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Re intellecta, in verbis simus faciles, or: What's your model?

In 1967, literary scholar Karl Kroeber wrote: "The humanist who wishes to utilize computers has one central task: To tell the machine operators what he wants them to accomplish." This is simple, but not easy. Digital humanities as we now call the field has certainly come a long way since then, and many things have definitely become simpler: For many tasks, scholars no longer need machine operators to accomplish what they want, they can use off-the-shelf-tools or write simple scripts themselves. But have things become easier? As Kroeber continues, "A thoroughly lucid explanation of *what* I want to accomplish compels me to face *why* I want to do this work [...] and it forces me to define explicitly the meaning or meaninglessness of fundamental terminology in my discipline. Unfortunately, the simpler it is to *just do* something, the less necessary it becomes to *think* about it."

In this talk, I want to take a step back and reflect on what digital humanities means in the context of computational processing of historical language, but also more generally from a conceptual point of view in order to encourage a discussion of where we want to head as a field.