

Digital Humanities Showcase 2015

Presented by the GW Digital Humanities Institute,
GW Libraries, and the Office of Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration
February 20, 2015, Gelman Library Room 702
#GWDoesDH

Opening Remarks: **Geneva Henry, Vice Provost for Libraries and University Librarian**

12:30-1:00: 3 presenters + 10 min Q&A + 5 min break

Shoko Hamano (East Asian Languages & Literatures): Visualizing Japanese Grammar

Since its launch on October 20, 2007, “Visualizing Japanese Grammar,” a Japanese grammar website created by Shoko Hamano with the assistance of Wakana Kikuchi Cavanaugh, has been accessed by more than 61,000 individuals from 162 countries/territories worldwide. Instead of being sent into oblivion after a few years, the site access has kept increasing steadily over the eight years. In fact, half of the total 103,463 hits have been made in the past two years. This is a peculiar accomplishment given the general nature of technical advancement in the digital environment. The accomplishment may be considered a feat of the innovative website, but it also speaks of the paucity of well-conceived digital resources that language instructors and students have access to. In this presentation, I will discuss the challenges of creating a website for language learning and present a wish list for further development.

Maia Gil'Adi (English): The Zombie Archive (www.thezombiearchive.com)

Maia Gil'Adi is the creator of The Zombie Archive. The Zombie Archive grew out of a love for the zombie: its centrality in our cultural imagination, as a source of anxiety and fascination, and the filmic, literary, and artistic representations it engenders. This site will be a comprehensive source for lovers of the zombie as well as zombie scholars to find all literature, film, art, cultural events, and scholarly sources surrounding the zombie in all its manifestations.

Sylvia Augusteijn (GW Libraries) & Chris Klemek (History): Digital DC: A Community History Project

For the past two spring semesters, the staff of George Washington University's Special Collections have partnered with Prof. Chris Klemek to engage students with primary sources in a dynamic new way. After learning how to locate and analyze maps, photographs, prints, and other primary sources both in our archives and in other local repositories, students in the class collaborated with library staff to design an online exhibit called Digital DC: A Community History Project documenting the history of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. (<http://exhibits.library.gwu.edu/exhibits/show/digitaldc>)

The class, called “Washington, D.C.: History, Culture, Politics,” has a uniquely local focus matched by a uniquely local student body; nearly half of the students in the class this spring were high-achieving local high school students attending GW as part of the early college program. Students learned the analytical skills of historians, the fact-finding skills of researchers, and the storytelling skills of exhibit designers, all while creating this enduring online exhibit for the public.

1:00-1:30: 3 presenters + 10 min Q&A + 5 break

Dan Kerchner (GW Libraries): Social Feed Manager (<http://social-feed-manager.readthedocs.org/>)

Social Feed Manager (SFM) is a software application developed by GWU Libraries to collect social media data from Twitter using Twitter's API. SFM is enabling scholars, students, librarians, and archivists to select, collect, preserve, and study Twitter data for research purposes. Over the past two years, SFM has provided data for research across a wide variety of disciplines. We are working to expand SFM to new social media spaces and media types, to develop policies and models for building sustainable collections of social media data and to find ways to support an even wider variety of disciplines and research types.

Diane H. Cline (History): The Social Network(s) of Socrates

Social network analysis maps and measures the fabric of society. It is introduced here as a tool to visualize the relationships of Socrates and to identify his closest companions through quantitative measures. Socrates had a vibrant social life and social network analysis can help establish exactly with whom. The database of Socrates' personal relationships was culled from the complete works of Plato, the *Memorabilia* and *Symposium* of Xenophon, and Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Preeminent Philosophers* (2.5) as well as Plutarch's lives of Pericles, Cimon, Nicias, and Alcibiades. The result is a set of 302 people with 688 relationships between them. The structure of the network is classified as a "small world." Thirteen individuals are identified as the likeliest candidates to be in Socrates' innermost circle.

Dora Danylevich (English): #brownbagsarepeopletoo

A creative social media and photography project that I am currently developing around #brownbagsarepeopletoo and #paperbagsarepeopletoo documents names and factory codes on the bottoms of paper bags aims to raise awareness of transnational labor practices and conditions. I have a growing base of hash-tagged bag photographs. The next step will entail research and data collection necessary to locate the actual individuals whose names appear on the bottoms of the bags, in an attempt to connect faces, stories, or paper trails to the images and stories of the brown or white paper bags documented in the photographs. This project connects to my dissertation's "[sic]" inquiry into tropes of passivity – taking account of the passive valences of the "bottom" of the bag – and with my broader agenda toward creative modes of narrating subordinate lives and selves. I also consider the affective valences of portraiture and of Instagram and selfies and "likes".

