

Digitization Day 2012

Conference Programme

Monday April 16th, 2012, University of Alberta

The Arts Resource Centre: Supporting the Digital Humanities at the University of Alberta

Karl Anvik, Arts Resource Centre, University of Alberta

In 2003, the Arts Resource Centre (ARC) was created through the amalgamation of three technology intensive service units, namely Arts Technologies for Learning (TLC), the Language Resource Centre (LRC) and Faculty of Arts Computing and Technical Support (FACTS). An important part of the amalgamation and reorganization was the creation of the Research Computing Group (RCG), first directed by the late Mr. Terry Butler, a pioneer in Humanities Computing at the University of Alberta. The RCG has supported many research projects throughout its near decade of existence, offering expertise in digitization, custom software development, and the general incorporation of technology into research efforts in the Humanities. In addition to these knowledge-intensive services, the RCG supports a great deal of information technology infrastructure used by the research community in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. This talk will outline many of the services and resources available through the RCG.

Trickster at the Intersection: Exploring Virtual Theatre Performance and Interaction

Pierre Boulanger, Computer Science, University of Alberta

Trickster at the intersection is a virtual theatre system designed to explore audience interaction and involvement in a participatory theatre performance. Allowing participants to enact change in the development of a theatrical experience allows them to function

not only as users of the creative system, but also as co-creators. We describe how the Trickster installation enables audiences to collaborate with the avatar in order to push forward the narrative, preserving the interactivity and improvisation of the theatrical art form and affording users a better sense of presence in the shared virtual world.

Beyond Digitization

Susan Brown, English and Film Studies, University of Alberta

The point of digitizing materials is so that one can do things with them. There are major impediments in our current digital environment, however, to the kinds of activities that we might desire to undertake, as a result of the ways that our digital environment isolates materials and activities from one another. This presentation will describe the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory, which aims to overcome some of these impediments through the production of an online research infrastructure for scholars of writing in and about Canada.

Turning "Space" into "Place": Historical maps in a Google-ized world

Maureen Engel, Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Alberta

The Edmonton Pipelines project is a series of linked and enmeshed digital mapping projects, or pipelines as we call them, which take the city of Edmonton as object and inspiration. Led by a team of four U of A researchers, Heather Zwicker, Daniel Laforest, Maureen Engel, and Russell Cobb, each of the pipelines tells complicated stories of space, stories that, as Lucy Lippard would remind us, turn "space" into "place." This distinction between space and place has become increasingly important in recent years. As maps and mapping become increasingly synonymous with consumer-grade GPS and Google Maps, the last vestiges of maps as representations begin to fade from our imaginary, and satellite imagery becomes conflated with "reality." Our project deliberately problematizes and extends the presentist and empirical surface of that "reality" to tell a "deeper" story. The Rossdale Project seeks to tell the multi-layered and contradictory history of the Rossdale flats, continuously inhabited for some 6000 years; Past Futures aims to engage with the futuristic visions of previous historical moments as a way to illuminate our own time's futuristic investments; Dis/Integration interrogates the

urban ruin of the Charles Camsell Hospital as both remnant of federal aboriginal policy, and perpetually deferred promise of gentrification and redevelopment in the city's core; and Vertical Suburbia crowdsources our view of the city by challenging us to look beyond the aggressively horizontal plain of suburbia and instead to look up and look down -- telling the story of the vertical. One of the foundational undertakings to support these pipelines was the Base Maps pipeline, which saw us georeference 21 historical maps of the city of Edmonton and make them available on the Hypercities platform. Those maps will serve as the base much of our future work, but they are also "in the wild" and available for anyone to use as the basis for their own rendering of "place."

www.edmontonpipelines.org

www.hypercities.com

University of Alberta Libraries: Specifications and Considerations for Digitization and Digital Archiving

Peggy Sue Ewanyshyn, Digitization Librarian, University of Alberta

Leah Vanderjagt, Digital Repository Services Librarian, University of Alberta

Before embarking on a digitization project, there are critical key decision points to tackle in the planning process that affect both the quality of the digitized product and the ultimate potential for long-term accessibility and preservation of these products online. Peggy Sue and Leah will review questions of evaluation and judgment required to carry out successful digitization projects and their ultimate archiving in repository environments, using examples of projects from the University of Alberta Libraries Digital Initiatives to illustrate these important questions.

