



HAL
open science

Embedding Digital Humanities in a Classics Master Programme

Aurélien Berra

► **To cite this version:**

Aurélien Berra. Embedding Digital Humanities in a Classics Master Programme. Digital Humanities 2017, Aug 2017, Montréal, Canada. , 2017. halshs-01578679

HAL Id: halshs-01578679

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01578679v1>

Submitted on 29 Aug 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Embedding Digital Humanities in a Classics Master Programme

Aurélien Berra

Université Paris-Nanterre
aurelien.berra@parisnanterre.fr

CONTEXT

In 2014 the Classics Master programme at Paris-Nanterre University, France, evolved and was renamed “HUMANITÉS CLASSIQUES ET HUMANITÉS NUMÉRIQUES.” It is now also available for distance learning, via videocast and a Moodle environment.

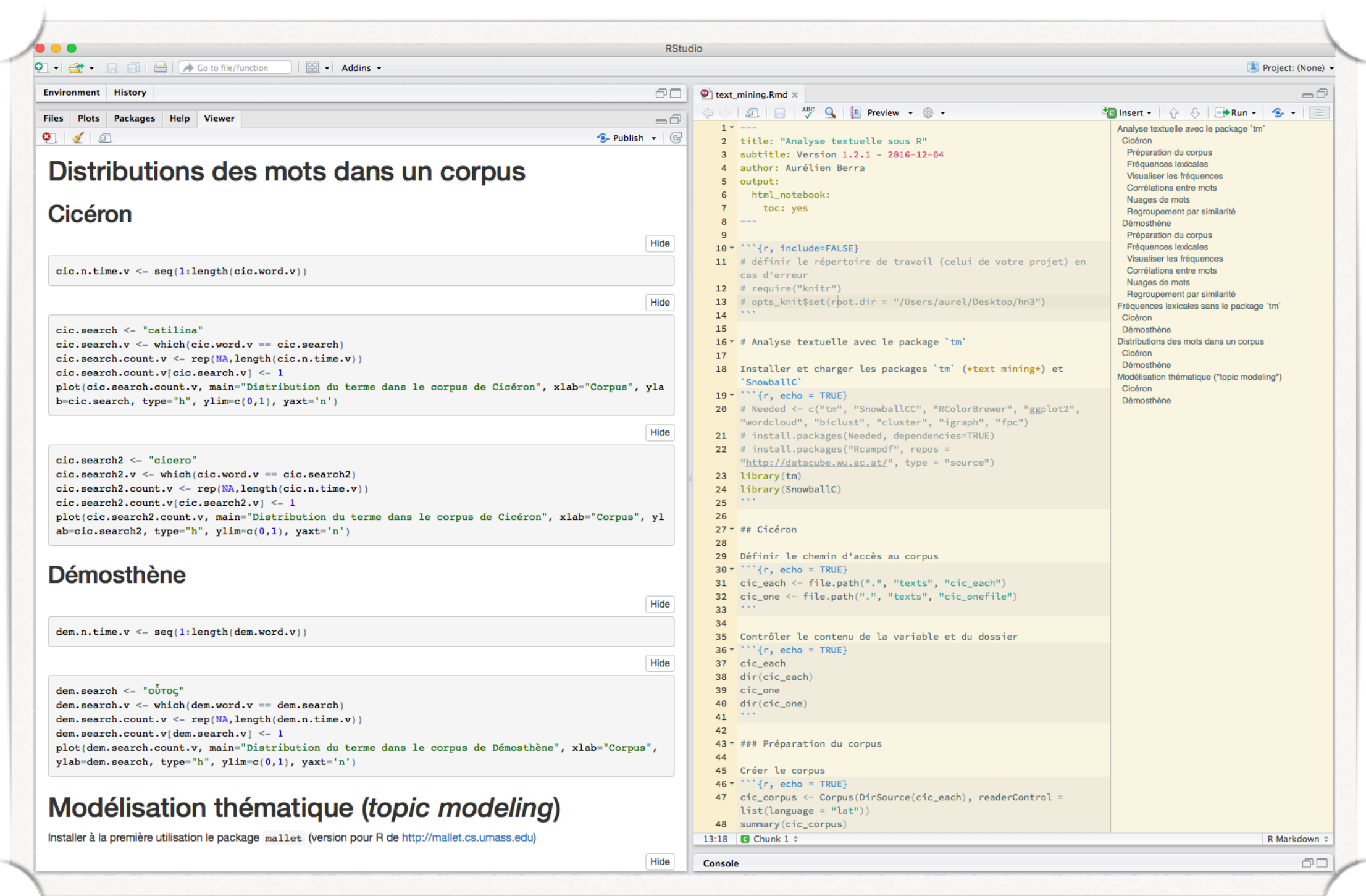
Why?

