

How to Get Started in Digital History

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University of Waterloo

Plan for the Workshop

- **Part One:** The Overview
 - *Defining digital humanities/digital history; resources to get started; discussion*
- **Part Two:** Public Histories
 - *Engaging the public through new technologies; knowledge mobilization & SSHRC; leveraging new technologies; exemplar projects; discussion*
- **Part Three:** Computational Histories
 - *“Doing” historical research with computers; long historical lineages; exemplar projects; advantages/disadvantages; discussion*
- **Conclusion**
 - *Publications, events, conferences to keep an eye on if you want to continue working in this field*

Plan for the Workshop

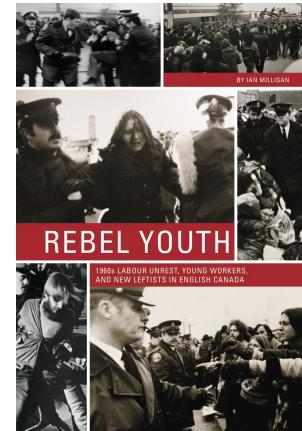
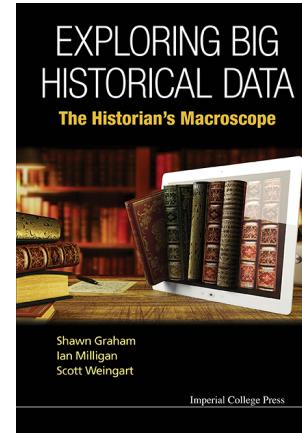
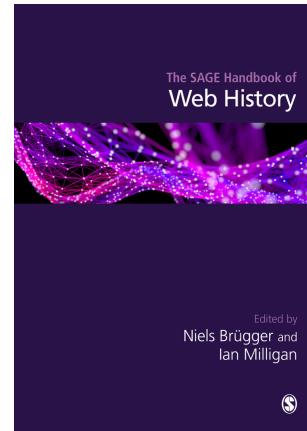
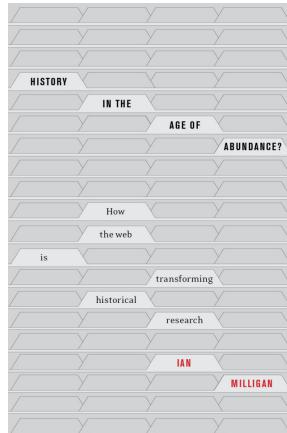
- The idea is that this is mostly a discussion-based seminar; for the long lecture, come next week!
- For each “part” I have some framing remarks, you’ve done a reading, and then we’ll turn it over.
- We’ll do the “raise hand” function on Zoom to queue speakers!

Readings for the Workshop

- **Part One:** Stephen Robertson, “The Differences between Digital Humanities and Digital History,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, 2016 edition, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minnesota)
<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/ed4a1145-7044-42e9-a898-5ff8691b6628>
- **Part Two:** Sheila A. Brennan, “Public, First,” in *ibid.*
<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/11b9805a-a8e0-42e3-9a1c-fad46e4b78e5>
- **Part Three:** Chad Gaffield, “Clio and Computers in Canada and Beyond: Contested Past, Promising Present, Uncertain Future,” in *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 101, issue 4 (December 2020): <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/777491>

Introductions (me!)

