

*The following is a list of abstracts for our spring digital dialogues series. We are adding abstracts as we receive them. Please check back as this list will be updated.  
Last updated: 02/08/12.*

02.14 **Melanie Kill**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park

***Knowledge and Meaning in the Information Age: A Humanist Perspective on Wikipedia***

co-sponsored by the Department of English

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: B0135 McKeldin Library, MITH Conference Room

Abstract:

Over the past decade, Wikipedia has drawn together a community of volunteer editors, translators, and programmers who have created the largest encyclopedia in history and one of the ten most visited websites in the world. But, while Wikipedia was born online, many of the ideas that inform its composition have long histories. Human beings have strived to give order to knowledge in the face of worries about information overload for ages. Their various responses have been shaped by the cultural norms, social needs, and technological possibilities of their historical contexts. This talk will focus on the old media precedents for Wikipedia's new media success story to explore what reciprocal relationships they reveal between concepts like knowledge and information and the technologies we design to build and distribute them.

02.21 **Mike Witmore**, Director, Folger Shakespeare Library

***Shakespeare from the Waist Down***

co-sponsored by the Department of English

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: 2115 Tawes Hall

Abstract:

Using the analogy of a dancer to think about the ways in which poetic and theatrical effects are produced, Michael Witmore will explore the ways in which high-level theatrical effects -- what literary critics call "plot" -- might be visible in low-level activity at the level of the sentence. We may know a lot about the dancer (Shakespeare's works) from the waist up, but digital analysis allows us to identify interesting moves taking place below the waist.

02.28 **Leigh Wilson Smiley**, Associate Professor, School of Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies, University of Maryland, College Park

***Vocal Visions***

co-sponsored by the School of Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: B0135 McKeldin Library, MITH Conference Room

Abstract:

The Visual Accent Dialect Archive (VADA) was created as a central resource for performers seeking authentic dialects and accents of the English language in which they could see the speakers as well as hear them. The gestural characteristics of the speakers from different regions, while unique to the speaker, are also unique to the culture of the region and help the researcher to acquire the sounds intrinsic to that dialect or accent by the formation of the lips and use of the vocal and articulatory musculature. As a crowd-sourced website, or "wiki", the Visual Accent Dialect Archive has the potential to attract dialect and accent donations from all over the world. Donors may speak a story, or a list of words, or a paragraph. Once the VADA

website is populated, researchers can click on a specific region, country, or state and locate the specific dialect or accent. In addition to being a central resource for performers, the website provides excellent cultural information for anthropologists and linguists.

02.29\* **Beth Plale**, Professor, Computer Science, Indiana University

***Digital Humanities at Scale: the HathiTrust Research Center***

co-sponsored by University Libraries

Time: 4:00 pm

Place: 6137 McKeldin Library, Special Events

\*Please note this talk takes place on a Wednesday.

Abstract:

The recently formed HathiTrust Research Center (HTRC) is dedicated to the provision of computational access to the HathiTrust repository. The center's mission is to provide a persistent and sustainable structure to enable original and cutting edge research in tools to enable new discoveries on the text corpus of the HathiTrust repository. In this talk, I will talk about the functionality that HTRC will provide, about the research questions that come out of providing a facility for large-scale text analysis, and about the research and modes of use we hope to stimulate within the digital humanities community through the center.

03.06 **Lynn Cazabon**, Associate Chair, Department of Art, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

***The Archive's Shadow***

co-sponsored by the Digital Cultures & Creativity Program at the Honors College and University Libraries

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: 6137 McKeldin Library, Special Events

*Abstract: not yet received.*

03.13 **Lisa M. Snyder**, The Urban Simulation Team and Institute for Digital Research and Education, University of California at Los Angeles

***A Conversation about Compulsion, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and Virtual Reality***

co-sponsored by the School of Architecture

Time: 2:00 pm

Place: 1111 School of Architecture (Building 145)

*Abstract: not yet received.*

03.27 **Craig Saper**, Associate Professor, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

***\R\e\l\l\i\l\l\g/ as a Publishing Practice***

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: MITH Seminar Room (B0131 McKeldin Library)

Abstract:

Digital Humanities research has found increased funding and job opportunities, and it has become a center piece of efforts to raise the rankings and profile of universities seeking the highest Carnegie Research status. It also has a blossoming industry that includes "text analytics" widely used in national security studies.

That type of DH research usually means digitizing massive amounts of texts, constructing databases, organizing information, and representing the patterns into meaningful conclusions. The researchers mine data in texts to make existing texts more accessible, and to discover connections and patterns difficult to decipher without computing power and information

design. In the midst of building a databases for two digital humanities project, Dr. Craig Saper realized that the interfaces his team had constructed online had a more profound impact on how one read the texts than the use of the database alone.

The online interface changed how one read -- even changed the essence of what one read. The futures of reading using new devices, like e-readers, will have consequences for the definition and practice of what we call reading.

Saper's presentation for MITH's Digital Dialogues will look at four of his major digital humanities projects -- two online and two just starting -- on \r\ea\d/i/n/g/ as a publishing practice and potential strategic alliances among the campuses on the university of Maryland system.

