engaging with culturally informed ways of knowledge building that simultaneously improve the outcomes of their students and increase their confidence and critical engagement with the digital.

It is important to understand that in *Crossing Digital Fronteras,* we implicitly and explicitly include the Afro-Latinx in our use of Latinx DH for a more accurate, richer, and fuller historical and cultural understanding of Latinx DH (see chapter 3, for example). However, it is also important to keep it in an area separate and apart from this volume. There is currently ongoing important work by Jessica Marie Johnson, Alex Gil, Eduard Arriaga, Kaiama Glover, and others that provides a framework for a body of scholarship that looks critically at race and the Afro-Latinx diaspora. Such research in the US, Caribbean, and across Latin America deserves its own stand-alone volume of methods, theories, and practices given the silences and absences around Blackness across the Americas, the Caribbean, and elsewhere.

Latinx Studies

Students enrolled in English 1B piled into a classroom on the San Diego State campus during the fall 1968 semester. Sunlight likely streamed into the room, gently illuminating the undergraduate students as the professor introduced one of the semester-long assignments: to keep a daily journal reflecting their thoughts and experiences. One student, Arturo Casares, initially found the task difficult:

Wednesday, September 25, 1968

This is the first time I have had a class where the instructor has given a daily writing assignment. I have never been able to write everyday because there are too many other things to be done, besides I enjoy reading more.[41]

Arturo certainly had many things to do—he had recently moved to San Diego from Texas to gain an education, had a young son to care for, a mother and family in Long Beach, and he needed to balance work with school. On top of this, he was navigating higher education as a former field worker and a Mexican-American student. Arturo, like Latinx students across the United States, longed for community and joined the fight to establish Latinx Studies programs that were culturally and politically informed.

Tuesday, October 8, 1968

I went to the MAYA [Mexican American Youth Association] meeting today. I've signed up for three committees. We are trying to get a Mexican-American major established at SDSC. I think it is a good idea because a lot of people don't know too much about this very important minority group which is the largest in California. We also talked about the "huelga" and Cesar Chavez. Someone suggested that a committee be formed for the purpose of asking Hubert Humphrey if he supports the grape boycott when he comes here later in the month . . .

Saturday, October 12, 1968

Let's boycott California grapes now. It's not fair for farm workers to earn something like one-dollar forty cents an hour for six months and then live in camps like the ones in Tulare County for the next six months. No one likes to live in a shack made of two wooden rooms. The conditions are really bad for these people . . . **my people** because I'm a Mexican American. I remember when I was growing up in Texas and had to work in the fields. It's not very pleasant. The government has done a good job of keeping us down but now we have a good thing going. We need the support of the people. If we can try to raise

standards, I am sure that the gap will be narrowed. I wonder how Lafferty ever got his job. I guess there are many conservative cats around that still follow the old ways.

Things have to change.

It was a nice day today. I had my son over and we played some Beatle albums. They are beautiful people.[42]

The more Arturo became involved with MAYA, the more dismayed he grew at the oppression and exclusion of Latinx history and triumphs—in all its indigeneity and complexity—from United States education.

Tuesday, October 15, 1968

Mexico has a pre-Hispanic culture that is fascinating. First I want to say that in all my years in school I had never been exposed to this [sic] indigenous cultures: Chichimeca, Toltec, Maya, Incan, Chimu, etc. They were so advanced in astronomy, architecture, and government. Of course I did learn all about Western civilizations. I think that the American system of education has completely ignored the Indian cultures of the Americas which is really sad. There is enough evidence in this field to create a specific area of studies. Just as we study particular phases of European history we should study the steps of development in the Indian cultures in the Americas.[43]

Arturo's journal is quoted extensively here because he articulates a yearning for what Nicholas Natividad and Cynthia Wise argue Latinx Studies provides beyond simply an education "about" Latinx-ness; it centers belonging, community, growth, activism, and a means for students who have been othered and dehumanized by the United States to reassert their humanity on their terms (see chapter 2). With their histories and thus, humanity, absent from textbooks, students conceived the dream of Latinx Studies in order to improve the conditions for their communities and students who came after them. It has always been student-centered, and it remains so. Nearly fifty-five years later, students like Arturo, who are caught between cultures, can explore their complexity and express their knowledge in Latinx Studies programs that critically engage with the digital. The digital pedagogy and practices of Latinx Digital Humanities (Latinx DH) detailed in this volume are tools for continuing this vital work.

