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L-100: Digital Approaches to Bibliography & Book History
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Narrative Course Evaluations

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*

1. The readings were helpful; some were more thorough than what was referred to in class. I suggest adding more articles about the topics discussed in class, and the ones referenced in class.
2. Yes! All of the course materials were very useful.
3. I downloaded the required readings and skimmed them. I appreciated that they laid some groundwork for folks but I would have liked some other modalities like podcasts or videos. Now that I've taken the class there are a number that I look forward to returning to, particularly the optional readings, so in some ways, I think the required set could be pared down some.
4. Yes, they were. While this course involves more up-to-the-minute updates than most, I didn't feel that what I read was overly outdated (it might be said to range from "classic" to "modern classic"). With more work being done on LLM systems and related technology, it might be worth adding a couple of new readings (and some of the tools listed for our perusal are now defunct, such as Juxta).
5. Some of them were very useful (like CS's article demonstrating the difference between how humans and computers see) and some were just overwhelming (like Bowers, which was noted as potentially overwhelming, but was still a lot for someone with no formal training in bibliography). It would also be nice to have some kind of "Coding 101" tutorial linked, as I had no experience with coding, and am still feeling like I need to do a bit more learning in that area before I'd feel comfortable embarking on any of the methods we explored in the course.
6. No, not really. They couldn't keep my attention because I didn't have context for understanding them. But it was good to have them available to try and get a sense of the discourse of the faculty who would be teaching.
7. The readings were useful in providing a general background of the topics discussed in class. The instructors mentioned during the classes a couple of articles that deal specifically with Digital Humanities; it would be great if they could provide a list of these articles after the course.
8. Yes, they were interesting and allowed me to make connections to class lectures and activities.
9. Yes, the pre-course reading assignments were useful; it would be wonderful to continue

to discuss how issues they raise are addressed through the cutting-edge technological work practiced together in class. Were we to work more directly with ESTC data, I wonder if Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser's "What is Print Popularity?" (from *The Elizabethan Top Ten*) might be a helpful chapter?—if only to show in part some of the challenges of settling upon categories used for analysis.

10. I found the pre-course reading to be helpful and feel that they set a good conceptual framework. This class jumps head first into a fairly tech-heavy perspective, but you need a kind of mental scaffolding that some of the texts can steer you towards.
11. Yes! It didn't always seem like they were absolutely necessary, as the instructors also introduced a lot of the ideas in them in class, and they weren't entirely integral to each day's work itself—but having the wide survey of readings to start familiarizing myself was really helpful. I do think it would be useful to have a couple more readings relating to more recent projects and humanities applications (e.g., some on neural networks, perhaps?) or maybe even recommendations for intros some of the statistical techniques we were using that come from outside book-fields—but overall what was there was helpful.

2) *What are your thoughts on the course workbook and/or other teaching materials distributed during class? Was the content appropriate and useful? Will it continue to be useful for you after the course?*

1. Super helpful, and having the documentation to refer to after class. In the future, in addition to doing the readings, students could be helped by taking an intro to Python before the class.
2. All of the course materials are extremely useful and will continue to guide and enhance my work after the course.
3. The workbook copies for reference and working workbooks were both extensive and detailed. Lots of explanation (and humor) integrated into the content so that I feel reasonably confident about working through some of the examples again and testing what I've learned against materials I have at work.
4. The Jupyter Notebooks are AMAZING. I've heard engineering students say they like these, and as a humanist getting my first exposure, I can see why. They're works of art, with extensive explanations, links for further reading, and LOTS of code I can review as I try to work out my own projects in the months ahead. It's making me think about my own teaching in new ways already!
5. Yes, and I'm sure I'll go back and look at them after the course, because there were lots of code and code explanations that will be useful.
6. The Colab Notebooks were really helpful for the faculty to document the code they were teaching us and their process of coming up with those coding choices. While I am still not able to reproduce my own Python code after this short one-week class, I could present it to a Python coder to provide an example of a concept or process I would like

to work on through the theories I learned in this class.

