**Introduction**

Between 1984 and 1989 four 501c3 nonprofit book publishers relocated to urban renewal targeted neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Minnesota, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and local corporate charities funded the presses’ moves to these areas in order to gentrify them. Among the presses were Graywolf Press (in St. Paul’s South St. Anthony Park neighborhood), Coffee House Press, New Rivers Press, and Milkweed Editions (all in Minneapolis’s Warehouse District).[[1]](#footnote-1) As the presses’ annual operating budgets quadrupled,[[2]](#footnote-2) corporate developers, the city councils, and the police displaced the surrounding neighborhoods’ working class residents and alternative economies. Today, Coffee House, Milkweed, and Graywolf are some of the most reputable literary publishers in the United States, while New Rivers lives on as an imprint of Minnesota State University Press.[[3]](#footnote-3) But South St. Anthony Park and the Warehouse District’s low-income populations are things of the past. I contend that the success of these nonprofit book publishers was dependent on the gentrification of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the valuation of creative labor alongside the devaluation of material labor under neoliberalism.

Book historians have yet to interrogate postwar trade publishing's complicity in gentrification that the as-yet untold history of 501c3 nonprofit presses illuminates. Nonprofit presses emerged in the US in the 1970s due to conglomeration, but they did not enjoy substantial funding until the 1980s when Minneapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota, and local corporations funded these four presses en masse. Computation-aided bibliographic and spatial analysis can illuminate this history.

This experiment pilots a python program to identify these corporate funders by lifting a “donors list” from the 58 books Coffee House Press published between 1990-1995 available in HathiTrust. Over the summer, I will run the program for all the books the presses published in HathiTrust to establish a donation timeline, and elucidate the relationship between corporate donors, the presses, and gentrification. In this experiment, I suggest that books are spatial products, and computationally aided analysis of their paratexts can re-embed digitally remediated text in the landscapes that produced the print version. In doing so, it reveals the spatial implications of nonprofit publishing that would be otherwise invisible.

**Literature Review**

Digital literary historians have studied publishing’s conglomeration, but they ignore the book and publishing’s spatiality. Richard Jean So’s *Redlining Culture* is a brilliant book on the stagnate racial diversity of the postwar publishing industry in the US in spite of the soaring popularity of multiculturalism. He contextualizes his distance reading of Random House publications with rich engagement in the publisher’s archives and statistical analysis of metadata, reviews, sales, and prizes to prove that the racial diversity of published authors did not change from 1950-2000. In spite of his spatially attuned title, So’s work is not spatially engaged. Redlining, here, refers to racist exclusion from access to the publishing industry, not the spatial implications of it.[[4]](#footnote-4) Likewise, Dan Sinykin’s “Against Conglomeration,” is a computational study of the aesthetics of 501c3 nonprofit-published literature. Sinykin uses HathiTrust’s collections, topic modeling, and machine learning to test if an algorithm can differentiate texts published by a nonprofit (Graywolf or Coffee House) from a conglomerate publisher (Random House). Through grounding his aesthetic analysis in publishing studies, Sinykin illustrates how the funding landscape of nonprofit literature and financial pressure of conglomeration influenced publications’ aesthetics. Sinykin’s work is the first academic account of the history of nonprofit publishing.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, as a literary scholar, his interest lies in the effects of conglomeration on the aesthetics of literature. Mine is in the effects of conglomeration on the people of Minneapolis and St. Paul. While So’s and Sinykin’s DH-enabled literary histories understand text as a commodity, they neglect that text is also a spatial product.

Computation enables Sinykin and So to study the history of the publisher using a corpus of the thousands of books the presses have published; however, due to the limits of computer vision, these methods only deal with the book on the level of text. According to Piper et al, “the value of computational approaches to studying culture lies in their ability to significantly expand the scale of evidence considered when making inferences about the past.”[[6]](#footnote-6) So and Sinykin take advantage of the scale computational analysis enables to distance read all of the publications from the publishers in question. This allows them to chart aesthetic changes in text over time and situate those within the institutional history of the publisher. However, their analysis and that of most DH-literary historians is text-centric because OCR--the very technology that renders page images into plain digital text--cleaves characters it recognizes as text from the page background. In doing so, it enacts a textual hierarchy on the page such that type is remediated and everything else is erased. Text is often all that remains to be analyzed by the time a printed book is made machine readable.[[7]](#footnote-7) As such, Sinykin and So’s distance reading only accounts for the book as a textual, not material or spatial object. For literary scholars like Sinykin and So for whom text is the primary object of study, this is not necessarily a problem. I am interested in using the computationally rendered textual record to study the processes of the text’s creation—not the text itself. As such, textual analysis, alone, is insufficient for my project.

