

CoreDH

Episode 4 — Jonathan Girón Palau

09 May 2023 | Listen on Soundcloud

Guest: Jonathan Giron Palau, [La Red de Humanidades Digitales](#)

Hosts: Hannah L. Jacobs (ADHO's Communications Officer), Erdal Ayan and Anna Sofia Lippolis (ADHO's Communications Fellows)

Hannah: Welcome to Core DH, a podcast that explores the stories and people behind the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations.

Erdal: Hi everybody, this is Erdal Ayan.

Anna: And hi, this is Anna-Sofia Lippolis from the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations, ADHO in short. And welcome to the fourth episode in our podcast series about the stories of ADHO's core, its constituents' organizations.

Erdal: Today we are hosting Jonathan Girón Palau. Jonathan is an academic editor at the Research Institute of the University and Education of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he currently works as editorial coordinator. He has a degree in philosophy from La Salle University, a diploma in academic digital publishing from the National Distance Education University of Spain, and a master's degree in communication and digital humanities from the University of the Cloister of Sor Juana. His work focuses on digital publishing, scholarly communication, and digital humanities. He is currently secretary of the executive committee of the Red Humanidades Digitales, a member of the Women's Writing Research Group at UNAM, and the Heritage Program organized by the IASUE and the Bibliographic Research Institute. Welcome, Jonathan.

Jonathan: Thank you. I'm really glad to be here with you guys.

Anna: We could start to talk a little bit about the history of RedHD and why was it created and how did you get involved with it?

Jonathan: Yeah, sure. La Red de Humanidades Digitales, or RedHD for short, was formed back in June 2011, when a group of academics meet and discuss to promote and support the formalization of digital humanities. Because in Mexico and mostly all along Latin America, it's not like a field that you can see in the universities.

Just starting with some degrees, master's degrees, and there's one PhD, but not much more. So since then, the objectives of the RedHD are to promote and strengthen the communication

between digital humanists in Mexico, but in all Latin America. To train human resources, to make and prepare documentation for good practices, and to promote digital humanities projects in general. And you know, dissemination of events, promotion, discussion, and trying to make the recognition of the field. That's the main objective and that's how it started. In recent years, since the beginning, we always have a good communication and collaboration with other organizations in the region, particularly with Argentina and Colombia. But in a few years, we're trying to make a big effort to work together, the three organizations, and trying to include everyone in the field in Latin America. For example, right now we're working on a book that mainly focuses on digital humanities projects in Latin America. Also, trying to make a week of HD in Latin America. Everybody in the region can come together, talk about their project, and meet each other.

Anna: That's impressive, I have to say. And I also have to say, and Erdal can confirm it, that as communications fellows of ADHO, we've seen that RedHD has a lot of engagement, and you're also very, very active on social media.

Jonathan: Yeah, I'm glad we have Rocio and Carlos in communication, and we have Isabel Galina in the ADHO. She was one of the founders of RedHD, along with Ernesto Priani. We are happy and lucky to have them in the team.

Erdal: What kind of tasks or works do you have in the organization that you are working for, I mean in HD?

Jonathan: In HD, I'm right now the secretary of the executive committee. One of the projects we're working hard on right now is this week of HD in the region, with Argentina, Colombia, and other digital humanities in Latin America. That's one of the things we are working hard on. We also want to, for example, this year, we have a collection of digital humanities in Spanish, a series of books. Last year, we launched the fourth volume, and this year we want to make the invitation for members to participate, so we can launch the fifth volume of the collection, for example. And we always try to help others in their events of digital humanities and try to make more visible the investigation in Mexico and in the region. That's, for now, the daily work of the RedHD, for example.

Erdal: Are you also holding some courses or training for the people who are going to focus on digital humanities methodologies, for example, summer schools or workshops?

Jonathan: In Red HD, we work in different workshops, and a lot of the members are professors, and some of them work with these digital humanities methodologies. But for now, as Red HD, we are just this year trying to make some workshops about digital humanities methodologies and theories, but we are just starting with that as a group, as an association.

Anna: Can you tell us a bit more about your work and also what DH theories and methods are you most engaged with?

