



Digital Humanities and Gender History

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Digital Humanities and Gender History

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The conference, which was held on the four Friday afternoons of February 2021, aimed to address gender aspects of the history of the digital and of the digital humanities, as well as the application of digital methods and research processes for gender-historical questions. It examined the gender-historical implications of digital methods, tools and projects as well as the possibilities and limitations, added values and challenges that digital methods offer for the study of gender history.

In the opening keynote¹, MICHELLE MORAVEC (Rosemont) elaborated on the possibilities and pitfalls that arise when analyzing the narratives of the women's liberation movement with digital tools. She used computational linguistics, lists of words, bigrams, cluster, frequency ranking semantic tagging und entity recognition to analyze texts of feminists. Moravec asked if the common periodization of the Women's Movement excludes the voices of black women and of women of color in general. She pointed out that both the lack of machine-readable texts written by marginalized groups and the use of canonical sources written by and concerning white women lead to an excessive emphasis on the division between the Women's Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, Moravec proposed a new, earlier starting date for Black Feminism. She concluded her presentation by exhorting us to rethink the prevalent periodization and to remember that digital tools are not neutral.

KRISTAN M. HANSON (Dumbarton Oaks) opened the first panel with a project presentation on digital mapping of flower markets

in 19th century Paris. She showed that the flower markets were places of possible transformation of the traditional female role and drew attention to the networks of seed sellers, florist shops and flower markets where women were present not only as buyers, but also potentially as sellers.

KATRIN HORN and SELINA FOLTINEK (both Bayreuth) presented the online database *Cushmania*², which documents the public reception and private writings of actress Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876). They summarized their development of an online Omeka-database with Transkribus, Neatline Timeline, tags and item relationships. Besides insights into the technical aspects of the project, Horn and Foltinek shared their thoughts on queering archives and how research on historical gossip can uncover the discourse about queerness in the 19th century.

In the second panel, SARAH-MAI DANG (Marburg) talked about data-visualization in film history. According to Dang, visualization often veils rather than explains data. She sought to review the use and perception of visualization: to rethink binaries and embrace pluralization, to scrutinize power structures and consider diversity.

TOBIAS UNTERHUBER (Innsbruck) looked back at the history of computer games and showed that these games are rooted both in martial culture and in counterculture. This contradictory heritage manifests itself in a specifically „geek“ form of masculinity that combines aspects of hypermasculinity with the image of the loner-tech-boy. After using a review of historical marketing strategies to show how gendered concepts influenced the evolution of video game culture, Unterhuber pointed to the pair of epistemical categories that underpin the concept of gaming: the player is imagined to be active and male whereas the game is conceived of as passive and female.

In her commentary, VERA FASSHAUER (Frankfurt am Main) pointed out that each of the presented projects offered new narratives about gender roles by relying on sources of gender history that have hardly been taken

¹ <https://michellemoravec.com/2021/02/>.

² <https://archivalgossip.com/collection/collections/show/1>.

into account so far. The evaluation of the sources with digital methods has shown the bias in the methods themselves and raised the question of how digital methods can be made useful for gender history.

Computers use binaries to operate and most tools thus represent gender as a pair of fixed categories. Fluid gender identities and trans identities are hardly present in the data. In her keynote on representing gender in data, JULIA FLANDERS (Boston) argued that in any (DH) project, researchers should ask themselves when, how and for what purpose gender needs to be represented in order to more adequately describe human life.

BARBARA HAHN (Nashville) presented the critical edition of the complete works of Hannah Arendt. This edition consists of a print version and an online version of Arendt's writings³, which makes text variants, fragments, overwritings etc. traceable. In her asynchronous talk, KATHRIN GANZ (Hamburg) considered the opportunities and different ways of scholar-led open-access publishing. She emphasized that open-access publishing is particularly suited for publishing developments and intermediate results.

THOMAS GLONING and ANNA PFUNDT (both Gießen) are compiling and analyzing a corpus of writings of the first Women's Movement into the German text archive. Their main foci are the reconstruction of communicative moves in public debates, the analysis of the vocabulary used in discourse and the search for an integrated system to present and document the writings.

MARIE FLÜH and MAREIKE SCHUMACHER (both Hamburg) revealed how they are analyzing gender stereotypes in novels from the 18th to the 20th century as well as in fantasy novels for youth from 2015 to 2020. They examine the relationship between the respective descriptions of emotions and gender. Methodically, they use a text/model-centered approach and digital analysis with CATMA and NER (Named Entity Recognizer).