Bibliographers demonstrate that text is always already a human-constituted product. According to bibliographer DF McKenzie, a text is a materially constituted assemblage that is a product of humans, structures, institutions, and systems, and bibliography is the sociology of texts. Understood this way, bibliography “can…show the human presence in any recorded text.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The human presences a text contains simultaneously multiply and become more difficult to observe in the era of the infrastructural book trade of the present. Matthew Kirschenbaum’s method bibliologistics “understands that books — individually and in aggregate — leave traces in ecological, economic, and many other registers.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Central to bibliologistics is site specific and network analysis which is crucial to tracing the ever-expanding registers the book trade implicates. Like texts of the present, digitized texts contain multiple human presences, but these often span space and time.

Because all texts are sociological productions, digitized text centric approaches need not preclude spatial analysis. Ryan Cordell argues, contrary to hegemonic assumptions, “digitization does not remove a historical artifact from material culture, but adds another stratum of computational materiality to its social text.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Text--digital or analog--is a recorded instance of human presence, and bibliography is a tool to witness that. Thus, we can use digital text and computation to look beyond bags of words towards the spatial politics that led to their construction, consumption, remediation(s), preservation, and loss. Space is a real lens that points towards material conditions and multiple objects. Because of this a computational approach to the spatiality of texts unearths patterns and systems motivating book production at the level of the publisher’s corpus of printed work.

This is an experiment in a computation-aided spatiality of texts. In this experiment, I wrote a python script to lift funding information from CHP books, but the ultimate aims of the project are to use this text to implicate the nonprofit press in the gentrification of the Minneapolis Warehouse District and St. Paul’s South St. Anthony Park neighborhood. The funding list is a spatially grounded paratext that records an institution’s choice to give money to a nonprofit press at a particular time when the press was located in a particular place. Even though these lists of donors have been remediated at least four times over, they document a financial transaction that occurred in the 1990s Twin Cities. I will situate the funding information in the geography of the 1990s Twin Cities that created the printed copy from which the text was digitized to understand the financial motives underlying funding choices over time and nonprofit publishing as a spatial project. Through using computational bibliographic methods to conduct a spatial history, I hope to reveal stories about humans whose hands never touched these books and whose eyes never read them, but whose lives were forever altered by their production.

**Warehouses and Coffee Houses: History of the District and the Publisher (1960-1985)**

From the 1960s onward, the Minneapolis Warehouse District fostered alternative economies and illicit uses of space. The area boasted residential hotels where one could get a room for $150 a month, the last gay bathhouse in the Upper Midwest, adult book stores, bars with cheap drink, strip clubs, gay bars, and pornographic movie theaters all within walking distance. Due to the proximity of sex related industries and cheap hotels, the area was home to both the straight and gay sex trades.[[11]](#footnote-11) In addition to the sex trade, the warehouse district was the epicenter of the alternative arts movement in Minneapolis. The rise of the counterculture in the late 1960s brought with it a resurgence of alternative art. Starting in 1971, these alternative artists illegally converted warehouse spaces into live-in studios. The vast majority of the Warehouse District’s 147 old warehouses had a couple businesses on the first floor but had been vacant on the upper floors since after the second world war.  Artists rented warehouse spaces because they were cheap considering the amount of space they provided. However, they were not so cheap that a working artist could afford to rent a warehouse for a studio and an apartment for a home. So, they illegally converted buildings into living and studio space. By 1979, artists converted 60 out of 147 warehouses, but only 12 of the 60 were code compliant which left the majority at risk of eviction.[[12]](#footnote-12)

These artists, sex workers, queers, hotel dwellers, and transients lived together in relative harmony until the 1980s. Under Reagan’s direction, federal neoliberal policies defunded cities and states which made them move away from welfare policies towards corporatism. As cities became more business-like, they incentivized the return of corporations to the urban core from the ailing suburbs. In short, neoliberalism provoked cities to gentrify.[[13]](#footnote-13) Sitting just northwest of real estate developments in central downtown Minneapolis, the Warehouse District threatened to drive away industry and throw the city into financial peril.