Jonathan: Yeah, sure. Well, right now I'm working in mainly two projects of digital humanities. The first one, with the one I get closer with the Red HD, was I'm working with this research group about history's women writings. So we start, well, first localizing this text, because at the beginning, like everybody said, that in Colón, in Mexico, the woman didn't write only Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, but nobody else. But Professor Clara started to find a lot of these documents of writings in archives. So we start to marking it up with TEI, TEI Standard, and we start collaborating with Biblioteca Digital de Pensamiento Novo Hispano, that is a Noblespine digital library archive that is directed by Ernesto Preani. So that's a project that I have been working for almost like six, seven years, and we are still marking these women's writing and we are making this repository about other collections. So that's one of my main works in digital humanities. And the other thing I'm doing right now with my dissertation is I am researching the role of digital objects in academic communications in humanities in Latin America. So my focus is to consider not traditional digital objects and the use they have in Latin America, what kind of digital objects the researchers are producing, communicating, how they can achieve this in the universities that don't recognize digital humanities field. So how they get the money to make these projects or if they have luck and what can incentivize this production of digital objects, mainly because here in Mexico in the humanities and Latin America, they only recognize books and papers, mostly. So it's really hard to recognize like a data set and a repository and, you know, different kinds of visualization data collections. So it's really hard. So I'm studying this for my dissertation.

Anna: Yeah, it's crazy how a lot of the things in digital humanities are so time consuming, like markup. And also, you have to also have this kind of philosophical approach to it because it's not as simple as it seems. But at the same time, these things and these operations are so complex and time consuming, are not recognized. This is not a problem, like an isolated problem in Italy as well. So it's getting hard to make some journals that are online only recognized. And we're not even talking about data sets and so on. So it's crazy. Yeah.

Jonathan: Yeah, it's really hard. It's like people really are passionate about their projects and really like to share their findings and document their process. And they have like this urge to experiment and communicate these findings. So really, for the most part, the enthusiasm of people can carry on this kind of project.

Erdal: Jonathan, I was also wondering about the funding issues for the potential DH projects or the publications, etc. Because as you mentioned, it is really hard to get access into digital materials, even though they are digitalized or they are, let's say, analog data. But how is the condition dealing with the public funding or the state funding for some DH projects that you are planning to conduct in the future?

Jonathan: Well, first, for example, in the Red HD, we don't have public funding. We have mainly two incomes, the affiliates. And we make every two years a DH conference, kind of. It's an Encuentro HD. And for example, last year we had the fifth one, paid to come in and give all the key speakers. For example, this year, Maria Fanador from Cuba, Ania Rosa from Cuba and Maria Josea Fanador from Colombia. And so that's one of the main incomes of Red HD. In the university, for example, well, you have your salary. That's the only security you have. And

sometimes you can apply for, for example, here in Launam, where I work, there are these things called PAPIT. So they give you additional money for specific research. But you have to frame it in like a traditional humanistic inquiry. And digital humanities mostly are like side projects, products. So the same goes with the national agency CONACYT. So the main aims, they have to find a place in the traditional fields. But researchers always find a way to put some digital humanities lines along the way. So that's mainly the financing situation here in Mexico. And again, the enthusiasm of all the people and the students that helps their professors, their researchers. That's, that's the main thing. The enthusiasm and the, yeah, the enthusiasm of all the people about digital humanities projects.

Erdal: Actually, at first I thought there might be some funding or financial support from the North American countries to Latin America, as happens in the European countries. For example, the European Commission provides some funding for some projects provided by the associations or created by the associations, etc. Do you get such kind of fundings from North American countries? Because they have already created kind of more common or well-prepared networks in DH with the organizations and associations, etc. But then it seems it is much easier for them to get access into funding and provide it or deliver it to third countries or to Latin America. What would you say about that?

Jonathan: I have access to that funds. I never tried it. And I'm not familiar with that, with those ones. For example, in my research for my dissertation, I interviewed different researchers from Mexico, Colombia and Argentina. And I only get reported from them one funding from German Center Research. But most of them were national, if they were lucky, national funded. Not much money, but enough to have a couple of assistants and just a little bit infrastructure. That's mainly my experience. But again, I'm not, I'm kind of new in the field.

Anna: There's much to talk about, so we could go on for hours. And also thank you so much for your participation.

Jonathan: Thank you so much for you guys. Thank you, Erdal. Thank you, Ana.

Erdal: Thank you, Jonathan, for your coming.

Anna: If you enjoyed this episode and you'd like to help support the podcast, please share it with others and post about it on social media. And to catch all the latest from Accro, you can follow us on Facebook and on Twitter @ADHOrg. Thanks for listening and see you next time.

Hannah: This podcast is a production of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations. ADHO promotes and supports digital research and teaching across all arts and humanities disciplines. We act as a community-based advisory force and support excellence in research, publication, collaboration and training. Learn more by visiting ADHO.org.

Resources:

Jonathan's Profile: <https://hcommons.org/members/jonathangp/>