

# Dennis Yi Tenen

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## Summary

*My teaching and research happen at the intersection of people, texts, and technology.*

I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University. A former software engineer at Microsoft and currently faculty associate at Columbia's Data Science Institute, I am the author of *Plain Text: The Poetics of Computation* (Stanford University Press, 2017). My next book explores the creative limits of artificial intelligence. My research appears on the pages of *Amodern*, *boundary2*, *Computational Culture*, *Modernism/modernity*, and *New Literary History* on topics that include narratology, the sociology of literature, media history, and literary theory. I am a co-founder of Columbia's Group for Experimental Methods in the Humanities, a research collective whose work has received numerous awards, major grants, and recognition from the press in *The New York Times*, *Fast Company*, *Der Spiegel*, and *Le Monde*.

## Training, Awards, & Affiliation

### Columbia University in the City of New York

Assistant Professor, Department of English and Comparative Literature, September 2012–

- Founder, Columbia's Group for Experimental Methods in the Humanities
- Executive Committee, Institute for Comparative Literature and Society
- Affiliated Faculty, Institute of Data Sciences and Engineering, New Media Center

Awards: Presidential Global Innovation Fund, The Brown Center for Media Innovation Magic Grant and Flagship, Lenfest Junior Faculty Development, Heyman Center Faculty Fellowship.

### Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University

Member of metaLab and Cooperation research groups.

- Academic Fellow, September 2011–2012
- Affiliated Faculty, September 2012–2016

### Harvard University (Cambridge, MA)

Ph.D. Comparative Literature, 2004–2012.

- Lecturer in Comparative Literature, Spring 2012

Awards: Research Computing in the Humanities Fellowship, Instructional Technology Fellow, Merit Grant Recipient, Whiting Fellowship in the Humanities (declined), Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Presidential Scholar.

### University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI)

B.A. Comparative Literature, 2001. B.A. Political Science (Theory Concentration), 2001. *Magna cum Laude*. Departmental Honors.

## Publications

### Book Projects

1. *Plain Text: The Poetics of Computation*. Stanford University Press, 2017.
2. "An Inquiry Concerning the Creative Limits of Artificial Intelligence." Manuscript in progress.
3. *Literature and the Experimental Humanities* with Maria Sachiko Cecire. Under contract by invitation to "Literature and Contemporary Thought" series published by Routledge, ed. Ursula K. Heise & Guillermina De Ferrari. Manuscript in progress.

## Peer Reviewed Journals

1. "Towards a Computational Archaeology of Fictional Space." Forthcoming in *New Literary History* (accepted in August, 2017).
2. "Laminate Text: The Strata of Digital Inscription." *Amodern*. Forthcoming, 2017.
3. "Unintelligent Design." *Boundary 2* 44, no. 2 (May 1, 2017): 145–56.
4. "Book Piracy as Peer Preservation." *Computational Culture* 4 (2014).
5. "Sustainable Authorship in Plain Text." *The Programming Historian* (2014). Translated into Spanish as "Escritura sostenible en texto plano usando Pandoc y Markdown" by Víctor Gayol y revisado por Antonio Rojas Castro y Maria José Afanador-Llach.
6. "Stalin's PowerPoint." *Modernism/modernity* 21.1 (2014): 253–267.
7. "Three Notes on Mary." *The Nabokovian* 46 (2001): 24–25.

## Contributed Essays & Chapters

1. "Anonymous, Massively Collaborative, Trans-human," forthcoming in *Rethinking Authorship in Comparative and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki. Iwanami Shoten, 2018.
2. "Digital Text" in *Cambridge Critical Concepts: Technology*, forthcoming as part of the Cambridge Critical Concepts in Literary Studies series, ed. Adam Hammond, Cambridge University Press, 2018.
3. "Archive" in *Literature: An Introduction to Theory and Analysis*, ed. Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, et al. Bloomsbury, 2017.
4. "Critical Computing in the Humanities" with John Simpson and Phillip Polefrone in *Doing Digital Humanities: Practice, Training and Research*, Ed. Ray Siemens. Routledge, 2016.
5. "Visual-quantitative Approaches to the Intellectual History of the Field" in *Futures of Comparative Literature*, ed. Ursula K. Heise, et al. Routledge, 2017.
6. "Blunt Instrumentalism" in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold, et al. Minnesota UP, 2016.
7. "Travelogue as Fact and Fiction." *Imaginäre Topografien: Migration und Verortung*, ed. Klaus Müller-Richter and Ramona Uritescu-Lombard. Transcript-Verlag, 2007: 99–111.

