Introduction to Digital History
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Overview

This course in an introduction to the methods and practice of history in a digital age. The goal is to introduce students to the wide variety of work being done computationally by historians today,

Historians are above all curators and creators of texts and artifacts. The rise of computing technology and the Internet has the potential to reshape all sorts of parts of historical practice, from curation to research to dissemination.

Following the introduction, we'll be looking at how digitization affects the historian's craft in three different domains of work:

1. What sort of sources we use;
2. What sort of research we can do with them; and
3. How we create and share historical research with the many publics historians interact with.

In all of these stages, we're going to get our hands messy. To understand the possibilities and the limitations of digital work, you have to engage with it directly. You're not expected to come into this class a master programmer, and you won't leave it one.

This is an introductory course to a large and growing field. Rather than try to completely master any single technique (we could certainly spend at least a seminar on text analysis techniques alone), we'll be trying to get a broad introduction to let us assess and create some of the work already out there.

Disclaimer We'll be working together to make this course as useful to your professional development as possible. That means you should feel free to communicate any changes you'd like to see to me; it also means that the syllabus is subject to be updated, with due notice, at any time. The latest version of the syllabus will be the one on the course website.

Course Goals

1. Describe the sort of work being done under the banner of digital history today, and be able to participate in some of the debates in the field.
2. Cultivate a base of knowledge that will help you to engage in digital research projects for your own work with texts, geographical systems, or networks.
3. Build and curate online displays that find new modalities for sharing historical artifacts and knowledge.
4. Create and/or further develop a professional online identity.

Requirements

Readings

You should complete the required readings and attend class ready to discuss them.

Blogging

You are expected to contribute almost every week to the course blog–over the course of the semester, you should have at least 10 posts which cumulatively reach 4,000 words. These are not expected to be completely polished pieces of writing, but they should show your engagement with the texts and your peers, and create a ground you can build on.

Topics include:

1. Reactions to the reading: questions you want your peers to answer,
2. Reactions to issues you've encountered in digital history in other courses or online.
3. Responses to questions posed by your colleagues.

If you'd like to have more ownership of your posts, I encourage you to set up your own web site and post there. Just make sure to link to them from the course blog.

Projects

As we take on classroom exercises in the second third of the course, you should think about which one(s) you want to expand into a longer form. We'll also try to get a trip to the archives in so that you can practice some digital curation on your own.

Digital Engagement

Currency   It is incredibly easy to engage with scholarly activity in the digital humanities by reading and posting online. As part of this course, you should set some goals

Pick five blogs that you'll be following: one should be the blog "Digital Humanities Now", which aggregates posts every week that many different digital humanists have been discussing.

Privacy   You may have good reasons not to want your name associated with your blog posts or Internet presence–if so, we can talk about how to make your posts private or pseudonymous. But remember, conversely, that building up a strong professional online presence can be enormously beneficial. We're doing blogging on

Grading

1. Class participation: 30%
2. Blogging: 30%
3. Projects: 40%

Required Texts

Most of the texts for this class are available online; digital humanists are good that way. Some are also available for physical purchase.

- Jockers, *Macroanalysis: digital methods and literary history*
- Tufte, *Envisioning information*

Schedule

Unit 1: Digital sources

In the first unit, we'll be exploring how digitization changes the sort of sources—primary *and* secondary—that historians work with. What are the biases and inherent assumptions in digital scholarship? What gets digitized, and what doesn't? What sort of answers are computational works of scholarship bringing to historical practice?

September 16: Digital History: Definitions and Debates

- Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital history*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Hockey, "The History of Humanities Computing"

- Cohen et al., "Interchange"
- Gold, *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, David Greetham, "The Resistance to Digital Humanities"
- ibid., Tara McPherson, "Why are the Digital Humanities so White?"
- Liu, "The Meaning of the Digital Humanities"
- Open thread on postcolonial Digital Humanities.

You can purchase *Debates in the Digital Humanities* if you wish, but it is also available online as an open-access publication.

September 23: Cliometrics and Quantitative History

- Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the cross*
- Haskell, *Time on the Cross* review and Gutmann on *Time on the Cross*.
- Ruggles, "The Transformation of American Family Structure"
- Explore the IPUMS website.

September 30: Making things digital

- KMNL, Keycoding standards.
- Bill Turkel's blog posts on digitizing text.
- Gibbs, "Hermeneutics of Data and Historical Writing"
- Darnton, "The Case for Books," Selections.

Project–Begin to digitize a historical object yourself. Do this with (at least) an image and a text. Try to pick something that you're legitimately interested in, which will save you work down the line in finding sources that you can work with.

You should post it to the course website, and you should be prepared to discuss the digitization process in class. If the object is under copyright, make sure to post it privately on the web site.

Unit 2: Historical Computing

For years, much of what's now called the "digital humanities" was called, instead, "humanities computing." The term tended to denote a more circumscribed set of practices than all the digital publishing, public history, and new media studies that are now part of digital humanities; it was, specifically, about the the possibility of digital techniques to transform the ways we do research. This unit aims to get your hands dirty with some of the research techniques you might be able to use taking full advantage of your computation.

No class October 14/Labor Day

October 7: Texts (small and large)

- Cameron Blevins, "Topic Modeling Martha Ballard's Diary"
- Jockers, *Macroanalysis: digital methods and literary history*

Software:

- Voyant Tools
- R-Mallet

October 21: Networks

- Shin-Kap Han, "The Other Ride of Paul Revere"
- Winterer, "Where is America in the Republic of Letters"

Software practice: Networks with Gephi (or with R).