- ✦ Seize the occasion of the European LMD curricular reform.
- ✦ Take advantage of the presence of a faculty member “doing digital humanities” (me).
- ✦ Save endangered classical humanities, one programme at a time?

The course aims at embedding Digital Humanities into PHILOLOGY, the traditional backbone of classical studies. I could design it and experiment quite freely. It is a work in progress.

My main sources of INSPIRATION are online syllabi and course materials, as well as publications like the following:

- ✦ Jockers, M. (2014). *Text Analysis with R for Students of Literature*. New York: Springer.
- ✦ Rockwell, G. and Sinclair, S. (2016). *Hermeneutica. Computer-Assisted Interpretation in the Humanities*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- ✦ Guerreau, A. (2004), *Statistique pour historiens*. Paris: Éditions en ligne de l'École des chartes, <http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr>.



Text analysis in RStudio

OVERVIEW

Semester 1: Digital Humanities 1 (12 sessions, 24 h) | Semester 2: Collaborative Project (6 sessions, 12 h)
Semester 3: Digital Humanities 2 (12 sessions, 24 h) | Semester 4: Personal Projects (6 sessions, 12 h)

S1 & S3 CLASSES

- ✦ Readings: tutorials, theory, history
- ✦ Bibliography management: Zotero, Zotero group, citation styles
- ✦ Project analysis: Greek and Latin online libraries
- ✦ Linked Ancient World Data: spatial data, prosopography
- ✦ Scholarly editing
- ✦ Introduction to textual analysis: statistics, graphical representation, corpus exploration (Greek TLG and Latin PHI indexes, Demosthenes and Cicero)
- ✦ Computer-assisted pastiches, imitating features statistically identified in the original texts

Digital literacy elements (character encoding, naming, plain text, Unix commands, versioning, shared folders and files, etc.) are gradually integrated as students practice editing and analysis:

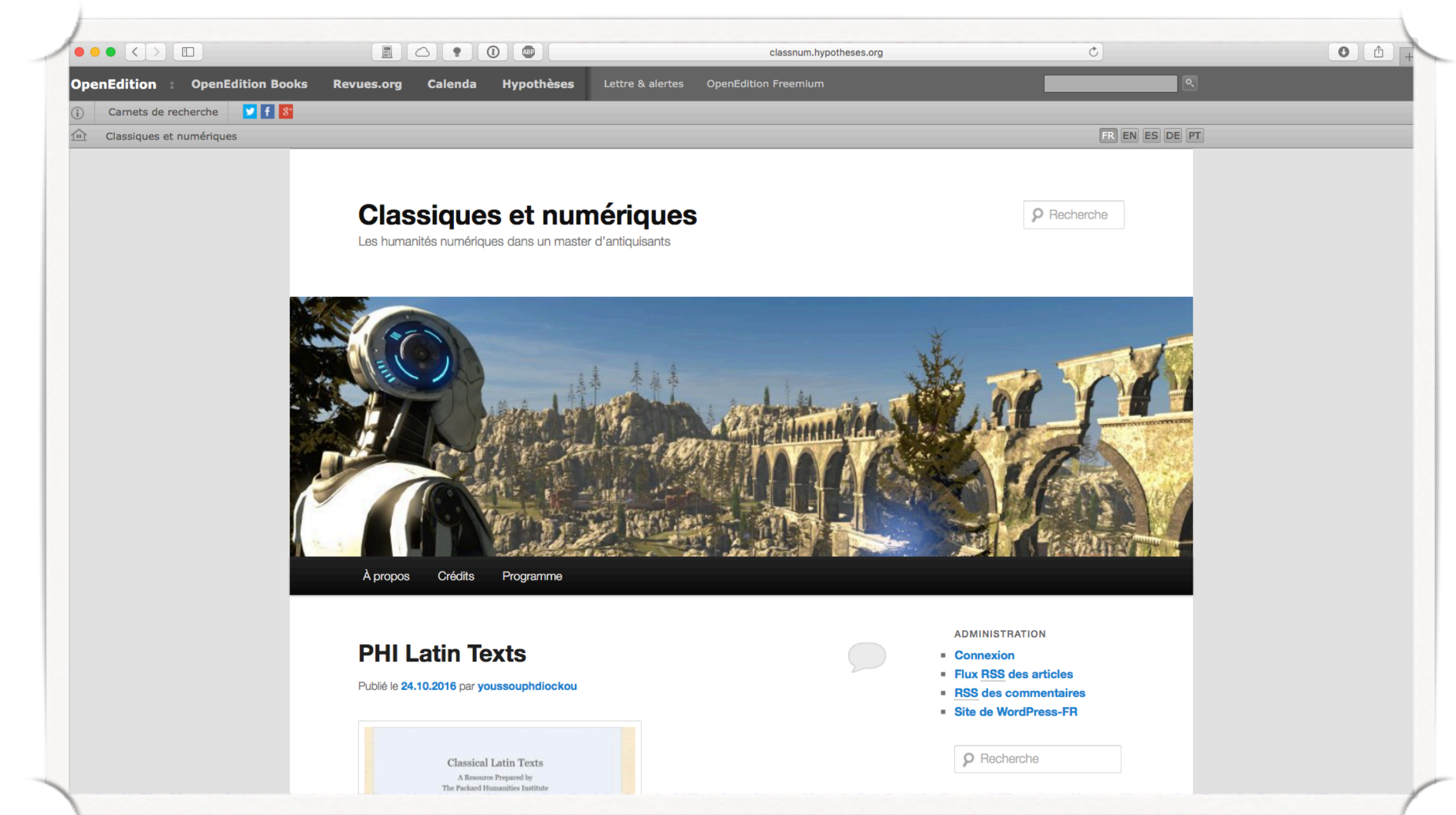
- ✦ Recreate traditional scholarly editing in Markdown, HTML, TEI XML (S1)
- ✦ Discover computer-assisted analytical and visualisation methods with the *Voyant Tools* software environment, then work in a literate programming framework implemented in R Markdown: corpus preparation, frequencies, correlations, word clouds, clustering, word distribution, topic modelling (S3)