## Book Reviews

1. "Dennis Tenen on *Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age* by Bernard Harcourt." *Los Angeles Review of Books* (2016). Included in the *The Digital Revolution: Debating the Promise and Perils of the Internet in the Last Years of the Obama Administration* (LARB, 2017), ed. Michele Pridmore-Brown & Julien Crockett.
2. "What Is? Nine Epistemological Essays by Johanna Drucker." *Design and Culture*, 7.2 (2015): 264–5.
3. "Writing Technology: *The Circle* by David Eggers and *Mad About a Boy* by Bridget Jones." *Public Books* (2014).
4. "History and Poetics of Intertextuality by Marko Juven." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 56.2 (2012): 309.
5. "Vokzal, Garazh, Angar: Vladimir Nabokov I Poetika Russkogo Urbanizma by Yuri Leving." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49.4 (2005): 688–89.

## Selected Projects

1. *Group for Experimental Methods in the Humanities*. Founding member, (09/14–today). A research collective specializing in cultural analytics, literary modeling and visualization, technologies of dissent, media archaeology, spatial humanities.
2. *Science Surveyor*. PI, (2014–2016). Visualizing the growth and decay of shared knowledge. In collaboration with Stanford Computer Science. Recipient of Brown Center Media Innovation Award (\$500k).
3. *Rikers Story Bot*, (2015–). Coding workshop + algorithmic storytelling set in and about Rikers Island correctional facility, New York City's main jail complex. Featured in *Fast Company*.
4. *dh-notes*. Principal maintainer, (2013–today). Lab notebooks, local knowledge, journal lists, tutorials, and other useful information for the new media and digital humanities community.
5. *Open Syllabus Project*. PI, (9/13–8/15) Collecting and analyzing the world's largest corpus of academic syllabi. Recipient of \$210k grant from the Sloan Foundation. Research featured in *The New York Times*, *TIME Magazine*, *Der Spiegel Online*, *FiveThirtyEight*.
6. *piracylab.org*. PI, (9/13–8/14). Research group exploring the impact of piracy on the spread of knowledge around the world. Findings featured in *Le Monde*.

7. *Studio at Butler*. Founding member, faculty advisor (9/13–today). Planning, specification, and programming of the Butler Studio, a maker/lab space at the center of Butler Library. Hosting lectures, training workshops, and open labs.

For a curated portfolio of projects please visit <http://xpmethod.plaintext.in>.