JESSICA BOCK (Berlin) summarized the presentations in her concluding commentary. On this second day of the conference, the speakers dealt with the presentation and publication of texts. Furthermore, the question

was raised as to how gender is constructed in texts and how fluid gender identities can be represented in data.

The third day started with a keynote by LAURA MANDELL (College Station), who asked how one might avoid bias in the Digital Humanities. She showed how we (re)produce bias even in apparently objective data analyses: in text analysis e.g., women appear as a marked category while men do not. Mandell pointed out that when interpreting data, researchers do not render „truth“ visible but rather take a position. In reference to the discussions of the previous days, she emphasized the need to reflect on how we can possibly deconstruct binaries within a system that relies on them.

Commencing the fifth panel, KRISTIEN SUENENS (Leuven) introduced male and female Belgian religious institutes in the web-database ODIS⁴. The data in ODIS show a clear female dominance in religious institutes, but most directors of institutes who are known and remembered are male. The assembled data could help to close the research gap on women in the institutes.

ANDREAS NEUMANN (Jena) asked how QDA software technology (qualitative data analysis) influences research and claimed that the more intuitive the interface of a QDA software is, the more historians are tempted to neglect methodological reflections. In addition, the use of this software may lead researchers to view certain data and categories, e.g. gender, as fixed and essential by concealing the processes through which they emerged. Using his own research on women's studies between 1865 and 1918, Neumann demonstrated the importance of dealing with and reviewing data critically. Reflecting critically and employing theory to assess the collected data can prevent a merely descriptive view and enable research that also considers factors not explicitly expressed in the data.

The sixth panel consisted of three prerecorded contributions, each of which the respective speaker then summarized live at the beginning of the session. First, STEFANIE PÖSCHL (Berlin) introduced the visualization of feminist networks in the Dig-

³ <https://www.arendteditionprojekt.de/>.

⁴ https://www.odis.be/hercules/_nl_home.php.

itales Deutsches Frauenarchiv (DDF)⁵. Subsequently, ILONA SCHEIDLE, ANDREA HUND and CORINNA SCHNEIDER (all Tübingen) presented their digital map of the women's movement in Baden-Württemberg. MIRJAM HÖFNER (Kassel) looked at the possibilities and limits of presenting research on the Women's Movement in a Pecha Kucha talk. She queried which parts of history are lost in a presentation form which gives the speaker limited time and a fixed number of slides and particularly noted that each form of presentation evokes certain narratives. The following discussion highlighted the strengths of the exchange between non-university and university institutions in knowledge-production, especially for the historization of Women's Movements.

In her commentary, KATHERINE FAULL (Lewisburg) addressed the overarching question of that day: how can researchers deal with bias in Digital Humanities? This problem was discussed across three subject areas: in archiving, where objects are selected for particular cultural and historical reasons, in the presentation of data, where visualization itself constitutes interpretation, and in encoding, where researchers have to be careful not to inscribe hierarchies into the data.

In her keynote, DOROTHY KIM (Waltham) combatted the myth that the internet is bodiless and therefore not inherently discriminatory and argued that racial discrimination is inscribed within digital structures. The assumption that data are objective, Kim noted, exacerbate crimes perpetrated against black people. In research on pre- and early modern Europe, the presence of black people is often ignored and the archives themselves have been conceptualized through a white gaze. Kim's intention is to create a premodern black feminist archive. To do so, she uses findings from bioarchaeology, which could prove that black people were present in European cities much earlier and in much larger numbers than previously assumed. Kim argued that in historical Digital Humanities an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach is necessary to render visible the histories of black people in archives and research.

INGO PÄTZOLD (Bielefeld) evaluated medical discourses on deviant masculinities

during World War I in the Berlin Klinische Wochenschrift (BKW 1864-1921). Especially the discourse about pension payments expressed the biopolitical power of physicians. Pätzold searched the source corpus, made readable and searchable with the tool nopaque⁶, for the keywords „pension“, „neurasthenia“, and „soldier“. He was able to show that there was an increase in frequency and an overlap of terms in BKW during World War I.

KATRIN MOELLER (Halle-Wittenberg) recorded a tutorial for the conference, educating participants about the SPSS program and research data management. Using her research on mortality in early modern Halle, she showed how the analysis of mass data can be employed in gender history, e.g. by showing how epidemics, wars and natural events affected the lifespan of women, men and children.