7. The teaching materials provided via Google Drive were very useful, especially those regarding the coding activities, in which they explained step by step.
8. Yes! The Colab notebooks are fantastic. I will definitely continue to refer to them after the course.
9. The notebooks are incredibly useful and will be phenomenally helpful in months and years to come. (Thank you!)
10. I found the exposure to concepts in this class to be very important. It is next level stuff, no doubt. No one who took this class will be walking out and using Python immediately at the level in which we followed in our Colab notebooks. However, the exposure to working and thinking about the computational side of things and the concepts is what this class is about and that is the point.
11. The notebooks in the drive were really useful as working documents in class, and I'm looking forward to spending more time with the fuller reference notebooks for each day's unit, as well. I've already found myself going back to code from some of the earlier notebooks and realizing it can be adapted in ways that will be useful for a project I'm currently working on.

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. Many of the topics introduced in class were new to me; having two scholars who are active in these spaces was also helpful for daily deeper-dives into topics.
2. Learning how code is written and how to speak “computer” was intriguing and relevant for the work that I do in leading a digital scholarship team. I am walking away with a wealth of knowledge I would not have otherwise.
3. As a librarian on a team supporting faculty across multiple disciplines, I appreciated the breadth of items discussed as I never know what questions might come up. I always learn a lot just from observing other people's work patterns and flows.
4. Seeing the range of methods, and hearing how they work in context from experts in the field, was greatly helpful. I liked the blend of hands-on work, lecture, and discussion, and the brainstorming I was able to do toward moving my own work forward will be very useful to me as I head back home.
5. Yes, I have lots of ideas and have become more interested in the digital humanities overall or as a direction I'd like to take my career—at least a little bit! I didn't emerge from the course with a specific idea about one project I'd like to do, because, as in the previous question, I don't feel like I know or understand enough about coding/computer science to know what I'm really doing, but I have several ideas that might pan out once I do that work.
6. This course expanded my mind with what can be done computationally to and with digitized heritage materials in text, image, and sound formats. I found the instructors

were excellent communicators of these computational processes in layman's terms and also in technical/specialized terms so that I could get a basic conceptual understanding of what they were doing. With what I have learned, I am able to figure out a project plan on how to move forward on some backlogs with a database project I am working on.

7. The course is very helpful to provide you a panorama of all possible applications of digital tools in the study of bibliography and book history. Some of the tools presented are particularly helpful in my own research as they will facilitate some research procedures.
8. Absolutely! Many aspects were intriguing and relevant to my work in metadata and my own scholarly interests. I am walking away with a number of new insights and plans for metadata workflows and scholarly projects, and in fact, I can't wait to dig in when I return back to work next week. I believe this course has introduced me to tools that will allow me to work more efficiently and perhaps even more creatively. I had studied Python on my own here and there, but this course helped me connect the dots, to see the big picture of how things work and how coding can support cultural heritage research. Now I feel much more confident in using Python in my work/scholarship.
9. While all aspects of the course were useful and compelling, I appreciated particularly our exploration of the concepts and code behind ChatGPT, as well as our ontological modeling and discussion of data formats. As a whole, the experience of the course both reinforced and deepened my commitment to existing projects while profoundly enriching my ability to explore new directions.
10. Our group (and people who work in digital humanities) have some interesting ideas about special collections, &c. There are instances where a data model can tell us things that might be buried or implied. "What if we were wrong?" "What if the data suggests that an impulse is subjective?" I found it very intriguing to learn about data frames and information that can offer another perspective and that it is our responsibility to go back and look at something again that we thought we already knew.
11. For one, I feel much more confident with trying things out in Python—I had *some* familiarity with it before, but was mostly self-taught from materials that weren't pitched toward the kinds of things I actually work on, so I'm definitely leaving feeling more ready to try to build my own tools. Otherwise, the specific tools we were introduced to also seem useful. But more than anything, I think what I most appreciated, and what I'm most walking away with, is a clearer understanding of *how* to best integrate digital methods into the kind of close, detailed work I often do, which often focuses on individual objects or texts: using them as much to prompt new questions and test assumptions that would be verified or taken further by my analog methods, as to find ways to answer questions that analog methods alone can't. I think this kind of recursive or fully hybrid approach—using analog methods, then turning to digital methods, then coming back to analog methods—was one I'd always struggled to fully put in practice myself, but this course put it into practice in a way that really

clarified how this kind of work actually gets done.