## Talks, Workshops, & Conferences

- Principal convener of the Knowledge Architectures: Lahore conference at the Information Technology Institute, Pakistan on March 14-15, 2018.
- “Fiction Factory: American Formalism and the Automation of Intellectual Labor.” Lecture by invitation at the Becoming Media conference, UCLA on February 23, 2018.
- “Plain Text: The Poetics of Computation.” Book launch and talk by invitation at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University on November 28, 2017.
- “Networks of the Avant-Garde.” Paper by invitation at the Mapping Literary Influences: Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches conference at UCLA on November 13-14, 2017.
- “Technologies of Dissent: Hannah Arendt, Heidegger, and the Continual Relevance of Columbia’s Core Curriculum.” Lecture in discussion with Dean Jim Valentini at the University of Chicago on November 6, 2017.
- “Computational Approaches to Characterizing Fictional Space.” Lecture by invitation at the Theory and Media Studies Colloquium, Yale University on October 13, 2017.
- “Sustainable Authorship in Plain Text” and “Plain Text: The Poetics of Computation.” A workshop and lecture by invitation at the Digital Humanities Forum, Kansas University, on September 29, 2017.
- “Modeling Space: Quantitative Parsimony in Computational Literary Analysis.” Lecture by invitation at the Analysing Text conference hosted by the Alan Turing Institute, London on September 22, 2017.
- “Version Control for Textual Criticism.” Lecture and workshop by invitation at the What is a Book in the 21st Century? seminar, Columbia University on January 20, 2017.
- “Technologies of Dissent: Shadow Libraries.” Lecture by invitation at the The Black Sea Networks Initiative, Columbia University on January 20, 2017.
- “The Sociology of Book Piracy.” Lecture by invitation at the Digital Humanities Symposium, Yale University Library on November 12, 2016.
- “Experimental Methods in the Humanities.” Lecture by invitation at the Scandinavian Modernism and Digital Resources workshop at Aarhus University, Denmark on September 14, 2016.
- Principal convener of the Knowledge Architectures: Mumbai conference at the Tata Institute for Social Sciences on July 4-6, 2016.
- “Literature Down to a Pixel.” Conference presentation as part of the Ephemera and Ephemerality: Media, Archive, Memory panel at ACLA (Harvard University) on March 17-19, 2016.
- “Metaphor Machines.” Lecture by invitation at the Digital Poetics Conference, CUNY Graduate Center on February 5, 2016. Presented also at Possibilities: Works-in-Progress seminar, Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, Columbia on 14 November, 2016.
- “Rapid Prototyping of Speculative Thought.” Talk by invitation at Digging Deep: Ecosystems, Institutions and Processes for Critical Making, CUNY Graduate Center on December 1, 2015.
- “Scene Detection in Literary Fiction.” Paper by invitation at the New Digital Resources and Computational Methods for the Study of Literature in a Global Context Conference, UCLA on November 4-5, 2015.
- “Digital Humanities: Core Skills and Foundations.” Workshop by invitation at the Polonsky Foundation Graduate Student Workshops in Digital Humanities, NYU on May 29, 2015.
- “Version Control for Library Use.” Workshop by invitation at Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning on February 5, 2015.
- “The Ethics of Writing in Plain Text,” with Grant Wythoff. Lecture by invitation at the Princeton-Weimar Summer School for Media Studies on June 19, 2014.
- “Rage with the Machine.” Keynote address at the University of Glasgow on May 28, 2014.
- “Technology We Deserve.” Keynote address at the Educational Technology Conference, Columbia University Teachers College on May 18, 2014.
- “Introduction to Cloud Computing with Amazon AWS.” Workshop by invitation at the Digital Praxis Seminar, CUNY on March 14, 2014.
- “Book Piracy as Peer Preservation.” Lecture by invitation at the Connective Media talk series, Cornell Tech (New York, NY) on March 6, 2014. Repeated on March 14, 2014 at a meeting of the Association of American University Presses, hosted by Columbia University Press.

