Digital Humanities Summer Institute: Accessibility in Online Environments

By Ashley Hughes

**Objectives for This Presentation:**

* Describe the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) in Victoria, Canada
* Share what I learned in the DHSI course entitled Accessibility in Online Environments
* Explain why we should make digital projects and the courses we teach more accessible

**What is DHSI?**

“A time of intensive coursework, seminars, and lectures, participants at DHSI share ideas and methods, and develop expertise in using advanced technologies” (“DHSI Homepage”).

**What We Learned:**

* Week long course
* Mix of lecture (read disability studies scholarship) and lab (used tools to create and evaluate digital resources)
* Taught me that digital projects should:
  + Account for a diverse variety of users and their needs
  + Be accessible through many senses
  + Meet emerging standards for accessibility (social model of disability, user-centered and universal design)

**Who Should We Reach?**

* Low-Vision or Blind
* Color-Blind
* Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing
* Limited Mobility
* Neurodiversity

**What Resources Can We Use?**

* 4Cs 2016 Accessibility Guide
* Anne-Marie Womack’s Accessible Syllabus
* WebAIM: Web Accessibility in Mind
* Accessible Campus
* The Digital Commons (.org)

**Best Practices:**

* Proper HTML and headings (for screen readers)
  + Try [CodeSniffer](http://squizlabs.github.io/HTML_CodeSniffer/) to make sure you are within [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/).
* High contrast colors (for low vision/color-blind)
  + Try [CheckMyColours](http://www.checkmycolours.com) to make sure your project has sufficient color contrast
* Include alternate text and descriptive captions for all images
  + Try the [WAVE Chrome Extension](http://wave.webaim.org/extension/) to evaluate your web content for accessibility issues
* Use large, Sans Serif fonts like Arial, Verdana, and Helvetica
* Offer handouts and other materials in accessible formats such as HTML (avoid PDFs if possible)
* Present information in a variety of ways: visual, verbal, auditory, callisthenic, so people have options.
* Make this information accessible during and after a session

**Recommendations:**

* Remember that accessibility benefits everyone
* Continue to educate yourself
  + [Check out my brief intro to universal course design on Google Docs](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sVIf0FnP0_eLYDKjYdiXiIcimqWLyGgDUSe_MXBpiks/edit)
* Encourage your institutions to formalize accessibility training