4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*

1. Yes, and I learned even more than I hoped for. My class/cohort also got along very well, and that was just luck of the draw.
2. Yes!
3. Yes.
4. Yes, and more! I wanted to learn the concepts behind coding and various applications thereof, and I got a great start on that, I think. I also learned various tips on finding resources, making choices for digital projects, and the thinking and work behind library resources I use regularly with my students such as EEBO.
5. Yes, I was exposed to coding for the first time which was great, and got many, many ideas of how one might think with a computer to approach humanities questions. I think I wanted to learn a bit more about types of software/programs—or even like a directory of types of programs—but the latter doesn't seem to exist, and I did like that it wasn't just a "here's how you use XYZ" course. I would have liked a bit more about mapping, or how to deal with space and spatial coordinates, because I think a lot of us in the group had questions about that, or that related to dissemination. It was also helpful to learn about the scale of data that makes certain computer processes/programs and statistical approaches even useful or relevant, because I realized I simply don't have enough data to make certain activities worthwhile (or statistically relevant, or enough to train a model, &c.).
6. Before this class, I imagined learning more about citation management in digital environments, hence the term "Digital Approaches to Bibliography." But instead, I actually learned things more interesting and relevant to what more I can do besides that. While I didn't gain any fluent status in Python, I believe I am more aware of computational methodologies with cultural heritage materials.
7. The instructors were able to show a varied assortment of digital tools useful for the study of bibliography and book history. However, to master each of the applications presented would require a new course. Thus, I learned all the possibilities that digital tools might offer, without being capable of using them.
8. Yes, absolutely! The instructors were amazing!! They are not only extremely knowledgeable in the content, they are approachable and patient, and these qualities combined with their enthusiasm for the content made for a wonderful learning experience. I would definitely take another course with them.
9. Absolutely. I almost feel as if I've been privileged to experience two courses in one. The preparation lays groundwork for appreciating the absolutely incredible level of technical detail, and I look forward to reviewing and working from both perspectives in years to come.

10. Yes, and then some. To put it bluntly, this class was akin to drinking from a firehose—I mean that in a good way.
11. Yes! I was hoping to learn both about (some of) a range of possibilities for working with different types of bibliographical information, and also to learn to use a few particular tools in depth, to learn more about how this kind of research works in practice—and the course did a nice job of both (acknowledging that there's only so much that can be covered in a week!).

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. I plan to learn Python, and more of the code for operationalizing my own (and first) DH project. The last period at the end of the week we get to talk through potential projects and get feedback on. This may also lead to writing a few grants for further support.
2. In digital scholarship projects.
3. I had one idea of how I might apply this and left with a different idea, but yes, I definitely think there are a number of different ways I can take the information I learned here.
4. I'm going to give a full report to my research team of undergraduate students next Monday to tell them what I learned and what we can start working to learn. I can also now build a task list for the next several months of work and plot out where I think this work will go in the next year or two. I'm also rethinking how I want to bring "the digital" into a literary history course I'm teaching this fall—not likely to do much coding (yet), but discussing the construction of databases and catalogs could be very helpful in that course.
5. I plan to use these skills in some way for one of my dissertation chapters; apologies for the vagueness, but see above regarding not knowing enough about code to know what I could do that would actually be meaningful.
6. I believe I could use my understanding to write grants and develop research teams to carry out computational digital humanities projects.
7. Now that I know about the existence and application of these digital tools, I plan to learn more to be able to use in my own research.
8. I will immediately implement my new skills and knowledge in my work with metadata and digital collections, and I plan to use my learning to a digital humanities project.
9. In addition to revivifying my desire to work bibliographically in Python—a central goal I'd had for taking the course—my commitment to articulating the value and affordances of differing data formats has been renewed, and I'm extremely eager to test and tweak the notebooks for work with EEBO-TCP metadata. (Again, thank you.)
10. Broadly speaking, I'm interested in human behavior and how we, as people, can evaluate and analyze that. I feel like I was exposed to some very interesting ways of thinking about information.