In response, the Minneapolis City Council passed legislation to render the sex related businesses illegal,[[14]](#footnote-14) and the police department cracked down on street workers.[[15]](#footnote-15) Meanwhile, developers did as developers are wont to do: bought real estate and cultivated the arts movement to attract wealthier, whiter residents.[[16]](#footnote-16) Part of that cultivation was funding the nonprofit presses. Coffee House Press was one of these.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Coffee House Press began in 1972 in the University of Iowa’s student center in the form of a mimeograph countercultural zine called *Toothpaste*. By 1974, Toothpaste’s founders, Allan and Cinda Kornblum, purchased a house and letterpress in West Branch, Iowa. For the next decade, they ran Toothpaste Press as a fine letter press publishing limited edition chapbooks.[[18]](#footnote-18) Toothpaste received some funding from the Iowa State Arts Board, but it never totaled more than about $10,000--barely enough to fund books’ production much less to live off of.[[19]](#footnote-19) As the young couple welcomed a daughter into the world, they realized running the press out of the house with such limited funding was not sustainable. So, they applied for 501c3 nonprofit status, renamed their press Coffee House, and relocated to the land of 10,000 corporate donors: the Minneapolis Warehouse District. Upon their August 1985 arrival, Coffee House Press already had $40,000 in funding.[[20]](#footnote-20) By 1991 the budget had grown to $360,000.[[21]](#footnote-21) But who were these funders?

I wrote a python program to lift the donor list from each CHP published book from 1990-1995. Prior to analyzing what this text says, we need to understand what the object of study is. The text the program analyzes has multiple material histories embedded in it. While my interest is in the spatial history of the printed object from which the digital text came, these other histories cannot be neglected. In order to understand these objects fully and resist treating them as surrogates, I created an anatomical map of the digitization starting with CHP and ending with the csv file of the funding information that I produced.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generatedMap

Description automatically generatedMap

Description automatically generatedMap

Description automatically generated

Legend

Warehouse District 1990

Warehouse District 1976

Warehouse District 1985

**The Program Anatomized**

Timeline

Description automatically generated

1. ***Coffee House Press, 27 N 4th. St Minneapolis, MN***

From 1990 to 1995, Coffee House Press was located in a warehouse district office space a block away from the heart of the gay night life scene. During this era, Coffee House Press transitioned from being predominantly a fine letterpress to a trade publisher. This meant they were no longer printing books in house, and distribution shifted to a national scale.[[22]](#footnote-22) HathiTrust contains 58 books in its collections that CHP published between [1990 and 1995](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mb?a=listis&c=1342547325). This list is not exhaustive of all the titles the press published during this time. Running the same metadata search in WorldCat indicates the press probably published around 80 titles during the same period. Many of these are limited edition chapbooks, but some are trade books. Missing trade titles in Hathitrust include:

1. Yamashita, Karen Tei. *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest : A Novel*. Coffee House Press, 1990.
2. Hogan, Linda. *The Book of Medicines : Poems*. Coffee House Press, 1993.
3. Lange, Art, and Nathaniel Mackey. *Moment's Notice : Jazz in Poetry & Prose*. Coffee House Press, 1993.
4. Marshall, Jack. *Sesame : Poems*. Coffee House Press, 1993.
5. Brownstein, Michael. *Self-Reliance : A Novel*. Coffee House Press, 1994.
6. Watson, Richard A. *Niagara : A Novel*. Coffee House Press, 1993.
7. Hollo, Anselm. *Corvus : Poems*. Coffee House Press, 1995.
8. Mazza, Cris. *Your Name Here : A Novel*. Coffee House Press, 1995.
9. Frym, Gloria. *How I Learned : Short Stories*. Coffee House Press, 1992.
10. Fincke, Gary. *For Keepsies : Stories*. Coffee House Press, 1993.
11. Waldman, Anne. *Iovis : All Is Full of Jove : A Poem*. Coffee House Press, 1993.
12. Di Prima, Diane. *Zipcode : The Collected Plays of Diane Di Prima*. Coffee House Press, 1992.

