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Applying New Digital Methods to the Humanities

ABSTRACTS

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER** Digital Humanities Through and Through
Melissa Terras

A recent (2013) survey* showed that almost 90% of academic researchers in the Humanities would be interested in having better technical support and advice on implementing digital research methods in their research, and over 80% would be interested in understanding how digital research activities could be thoughtfully integrated into Humanities research projects. What does it mean to implement and integrate digital methods into Humanities research methods, and how best can this be achieved? Where do you start when learning digital tools for humanities study? In this talk different approaches to integrating digital methods into humanities research will be scoped out, demonstrating the affordances, issues and benefits of Digital Humanities. Issues such as teamwork and lone scholarship, resources and access, and ongoing training and support come into play, as well as interdisciplinarity and recognition for the use and further development of non-traditional methods. Is Digital Humanities becoming firmly embedded into humanities methods and traditions, or is it destined to be an outlier method which many aspire to, but don't have the resources to pursue?

*Figures from Housewright, R., Schonfeld, R. C., and Wulfson, K. "Ithaka S+R US Faculty Survey 2012". (2013).

Big Data for Arts and Humanities Research

Dr Jane Winters

There is increasing interest among arts and humanities researchers in working with big data, as evidenced by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's recent big data funding call and the Digging into Data programme. However, working with data at this scale presents unique theoretical and methodological challenges which we are only now beginning to explore. This paper will present a number of approaches to big data research, focusing on the archive of UK web space for the period 1996–2013; 200 years' worth of parliamentary proceedings for the UK, the Netherlands and Canada; and a corpus of historical material digitised by The National Archives spanning the middle ages to the twentieth century. It will consider prosopography, linked data, semantic mark-up and natural language processing, as well as the ethics of big data research. Finally, it will highlight some of the benefits of adopting a genuinely collaborative and interdisciplinary way of working when dealing with big data.

Turning the Final Pages: The DigiPal Database of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts

Dr Stewart Brookes

When we began creating the DigiPal database, it was our intention to bring digital technologies to bear on the study of medieval handwriting, offering a set of tools for searching and visualisation that had been discussed in theory but not implemented. Now, more than three years on, we have created a web-based framework which incorporates different ways of exploring and manipulating information, including annotating images, image-processing, and more conventional text-based facilities to search for letter-forms and their features. But how much of a shift is this away from traditional palaeographical study? Have our research questions been answered or at least nuanced by access to these technologies? And what desiderata remain?

Doing Things with a Spatial Dataset of Medieval Literature

Dr David Wrisley

This presentation will focus on what might be called a "distant reading of place." Many digital projects in medieval studies replicate close reading practices either in their data model or in their uses of visualization. Using a growing dataset of several thousand geo-referenced place names found in the large corpus of medieval French literature, this project is exploring an "abstract model of literary history" (Moretti) through digital analysis of space and place across time. In addition to showing how a large-scale spatial dataset can be expressed in various faceted map interface visualizations, the presentation will discuss the limitations of its original data model, some of its digital by-products and how these can be recombined with other data to generate more robust (and literarily challenging) readings of place.

'I was but the learner; now I am the master': modelling and implementing a digital resource for the Medieval Francophone Literary Cultures Outside France project

Dr Jane Gilbert and Paul Vetch

This session will address the database and web application which are principal outputs of the AHRC-funded project, Medieval Francophone Literary Culture Outside France (2011-2014). Designed and developed by KCL DDH along with other members of the project team, the database aims to enable a new kind of scholarship to take place by bringing together data that are normally the province of two distinct, and differently trained, groups of scholars: codicologists, who work on manuscripts, and philologists, who work on texts.

We will begin by discussing the process of modelling the project's data and the collaborative process involved in the design and implementation of the database structure. We will then explore the process of populating the database, discussing the editing environment that was built over it and the work that was done to try and ensure a balance between ensuring an appropriate level of structured data together without creating too conspicuous an overhead in terms of 'data entry'. Finally we will turn to the public interface for interrogating and exploring the dataset and look at the ways in which we have attempted to convey the nuances of the underlying structure.

