TEC 154 2014S, Class 23: Digital Humanities (2)

Overview

- Preliminaries.
  - ○ Admin.
  - ○ Questions.

Preliminaries

Admin

- I was disappointed to see so few reading responses for today. (The ones I received were good, though.)
- For Friday, please read and respond to the Digital Humanities manifesto.
- Today's note takers: MK and JV
- Missing: FC (excused), DS, DP, CC, SG

Questions from the Reading

An approach to thinking about these things

- Break into groups of two.
- Identify thorny parts of the text and the questions you have about them.
- Can these approaches be used in your discipline?
- How might collaboration be involved in your discipline?

Word-Level Questions and Observations

- Lots of expectations that you have a particular worldview.
  - ○ Venue is PMLA - Modern Languages Association
- p. 410: Column 2 Role of society, and the reception of humanities and the digital from the perspective of society. What roles do the humanities continue to serve?
  - ○ They address what is human about us.
  - ○ Truth, beauty, morals, ethics.
  - ○ Who are we? What is the meaning of life? What is religion?
  - ○ Characters that we read are put in ethical binds that we wouldn't normally be, and pushes them to the breaking point.
  - ○ Are we rational actors, altruistic, etc.

About the Author and the Article

- Liu is an early adopter of digital humanities
- 1980's traditional scholar.
- Disappears for awhile.
- Reemerges in the late 1990's as a digital humanist.
- He's emerged as one of the primary spokespeople for digital humanities.
- So this article is to convince people that this stuff is useful.
- Language suggests that "I'm an insider."
- Deals with the cricism that the Moretti lab isn't really dealing with language any more.
- The essay is not only descriptive, it's also polemical.

Can we apply this to our own disciplines?

- Collaboration between art and other technologies. Why is the Mac, rather than Windows, considered the preferred machine for artists? What are the characteristics that attract artists?
  - Yes, we need to think about technical issues.
  - And disciplines make interesting decisions.
  - Do you need to code in order to participate in digital humanities work.
  - Important issue: *Accessibility*. Can you do digital humanities work if you can't program? Not right now.
  - Language issues: Collaborating between Python and Java.
    - "Java makes my head explode."
- Interactionality between digital humanities and tech studies (p. 416)
  - We should not reinvent the world. There's a theoretical vocabulary that we can use.
  - STS is another way of knowing about the digital humanities.
  - As Pickering suggests, it's not as simple as just applying the scientific method to the humanities (or the digital humanities)
  - "We don't have to reinvent the wheel."

Shakespeare Network Analysis

Outline:

1. Experimental, Empirical approach

   - What new understanding?
   - Do we confirm or revise standard paradigms?

2. Network Analysis -> Social Networking

   - 6 Degrees of Francis Bacon
   - Franco Moretti and Plot Analysis

3. Standard Story: Disordering of Social Bonds

- Carnivalesque
- Tragedy and Chaos
- Gap in narrative theory

4. To break social bonds, needs of dense social network.

Narrative

- Network analysis is used a lot in the social sciences.
- An experimental tool can tell us a lot about things.
- It's okay to start with questions or problems.
- Given acts and scenes in Shakespeare's plays, look at who speaks to each other.
- Visualization:
  - For a character: Bubbles are the amount of words a character speaks. (Shakespeare is nice because every line has ten syllables.)
  - Distance: How frequently they speak to each other. (Inverse)
  - Note that formatting of text tells us a lot about crosstalk and such.
- Didn't know what would emerge: Experimental rather than empirical.
- People focus too much on the the answer, and often work backwards.
  - This approach sometimes twists things.
- Really wanted to start with a question and let the data fall where they may.
- Why Shakespeare? The formatting issues above, along with the wealth of scholarship and analysis.
- Social networking
  - Dan Shore (formerly at Grinnell) is part of a project at Georgetown called "six degrees of Francis Bacon". Take "Dictionary of National Biography"
    - Crowdsourcing to identify a network. Using DNB entry with, who is this person associated with? Thinkers, printers, publishers, etc.
    - Critique: This loses so much of the important detail of the biography
  - Moretti: Dig deeply into the plot of plays.
    - Work done by hand.
    - Conclusion: "Network analysis doesn't teach us anything."
    - Lee hopes that this project can show some utility to SNA for literary analysis.
- What did we find? A promising new approach.
  - Moretti suggested SNA to study narrative and plot (not beauty etc.)
  - Standard theory: Shakespearean plays are about the disordering of social bonds.
  - In Shakespearian comedies, there's a "pause button" which leads to a playful reordering of social hierarchies.
  - Input is a stable society, there's temporary upheaval, and then we return to a stable society.
  - There's also chaos in Shakespearian tragedy. Also carnivalesque, but with a harder edge. A tearing apart of the social order. But, unlike in the comedy, we don't return to a stable society. Rather, we end with disorder/chaos.
  - Scholars have identified a gap in this theory: How does drama confirm or deny this approach.
  - Narrative theory tends to focus around novels and films.

- ○ Plays are different: Performed and seen.
- What did we find?
  - ○ Yes, there's breaking social bonds.
  - ○ But in the scenes that there's breaking of social bonds, there's the thickest social network.
- Let's look at *Twelfth Night* (1600)
  - ○ Critics focus on a solliloquy moment (Act 1, Scene 2, I think), rather than the scenes in which there's a lot of interaction (e.g., Act 5, Scene 1)
  - ○ A lot of interesting stuff related to social structure appears in the highly-networked sections.
- Similar issues in *Hamlet*.
- We should think more about these scenes.
- Another project: A macro-scale analylsis of the relationships