The Wolfe Institute

Rethinking the Digital Humanities
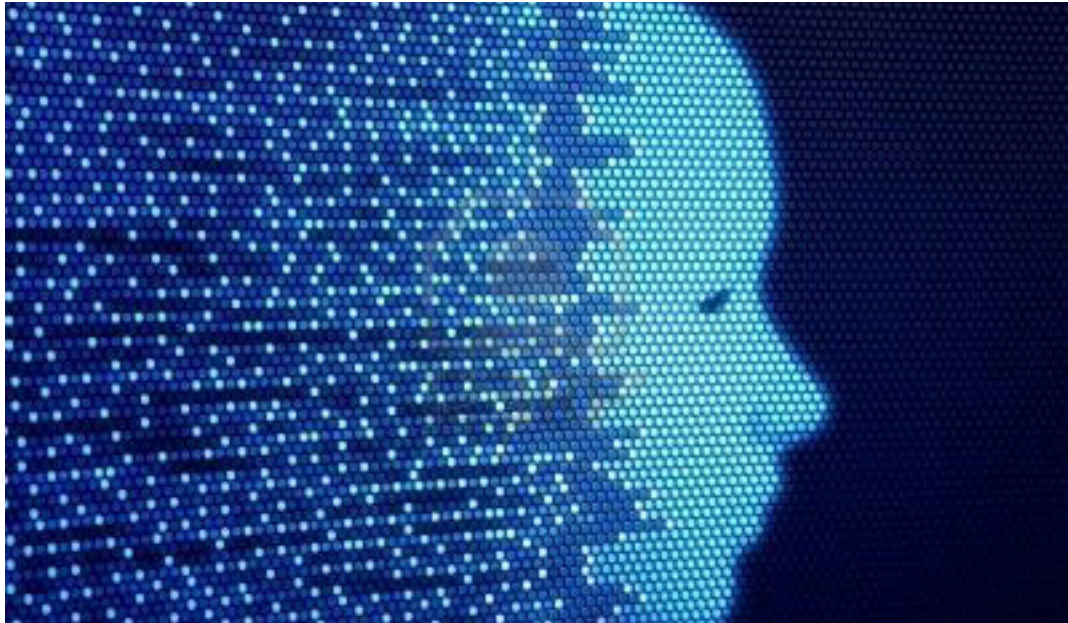
Federica Frabetti is senior lecturer in the communication, media and culture programme at Oxford Brookes University, UK. She completed an MRes and PhD in Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has a diverse professional and academic background in the humanities and ICT and has worked for a decade as a Software Engineer in telecommunications companies. She has published numerous articles on the cultural study of technology, digital media and software studies, cultural theory, and gender and queer theory. She is an editor and translator of *The Judith Halberstam Reader* (in Italian) and is currently completing a monograph titled *Technology Made Legible: A Cultural Study of Software*.

This lecture is situated at the margins of what has become known as 'Digital Humanities', i.e. a discipline that applies computational methods of investigation to literary texts. Its aim is to suggest a new, somewhat different take on the relationship between the humanities and digitality by putting forward the following proposition: if the Digital Humanities encompass the study of software, writing and code, then they need to critically investigate the role of digitality in constituting the very concepts of the 'humanities' and the human.

In other words, I want to suggest that a deep understanding of the mutual co-constitution of technology and the human is needed as an essential part of any work undertaken within the Digital Humanities. I will draw on the concept of 'originary technicity' (Stiegler 1998, 2009; Derrida 1976, 1994; Beardsworth 1995, 1996; Critchley 2009) and on my own recent research into software as a form of writing - research that can be considered part of the (also emerging) field of Software Studies/Code Studies - to demonstrate how a deconstructive reading of software and code can shed light on the mutual co-constitution of the digital and the human. I will also investigate what consequences such a reading can have - not just for the 'humanities' and for media and cultural studies but also for the very concept of disciplinarity.

Thursday, April 7, 2011
2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.
Jefferson-Williams Lounge, Brooklyn College Student Center
Campus Road and East 27th Street