

Prototypes and the Sensory Sphere: New Approaches to Digital Humanities

Digital Humanities (DH) research is of particular interest to scholars of history as its associated tools, methods, and practices can harness the capacity of Information Technology (IT) in order to represent temporally and spatially distant sites and cultures. In the context of ancient history, there are several projects that rely on IT in context-based visualizations and prototypes of time-spatial cultural dynamics. These projects indeed, offer insight into historical concepts of urban planning, cultural topography and architecture.

In this paper, I argue that the majority of these projects rely primarily on ocularcentric conventions created to express representational models of knowledge, while their ability to delve deeper into the sensory/experiential sphere of its audience/user appears limited. To address this issue, I draw on sensory-orientated critical making techniques as methodological device. I suggest that such non-teleological, sensory approaches of digital reconstructions may allow us to delve deeper everyday life in ancient settings and can offer novel insight into the experience, rather than functionality, of the (often relentlessly visualized) antiquity. In conclusion, I propose methodological guidelines applicable to DH research and discuss how sensory approaches can help provide insight into poorly understood aspects of ancient life.