11. {no response}

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Anyone interested in library/bibliometrics, and digital humanities applications. Also learning how to apply computer science and DH concepts to bibliographical projects that utilize larger data sets, and finding ways to query the results.
2. Digital Scholarship practitioners, digital archivists, librarians, and faculty.
3. Anyone interested in expediting their analysis work with texts or images. I kind of want to send everyone I work with on our digital humanities team to this course.
4. Scholars and librarians who are engaged in the study of books and/or archives but fairly new to digital humanities would greatly benefit, as would scholars with a digital project for which they find they need broader context or a larger toolkit.
5. Someone who has some experience of coding and has a particular project or set of digital resources that they think they want to use—or "get something out of"—even if they don't quite know how to articulate what they want or how they want to do it. Having a larger research question/problem would be a good way to enter the course, too.
6. I think other cultural heritage professionals working with non-Western materials could benefit. There is a way that BIPOC cultural heritage workers are already underrepresented in the rare books fields. Now adding this computational skill layer to the field increases this disparity in BIPOC access. I think by providing more opportunities for BIPOC library, archives, and special collections education in computational digital humanities skills can really increase diverse voices in the semantic web and facilitate new research conversation on issues of ethics in representation and interpretation, power/knowledge, &c.
7. During the course we were presented with a varied assortment of digital approaches. So, it benefits a wide range of professionals, from librarians and curators to researchers and professors.
8. Primarily librarians and scholars.
9. I would say that librarians, scholars of early modern literature and culture, and graduate students would benefit particularly; many others might have their imaginations sparked as well!
10. People interested in (digital) humanities and information science.
11. Anyone who wants to learn about the digital humanities from scholars fully committed to both sides of that equation: those who are curious about digital methods but skeptical of whether their objects of research can really be suited to such methods; those who want to understand both the possibilities and limitations of given tools and approaches; those who want to think critically about what **can** be done digitally that **can't** be done with other methods, as well as what still can't be done digitally, and why; those who want to better understand **how** computers work and can be used as

research tools.

7) *If applicable, what were the most powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any "aha!" moments you'd like to share?*

1. Learning about how ChatGPT really works; really works with probability. And how to do text mining, and similar work with images. The possibilities! The possibilities!
2. I loved learning about neural networks and how Chat GPT came about.
3. I think the main things were how much "thinking" is required before the "doing." Both CS and BP underscored that in their discussions, and while it is something I knew intuitively, that work can often feel or be invisible and I have better tools for talking about and claiming that time in my workflow.
4. So many to name! Zipf's Law was one (Google it!). The idea that ChatGPT is "mansplaining as a service." Learning how a computer "reads" a text or an image compared to how a human does so, and how to adjust my thinking to ask the computer the things I ACTUALLY want it to do.
5. Thinking like a computer, or seeing like a computer—and how that interfaces with human thought and vision—is something I'll be carrying around for a while and mulling over, particularly as it interfaces with the oft-repeated, "the computer messed this up or didn't recognize it, so it's stupid, so the whole DH thing is pointless!" &c. How they see images is an issue that I think might be more productive for me than I can currently articulate.
6. The ability to learn so many theories behind the computational processes we were learning and how they were applicable to digitized special collection materials were impressive. They were able to demonstrate what new research thinking can be done as special collections face digitization for access purposes. The faculty also brought some really good discussion on the limits of digitization of different versions of the same text. The printing process of older rare books and manuscripts created idiosyncrasies, due to print technology flaws, that should not be looked over even though we can now access digital surrogates of one of the copies. This class brought more critical attention and reflection on the process on the work flows of digitizing collections.
7. The class where they explained how to import bibliographical records to a database was the most interesting moment for me.
8. It's hard to identify just one. I think the "aha!" moment was that I could see ways to apply what I was learning to my own work/interests.
9. From the first day to the final discussion, I've appreciated deeply the ways in which both instructors' unwavering commitment to both the course's methods and students' learning allowed them to register details that our group would likely find significant, while bringing these forward succinctly and with an eye to their greater implications.
{private response}
10. I found that the ways our instructors wrapped some philosophical content around the

approaches to trained data models to be powerful.

11. I actually feel like I understand how ChatGPT and other large language models work, now! And by mid-week, I found myself writing my own script for building my own database from a huge dataset of bibliographical info my library had available for download. My very first Python script that wasn't for a tutorial! And it works!