The Media Wave

Cezary Gajewski, Art and Design, University of Alberta

This presentation will analyze the design, creation and outcomes of a media-rich interactive art installation entitled Wave. Influenced by the works by Marshall McLuhan, this highly collaborative project brings a new way for the public to interact with media in

public space. The installation, produced as a means to explore and share McLuhan's legacy in a public forum, integrates real-time interactions with media, sound and text allowing the audience to partake in the experience of the artwork. The installation embodies five major themes that are apparent in his work; Media as extensions; Bias of space, bias of time; Figure and ground for understanding new media; City as a technological composite and City as classroom. Thus, it utilizes both passive and active technologies to allow visitors to reflect on human interaction and behavior and to consider the ways in which technology has an increasingly invisible influence on society and our individual lives. Through exploration and interaction, viewers of the work come away with a sense of the importance and significance of Marshal McLuhan's work to today's society.

FemShep: Crowd Sourcing a Female Hero

Sean Gouglas, Director of OIS, University of Alberta

“PRODDing Along”: Humanities Computing and the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada Project

Colette Leung, Humanities Computing, University of Alberta

The Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada Project seeks to explore and record the history of eugenics, or the ideas and practices aimed at improving “human breeding,” in Western Canada. An alliance of 30 research scholars and community members, as well as near 30 university and community partnering organization, Living Archives aims to create a range of academic and public resources – known as the living archives – for investigating eugenics in Western Canada. These including recording oral histories, and building an interactive digital interface that increases community engagement. Working with a team from the Humanities Computing Programme of the University of Alberta, the project has developed a strong strategy for addressing these needs.

The project is in the process of developing a number of interactive, themed website modules for their public interface, known as Public Research Objects of Discovery, or PRODs, which aim to suit the numerous audiences and facets the project covers. These PRODs will be examined, alongside other digital aspects the project values,

including management within teams, and issues of accessibility. Finally, a digital timeline, a digital “mindmap,” and two example prototypes of PRODs will be showcased.

Movie Posters Across Time and Space: An Image Cultural Analytics Study

Parisa Naeimi, Computing Science, University of Alberta

Image cultural analytics refers to the study of relating low-level image features to high-level semantics of cultural significance. Having access to huge number of images mostly generated from social/cultural activities enables such study through well-established computational methods. Using well-known image-processing algorithms and techniques, we try to extract low- and mid-level image features such as color, shape and texture and investigate the relationship between these extracted features and high-level concepts. In this regard, we implemented a prototype for exploring correlations in image repositories through a faceted-search interface supporting visual and textual facets. To highlight the potential of our system, we have done an empirical study on IMDB image data set.

Movies can be considered as cultural artifacts since they reflect the image of a society in different ways by highlighting or to some extent exaggerating the facts. Considering IMDB as a valuable source of movies and associated data, we did a comprehensive study on movie cover photos to explore any existing cultural phenomena. In this regard, we were interested to find the similarities and distinct differences across geographical locations and over time especially for countries such as France, Italy, Germany, India and US to see “How does culture have impact on the design of movie poster? Do similar genres across different countries have similar color combinations or do they differ? How do we interpret these cultural differences? How does appearing star on the movie cover poster impact the box office performance and user ratings? What are the similarities and differences in the posters of movies with men/women as primary stars?” These are type of the questions we expected to answer and by answering them to find some correlation between low-level features extracted from movie posters (color, number of detected faces and so on) and high level semantics (user ratings, box office performance, and movie genres).