S2 & S4 PROJECTS

- ✦ Collaborative Projects: encode and analyse place names in a Late Latin poem on the Pelagios Project platform, Recogito; prototype an online edition/exhibition of passages selected in the *Odyssey*, with the students of another MA specialised in Web design
- ✦ Personal Projects: corpus and text analysis for the final research mémoires

PRINCIPLES

- ✦ Avoid the lecture and the demo mode
- ✦ Favour active participation, learning-by-doing and flipped classroom teaching: links, not slides
- ✦ Understand resources: formats, rights, affordances
- ✦ Insist on the critical, reflexive dimension of digital procedures
- ✦ Promote data re-use and free resources like Pandoc, Framapad tools, Atom editor, Open Refine, RStudio, *The Programming Historian*, *TEI by Example*, *TEI Critical Edition Toolbox*, *Omeka*
- ✦ Develop an open publication culture through the blog maintained by the students (WordPress on the *Hypotheses.org* platform) and a shared Zotero group library
- ✦ Create an awareness of the surrounding communities: Digital Classics, Digital Humanities
- ✦ Foster collaboration between the students and with other projects or programmes: the Pelagios Commons project on the annotation of place names, the Sunoikisis Digital Classics network in its effort to collectively define a core syllabus



Classiques et numériques, the blog of the MA
<http://classnum.hypotheses.org>

QUESTIONS

Here are some ASPECTS of the current development of Digital Humanities pedagogy that make comparison difficult but essential:

- ✦ As a separate enterprise or within established disciplines
- ✦ With or without infrastructural, collegial or cross-departmental support
- ✦ Various time formats
- ✦ Different modes of external collaboration

This experience makes me reflect on SPECIFIC POINTS:

- ✦ With no technical support, much time is lost
- ✦ Integrate distance learning is tricky
- ✦ Establishing a link to other seminars in the programme is still a goal: methodology, critical editing, linguistics, literature
- ✦ Keep small groups: vital to the model, perhaps not sustainable
- ✦ Students have very heterogeneous levels and motivations (or: there are no digital humanities natives)
- ✦ Several teachers should be involved (in progress)
- ✦ Institutional strategy: go beyond DH as a trend
- ✦ Collaboration is a great experience in itself, but often a frustrating one: communication, schedules, unfinished tasks
- ✦ More hours than a specialised introduction (e.g. to the TEI), less than an intensive training or a full DH programme: more time is needed for collaborative projects; non-textual dimensions are neglected
- ✦ Competences and professional value: is it an intellectual or a professional training?

What do *you* think?