October 28: Maps

- Orbis Project, Stanford.
- Richard White, "What is Spatial History"

Practical:

- ArcGIS
- Review Map Projections at jasondavies.com.

Unit 3: Creating Digital Scholarship

The sort of work historians create and share matters as much as the sort of You could use the techniques from unit 2 and produce a wholly conventional work of scholarship; and you could create a groundbreaking multimedia installation without using any algorithms or even programming.

November 4: Visualizing Data

- Theibault, "Visualizations and Historical Arguments"
- Tufte, *Envisioning information*
- Jessop, "Digital visualization as a scholarly activity"
- Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display"

Exercise: visualzing in R.

November 11: Digital Collections

"Our Marathon," Northeastern American Memory, Library of Congress. Rumsey Historical Maps.

Exercise: Building with Omeka.

November 18: Telling Stories in new media.

- "Snow Fall"
- Bagnall and Sherrat, "Invisible Australians: Living under the White Australia Policy"
- Welcome to Pine Point

November 25: Publishing and sharing research

Paul Fyfe, "Electronic Errata: Digital Publishing, Open Review, and the Futures of Correction," Debates in the Digital Humanities. Dan Cohen, "The Social Contract of Scholarly Publishing," Debates in the Digital Humanities. William G. Thomas, III, and Edward L. Ayers, "The Differences Slavery Made: Two Communities in the American Civil War," American Historical Review (December 2003). William G. Thomas, III, "Writing a Digital History Article from Scratch". Introduction to the *Journal of Digital Humanities*: Pick through and read an issue and describe how it coalesced.

December 2: Projects/Flex Time/Student defined projects.

Full Citations for Readings

Alexander, Bryan. *The new digital storytelling creating narratives with new media* [in English]. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011. ISBN: 9780313387500 0313387508.

Ayers, Edward L. "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History." Pasts and Future of Digital History. 1999. http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html.

Bagnall, Kate, and Tim Sherrat. "Invisible Australians: Living under the White Australia Policy." http://invisibleaustralians.org/.

Cohen, Daniel J., Michael Frisch, Patrick Gallagher, Steven Mintz, Kirsten Sword, Amy Murrell Taylor, William G. Thomas, and William J. Turkel. "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History." ARTICLETYPE: research-article / Full publication date: Sep., 2008 / Copyright © 2008 Organization of American Historians, *The Journal of American History* 95 (2 2008): 452–491. ISSN: 0021-8723. doi:10.2307/25095630. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25095630.

Cohen, Daniel J, and Roy Rosenzweig. *Digital history: a guide to gathering, preserving, and presenting the past on the Web* [in English]. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006. ISBN: 0812219236 9780812219234.

————. "Promises and Perils of Digital History." Digital History. http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction/.

Drucker, Johanna. "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display." 5 (1). http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html.

————. "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display." 5 (1 2011). http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html.

Fogel, Robert William, and Stanley L Engerman. *Time on the cross: the economics of American negro slavery* [in English]. New York: Norton, 1989. ISBN: 0393306208 9780393306200 0393312186 9780393312188.

Gibbs, Fred. "Hermeneutics of Data and Historical Writing." Writing History in the Digital Age [in English]. March 14, 2012. http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/data/gibbs-owens-2012-spring/.

Gold, Matthew K. *Debates in the Digital Humanities* [in Available Online: http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/]. U of Minnesota Press, January 1, 2012. ISBN: 9780816677948.

Hockey, Susan. "The History of Humanities Computing." In *Companion to Digital Humanities*, by Ray Siemens, John Unsworth, and Susan Schreibman. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Professional, December 2004. ISBN: 1405103213. http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/.

Jessop, Martyn. "Digital visualization as a scholarly activity" [in en]. *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 23 (3): 281–293. ISSN: 0268-1145, 1477-4615. doi:10.1093/llc/fqn016. http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/3/281.

Jockers, Matthew L. *Macroanalysis: digital methods and literary history*. University of Illinois Press, 2013.

Liu, Alan. "The Meaning of the Digital Humanities." *PMLA* 128 (2 2013): 409–423. ISSN: 0030-8129. doi:10.1632/pmla.2013.128.2.409. http://www.mlajournals.org/doi/abs/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.2.409.

Ruggles, Steven. "The Transformation of American Family Structure." *The American Historical Review* 99 (1 1994): 103. ISSN: 00028762. doi:10.2307/2166164. http://www.hist.umn.edu/~ruggles/Articles/AHR.pdf.

"Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek." 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/.

Theibault, John. "Visualizations and Historical Arguments" [in English]. In *Writing History in the Digital Age*, by Jack Dougherty. March 23, 2012. http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/evidence/theibault-2012-spring/.

Thomas, William G. "Computing and the Historical Imagination." In *A Companion to Digital Humanities*. http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/view?docId=blackwell/9781405103213/9781405103213.xml&doc.view=print&chunk.id=ss1-2-5&toc.depth=1&toc.id=0.

Tufte, Edward R. *Envisioning information* [in English]. Cheshire, Conn. (P.O. Box 430, Cheshire 06410): Graphics Press, 1990.

Winterer, Caroline. "Where is America in the Republic of Letters." *Modern Intellectual History* 9 (03 2012): 597–623. doi:10.1017/S1479244312000212.