04.03 **Bill Ferster**, Senior Scientist, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

***Historical Interactive Visualization: Coaxing Data to Tell Stories***

co-sponsored by the Human Computer Interaction Lab (HCIL)

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: 2117 Hornbake, South Wing (HCIL)

Abstract:

This talk will take an informal look at interactive visualization projects done at the University of Virginia's *Virginia Center for Digital History* (VCDH) and the *Sciences, Arts, & Humanities Network of Technology Initiatives* (SHANTI) digital humanities centers. The projects were built using an NEH-funded visualization authoring tool, VisualEyes, developed at UVa.

VisualEyes enables scholars to present selected primary source materials and research findings while encouraging active inquiry and hands-on learning among general and targeted audiences. It communicates through the use of dynamic displays that organize and present meaningful information in both traditional and multimedia formats, such as audio-video, animation, charts, maps, data, and interactive timelines.

I will also show a number of student-generated visualizations, created in the context of undergraduate project-based learning (PBL) seminars, and discuss how visualization and PBL are strong partners to promote historical inquiry. As a consequence, I have developed a new model to help scaffold the design of data-driven interactive projects called ASSERT. *Ask* a question; *Search* for evidence to answer that question; *Structure* the data; *Envision* ways to answer the question using the structured data; *Represent* that data in a compelling interactive manner; and finally, *Tell* a story using that data to answer the question.

04.10 **Jordan Boyd-Graber**, Assistant Professor, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland, College Park

***Making Topic Models More Human(e)***

co-sponsored by the Department of Computer Science

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: B0135 McKeldin Library, MITH Conference Room

Abstract:

Imagine you need to get the gist of what's going on in a large text dataset such as all tweets that mention Obama, all e-mails sent within a company, or all newspaper articles published by the New York Times in the 1990s. Topic models, which automatically discover the themes which permeate a corpus, are a popular tool for discovering what's being discussed. However, topic models aren't perfect; errors hamper adoption of the model, performance in downstream

computational tasks, and human understanding of the data. However, humans can easily diagnose and fix these errors. We present a statistically sound model to incorporate hints and suggestions from humans to iteratively refine topic models to better model large datasets.

We also examine how topic models can be used to understand topic control in debates and discussions. We demonstrate a technique that can identify when speakers are "controlling" the topic of a conversation, which can identify events such as when participants in a debate don't answer a question, when pundits steer a conversation toward talking points, or when a moderator exerts her influence on a discourse.

04.17 **Jeffrey Schnapp**, Professor, Romance Languages & Literatures and Comparative Literature, Harvard University

***Building the Digital Public Library of America***

co-sponsored by the School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: 6137 McKeldin Library, Special Events

Abstract:

I will be speaking about extraMUROS/Zeega, metaLAB's effort to allow anyone to easily explore, visualize and curate collections from public APIs and then use this media to collaboratively create multimedia projects that are accessible online, on mobile devices and in physical spaces. While books (in material and digital form alike) are vital to the future of libraries, I believe that in an increasingly audiovisual world of public knowledge and discourse, it is essential that libraries play a major role in preserving, making available and providing innovative tools for interpreting society's audiovisual past, present and future across media.

04.24 **Jeremy Dibbell**, Head of Social Media, LibraryThing

***Enhancing the Bibliosphere: Bringing Historical Libraries to Life at LibraryThing***

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: B0135 McKeldin Library, MITH Conference Room

Abstract:

I will discuss the Libraries of Early America project, an effort to digitize and make widely available the library collections of American readers from the early colonial period through 1825. Using the online book-cataloging site LibraryThing.com, scholars and volunteers from institutions around the country - including Monticello, the Boston Public Library, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Athenaeum, the American Antiquarian Society and others - have begun the process of creating an extensive online database of early American libraries. Current subjects include Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Lady Jean Skipwith, James and Mary Murray, and other early American readers (some well-known, others obscure).

Unlike standalone institutional databases or online library catalogs, the Libraries of Early America collections through LibraryThing allow users to quickly and easily make comparisons between libraries (what books did John Adams and Benjamin Franklin have in common, for example, or what books were most commonly shared among all the Signers of the Declaration of Independence?), and to search collections which may not exist today in physical form or which are spread across multiple institutions and private collections. A reconstruction of the

multi-generational Mather Family library makes those titles widely available for the first time. Further, LibraryThing's capabilities allow significant data about each book to be added to the record where known: transcriptions of marginalia, information about acquisition of the title, the binding, correspondence about a given book, or even a link to a digital scan of the volumes (as with the John Adams collection at the Boston Public Library).

So far, data on more than 1,250 early American libraries has been added, with more information constantly being collected and included. I'll discuss the origins of the project, sources and methods, and future plans and enhancements.

05.02 **Carla Peterson**, Professor, Department of English, and co-presenter **Seth Denbo**, Project Manager, Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, University of Maryland, College Park

***From Print to Digital: The Black Gotham Digital Archive***

co-sponsored by the Departments of African-American Studies, American Studies, and English

Time: 2:00pm

Place: 6137 McKeldin Library, Special Events

*Abstract: not yet received.*

05.08 **Mark Matienzo**, Digital Archivist, Yale University Library

***Between Representation and Assertion: The Meaning of Archival Description***

co-sponsored by University Libraries

Time: 12:30 pm

Place: B0135 McKeldin Library, MITH Conference Room

*Abstract: not yet received.*