A growing number of Latinx DH projects are receiving national attention but many remain invisible because of the limitations of funding and the peer-review system. Two such projects are Alex Gil and Kaiama Glover's the Caribbean Digital and their peer-reviewed journal *archipelago/a journal of Caribbean digital praxis*. These two projects that emerged from Columbia University and Barnard College helped make possible Glover's next project, In the Same Boats: Toward an Intellectual Cartography of the Afro-Atlantic, which traces the movements of intellectuals across the Atlantic world including Afro-Latinx cultural actors.[44] Most recently, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has provided support to the Caribbean Digital Scholarship Collective (CDSC) with a $5-million-dollar four-year grant.

Another effort, Roopika Risam and Alex Gil's Torn Apart/Separados project,[45] mapped the location of private juvenile detention facilities and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) facilities as volume I of their work. In the follow-up hackathon at the International DH Conference in Mexico City, they sought to rapidly prototype maps that would correlate information on money and ICE funding, but to also raise deeper questions about the role of DH and other humanistic work in the service of social justice.[46] The Detainee Allies project out of the Hispanic-Serving Institution San Diego State University (SDSU), along with the SDSU Digital Humanities Initiative and local grassroots activists, brought much-needed attention to the plight of Latinx, Latin American, LGBTQiA+, and many other immigrants being held at the border in deplorable conditions at the Otay Mesa Detention Center. Through a letter writing exchange between the detainees at Otay and students and local activists, the detainees told their stories while the students and activists worked to identify and code human rights violations within the written testimony. The letters provided important insight into the lives of asylum seekers and migrants both before and during detention in these for-profit US-run centers. As a result of this project and the mounting evidence found in these letters, the California State University System's Retirement Fund divested its holdings associated with the companies that profited from the maintenance, food preparation, and/or overall management of these detention centers.[47]

Lastly, the University of Houston's Latino cARTographies project features Houston's social and geographic landscape of visual Latino art, past and present. Under the leadership of Center of Mexican American Studies Director Dr. Pamela Ann Quiroz, this visual archive centers the artistic and cultural contributions of Houston's Latinx artists as well as the communities in which their art is and was created. At a time when museums' commit-

ment to European art canons is changing at a glacial pace, this project, in bilingual, portable, digital boards, immerses users into a dynamic experience that challenges our understandings of art as well as how it is presented and accessed.

These projects all act to uncover as well as recover lost, ignored, and purposefully hidden Latinx histories. All addressing disparate segments of Latinx histories that have been neglected and even whitewashed, these projects are tangible examples of how social justice and a Latinx DH come together to make social change possible. In this volume, Mancilla and Vukelich-Selva and Baeza Ventura, Gauthereau, and Villarroel have each also leveraged the space of the academy as a place where forms of insurgent practices in Latinx Digital Humanities may take shape but also occur outside the classroom and within respective community partnerships. While Mancilla and Vukelich-Selva outline how partnerships with community-based organizations in the borderlands can deepen students' understandings of geopolitical spaces, Baeza Ventura, Gauthereau, and Villarroel describe the kind of scaffolding that has made the team at the Hispanic-Serving Institution, University of Houston, and Arte Público Press successful in their outreach efforts to other Latinx communities—communities that are themselves now employing meaningful archive-making and literary practices.[48]

Organization of *Crossing Digital Fronteras*

This volume is organized into three broad sections that a) illuminate the need for rehumanizing undergraduate curriculum at HSIs, b) connect and broaden Latinx student knowledges and pedagogies through technology, and c) challenge colonial narratives and centering projects that focus on recovering Latinx histories. To further characterize Latinx DH, a field that is as fast-evolving as the rest of DH—we frame the subsequent chapters in relation to their critical significance during yet another epoch of attempted minority disempowerment (see voting rights, abortion rights, attacks on DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] initiatives) across huge swaths of the US.

