



Advanced Writing in the Disciplines
Cecelia Musselman
Computational Text Analysis for Literature Reviews

Key Words

- **Computational Text Analysis:** Text analysis is making inferences based on textual data. Computational text analysis (CTA) involves a computer drawing out patterns in a text, and a researcher interpreting those patterns. CTA includes methods such as word count frequency, nGrams, and sentiment analysis. CTA is similar to statistical analysis, but the data are texts.
- **Corpus (plural-corpora):** A collection of texts or data used for analysis and research purposes.
- **Stop words:** words that appear frequently in a language, like pronouns, prepositions, and basic verbs. These are often removed for computational analysis. Some English stopwords include: a, the, she, he, I, me, us, of, is, would, could, should, etc.
- **Word Count Frequency:** Counting the total times a word appears in a text/corpus or the percentage of how often it appears.
- **Sentiment Analysis:** Measuring the sentiment of a text based on a scale such as negative/positive or happy/sad. Each word has a particular weight to determine where on the scale it falls, and these weights are calculated to determine a text's overall sentiment.

Web-Browser Computational Text Analysis Tools

These browser GUI (Graphical User Interface) text analysis tools are not particularly powerful or sophisticated, but they can show word frequencies and patterns in language. While using coding languages like Python and R can open up other types of analysis (such as word embedding models and topic modeling), these GUI tools allow you to do more basic analysis to begin examining your texts computationally. We will be working with:

- Lexos: <http://lexos.wheatoncollege.edu/upload>
- Voyant: <https://voyant-tools.org/>

Our Sample Corpus

The data are several State of the Union addresses given by the current and former Presidents, going back to George H. W. Bush. Data retrieved from

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/app-categories/spoken-addresses-and-remarks/pridential/state-the-union-addresses>

How to Build a Corpus

When building a corpus, especially in the context of a smaller project, follow these steps:

Find these slides and more at <http://bit.ly/diti-spring2020-musselman2>

Questions? Contact us!

Cara Marta Messina, messina.c@husky.neu.edu

Garrett Morrow, morrow.g@husky.neu.edu



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- Choose the texts you would like to include in your corpus, which will be scholarship published in your discipline.
 - Remember, these texts are not necessarily representative of a larger body of writing, but rather a contextualized collection of texts.
 - In your argument and analysis, you should specifically address and analyze the contexts of these texts.
 - Create a folder on your computer or cloud storage where you will store your corpus. You might title this folder “awd_corpus”.
 - Once you have chosen the texts you will include, open a plain text editor (for example, Notepad on PCs and TextEdit on Macs).
 - TextEdit on Macs: You must make sure it is a plain text file. To do this, open Text Edit and go to “Preferences” and make sure “plain text editor” is selected. Then, restart TextEdit.
 - To add the actual text, simply copy and paste the contents of each document into the text editor. Often, texts that are on websites can easily be copied and pasted. Only copy one text into each new plain text file.
 - Some articles might have HTML/web-browser versions that will be easier to copy-and-paste than PDFs.
 - If you cannot copy and paste the text (if it is a PDF or an image), either find a text that you can copy and paste, or transcribe the text.
 - Make sure each file name ends with .txt – this is a plain text file and most GUI tools will accept these.
 - Use filenames to indicate the data inside (ex: “2012obama.txt”)
 - Repeat steps 4 and 5 for each text in your corpus. See the screenshot below of a sample final corpus.
 - For example, if you have five texts in your corpus, create five files.