

ACSC 2022 Digital Humanities Workshop

“Mapping Rural Lives and Environments in the Atlantic Region”

In-Person: Digital Visualization Lab, Harriet Irving Library, UNB Fredericton

Remote Option: Zoom (register by Tues 24 May at <https://forms.gle/aRPimVsGmP9gUAFH6>)
25 May, 2022

Objectives

This workshop considers new digital humanities (DH), quantitative research, and other approaches to documents such as rural diaries and life writing that in the past have largely received a qualitative focus. We hope that this small, focused workshop at ACSC will bring together scholars to learn about these emerging DH methods and to build capacity for new rural, agricultural, and environmental history based on digital collections in the Atlantic region.

Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, participants will know more about rural diary and life writing collections in Atlantic Canada as well as related research in rural and environmental history (Sessions #2, 3 and 8). They will learn about the Rural Diary Archive in a presentation from its founder, Dr. Catharine Wilson (Session #4), and discuss interest in similar projects locally.

In the “Digital Tools” sessions, participants will gain an introductory knowledge of three digital humanities tools and their applications to rural and environmental history. First, the GeoREACH Lab’s “Agroecosystem Metabolic Profile Application” (AMPA) is ready to help historians produce data and data visualizations for writing histories of rural land use and agricultural energy flows in nineteenth century Canada (Session #5). These are based primarily on manuscript and published census data, but historians may also use routinely generated qualitative sources such as farm diaries. Second, participants will get an introduction to two qualitative data visualization tools that are designed to work with large textual records, such as digitized diaries: frequency graphs in Voyant Tools and topic models in Jupyter Notebooks (Session #6). Finally, participants will learn about geographic information system (GIS) tools that are ideal for examining land use transitions: aerial photographs and participatory map surveys (Session #7).

Requirements

Participants with any skill level in digital humanities are welcome, and no programming or advanced computer skills is required. Ideally, participants should have access to a laptop or other computer with Windows or Mac operating systems and access to the internet. To participate remotely via zoom we recommend that you have a stable internet connection and access to multiple screens so you can open software and watch presenters at the same time. AMPA requires Microsoft Excel (for Windows or Mac).

Schedule

1. 8:30-8:45, Participant Introductions
2. 8:45-9:45, Diaries and Rural History

Elizabeth Mancke (Simeon Perkins and His Atlantic Network); Daniel Samson (James Barry, His Diary and His Textual Community); Alan MacEachern (The Green Gables Diary); Mary McDonald-Rissanen (Seeing 19th and early 20th century rural PEI through Emma Chadwick Stretch, Maud Jones, Lucy Palmer Haslam, and Amy Tanton Andrew's life writing)

3. 9:45-10:15, Diaries and Agricultural History

Matthew Hatvany (David Ross' Diary: Context, Processes and Sustainable Development on a PEI Farm, 1836-1882); Jamie Murton (Rebecca and Manning Ells: Household Survival in Early 20th Century Nova Scotia)

Break: 10:15-10:40

4. 10:40-11:30, Digital Collections I: Catharine A. Wilson (The Rural Diary Archive)
5. 11:30-12:00, DH Tools I: Visualizing Land Use Transitions with Diaries and the Census: Josh MacFadyen & Margot Maddison-MacFadyen (The "AMPA" Data viz app)

Break for Lunch 12:00-1:30

6. 1:30-2:30, DH Tools II, Visualizing Life Trends and Topics: Josh MacFadyen (Indexers, Voyant Tools); Grace Fishbein, ACENET (Topic Modeling)

Break: 2:30-2:45

7. 2:45-3:30, DH Tools III: Mapping Land Use Transitions with GIS: Sasha Mullally and Yun Zhang (Air Photo Mosaics); Josh MacFadyen (GIS and Participatory Mapping)

Break: 3:30-3:45

8. 3:45-4:30, Digital Collections II: Sources in the Atlantic Region; Opportunities for Digital Collections/Crowdsourcing. Meghan Landry (ACENET); Simon Lloyd (UPEI); James MacKenzie (UNB); David Mawhinney (MTA); Joyce Thomson (SMU)
Atlantic diary & life writing collections database <https://forms.gle/Uz1W1H4SzjzyvWCj6>
9. 4:30-5:00, Conclusions and Suggestions for Next Steps