Firstly, the need for rehumanizing undergraduate curricula is critical, and Nicholas Natividad and Cynthia Wise (both of New Mexico State University) in chapter 1, "Toward a Rehumanizing Latinx Studies Curriculum," address what is broadly understood as *rehumanization*—contemporary attempts to counter long-standing and widespread historical and practices that dehumanized or objectified and exploited Latinx communities—with

the caveat that illegitimate and marginalized peoples were subject to these same dehumanizing practices. Natividad and Wise argue that, as such, communities must understand themselves and others as minoritized beings. Natividad and Wise also understand Latinx Studies and Latinx DH as integral to disrupting processes of dehumanization by positioning resistance and promoting curricula of rehumanization beyond brick-and-mortar classrooms and through the use of digital tools and technologies. In digital spaces, these technologies facilitate learning that is decentralized and has the potential to be counter hegemonic. They assert that Latinx Studies provides an education that not only can move between ideological positionings to break the appearance of mutual exclusivity of oppositional practices of consciousness and social movements but is also decolonizing and healing.

Practice in DH and Latinx DH is critical to ensure that technology is made readily available, with hopes that Latinx student knowledges and pedagogies are connected and broadened. In chapter 2, "Digital Pedagogy in a Multicultural Setting: Learning History and Connecting through Technology," Lissette Acosta Corniel of CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College documents how she utilizes technology to "center student voices and identities" and, in doing so, students become "co-constructors of not only knowledge in the classroom, but also of assignments and policies." Acosta Corniel has been critical of historical as well as current social and political processes that have shaped Latinx experiences. As a corrective, resources used by Acosta Corniel include Google Docs, Blackboard discussion boards, and the First Black Americans archive. In particular, as a Caribbeanist she draws on experiences and history of the Afro-Latinx peoples of the Dominican Republic and then shares their analyses across technologies.

In chapter 3, "Latinx Spaces, Discourses, and Knowledges: Student Voices and the Rehumanization of Latinx Identity in the United States," authors Isabel Martínez, a former associate professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, and Irma Montelongo, associate professor of instruction and the director of the Chicano Studies program at The University of Texas at El Paso—two professors separated by 1800 miles—recount how they connected two classrooms in HSIs located in two far-apart immigrant gateway communities, El Paso, Texas, and New York City. Joining the two classrooms are digital tools such as videoconferencing and shared digital platforms, where students and professors in these two classrooms learn, in depth, about the lived experiences of members of each other's classrooms. Practices include discussions with each other about the shared readings via videoconferencing and students from both campuses collaborating through

shared digital spaces. Here, they bridge experiences as they share knowledges, and swap analyses of texts to produce new, hybrid knowledges that are rooted in two different Latinx geographic locales.

In chapter 4, "Translanguaging and Multiple Literacies: Podcasting as a Linguistically and Culturally Sustaining Medium in a Multicultural Teacher Education Course," Jen Stacy, Mildred Ramos, and Adriana Correa, all affiliated with Cal State University, Dominguez Hills, discuss the use of podcasting to promote translanguaging and the use of Latinx students' linguistic capital in academic settings, in a particular setting where bilingualism is not understood as the *full* mastery of two or more individual (separate) languages. The authors recount how two Latinx students approached their professor to expand the boundaries of their assignment to include their natural linguistic practices. Outside the constraints of typical classroom surveillance, translanguaging provides students with spaces to process concepts in their native languages. Conversely, it allows professors another opportunity to learn from their students. With nearly 30 percent of the US K–12 public school system identifying as Hispanic, this chapter provides insight into how popular and readily available digital tools can be used in teacher education programs to validate educators' bicultural and bilingual identities and those of their students as well.

The saying goes that we are condemned to repeat history if we remain ignorant of it, and so it is urgent that historically victimized communities contest colonial narratives and Latinx students must continue to recover Latinx histories. In chapter 5, "US Latinx Digital Humanities: Rehumanizing the Past through Archival Digital Pedagogy," authors Gabriela Baeza Ventura, Lorena Gauthereau, and Carolina Villarroel, throw a spotlight on the US Latino Digital Humanities program (USLDH) and its Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage (Recovery Program) that is housed at the University of Houston. This archive challenges long-reproduced, unfailingly disparaging narratives about Latinxs. With students trained to use Omeka, an open-source web publishing platform, they create their own exhibits, maps, or other digital representations of underrepresented archives housed in the Recovery Program. In both the English and Spanish languages, these students at the University of Houston learn and also critically engage with Latinx histories. Grounded in an "ethics of care" they identify, excavate, curate, and then exhibit un/undertold Latinx stories and also develop, with guidance, their own processes to do so.

Delis Negrón, a transnational Puerto Rican newspaper editor, poet, translator, professor, and activist challenged national borders and fluidly