Text, Technology, and Latin America
Graduate Seminar
Hannah Alpert-Abrams

How are texts made, circulated, read, and preserved? How do technologies shape the way we construct and engage with the historical record? And what happens when those technologies are digital? This course takes a long view of inscriptive mechanisms in Latin America from cochineal to mimeographs, and explores how new digital technologies are changing the way we understand and engage with the documents these tools leave behind. It explores how text technologies have been used to create imperial order, record everyday experience, and foster revolution. Finally, it looks critically at quantitative approaches to text analysis, from querying a library catalogue to using machine learning to analyze a corpus of texts. Each week, we spend half of the class period discussing scholarly readings, and half of the period engaging in hands-on workshops with digital texts.

Unit 1: Writing Without Words
In the first unit, we examine systems of communication and technologies of inscription in the early years of European exploration and conquest. Focusing on Indigenous inscription systems, notarial record-keeping, and early print production, this unit explores the technological systems at work in early colonial American text production, and draws on digital editions to examine how these practices are transformed as early colonial texts are put online.

Unit 2: The Sociology of Texts
In the second unit, we examine the role that texts and text technologies have played in the social and political spheres, considering how textual production and circulation has been involved in periods of political oppression and resistance across Latin America and the Caribbean. Considering cases that include Spanish censorship, Haitian revolution, and Uruguayan dictatorship, and technologies that range from movable type to mimeographs, in this unit we will explore the intertwining relationship between political resistance and technologies of the text. At the same time, we will consider the role of digitization in shaping historical memory, providing access to histories of resistance, and determining the future of the past.

Unit 3: Remediation
In the third unit, we explore what happens to texts as they move across media. We consider how facsimiles have been used to circulate information and reshape historical memory, and examine how textual production is changing in the digital age. We also consider the defamiliarizing effect of corpus creation and machine learning, and explore the liberatory possibilities of playful deformations of digital texts.

Assignments:
During the first half of the semester, students will produce a digital edition of a historical text of their choice using Ed (https://elotroalex.github.io/ed/), a Jekyll theme for scholarly editing. Jekyll allows users to produce digital scholarly editions that draws on minimal computing principles to create accessible digital texts. During the second half of the semester, students have the option of a) producing a public syllabus based on a text technology of their choice or b) writing a seminar paper.

Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule and reading list. Readings will be selected from the bibliography provided here.

Unit 1: Writing without words

1.1 *Writing, Books, Libraries*
    Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo, *Writing Without Words*
    José Rabasa, *Tell Me the Story of How I Conquered You*
    Ludo Snijders, *The Mesoamerican Codex Re-Entangled* (Parts 1-2)

    Digital: Search
    Lara Putnam: "The Transnational and the Text Searchable"
    Isabel Galina Russell, "Qué son las Humanidades Digitales"

1.2 *Text and Image*
    Dana Leibsohn, *Script and Glyph.*
    Michael Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage*
    Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive*
    Angel Rama, *La ciudad letrada*

    Digital: Scan
    Dot Porter, "Is This Your Book? What we call digitized manuscripts and why it matters."
    Popol Wuj Online: https://library.osu.edu/projects/popolwuj/

1.3 *Manuscript and Print*
    Hortensia Calvo, "The History of the Book in Latin America"
    Anthony Grafton, Elizabeth Eisenstein, and Adrian Johns, *American Historical Review Forum* (2002). https://academic.oup.com/ahr/issue/107/1
    Marina Garone Gravier, *Historia de la tipografía colonial para lenguas indígenas*.
    Bonnie Mak, *Manuscript.*

    Digital: Transcribe
    Ryan Cordell, "Why you, a humanist, should care about optical character recognition."
    Laura Matthew, *The Form of the Content*
    Nahuatl-Nawat: http://nahuatl-nawat.org/

1.4 *Print Culture*
    Magdalena Chocano Mena, "Colonial Printing and Metropolitan Books: Printed Texts and the Shaping of Scholarly Culture in New Spain: 1539–1700," Colonial Latin American Historical Review 6, no. 1 (1997): 71–72
    Pedro Guibovich, "The Printing Press in Colonial Peru: Production Process and Literary Categories in Lima, 1584–1699" Colonial Latin American Review 10, no. 2 (2001): 173.
    Valeria Gauz, "Early Printing in Brazil." Bulletin du Bibliophile (2013).
    Hill, Matthew. "The Book Trade in the Colonial Philippines." *Book History* 20:1 (2017).

