

Call for papers: international conference, sponsored by the Asociación de Hispanistas del Benelux (www.ahbx.eu)



The Humanities in the age of the Digimodern User

The impact of the 'digimodern user' on research and teaching practices in the humanities

University of Groningen, Netherlands, 1st – 2nd November 2018

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Central concern: Digimodernism represents a challenge to the humanities

21st Century society is characterised by what Alan Kirby terms “digimodernism”, in which ephemeral mediatisation, new information technologies, and the destabilisation of the traditional text play a central role.¹ With the destabilisation of the traditional text, the role of the academic as mediator is decentred: when a large part of the population has permanent access to a wide range of knowledge on the internet, a popular perception emerges that experts and authorities are now redundant - a notion that, as Tom Nichols affirms in the *The Death of Expertise* (2017), is skilfully utilised within populist rhetoric.² During the period in which we most need specialist skills in critical media consumption, there has been a rapid and problematic disassociation between the ‘digimodern user’ and the academic world, which necessitates an accompanying readjustment of research and teaching practices in the field of the humanities.

Castells asserts that: “As in all moments of major technological change, people, companies, and institutions feel the depth of the change, but they are often overwhelmed by it, out of sheer ignorance of its effects” (10). What are needed, thus, are new strategies for generating and imparting knowledge in the digital age.³ New users of academic production, from academics and students to society more broadly, require the ability to critically assess the

¹ Kirby, Alan. *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture*. New York: Continuum, 2009. – Castells, Manuel “The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective.” In *OpenMind Change, 19 Key Essays on How Internet is Changing our Lives*, pp. 2014.

² Nichols, Tom. *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

³ Rosenberg, Marc J. *E-Learning: Strategies for Delivering Knowledge in the Digital Age*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2001.

new media and content that characterize the digital era, as well as an effective verbalization of this critical thinking. They require, in other words, '21st-Century Skills'.⁴ This presents two fundamental challenges to the humanities in general, and Hispanism in the Benelux, in particular: First, if we want to maintain a productive link with the present, academic research and teaching practices should be oriented towards media innovations and develop new models to capture the complexity of this new cultural production and the 'new user'. Second, despite making use of new media and content, research and teaching must maintain a critical distance from new media developments and their effects on research and teaching practices themselves. The medium is not neutral: it influences the construction of knowledge and the identity of the user.

In light of the challenges described, the present meeting will focus on two main perspectives: 1) The digital user as the object of study and teaching and 2) The digital text as a tool of study and teaching.

The conference will take place on the 1st and 2nd November, 2018 and brings together international Hispanists to contemplate, in a multidisciplinary field, methodological innovations focused on the user's perspective. It is aimed at researchers from the fields of cultural studies, linguistics, and the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language. All interested parties are invited to submit 250-word proposals for:

- A. Workshops between 20 and 45 minutes
- B. Presentations or round tables of 20 minutes

Any of the following suggested sections and sub-topics can be considered:

1. The digital user as an object of study and teaching: What new research topics and teaching arise in the fields of cultural studies, linguistics, and the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language, as a consequence of digital living? Presentations can focus on:

- Identification and profile of the digital user
- The digimodern user as a student
- Empirical study of the self-identification of the digimodern user
- Global and transnational aspects of the digimodern user
- The effect of new media on the active and passive linguistic competences of the digimodern user
- The teaching of skills in the critical use of digital texts
- Affective aspects of the aesthetics of blogs, vlogs, wikis, blognovelas, internet-vocabulary, online multilingualism, international telecollaboration, etc.
- Cultural representations of digital texts (e.g. The representation of Twitter, Instagram etc. in movies, novels, political discourse) and perception of these representations by users
- Cultural narratives about new media (new media as a threat, as a sign of the future, as devices of control, etc.) and perception of these representations by users.

2. The digital text as a tool for study and teaching: How does digimodernity affect research practices in the fields of cultural studies, linguistics, and the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language? Presentations can focus on:

- The use of blogs, vlogs, etc. for the dissemination of academic content
- The use of wikis to generate research questions from social actors outside the academic field

⁴ Trilling, Bernie & Charles. *Twenty-first Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

- The use of blogs, vlogs, wikis, blognovelas, internet-vocabulary, online multilingualism, international telecollaboration in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language
- The use of digimodern texts for 'blended learning' purposes (Perusall)
- Reflections on the epistemology of new media (what forms of knowledge represent and promote new media?)
- Reflections on the effect of the use of new media on the educational process

Please send proposals in Spanish or English to ahbx2018@gmail.com before April 1st 2018. The selection will be communicated early May.

Programe updates: <https://www.rug.nl/research/icog/news/2018-01-09-cfp-humanities-digimodern-user>