- “Civic Scholarship.” Lecture by invitation at the Research Without Borders conference, Columbia University on February 27, 2014.
- “Visualizing Book Piracy.” Conference address by invitation at Detective: Advanced Data Visualization Project, Graduate School of Architecture, Columbia University on February 3, 2013.
- “Algorithmic Agency.” Lecture by invitation at the Cognitive Theory and the Arts Seminar, Harvard Humanities Center on November 21, 2013.
- “Authoring in Plain Text.” Workshop by invitation at the Center for Science and the Imagination, Arizona State University on November 15, 2013. Repeated at the Comparative Literature Colloquium at Harvard on November 22, 2013.
- “Literary Networks.” Lecture by invitation at the Digitization in the Humanities conference, Rice University on April 6, 2013.
- “Digital Humanities in Context.” Lecture by invitation at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University on February 21, 2013.
- “Interpretive Communities over Time.” Lecture by invitation at the Big Data and Digital Scholarship Seminar, Columbia University on February 11, 2013.
- “Hacking the Archive.” Lecture by invitation at the New Media in Education Conference, Columbia University on February 1, 2013.
- “Digital Humanities at Columbia.” Lecture by invitation at the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship, Department of Computer Science, Columbia University on November 27, 2012.
- “Growth and Decay of Shared Knowledge.” Lecture at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University on April 3, 2012.
- “Reflections on the ‘Laboratory’ Paradigm in the Humanities.” Lecture at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University on December 13, 2011.
- “Nothing is at Stake, Everything is at Stake: Literary Studies Today.” Talk by invitation at the Graduate Professional Development Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University on October 26, 2011.
- “Experimental Criticism: Is Knowledge Aggregation in the Humanities Possible?” Conference presentation at ACL(x), Data Mining Panel, Penn State University on October 1, 2011.
- “The Premise of Machine Literature.” Lectures by invitation at the University of Iowa, Loyola University, University of Rochester on multiple dates in 2011.
- “Recursive Encounters with Ourselves.” Lecture by invitation at the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University on January 26, 2011.
- “The Tyranny of Literature.” Lecture by invitation at the Thinking with Technology Workshop, Harvard Humanities Center on November 15, 2010.
- “Order on Display: The Aesthetics of Soviet Data Visualization.” Paper presentation at the AAASS Conference in Boston, MA on November 12, 2009.
- “The Birth of Non-Fiction.” Lecture at the Slavic Languages and Literatures Colloquium, Harvard University in October, 2006.

## Teaching

### 2016-17 (Columbia University)

- *Form, Formula, Format*. Graduate Seminar, fall.
- *Critical Computing in the Humanities*. Undergraduate lecture, spring.
- *Contemporary Civilization*. Undergraduate seminar. Columbia Core, year-long.

### 2014-15 (Columbia University)

- *Computing in Context: Textual & Literary Scholarship*. w/ Matt Jones (History), Adam Cannon (Computer Science), and Karl Sigman (Economics). Lecture, spring.
- *Code & Poetry*. Lecture. Topics in new media studies, fall.
- *Contemporary Civilization*. Undergraduate seminar. Columbia Core, year-long.
- *Coding for Human(s | ists)*. Lecture & lab. University of Victoria, Canada. Digital Humanities Summer Institute, summer 2015.

### 2013-14 (Columbia University)

- *Illicit Knowledge*. Seminar & DH lab, spring.
- *Media Archeology*. Seminar, topics in new media studies, fall.
- *Contemporary Civilization*. Undergraduate seminar. Columbia Core, year-long.
- *Foundations of Computing for Data Science Journalism*. Lecture & lab. Lede Program. Graduate School of Journalism, summer 2014.

#### **2012-13 (Columbia University)**

- *Beyond the Human*. Seminar. Topics in new media studies, spring.
- *Hacking the Archive*. Seminar & DH lab w/ Matthew Connelly, fall.
- *Literature Humanities*. Undergraduate seminar. Columbia Core, year-long.

#### **2011-12 (Harvard University)**

- *Experimental Criticism*, Lecturer w/ Prof. Jeffrey Schnapp. Seminar & DH lab, spring.

#### **Before 2011 (Harvard University, Tufts University)**

- *The Art of Numbers*, Teaching Fellow (TF) with Prof. Alyssa Goodman, spring 2008 & 2010. Undergraduate seminar, data visualization, quantitative reasoning.
- *Future of the Book*, Tufts University Lecturer, Spring 2008, undergraduate seminar.
- *Literature Tutorial*, Harvard Tutor in the of fall 2007 through spring 2010.
- 19th Century English Literature Survey, TF w/ Prof. Matthew Kaiser, spring 2009.
- 19th Century Russian Literature Survey, TF w/ Prof. William Mills Todd III, spring 2006.
- 20th Century Russian Literature Survey, TF w/ Prof. Svetlana Boym, fall 2005.
- *Self, Serenity, and Vulnerability*, TF w/ Profs. Roberto Unger & Michael Puett, fall 2007 and spring 2010. Moral reasoning.
- *Self, Freedom, and Existence*, TF w/ Prof. Richard Moran, fall 2008. Moral reasoning.