Other missing titles included limited run chapbooks and broadsides. Why these titles are not included in HathiTrust’s collections I do not know. However, the majority of titles are present in HathiTrust, and for the purposes of trying to understand funding patterns, this corpus should be sufficient. Afterall, funders tend to donate to presses annually, so as long as I have the majority of books for any given year, I should be able to get a rough idea of the annual funding landscape.

1. ***Printer***

Following editing, CHP would have sent a text file (probably made from adobe page maker) of each publication to a printer to be printed on offset. These books do not contain anything about where they were printed.

1. ***Distributor***

Coffee House Press’s main distributor was Consortium. Located across the river in St. Paul’s South St. Anthony Park, Consortium was founded in 1985 as a coop distribution service for independent press books. Consortium mostly distributed to bookstores.[[23]](#footnote-23) The 58 volumes in this corpus all came from libraries, so a library distributor or jobber probably sold them to these institutions. During this time period, Baker & Taylor dominated the library market, so it is likely that corporation handled the distribution of the 58 titles. Libraries would have ordered books directly from the distributors catalog.[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. ***Library***

Of the 58 volumes, 54 were digitized from printed volumes in the University of Michigan’s library. The other 4 were pulled from University of California system libraries (2), University of Texas (1), and Indiana University (1). These printed books remained a part of their holding libraries' circulating collections. Then, in 2002, Google approached the libraries with a proposition. The corporation offered to digitize everything in the library totally free of charge so long as the institution lent all circulating materials to Google.[[25]](#footnote-25) All four libraries agreed.

1. ***Google***

The Google books project, code named Project Ocean, began in 2002 with a 300 page book and a metronome. Following their book-metronome experiment, Google founders Larry Page and Marissa Meyer estimated they could digitize a 300 page book in 40 minutes. Armed with that information and silicon-valley hubris, the developers offered to digitize the entirety of the University of Michigan’s 7 million volume collection in six years. U-M agreed, and eight years later the corporation had digitized 25 million volumes from Michigan, Oxford, Harvard, New York Public, Stanford, and dozens of other libraries, far outpacing their original estimate.[[26]](#footnote-26) The cost was an astronomical $400 million.

Google heavily guarded the process through which they created the scans and OCR versions of these texts.[[27]](#footnote-27) The reasons for this are multiple. First, the project was a blatant copyright violation.[[28]](#footnote-28) Second, google intended to patent their scanning software, but did not receive approval from the USPTO until four years after the project began.[[29]](#footnote-29) Third--and most importantly--the digitization project relied on the exploitation of contract workers who were mostly people of color.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Here is what we do know about the process. Semitrucks arrived at libraries, and librarians loaded collections onto the trucks for transport to a Google scanning outpost nearby. Google set up scanning outposts throughout the country. The locations of the scanning facility at which the digitizers of these 58 volumes worked remains unknown. Thanks to Andrew Norman Wilson’s documentary footage, we know that digitizing laborers arrived on Google’s Silicon Valley scanning facility every day at 4AM and left at 2PM. While there, the corporation forbade them from talking to any other employees or telling anyone what they were doing.[[31]](#footnote-31) Inside the facility, workers operated Google’s custom built scanning equipment. It is true that Google's scanning machine made the scanning process much quicker than any OCR workflow before through using patented LIDAR technology to straighten warped page images before running OCR on them. However, these scanning machines still depended upon workers individually turning each page of the book and using a foot lever to capture an image of each page. Digitizers could capture 1,000 pages of a book per hour. For creating what James Somers has called “the most significant humanities project of our time,” scanner workers earned $24,000/year in 2008 with no benefits.[[32]](#footnote-32) The average google employee earned $71,000/year.[[33]](#footnote-33) That means these 58 volumes may very well have been digitized over the course of 11.5 hours for which a worker would have been paid $132.25. Following scanning, the semitrucks transported the books back to the lending institution. LIDAR straightened the page images and software engineers generated OCR from the pages. The engineers stored these on a server somewhere in Silicon Valley that can still be accessed today via google.