    Digital: Editing
    Ed: A Jekyll Theme for Minimal Editions: https://elotroalex.github.io/ed/
    Minimal Computing: http://go-dh.github.io/mincomp/about/

Unit 2: The Sociology of Texts

2.1 *Censorship*

    D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*

    Palacios, Albert. "Preventing 'Heresy': Censorship and Privilege in Mexican Publishing, 1590-1612." *Book History* 17 (2014): 117-164.

    Corinna Zeltsman, "Defining Responsibility: Printers, Politics, and the Law in Early Republican Mexico City." The Hispanic American Historical Review. 98, no. 2 (May 2018): 189-222.

    Digital: Access

    Kim Christen: Does Information Really Want to Be Free?

    Slave Societies: https://www.slavesocieties.org/

2.2 *Independence*

    Rafael Antolínez Camargo, *El Papel periódico de Santafé de Bogotá, 1791–1797: Vehículo de las luces y la contrarrevolución* (Bogotá: Banco Popular, Fondo de Promoción de la Cultura, 1991).

    Oleski Miranda Navarro, "The Periodical Patria and Racial Mobilization in the Last War for Cuban Independence." *Age of Revolutions.*

    Victor Peralta, "La revolución silenciada: Hábitos de lectura y pedagogía política en el Perú, 1790–1814," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 54, no. 1 (1997): 107–34.

    Chelsea Stieber, "The Haitian Literary Magazine in Francophone Postcolonial Literary and Cultural Production."

    Digital: Revolution

    A Colony in Crisis: http://smallaxe.net/sxarchipelagos/issue02/intervening-in-french.html

2.3 *Repression & Resistance*

    Damian Bil and Lucas Poy Pineiro, *Trabajo no libre en la Penitenciaria Nacional de Buenos Aires: El caso de los talleres graficos, 1877-1917*

    Raúl Coronado, *A World Not To Come*

    Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin*

    Emma Whittington, "Read This and Pass it On: A History of Mimeographed Resistance to the Uruguayan Dictatorship."

    Digital: Memory

    Caribbean Memory Project: http://smallaxe.net/sxarchipelagos/issue02/hudson-review.html
http://www.caribbeanmemoryproject.com/

Unit 3: Remediation
3.1: Facsimile
        Barbara Rhodes and William Streeter, *Before Photocopying: The Art and History of Mechanical Copying 1780-1938*
        Barbara Mundy and Dana Leibsohn, "Of Copies, Casts, and Codices."
        Ludo Snijders, *The Mesoamerican Codex Re-Entangled* (part 5)
        Daniela Bleichmar, "Translation, Mobility, and Mediation: The Case of the Codex Mendoza."

        Digital: Remediation
        sxarchipelagos Musical Passage Review: http://smallaxe.net/sxarchipelagos/issue01/musical-passage.html
        Musical Passage: http://musicalpassage.org/

3.2: Transmedia
        "Estéticas transmediales: reflexiones en torno a la literatura electrónica," María Andrea Giovine
        Élika Ortega, "Binding Media: Print Digital Literatures from Latin America."

        Digital: Corpus
        Murrieta-Flores et al, "Developing Big Data Geographic Approaches to 16th Century Historical Sources: Digging into Early Colonial Mexico"
        https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/digging-ecm/

3.3: The Future of Text
        To be determined…

        Digital: Machine Learning
        https://botwiki.org/resource/tutorial/how-to-make-a-twitter-bot-the-definitive-guide/