DAGMAR BRUNOW (Växjö) drew attention to the ambivalence of LGBTQ+ visibility in digital queer archives. On the one hand, visibility is an important demand of queer communities; on the other, being searchable may render people more vulnerable. The very practice of archiving holds pitfalls: name tagging has to be critically questioned and it has to be ensured that fluid gender identities are not fixed in retrospect.

In his concluding commentary, JAN HORSTMANN (Weimar) connected the presentations of the day and raised questions that were asked during the conference: What benefit do digital methods bring to gender history? What can gender history offer Digital Humanities? Horstmann's hypothesis in this regard was that the reflective approach of gender history can reveal bias and power structures within digital methods and subsequently render them more inclusive.

Conference overview:

Keynote_

Michelle Moravec (Rosemont College): Why Gender History Needs Digital Humanities and Vice Versa

⁵<https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de/akteurinnen>.

⁶<https://nopaque.sfb1288.uni-bielefeld.de/>.

Panel 1

Kristan M. Hanson (Dumbarton Oaks): Historical Geocoding and Digital Mapping. New Approaches to Studying Gendered Spatial Practices in Parisian Art, Society, and Plant Culture

Katrin Horn / Selina Foltinek (Universität Bayreuth): Cushmania. Reconstructing Queerness and Celebrity of a Nineteenth-Century Actress

Panel 2

Sarah-Mai Dang (Philipps-Universität Marburg): Aesthetics of Access. Visualizing Research on Women in Film History

Tobias Unterhuber (Universität Innsbruck): Männlich codiert? – Annäherung an eine Medien- und Geschlechtergeschichte des Computerspiels

Abschlussdiskussion

mit einleitendem Kommentar von Vera Faßhauer (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main)

Keynote

Julia Flanders (Northeastern University, Boston): Gender in the Machine. Representing Gender in digital Publication Frameworks

Panel 3

Barbara Hahn (Vanderbilt University, Nashville): Hannah Arendt. Complete Works. Critical Edition. A Presentation of the First Three Volumes (print) and of the Webportal

Kathrin Ganz (Open Gender Journal & GenderOpen, Hamburg): Scholar-led Open-Access-Publishing. Potentials for Digital Humanities in Gender Studies

Panel 4

Thomas Gloning / Anna Pfundt (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen): Das Teil-Korpus „Texte der ersten Frauenbewegung“ im Deutschen Textarchiv. Die Konzeption als lebendes Archiv, Forschungsmöglichkeiten, Zukunftsperspektiven

Marie Flüh / Mareike Schumacher (Universität Hamburg): Digitale diachrone Korpusanalyse am Beispiel des Projekts „m*w – Gen-

der Stereotype in der Literatur“

Abschlussdiskussion

mit einleitendem Kommentar von Jessica Bock (Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv, Berlin)

Keynote

Laura Mandell (Texas A&M University, College Station): Statistics versus Machine Learning: Gender, Intersectionality, and Big Data

Panel 5

Kristien Suenens (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven): Mapping a Terra Incognita. Male and Female Religious (Institutes) in the Web-database ODIS

Andreas Neumann (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena): Positivismus, Hermeneutik, Reifikation. Probleme beim Einsatz von QDA-Software

Panel 6

Stefanie Pöschl (Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv, Berlin): Feministische Verbindungen – zur Visualisierung frauenbewegter Netzwerke im DDF

Ilona Scheidle / Corinna Schneider / Andrea Hund (Bildungszentrum und Archiv zur Frauengeschichte Baden-Württembergs, Tübingen): Landkarte Frauen*bewegungen in Baden-Württemberg

Mirjam Höfner (Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung, Kassel): Was geht – und was bleibt? Frauenbewegungsgeschichte/n um 1900 als Pecha Kucha

Abschlussdiskussion

mit einleitendem Kommentar von Katherine Faull (Bucknell University, Lewisburg)

Keynote

Dorothy Kim (Brandeis University, Waltham): Critical Intersectionality and the Premodern Digital Archive

Panel 7

Ingo Pätzold (Universität Bielefeld): Körper- und Geschlechterdiskurse in der Berliner Klinischen Wochenschrift (1864-1921)

Katrin Moeller (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg): Säuglingssterblichkeit,

Epidemie und demografische
Geschlechtergeschichte – ein Let's Analyze
von Massendaten

Panel 8

Dagmar Brunow (Linnaeus University,
Växjö): The Ambivalence of LGBT+ Visibil-
ity in Digital Archives. Between Archival
Recognition and Digital Disengagement

Abschlussdiskussion

mit einleitendem Kommentar von Jan
Horstmann (Klassik Stiftung Weimar)

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