Program Outline

Morning: Hands-on History of Recent Digital Humanities: 9am – 12pm

• Introduction: What is the Digital Humanities?
• Build the Archive
• Annotate the Archive
• The Archive as Data

Afternoon: Digital Humanities Methodology and Wrap-up Discussion: 1:30pm – 2:30 ??

• Digital Humanities: Methodology or Tool?
• Discussion and wrap-up
Caveat

Not an expert (though reading about DH is part of my job)

Not an historian, most familiar with literary study

Generalize and simplify to compare and contrast
Distant Reading

The goal is not to use the machine to supplant the judgment and expertise of a human expert who has spent a lifetime reading Dickinson, but rather to see if the classifications can “provoke” new insight amongst a body of familiar texts.

Matthew Kirschenbaum
[Y]ou invest so much in individual texts only if you think that very few of them really matter. Otherwise, it doesn’t make sense. And if you want to look beyond the canon (and of course, world literature will do so: it would be absurd if it didn’t!) close reading will not do it. It’s not designed to do it, it’s designed to do the opposite. At bottom, it’s a theological exercise—very solemn treatment of very few texts taken very seriously—whereas what we really need is a little pact with the devil: we know how to read texts, now let’s learn how not to read them. Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems.

Franco Moretti
Distant Reading

Some readers have always used methods similar to “distant reading” or “not reading”.
The abundant note-takers and compilers who are the focus of my book articulated a new enthusiasm for attending to every book and every discipline in the search for potentially useful information. They hoped to safeguard the material they collected against a repetition of the traumatic loss of ancient learning of which they were keenly aware. The compilers also saw their work as a contribution to the public good that benefited from their catering to as many different themes and interests as possible.

Ann Blair
DH and World History

Remember my earlier caveats...
The tree describes the passage from unity to diversity: one tree, with many branches: from Indo-European, to dozens of different languages. The wave is the opposite: it observes uniformity engulfing an initial diversity: Hollywood films conquering one market after another (or English swallowing language after language). Trees need geographical discontinuity (in order to branch off from each other, languages must first be separated in space, just like animal species); waves dislike barriers, and thrive on geographical continuity (from the viewpoint of a wave, the ideal world is a pond).

Franco Moretti
DH and World History

See the beauty of distant reading plus world literature: they go against the grain of national historiography ... And probably, no matter what the object of analysis is, there will always be a point where the study of world literature must yield to the specialist of the national literature, in a sort of cosmic and inevitable division of labour ...

This, then, is the basis for the division of labour between national and world literature: national literature, for people who see trees; world literature, for people who see waves.

Franco Moretti
DH and World History

MappaMundi and excellent white paper by Geraldine Heng on the process.

- Global medieval, multiyear, multidisciplinary
- Routes of culture and points of anchoring
- Allows interrogation of the definitions, identifiers, and relations of modernity and premodernity
Spatial methodology

For the purposes of comparison, some generalizations:

• History’s classic mode of expression is narrative, seeking causality in sequence.
• Geography’s is visual, seeking causality in spatiality.
• Large differences in training received and ways of working between history and geography.
Spatial methodology

Storing data that cannot be represented on paper, not only visualization but examination at different scales, space and time.

- Layers of spatial and temporal patterns, nonlinear.
- Scale and decisions of scale (what will you show when?)
- Representing time and handling images are still difficult.
- Georectification via Neatline and visibility analysis, e.g. what Robert E. Lee could see.
“The first question that researchers need to ask is not ‘How do I use geographical information in my project?’ but ‘Why should I use geographical information?’ followed by ‘What type of question can it I ask of it?’ and then ‘What type of questions do I want to ask?’”

Martyn Jessop
The Topographic Revolution can be characterized as scholarly appropriation of forms that are topographic – with two- or three-dimensional shape – dynamic – meaning that they change their configuration over time – and autonomous – meaning that while the rules governing the behaviour of a given formalism are set by an author, its performance of those rules is not.

John Bonnett
For historians in particular, I suggest the Topographic Revolution will assist scholars in gaining traction on a particular class of historical problem: the emergent event for which there is no obvious precipitating cause or set of causes” ... “enables scholars to model the random, emergent, non-linear behaviour of human social, economic and cultural systems in ways that were impossible with the logical syllogism and linear mathematical equation, the two dominant forms that social scientists and humanists have used to support their reasoning in the past.

John Bonnett
In simplest terms, it identifies an important agent – be it a virus, an individual, a firm, or a social grouping – and models its interaction with neighbouring agents. The modeller governs the interaction of agents by stipulating rules of behaviour. The resulting simulations often produce emergent properties – social or economic structures – that result from agent-agent interaction, and are unanticipated by the modeller.