Shared Canvas and IIIF

Neil Jefferies

Shared Canvas (www.shared-canvas.org) is a metadata standard that aims to solve the problem of providing an online presentation of a digitised artefact, such as a manuscript, in a way that captures the richness of the source material and exposes it for scholarly purposes. It addresses a number of key issues that are poorly handled by current systems such as non-rectangular or folded materials, manuscript fragments, rebinding or scattered pages, palimpsests and multispectral/multisource images. It makes use of RDF and, in particular, Open Annotation to describe how images and textual content should be combined to represent the artefact on-screen. These same mechanisms, in turn, allow the item to be annotated and linked to other resources both as part of the scholarly process and as a means of enriching the source. IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework, <http://iiif.io>) is a related project that looks at a standardised way of delivering images and image fragments in order to simplify the implementation of a cross-institutional Shared Canvas viewer.

Lessons from the Zooniverse : From Citizen Science to Digital Humanities

Dr Chris Lintott

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have turned to crowdsourcing as a solution to the problems of 'big data'. The Zooniverse, the world's leading platform for data analysis through 'citizen science' has seen more than a million volunteers discover planets, explore the Serengeti and transcribe First World War archives. This talk, from Zooniverse Principle Investigator Chris Lintott will draw on these experiences to explore what works - and what doesn't - in designing and running such projects.

Data + Place: Virtual Mappa and other forays into spatial data production

Kimberly Kowal and Martin Foys

The British Library is currently host to numerous projects exploring the ways that spatial information can enrich the study of and access to heritage collection materials. Maps stand out most prominently for the enhancements possible via visualisation, but the real heart of all such projects is the creation and implementation of place data, which can be applied to both documentary and graphic historical sources. This panel will first summarize several ongoing initiatives and partnerships related to maps and spatial data, including BL Georeferencer and Pelagios3, before presenting a more detailed view of another, the Virtual Mappa Project. The Virtual Mappa Project, a partnership between the DM Project and the British Library, seeks to establish how medieval maps of the world and related geographic texts may be collected, studied and annotated by scholars. The presentation will showcase VMP's use of DM's new multi-up working environment, with methods for managing the display, selection and annotation of several manuscript images and transcribed texts simultaneously, by collaborating with users within the same project.

Performing/Analyzing/Visualising Haydn String Quartets

Jason Sundram

Haydn is widely acknowledged as the father of the String Quartet. In this talk, I will discuss 4 axes along which I have explored Haydn's String Quartets: Performance, Recordings, Metadata, and Scores. The String Quartets are works intended for amateurs to enjoy in their homes and to be shared in public concerts. With The Haydn Enthusiasts, I have done both, trying throughout to cultivate a new audience for these works. The String Quartets have been recorded many times over by almost every professional string quartet. The resulting wealth of recordings presents a paradox of choice: How can we best explore these recordings? I will discuss some approaches and tools I am developing for that purpose. There is also a wealth of data about the quartets: composition year, key, length, tempo, dedication, etc. I will discuss and demonstrate an extensible tool I have built for exploring this data. The scores themselves do not exist in a complete digital encoding. I will talk about my efforts to complete a symbolic encoding of all the quartets, an initiative that was started in 1984 by Stanford's Center for Computer Assisted Research in the Humanities (CCARH), but never completed.

"Audience Development... should be everyone's job."

Rosemary Bechler

In this presentation, Rosemary Bechler will discuss some of the chilling effect on debate of the inexorable rise of IPR during the digital era, amongst the broader implications of the profitable commodification of knowledge. Political debate, education, research and artistic expression were once protected by provisions of 'fair use'. These were precisely the provisions that restricted monopoly in the American constitution, in which it was fully recognised that creativity and innovation must depend on the use, criticism, supplementation and consideration of previous works. But in the age of Facebook is 'fair use' still a possibility? Sometimes it feels as if we have to swim against the current, circumventing the aggregative power which invites the removal of your best articles from its debating context to maximise your numbers of 'likes', and discouraging your readers from clicking 'best' comment in a way which immediately throws any conversation flow permanently askew. How can we best defend the basic forms of civility 'fair use' was designed to protect?