### **Service & Community Development**

#### **Department**

- Committee for Undergraduate Education, 2016–
- Committee for Graduate Education, 2012–15.
- Senior essay advising and undergraduate prize committee participation, 2012–
- Weekly lab meetings with the Group for Experimental Methods in the Humanities. Workshops and lecture series, 2013–

#### **University**

- Executive Committee, Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, 2016–
- Faculty Working Group on Computational Humanities and Social Science, 2016–
- Collaboratory Proposal Selection Committee, 2016.
- Data Science Taskforce, 2015–
- Ad-hoc Exploratory Committee for the Center for Culture and Computation, 2014–15.
- Founding Member. Digital Storytelling Lab, 2013–
- Advisory Board. Studio at Butler Library (maker space), 2013–
- Member of “Literary Theory” and “Theory and History of Media” university seminars.
- Multiple contributions to the “Strategic Plan for Humanities in the Arts and Sciences,” 2016-2017.
- Principal convener (along with Manan Ahmed and Roosevelt Montas) of the “Connected Core” pilot program as part of the university-wide “Core to Commencement” campaign, funded by the College Dean’s office.

## Graduate Advising

- Gabrielle Dacosta, "The Reading Self in George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*," MA thesis, spring 2017.
- Maxine Arndt, "Women and Animals in *The Woman Warrior* and *My Year of Meats*," MA thesis, spring 2017.
- Jonathan Reeve. "Computational Approaches to the Study of Literary Style," reading list. Oral exam committee, 2017–
- Sierra Eckert. "Sociology of Literature," reading list. Oral exam committee, 2016–2017. High pass.
- Phillip Polefrone. "Technology and Society," reading list. Oral exam committee, 2015–16. Pass.
- Jessica Hallock. "Literary theory," reading list. Oral exam committee, 2015–
- Alice Boone, "The Progress of Error: or, the Recursive 18th Century." Dissertation defense only. Spring 2014.
- Graham Sack. Dissertation committee, 2014–
- Florence Wan Yu Ang, academic advisor, 2017–18.
- Isabel Guan, academic advisor, 2017–18.
- Gianmarco Saretto, academic advisor, 2014–15.
- Jeremy Stevens, academic advisor, 2014–15.
- Erica Grove, academic advisor, 2013–14.
- Becky Bort, academic advisor, 2013–14.

## Misc. Theses, Independent Studies

- Elena Goldstein, "Big Brother all Grown Up," independent study, fall 2014.
- Christopher Brennan, "Personal Social Networks and Deliberative Democracy in the Russian Anti-Putin Protest Movement," senior thesis, spring 2014.
- Jessica Tyler, "The New Opposition, The Russian Language Blogosphere and its Impact on Public Discourse," senior thesis, spring 2013.

## Professional Service

- Book manuscript reviews for Cambridge UP, Columbia UP, MIT Press, and Princeton UP.
- Peer review for The American Academy in Berlin; *Computational Culture*; *Digital Studies / Le champ numérique*; *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*; *National Science Foundation*; *Modernism/Modernity*; *Science, Technology & Human Values*, & Association of Computational Linguistics (ACL).
- Program Committee, Association for Computational Linguistics, Abusive Language Workshop (August, 2017). Vancouver, Canada.
- Knowledge design consulting for Diller Scofidio + Renfro.
- 2 years as a managing editor of *Modernism/Modernity* (Modernist Studies Association and John-Hopkins University Press, job following placement of manuscript).
- 5+ years application development (Microsoft).
- 5+ years web design with an emphasis on content management systems (clients include General Motors, The Greening of Detroit, MRI, MSU Libraries and Computing Provost).
- 2+ years desktop publishing as editor/researcher for Physician's Press.

Updated: October 21, 2017