John Bonnett
Emergent Complexity

- *Batman Returns*, Boids, flocks, crowds

- Emergent Hanoi traffic

- Aggregate Dynamics for Dense Crowd Simulation
Game as mode of scholarly representation, not only teaching and learning tool

- **Shadow of Utopia / Clyde, Hopkins, Wilkinson**
- “The Differences Slavery Made”
- “Unlike other forms of digital history, the gamic mode does not attempt to reconstruct or simulate the past or specific argument; the game *is* the argument, it is a scholarly expression of the past.”
  - Beyond reconstructing the past, overemphasizing empathetic re-enactment; rather focusing on construction of reasonably justified truth about the past
  - Allowing player to explore the argument in an interactive way, scholarly constructions of the past can be "read" through trial and error and meaningful choice
Abductive Reasoning

“[H]istorians will need to consider the possibility of simultaneously representing two or more time-lines in their narratives, to facilitate user comparison and interaction while following the argument at hand.” – John Bonnett

- Does this relate to the gamic mode?
- Signify history as it might have been
- Make the historian’s reasoning, explicit through interactivity
- Game technology as representation of the scholarly process as series of branching choices
Speculative Computing

“Very often the case that it is this ambiguity and uncertainty that is of interest to the humanities scholar. It is not a nuisance factor to be eliminated; it is a valuable aspect of the data and the focus of much study.”

Martyn Jessop
Speculative Computing

[S]peculative approaches seek to create parameter-shifting, open-ended, inventive capabilities – humanistic and imaginative by nature and disposition. Quantum methods extend these principles. Simply stated, quantum interpretation notes that all situations are in a condition of indeterminacy distributed across a range of probability until they are intervened by observation. The goal of 'pataphysical and speculative computing is to keep digital humanities from falling into mere technical application of standard practices (either administered/info management or engineering/statistical calculations). To do so requires finding ways to implement imaginative operations.

Johanna Drucker
“The first wave of digital humanities work was quantitative, mobilizing the search and retrieval powers of the database, automating corpus linguistics, stacking hypercards into critical arrays. The second wave is qualitative, interpretive, experiential, emotive, generative in character. It harnesses digital toolkits in the service of the Humanities’ core methodological strengths: attention to complexity, medium specificity, historical context, analytical depth, critique and interpretation.
Speculative Computing

- **SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing**

- **Temporal Modelling** (Bethany Nowviskie)
  
  - “Create a visual scheme and interactive tool set for the representation of temporal relations in humanities-based or qualitative research, with particular emphasis on the subjective experience of temporality ...”
  
  - “Bring visualization and interface design into the early content modeling phase of humanities computing projects”
at its most successful, the critical act of illumination is conducted along the line of prose itself (not explained by the prose), as the mind of the interpreter triangulates its objects of study via the nuances of language. What gets exposed is not the truth of the relationship between the objects, but rather a set of contradictory fields and ambiguous meanings in which the interpreter is always implicated—indeed, in which she explicitly means to implicate herself and her perspective.
Changing the Work

- Self-organizing, egalitarian and temporary (THATCamp)– does this change the academy?
- Collaborations, funders, PIs -- a lab model
- Publishing:
  - Do you share your library, archive, data?
  - Do Open Access, digital projects “count” in tenure and promotion?
  - What is the peer review process for a GIS map?
  - What is the longevity of your work? The official record of a multimedia dissertation?
    - There are perils in digital scholarship, and strategies for sustainability. (Library deposit!)
Public Humanities

Does DH inherently turn towards public humanities and communicating outwards?

- Global audience and visualizing cultures incident
- Museum Train and public humanities as an ethos, blurring walls between public and academics.

“In other ways, the high cost and experience required to produce and implement technological tools will deter historians from engaging in the production process and will leave the task up to corporations.”

Orville Vernon Burton
Methodology or Tool?

What is the tool shaping? How do we shape the tool? Does it need a Theory?

“Very often the case that it is this ambiguity and uncertainty that is of interest to the humanities scholar. It is not a nuisance factor to be eliminated; it is a valuable aspect of the data and the focus of much study.”

Martyn Jessop
Further Resources

Selected DH Centers

- Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University
- Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at University of Nebraska – Lincoln
- University of Virginia Scholars Lab and Praxis
- NEH Office of Digital Humanities
- Spatial History Project at Stanford
- Stanford Literary Lab
- Harvard metaLAB
- MIT HyperStudio
- MATRIX at Michigan State University
- Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities at University of Maryland – College Park


Further Resources

Works Consulted


Further Resources

News and Colleagues

Digital Humanities Now

Guardian DataBlog

Twitter #digitalhumanities

HASTAC

Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations

Bamboo DiRT
Discussion

Your Ideal Project

Imagine the unlikely scenario in which money, time, and expertise are no object. Would you incorporate a Digital Humanities project into your dissertation, and if so, what would it look like?

- What data would you magically create?
- What functionality would you magically allow?
- What could temporal, textual, or spatial layers do for your dissertation?