NETHERLANDS NASA AMERICAN ★ STUDIES ASSOCIATION

CONFERENCE

*A*MERICAN *S*TUDIES AFTER THE *D*IGITAL *T*URN

15-16 September 2016

Roosevelt Study Center
Abdij 9
4331 BK Middelburg, The Netherlands

www.netherlands-america.nl

AMERICAN STUDIES AFTER THE DIGITAL TURN

We live in an era of academic "turns": Cultural, linguistic, pictorial, transnational. The "digital turn," raises new possibilities and predicaments for scholarly work on the United States—especially for Americanists working outside of the United States. The increased availability of digitized material has cut across other turns in American Studies: it makes some work easier, other work more difficult; it outdates some scholarly modes and revives others. Seemingly stale inquiries into American myths and symbols might have a digital revival, while the global reach of the digital might render transnationalism and interdisciplinary research less revolutionary or revisionist than scholars believed even a decade ago.

The "digital humanities" have already gone through several cycles of celebration and lament. This is a good moment to take stock. European Americanists are particularly well-positioned to discuss the impact of the digital, given their long experience with transnational and comparative inquiries in American Studies. Additionally, Americanists in Europe, in the course of teaching and researching the United States from a distance, might have different uses for digital tools than their peers in the United States.

The concerns of this conference are practical, theoretical, and polemical. The papers address Americanists' use of digitized sources and tools. How do they process digital sources for their work? How do they combine the reading of texts with digital tools? What counts as "interdisciplinary" for a field long associated with interdisciplinarity, for better or worse?

Other papers caution about digitization's unintended consequences. How do Americanists view the possibilities of the digital in education? Do they envision significant shifts in the balance of funding and institutional settings caused by digitized sources and tools?

Finally, scholars outside of "American Studies" proper will examine how academic narratives of America inform their work. What old or new ideas from American Studies—keywords, clichés, slogans—have been most useful or most distracting? How did digital sources help them achieve their goals?

Participants who seek advice how to enrich, combine or extend their analog projects with digital applications are more than welcome to submit this at the Roundtable. A forum of experts will offer feedback and recommendations.

PROGRAM

Thursday, 15 September 2016

09.30-10.15   Registration with Coffee and Tea

10.15   Welcoming Remarks by Kees van Minnen, director Roosevelt Study Center
and
Opening of the Conference by George Blaustein, chair NASA

10.30-11.30   **Keynote Lecture**
Chair: George Blaustein (University of Amsterdam)

John Corrigan (Florida State University)
Digital Data and the Methodology of American Studies

11.30-12.30   Digital Story Telling and Critique
Chair: George Blaustein (University of Amsterdam)

Tim Jelfs (University of Groningen)
Pre-Occupied with Death: Serial *and the Ethics of Storytelling in the Digital Age*

The ethical questions that the *Serial* raises are a result of the conjunction of the show's narrative techniques with a set of conditions peculiar to the digital age.

Alexander Dunst (Universität Paderborn)
What Has Critique Ever Done for Us? On the Theory and Practice of Doing American Studies in an Interdisciplinary Digital Humanities Project

This presentation will reflect on the methodological challenge of combining (qualitative) critique and computational quantification.

12.30-13.30   Lunch

13.30-14.30   Digital Activism
Chair: Tim Jelfs (University of Gronignen)

James Mackay (European University Cyprus)
Indigenous Studies, Wikipedia, and the Role of the Europe-Based Scholar

This presentation argues that European scholarship in the field of indigenous studies has been noticeably affected by immediate daily contact with Native people, causing scholars to increasingly engage in political activism, and assess the danger this brings of "speaking for" Native peoples.

Robert Allen Johnson II (Ludwig-Maximilian's-Universität München)
The Irish in the Caribbean: The Americans & Their Own Cultural Troubles and the Power of the Meme in a Digital Historic Context

This presentation examines the digital motive power and controversy of the meme of the Irish as "slaves" in the early colonization of the Americas, especially the Caribbean and how it is used and misused. It shows the dangers and advantages of the Internet.

14.30-15.00   Coffee/Tea Break

15.00-16.00   **Keynote Lecture**
                     Chair: Lisanne Walma (Utrecht University)

Miriam Posner (UCLA):
Data Trouble

Digital humanists have no particular problem talking about data. Many "traditional" humanists, though, bristle at the notion that their sources constitute "data." And yet humanists work with evidence, and they speak of proving their claims. So is this just a problem of terminology? Miriam Posner argues in this talk that our data trouble is more substantial than we have acknowledged. The term "data" seems alien to the humanities not just because humanists are not used to computers, but because it exposes some very real differences in the way humanists and scholars from some other fields conceive of the work they do. In this talk, she will outline the specific points of tension between the notion of data and the ways that humanists work with sources, and she will explain why she thinks this epistemological divide actually suggests some incredibly interesting avenues of investigation.