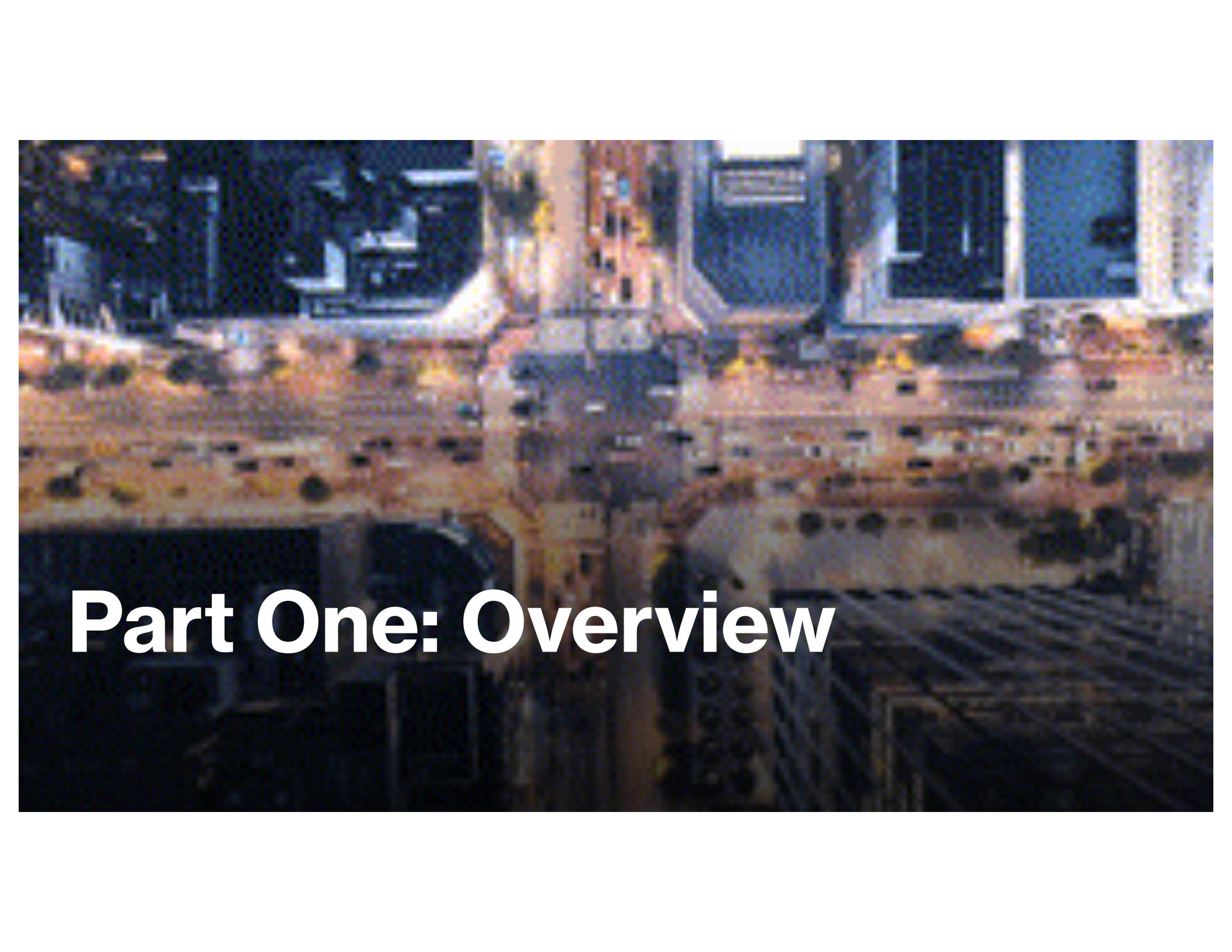
- BA, Queen's (2006); MA, PhD York (2007; 2012)
- A Social and Cultural Historian
 - *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada*
 - *Exploring Big Historical Data: The Historian's Macroscope*
 - *History in the Age of Abundance? How the Web is Transforming Historical Research.*
- Lead a large software development project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Project; serve on LAC's Acquisitions Advisory Committee, NDARIO Research Data Management working group, CRKN Preservation and Access Committee, as well as advisory/editorial boards for journals and projects.



