Teaching the Digital Humanities through Virtual Research Environments

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Dr Craig Bellamy
Analyst Digital Humanities, VeRSI
Secretary: Australasian Association for Digital Humanities

a) The Digital Humanities Landscape

b) Virtual Research Environments (VREs)

c) VREs in teaching and research
The DH Landscape...

• The Digital Humanities (growing energy in the field; Australia and Internationally)

• Largely a focus on methods in humanities research

• Challenges: utilisation of vast amount of digital resources being created in a meaningful, scholarly way

http://www.versi.edu.au/
VREs

“...the humanities need to consider the multiple opportunities associated with cyberinfrastructure, whilst maintaining epistemic integrity and avoiding modelling new infrastructure uncritically after existing models” (Patrik Svensson, DHQ, Winter 2011)

VREs (examples)

1. LORE (Aust)
2. Old Bailey (UK)
3. TAPoR (Canada)
4. NINES (USA)
1: Aus-e-lit (lore tool)

"LORE: Literature Object Re-use and Exchange

LORE is an extension for the Firefox Web Browser which aims to support the digital practice of Literature scholars and teachers by enabling them to:

- **Author Compound-objects:**
  - **Gather** web resources and organise and tag them, describe links between them and make notes about them via the graphical editor.
  - **Discover** compound objects that others have created about related topics and web resources.
  - **Publish** the information that scholars have assembled as compound objects so that others can find them and reuse the information.
  - **Communicate** the information using automatically generated documents, slideshows and diagrams.

- **Annotate web resources:**
  - **Contribute** comments, notes and additional information by annotating web resources.
  - **Search and browse** annotations contributed by others.
  - **Discuss** topics and resources by replying to annotations created by others”.

2: Old Bailey

- “The Old Bailey Proceedings Online makes available a fully searchable, digitised collection of all surviving editions of the Old Bailey Proceedings from 1674 to 1913, and of the Ordinary of Newgate’s Accounts between 1676 and 1772. It allows access to over 197,000 trials and biographical details of approximately 2,500 men and women executed at Tyburn, free of charge for non-commercial use.

- In addition to the text, accessible through both keyword and structured searching, this website provides digital images of all 190,000 original pages of the Proceedings, 4,000 pages of Ordinary’s Accounts, advice on methods of searching this resource, information on the historical and legal background to the Old Bailey court and its Proceedings, and descriptions of published and manuscript materials relating to the trials covered. Contemporary maps, and images have also been provided.”

- See: http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Project.jsp
Tabulating Judgment Days Through the Centuries

The following charts were generated from queries to the online archives of the Old Bailey, London’s central criminal court, based on records between 1674 and 1913.

**GUILTY PLEAS**

An unusual jump in guilty pleas began to occur after about 1825. Analysis suggests that one reason was the use of prisons as an alternative to capital punishment.

![Guilty pleas as a percentage of all verdicts](chart1.png)

**BIGAMY**

The number of women indicted for the crime of bigamy in Victorian England far exceeded the number of men, showing evidence of a double standard.

![Bigamy chart](chart2.png)

Source: Data Mining With Criminal Intent Team

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http://www.versi.edu.au/
3: TAPoR

- Launched in 2003
- Text Analysis Portal for Research
- Network of six leading humanities computing centres in Canada

TAPoR is a portal for:
- Collecting texts - TAPoR lets you keep a library of references with links to original documents on the web or elsewhere
- Analysing texts - You can then pass these texts to tools that analyse the text and then store the results
- Tools on TAPoR are web services not on the TAPoR server
- TAPoR provides a common interface for tools
4: NINES

**Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-Century Electronic Scholarship**

Goals:
- to serve as a peer-reviewing body for digital work in the long 19th-century (1770-1920), British and American;
- peer-reviewing and legitimating digital literary editing, to support scholars’ priorities and best practices in the creation of digital research materials;
- to develop software tools for new and traditional forms of research and critical analysis.

It provides scholars with access to a federated digital environment and a suite of computerised analytic and interpretive tools.

- **NINES is currently aggregating 670,373 peer reviewed digital objects from 96 federated sites.**

http://www.versi.edu.au/
VRE in the classroom (Heuristic)

1. "serving to indicate or point out; stimulating interest as a means of furthering investigation.
2. encouraging a person to learn, discover, understand, or solve problems on his or her own, as by experimenting, evaluating possible answers or solutions, or by trial and error: a heuristic teaching method.
3. of, pertaining to, or based on experimentation, evaluation, or trial-and-error methods"...

VRE in the classroom

- Computing in the humanities is a set of humanities questions to achieve a set of humanities interpretations.
- Provide technical architectures that open-up critical interpretations of digital objects (within assessable tasks) to broader audiences of students.
- Information retrieval and analysis skills become more important through the increase of social/cultural data (ie. Zetoro, Lore, Tapor)