16.00-17.00   Digital Assets and Liabilities
                     Chair: Lisanne Walma (Utrecht University)

Melvin Wevers (Utrecht University)
The United States as a Reference Culture in Twentieth Century Dutch Newspaper Discourse on Consumer Goods

This presentation will analyze newspaper discourse on consumer goods to describe how the United States emerged as a reference culture in this domain. It argues that the Dutch perception of the United States was rather monolithic, which runs counter to attempts within American Studies to point out the plurality of American culture.

Konstantinos D. Karatzas (University of Zaragoza)
The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Archives and the Use of Technology

This presentation will discuss the limits of technology on traditional research. Moreover, the discussion could focus on the ways of transforming an analog project to a digital one and the possibilities of combining research and teaching a 21st century American Studies class.

17.00-18.00   Reception

Friday, 16 September 2016

09.00-10.00   Registration

09.15-10.00   **Annual General Meeting**
                    All NASA members are welcome!

10.00-11.00   **Keynote Lecture**
                    Chair: Frank Mehring (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Antal van den Bosch (Radboud University Nijmegen)
Digital Humanities: How Can the Robot Humanist Be of Service?

This presentation will explain how the type of "distant reading" that "robot humanists," computational models, can perform on large, super-human amounts of documents, and how these analyses can help and complement traditional humanities research. Case studies include how newspapers report on strikes before they actually happen (or not), both in the United States and in Europe; and on biographies of socialist politicians in the Netherlands and the people networks that can be derived from these documents. The lecture will argue that text categorization, network discovery, and visualization are robust techniques that can be relatively directly linked to theories and debates in historical and cultural studies on evolutionary processes of adoption and change.

11.00-11.15   Coffee/Tea Break

11.15-12.30   Digital Applications I
                    Chair: Frank Mehring (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Dario Fazzi and Giles Scott-Smith (Roosevelt Study Center and Leiden University)
Digital Learning at Work: The Rooseveltian Century Example

Next spring, Leiden University will be offering an MA course on U.S. History where, for the first time, traditional lectures will be integrated by students' active involvement in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) available on the *Coursera* platform, centered around the collective impact of the Roosevelt's on U.S. and international history. On line, students will be invited to follow the MOOC video lectures, make use of its primary and secondary sources, participate in its discussions, and do its regular assignments, and act as tutors. This presentation will highlight the potential benefits (and drawbacks) of blended learning.

Aynur Erdogan (University of Groningen)
Digital Research and Analog Reading: Digitalized Sources in the Classroom

This presentation will showcase how digital research and analog reading can provide impressive insights into textual mobility, and how this approach can be used in the classroom to explore early American culture.

Mark L. Thompson and Joanne van der Woude (University of Groningen)
Amerigo: A Digital Showcase for Early American Connectivity

This presentation introduces a new interdisciplinary project aiming at (re-)discovery of Groningen's five-hundred-year history of interaction with the Atlantic World. It shows how digital technology meets archival research and scholarly interpretation.

12.30-13.30   Lunch

13.30-14.30   Digital Captivity
                   Chair: Hans Krabbendam (Roosevelt Study Center)

Marc Priewe (Universität Stuttgart)
Tracing Early American Captivity Narratives: Digital Methods and Tools

This presentation grasps the multidimensional relations of captivity narratives amongst themselves as well as their geographical expansion.

Damian Pargas (Leiden University)
Runaway Slaves and the Geography of Freedom: Digital Mapping Ideas

This presentation seeks to openly brainstorm about the various possibilities for translating historical research on fugitive slaves to a digital format.

14.30-15.00   Coffee/Tea Break

15.00-16.00   Digital Applications II
                   Chair: Hans Krabbendam (Roosevelt Study Center)

Herman Cohen Stuart (Zoetermeer, Independent Researcher)
Researching the Digital North American Indian

This project shows an analysis of all photographs and the texts in Edward S. Curtis' twenty-volume series *The North American Indian* benefited from digitalized NAI versions that were available on two internet sites. The subsequent analysis, however, had to be done analogically. Herman Cohen Stuart wants to explore how the availability of a digital tool for image recognition could change the project.

Frank Mehring (Radboud University Nijmegen) and Hans Krabbendam (Roosevelt Study Center)
Digitizing, Mapping, Clustering: Semi-automatic Collaborative Annotation of Texts and Images in Transnational American Studies

In order to make the successful transition from using cutting-edge digital technology as a practical revolution towards an intellectual revolution, we have to devise novel theoretical and methodological tools relevant to our respective fields. How can media studies, linguistics, and network analysis help us to trace recurring narrative patterns in texts and images? In how far can digital mapping and clustering complement or revolutionize traditional practices of data mining and analyses? Turning to the case study of the cultural diplomacy of the Marshall Plan, the presentation will offer suggestions towards making digital humanities useful for transnational American studies.

16.00-17.00   Roundtable <u>The Future of Digital American Studies in Europe</u>
Chair: Hans Krabbendam (Roosevelt Study Center)

Antal van den Bosch (Radboud University Nijmegen), John Corrigan (Florida State University), Alexander Dunst (Universität Paderborn), Sebastian M. Herrmann (Universität Leipzig), Miriam Posner (UCLA), Marc Priewe (Universität Stuttgart), Lisanne Walma (Utrecht University)

17.30   End of the Conference

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