8) *Are there any other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. Being encouraged to take a basic introduction to Python beforehand, to maximize the experience. Offering an advanced, follow-up course!
2. No.
3. Can't think of any right now.
4. The course is very fast-paced. That's in the nature of RBS, but perhaps because there weren't as many artifacts, this stood out more in this course. I don't have particularly helpful suggestions, other than perhaps a little more signposting, along the lines of "THIS is the big thing to take away" or "here's why we're doing what we're doing."
5. Having a list of vocabulary words for those who don't know coding would have been useful (e.g. a glossary).
6. Include an elementary text on what Python is and how to build a vocabulary of Python syntax. While the instructors didn't necessarily care for us to "master" Python by the end of the class, having had the chance to study the grammar, syntax and vocabulary of Python beforehand could have increased our understanding of how they structured their coding arguments and decisions. I also think including examples of non-Western materials and going through computational methods would have been interesting for the inclusion of other ways of looking within other types of cultural heritage materials.
7. {no response}
8. I can't think of any. Everything was useful, inspiring, interesting, engaging, well-paced, ... just right.
9. {no response}
10. I think more people need exposure to this type of information? I know it isn't for everyone, but bringing more transparency and diversity will only help a field like this and make it grow more.
11. {no response}

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? **On a 1–10 scale**, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10

2. 10
3. 8
4. 10
5. 8
6. 9
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 8

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhance the course experience?*

1. N/A
2. Yes.
3. We spent time in UVA SC and that was helpful and had me thinking about how some of the teaching concepts demonstrated there could be replicated in my own place.
4. The trip across the street to SC was great fun! I wouldn't mind more of that, but then again, I am a book geek.
5. Went to the SC auditorium and enjoyed looking at the copies of Sophonisba. It was nice to get my hands on some actual books rather than just being on the computer all the time. Also it was relevant to see how they differed from the PDF scans, although I'm not sure anyone in the course agreed with BP's assertion that people use digital PDFs to try to answer material questions.
6. Yes. Good use of the SC activity, analyzing the idiosyncrasies in the printing of specific versions of the same rare book. It got the instructors' point across for that day.
7. {no response}
8. Yes.
9. Yes, I very much enjoyed our trip to SC: working with bibliographically varied multiples made the stakes of our computational considerations even more tangible. I also simply appreciated that experience in itself. Discussing the potential sources of ongoing typographical variance was also fascinating!
10. Yes.
11. {no response}

11) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. Apply and hope you get in.
2. Do it!

3. Be prepared for the lunchtime shared experience. That was a bit of a hidden curriculum I wasn't expecting.
4. Don't worry about understanding all the reading ahead of time; if you follow the keywords and get the main concepts, you'll be well-prepared for the course. And make sure you bring the power cord for your computer EVERY DAY!
5. I would recommend it, particularly for those looking to dip a toe into the digital humanities pool, because it's a very friendly way to enter an area that's often quite gatekeeper-y about "do you know how to code or not?", with the implication of the "or not" being that you should just leave immediately. The RBS group is also great and very encouraging; I learned about lots of grants that I may or may not ever apply for, but it was lovely to hear about them, and to find that people were interested in my project and thought I might be a candidate for some of them. I would recommend it the most to those who, again, have a specific project, problem, or corpus of digital material, because my classmates who did seemed to have developed projects when we went around the room on the final day and had more of an action plan. But it was also lovely to learn about these possibilities—I feel as though I am heading towards some light at the end of a hallway, but am still blinking in the darkness.
6. This class would be good for those working on digitizing archives and special collections and entering items into databases. This class helps them think about the affordances and limitations of this process.
7. The course would benefit anyone interested in discovering how these digital tools can improve any work related to the world of the book.
8. {no response}
9. This course is extraordinarily valuable, and for those considering work in this area—and willing to learn a bit of Python to make maximum use of the materials—it's hard to think of another context able to bring about the same character and caliber of transformative learning experience. Take it.
10. I had very little reservations about this class and felt like I learned a lot.
11. {no response}

12) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or a haiku, what would you say?*

1. Inspiring professors, intriguing classmates, welcoming staff.
2. Inspiring and enlightening!
3. A brainful, delightful, intellectual experience.
4. Another life-changing week, filled with new friends, old books, and head-turning ideas; thank you!
5. Thanks to all those who worked sedulously to make it a lovely week!
6. This class felt like a crash course in what would be a decades worth of study in computational digital humanities. Already this knowledge base is quite rare and

expensive in its accessibility and understandability, but it is very important as libraries and archives are facing the pressure to digitize and make things available online. As an archivist focused on the ethics of cultural heritage research and work, I feel like I have expanded my knowledge base to think about what I'm doing with planning and executing digital collections and I feel more confident in reaching out to computer scientists to collaborate on projects.

7. The more “bookish” data you have, the more you need this course.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. Sun's wrath blazes bright, / Jefferson's legacy gleams, / Shadows hide his flaws.
11. Treat the computer as your collaborator!