1:30-2:00: 3 presenters + 10 min Q&A + 5 break

Michael Levy & Elissa Frankle (US Holocaust Memorial Museum): Textual Analysis of Oral History Testimonies at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum

A pilot data set would include a large number of oral history interviews, in many languages and with varying degrees of associated metadata. A large subset is in English and has full transcripts. Data includes relatively unstructured transcript text along with reasonably well structured catalog data including data points such as year of interview. We believe that this corpus of data could provide a wealth of opportunities for textual analysis.

One idea may be to note term frequency or other computationally derived measures of textual content when contrasted by the date of the interview. Do certain terms begin to appear or disappear in certain years? Might media or press depictions of the Holocaust affect terms or expressions used by the interviewees? These or other digital humanities techniques approaches could raise new questions and avenues of inquiry for Holocaust research.

Lori Brister (English): A Digital Dissertation Companion

I will present my project as a potential model for preparing and submitting digital dissertations or dissertation-adjacent projects in such a way that it allows graduate students, who are likely already over-committed, to learn tools and techniques to expand their research and become more competitive on the job market (academic or otherwise). These micro-projects also have the potential to be expanded into the classroom, engaging undergraduates in digital research.

Tina Plottel (GW Libraries): The People and the Punk: The Story of Kansas House and Its Impact on the Washington, D.C., Punk Scene

For fifteen years, Kansas House surpassed the ephemeral nature of traditional Art Punk collectives, only to be razed in Arlington County, Virginia's effort to develop high-density housing along a popular transit corridor. This particular collective provided a consistent, open space, hosting house shows, poetry readings, and happenings traditionally associated with the network of similar Punk groups in the United States during the late 20th Century. Kansas House's proximity to cultural and counter-cultural landmarks in DC allowed for its residents and members of the collective to become active participants in their community; the house became a central location for artists and musicians, many of whom spoke out against the gentrification of their neighborhood.

I will share how my use of Social Media (Soundcloud, Facebook, and Wordpress) to present the complete oral histories meets an academic need while aligned with the Punk nature of allowing information to be accessible by all.

2:00-2:30: 3 presenters + 10 min Q&A

Phoebe Coleman (Jewish Cultural Arts): A Golem for a Digital Age

“A Golem for the Digital Age” is an online game centered on the Golem, a 16th century anthropomorphic creature designed to protect the Jews from harm's way. Fashioned out of clay, it was given life by the recitation and combination of Hebrew letters. My project, drawing on pixels and bytes, as well as on the playful use of the Hebrew alphabet and other Jewish visual devices, situates the Golem within the 21st century, where it guards against cyber-terror. The objective of the game is to provide a digital experience to make Jewish legends and cultural traditions more accessible, relevant, and alive to a global audience.

Tawnya Ravy (English): The Salman Rushdie Archive; Midnight's Children Map

What started out as a relatively simple web archive to help me with my dissertation (the Salman Rushdie Archive) has become a multifaceted project which engages the larger scholarly community and has enabled me to begin developing pedagogical tools for teaching literary analysis of contemporary postcolonial authors like Rushdie. In addition to gathering Rushdie Studies resources on my Wordpress site, I have been analyzing and coding Rushdie's twitter feed for my dissertation coda. It is still a work in progress, but I have determined the frequency with which Rushdie retweets death threats that he receives to his more than X number of followers among other aspects. I will track additional trends including aspects like his use of literary games to engage twitter followers and political statements. I intend to both discuss these findings at length in my dissertation, but also to represent this data visually. I am also testing most of the available (and free) mapping tools to discover one that would be uniquely suited to mapping a complex story like Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. I propose that mapping stories like this will have both scholarly implications and pedagogical potential. I envision potential course projects using the same tools I use for my work in order to teach students how to work with primary sources and represent literary analysis visually.

Tolonda Henderson (GW Libraries): More than Moving Images: The Visual Culture of Harry Potter

“More than Moving Images: The Visual Culture of Harry Potter” is a forthcoming chapter in a collection of Potter scholarship co-written by GW librarian Tolonda Henderson and Dr. Amy Von Lintel, Assistant Professor of Art History at West Texas A&M University. A concordance program was used to identify occurrences of various relevant words (e.g. drawing, photograph, frame) in digital editions of Rowling's work. Further analysis revealed several patterns about the intersections of magic, images and narrative such as the fact that while two-dimensional representations such as paintings tend to be magically animate, three-dimensional representations such as statues tend to remain stationary. The chapter both interrogates the mechanics of images described by Rowling and argues that the magical function of pictures in Harry Potter illuminates crucial and familiar aspects of our digitally manipulated and screen-oriented contemporary visual culture.

2:30-3:00: General reception (just outside of Gelman Library Room 702)