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James Baker, "A History of History Through the Lens of Our Digital Present, the Traditions That Shape and Constrain Data-Driven Historical Research, and What Librarians Can Do About It.", in *Laying the Foundation: Digital Humanities in Academic Libraries* (2016).

The reading of this chapter from *Laying the Foundation* was laborious. It was not only because some words were unusual to me, therefore I was not always able to grasp their implications, it was also because I did not find that James Baker was making a clear point at first. He only starts making a real statement, and somewhat defending it, in the second part of the article. During my first reading of the text, I felt like the first part was only dedicated to babbling on quite obscure epistemological bibliographical and research references. Yet, I acknowledge that part of this feeling might be due to the fact that I do not feel like the French approach of teaching the history of a discipline is done through readers : therefore I do not feel like there is such a constructed debate, in the teaching domain at least, on what reference textbooks should say or which stake they should tackle. So the ground for Baker's debate was unfamiliar to me. Besides, I was annoyed by how he articulates the interaction between librarians and historians: at times, he seems really dedicated to talking about the discipline of history *to historians*, and then he brings up librarians, but he never really clearly says how he imagines the relationship between the two (except to say that librarians are working for the historians, which I believe is more of a two-way relationship).

I appreciated though how he uses the parallel between Braudel's times and their debates on quantitative approaches, and today's data revolution, which brings again the question of quantitative approaches –reaching an even bigger scale, given the quantity of data at hands. I enjoyed reading the parts where he evokes how data-based researches are not just a revolution in the *sources* available to the historians: they also and above all bring in a real *methodological* change in the work of the historians. I found this is a very interesting way to understand how Digital Humanities are as much a specific field of Humanities as a new method to envision researches in Humanities. It is easy to think that working with computers (and the Internet) just makes possible working with more sources, whereas as Baker says, this change in the paradigm implies rethinking how the historian's interpretative work is challenged.

I found Baker very alarmist when suggesting that historians are crucially missing a key turn in the discipline. He definitely opposes micro- and macro-approaches, which I did not find very subtle, even though I understand that it is above all in order to underscore how important it is that the historians not only focus on micro-historical researches. On this note, he seems to present librarians as sort of background saviors, doing the work historians should do while the latter are not “waking up”. And since this is a text extracted from a (text)book aimed at librarians, I was wondering what was the point of not developing more the question of what librarians are expecting historians to do with these resources.

On another note, I appreciated how Baker remains critical towards mass digitization on the basis that they are not, as some people forget, devoid of biases: it is indeed fundamental that historians, and more broadly humanists, keep in mind that it is not because large corpus of data are available that *all* corpus of data are.

Finally, I liked that he raised the question of websites and the Internet in general being key sources in the future for analyzing our current present. From my viewpoint, I find it very difficult to imagine how they can be used: there is so much on the internet, and at the same, I find it very hard to articulate the on-line aspects of our present with the “real-life” experiences. From Baker’s chapter, I believe one of the reasons I find it so hard is because I am, as he denounces, more familiar with micro-historical researches, or at least researches that give a prior importance to being grounded in individual experiences, because I do believe, for the sort of themes I have studied, that quantitative approaches very often mute minority’s realities and participate to hide them. I therefore wonder what sort of questions studying the Internet, from a historical perspective, will try answering, how it will do so, and which biases it will imply. How will future (or how are current) historians working with the Internet as a source articulate real-life experiences and on-line experiences to not have an incomplete picture of the realities they are studying.