Our initial study on IMDB data set over time showed that most often the movie poster’s color appropriately represent the genre. For example, action, thrillers and horror genres have darker cover posters while other genres such as comedy and animation have brighter posters. Comparing genres in their own group also revealed that there is more inter-genres similarity than across intra-genres. Furthermore, having famous actor(s)/

actress(es) on the movie cover posters (the number of detected faces) on the movie cover posters affects the box office performance and user ratings. Using our prototype facilitate to conduct these types of studies (for instance, examining a hypothesis) by exploring image repositories through combining visual and textual facets. We believe that this kind of interfaces encourage formulation and investigation of hypotheses whose validation can help us to understand how our culture evolves over time.

Digitizing at the Kule Folklore Centre

Andriy Nahachewsky, Ukranian Folklore Centre, University of Alberta

Digitizing the Wilfred Watson Papers

Harvey Quamen, English and Film Studies and Humanities Computing, University of Alberta

"The Last Best West": The Alberta Land Settlement Infrastructure Project

Silvia Russell, Humanities Computing, University of Alberta

The motto, "last best west", attracted many transatlantic and American immigrants to the Canadian prairies before World War One, an era of immense population expansion in Alberta and a remarkable period in the peopling of the Canadian nation. The settlement of the Canadian west is best seen as a giant social experiment: the State's policy of granting free homesteads to hundreds of thousands of takers was a major public investment strategy. Yet surprisingly little is known about the people in whom the State invested, where they came from and how long they stayed. The Alberta Land Settlement Infrastructure Project (ALSIP) has three linked parts: digitized images of the Alberta Homestead Records; an on-line database compiled from those images, extended and enhanced by the addition of geo-physical variables; and 100 percent of Alberta's population in the 1911 census linked to the Homestead records.

Building Tools to Mine Data from the Old Bailey Project

John Simpson, Philosophy, University of Alberta

The Old Bailey Project (<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>) represents the largest digitized body of texts detailing the lives of non-elite people ever published, containing 197,745 criminal trials held at London's central criminal court between 1674 and 1913. As a digital repository it would not be of much benefit beyond what can be provided by simple text searches without the creation of additional tools to provide glimpses into the relationships that exist within the massive amount of data. This presentation will touch on all the tools that are available, but focus its attention on a tool for fast mining of data to provide quick insight into the validity of suspected trends or hypothesis. This tool was built at the U of A by Dr. John Simpson under the guidance of Professors Geoffrey Rockwell and Joerg Sander and was implemented via Python and SQLite. All aspects of development from initial conception to deployment will be briefly touched on in this broad overview.

Digitizing Soundscapes: Creating Maps for Soundscape Archiving and Sharing

Scott Smallwood, Director of Humanities Computing, University of Alberta

In this presentation I will give an overview of the collection and mapping of soundscapes, both in terms of what has been created thus far, and what some possible approaches might be for future work in this area. The presentation will include a description and historical view of soundscape collection, phonography, and artistic inquiry of soundscapes through field recording, listening practice and composition. I will also discuss the challenges inherent in archiving soundscape recordings, and will show examples of several online mapping tools, concluding with an overview of current research being investigated at the University of Alberta.

Archiving a field: from metadata to oral histories

Victoria Smith, Humanities Computing, University of Alberta

This research project began when the research team acquired two separate collections from colleagues in the field of Humanities Computing; one from the University of Alberta and the other from the University of Toronto. The materials now in our possession range from conference proceedings and software manuals to meeting minutes and personal correspondence. This diverse collection posed two questions for the research team: (1) How do we preserve the materials, and (2) what do we do with them?

This presentation will give an overview of the team's work towards securing our collection in the University of Alberta's digital repository, ERA, as well as increasing the breadth of the collection in an effort to further understand the field of Humanities.

Digitizing Language: The value of digital records of language material in language study and preservation

Benjamin Tucker, Department of Linguistics

Collections of language material can be found all over the world, stored in many ways and locations. Much of this material is trapped in media formats that are no longer accessible or useable to much of the population. In this talk I first describe the facilities available in the Alberta Phonetics Laboratory for digitizing this media. Second I discuss several projects which illustrate the value of the material in an academic and cultural setting.