Essential Points re: MU’s Digital Humanities – Revised by Twyla Gibson

A number of constituencies at MU have recognized the need for the services of a “technology concierge”—and the humanities are no exception.

The Digital Humanities Commons serves as the center for MU faculty who wish to apply technology to scholarly questions and for graduate students who seek training in 21st Century digital research skills. However, expanding our expertise and education in digital research at MU beyond our current capacity can only be accomplished through effective coordination with the resources within the Division of IT—especially given the consolidation of those resources through the MU IT Transition Project (ITTP) see: http://transition.missouri.edu/

The particular tasks and skills needed to support the range of DH projects at MU vary widely. Perhaps the closest job description to “technology concierge” would be “interaction designer” (see below). Candidates for this position would also need to have sufficient knowledge of the University IT infrastructure to allow them to be an effective bridge or connector between the faculty and grad student researchers at the DHC and the University IT. The DHC retains several highly qualified Graduate Student Assistants who work with faculty and their senior graduate students to conceive and develop humanities projects that take advantage of digital research methods. The incumbent in this position would also students must be provided with additional training and supervision. Graduate students are involved in conceiving and designing digital research projects and in identifying, prioritizing, and selecting possible open source tools and technologies and integrating these via custom programming. GRA s who staff the DHC have five month, nine month, or twelve month contracts. Students who enroll in a semester long course or a graduate certificate through SISLT may extend their involvement through independent study.

The initial request is for a staff member within the Division of IT who can dedicate ten hours per week to facilitating DH projects. The designated individual will assess needs, troubleshoot problems, and help identify potential solutions – engaging students where practical. This work entails helping to gather and exchange ideas, diagnosing and resolving technical problems, and developing effective solutions. The staff member will help coordinate relevant activities and insure that they are accomplished on a timely basis. This individual will help the Division of IT efficiently and effectively participate in designing and implementing software systems that co-mingle existing and desired functionality. In collaboration with ISAM, the individual will help researchers, staff and students understand and comply with security requirements. In essence the purpose is to help manage and improve effective working relationships that respect and appreciate each others’ constraints.

Systems that interact with MU’s computing infrastructure must comply with relevant funding agency and university rules and security requirements. In addition to the Division of IT staff, it is expected MU’s CI Engineer position funded by NSF project (Calyam, PI) will be an excellent resource for the needed technology support. In turn, these Digital Humanities projects can add diversity to the research projects participating in the funded research projects.

Having reached out to MU’s email list of faculty interested in Digital Humanities, the consensus of the planning group is that the Division of IT begin with Omeka as the first open source software implementation. http://omeka.org/ https://omeka.org/codex/Sites_Using_Omeka http://omeka.org/showcase/

Another common need is for maps and geoinformation science tools. Some have suggested GeoJSON, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GeoJSON but this is an example of the need to coordinate activities with others on campus, for example the geospatial planning activities. A technology concierge will help bridge the communication gaps.
In design, human–computer interaction, and software development, interaction design ... is defined as "the practice of designing interactive digital products, environments, systems, and services." Like many other design fields interaction design also has an interest in form but its main focus is on behavior.[1]:1 What clearly marks interaction design as a design field as opposed to a science or engineering field is that it is synthesis and imagining things as they might be, more so than focusing on how things are. Interaction design is heavily focused on satisfying the needs and desires of the majority of people who will use the product;[1]:xviii other disciplines like software engineering have a heavy focus on designing for technical stakeholders of a project. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interaction_design
See also: http://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/interaction-design.html