1. ***HathiTrust***

HathiTrust launched on October 13, 2008.[[34]](#footnote-34) Upon its launch, all of its volumes came directly from Google’s Project Ocean, and in 2017, about 95% of the 15.7 million volumes were google digitizations.[[35]](#footnote-35) These volumes consist of page images, OCR plain text files, and adjoining JSON metadata records.  Google digitized all 58 of the volumes in the corpus. Since its 2008 inception, developers at HathiTrust (Ryan Dubenicek among them) created an API, secure virtual machines, and python libraries for researchers to gain full text access to texts in the collections. While anyone can search HathiTrust, one must be at a member institution to be eligible for requesting a data capsule and receiving full text access. There are currently 128 member institutions of HathiTrust, and most R1 schools in the US have a membership.

I requested access to a data capsule on which I would analyze the 58 volumes.[[36]](#footnote-36) From this virtual machine, I ran two python programs, one that downloaded the first 12 pages of the 58 volumes, and one that scraped the copyright page out of those volumes and appended it to a csv file. I exported the python files and csv file from the virtual machine following analysis. The plain text OCR files that google created remain on the data capsule.

The python script, csv file, and documentation are available on github.[[37]](#footnote-37)

**Plans for Analysis**

The data collection phase is far from over, but I have begun to think about what analysis will entail. The CSV file my python script outputs is a good start, but it does not always capture the donor list. This is because it slices 5 lines before, the line containing, and 20 lines after the string “copyright.” Thus, if the word copyright comes up anywhere else in the text, it also captures the surrounding lines. Additionally, if the funding information is not on the copyright page, it does not capture it. In later CHP publications the funding list is in the back of the book. I will need to come up with a better string or series of strings to identify the funding list more accurately and more often. Other strings could include “foundation,” “thanks,” “donor,” and “support.” Alternatively, I could rely on topic modeling of pages rather than simply searching for strings that are likely to be on the right page. I may have to do this if there is too much word variance in donor lists across the corpus.

Furthermore, the scraped text is not easily iterable. For example, commas do not always separate the names of donors. Sometimes there are entire word-phrases between donors. I will likely have to create a list of donor entities from each donor list by hand so that I can easily iterate over it and compare it across the corpus.

**Limitations**

The largest problem that is yet unresolved is the number of missing titles. I do not know exactly how many titles CHP actually published from 1990-1995, but it was probably closer to 80. The most obvious solution--going to the press’s archives and finding the donor list and complete publication list--is not a possibility for me as a high risk researcher amid the unmitigated COVID-19 pandemic. The holding institutions’ staffing shortages make getting a digital version unlikely. So, I could supplement my HathiTrust corpus analysis with Internet Archive corpus analysis; however, I must accept my corpus will never be complete. Internet Archive, Google, and HathiTrust cull their titles from libraries. Even WorldCat’s robust bibliography comes from libraries that hold OCLC membership.[[38]](#footnote-38) While all four nonprofit presses likely sold the majority of their titles to libraries, I simply cannot know that with certainty. As such, the corpus is representative of books that librarians at extremely wealthy universities purchased (in the case of Hathi and Google) or libraries with a budget and staff time for digital preservation activities (Internet Archive books tend to come from public libraries, but this, too, is a matter of funding). And even my metric for checking how many books were publishing in a period--World Cat--favors those libraries than can afford OCLC membership. Suffice it to say, the books the corpus contains are those favored by an academic or public librarian audience---an audience is hugely biased and minimally racially diverse.

In the case of the four presses, these biases of the corpus are unlikely to significantly alter the results. All four presses were also launched by white people (although Graywolf’s editor by the mid 1990s, Fiona McCrae, was a Black woman)[[39]](#footnote-39) and pursued academic audiences. The editor of New Rivers Press, Bill Truesdale, was an academic.[[40]](#footnote-40) Graywolf, Milkweed, and Coffee House worked together to send catalogs of their books to university professors across the US. As such, the vast majority of everything all four presses published is probably represented in Internet Archive and Hathi. The remaining titles are probably accounted for in World Cat. If I were using these same methods to study anti-institutional, radical presses, the biased corpora would be a larger issue.

**Conclusion**

This project is far from over. There remains data to collect, lists to analyze, and maps to make. Still in its early stages, the project contends that spatial analysis re-embeds text in the ground from which it came. Spatially driven bibliography makes possible big data analysis that centers the people and places that produced the text in question.

In the case of these four nonprofit presses, spatial analysis holds that publishing’s conglomeration did not just change the aesthetics of published literature. It also remade neighborhoods. Computation aided spatial analysis of the books’ funding lists allows us to bear witness to this history.

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