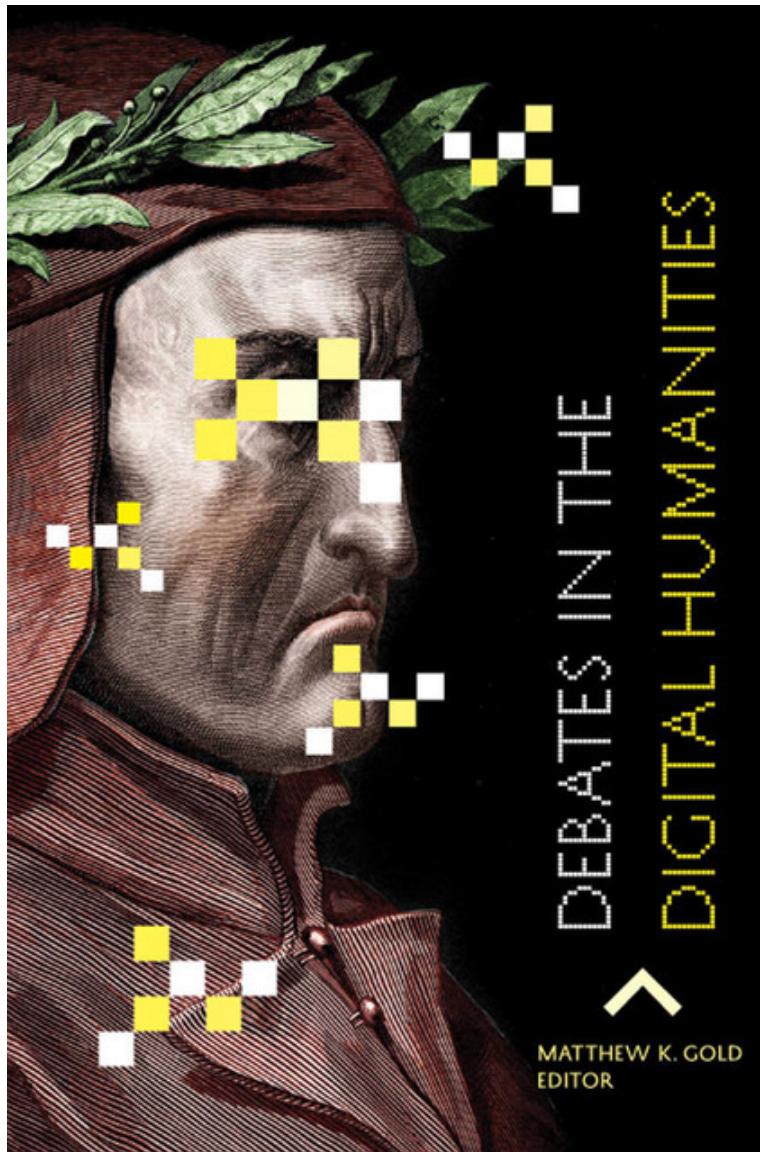


Introductions (you)

- Name, place in the program, dissertation topic
- What have you heard about “digital history” before?

The background image shows an aerial view of a city at night. The city is densely packed with buildings of various heights, many of which are brightly lit from within, creating a grid of lights. The streets below are also illuminated, showing the flow of traffic and the overall urban landscape.

Part One: Overview

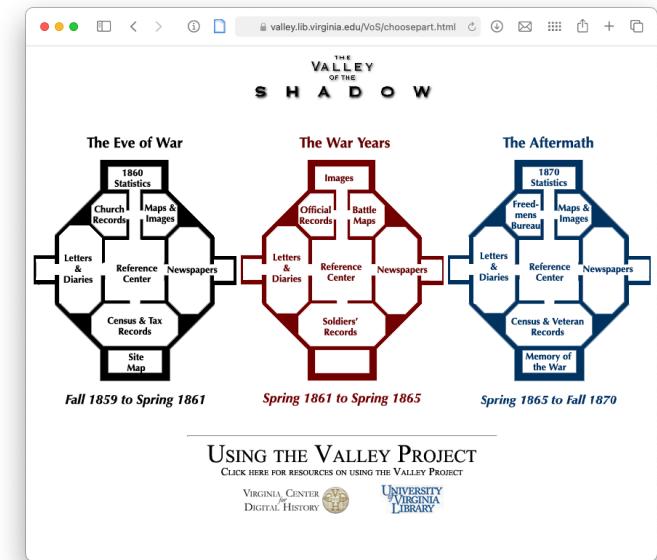


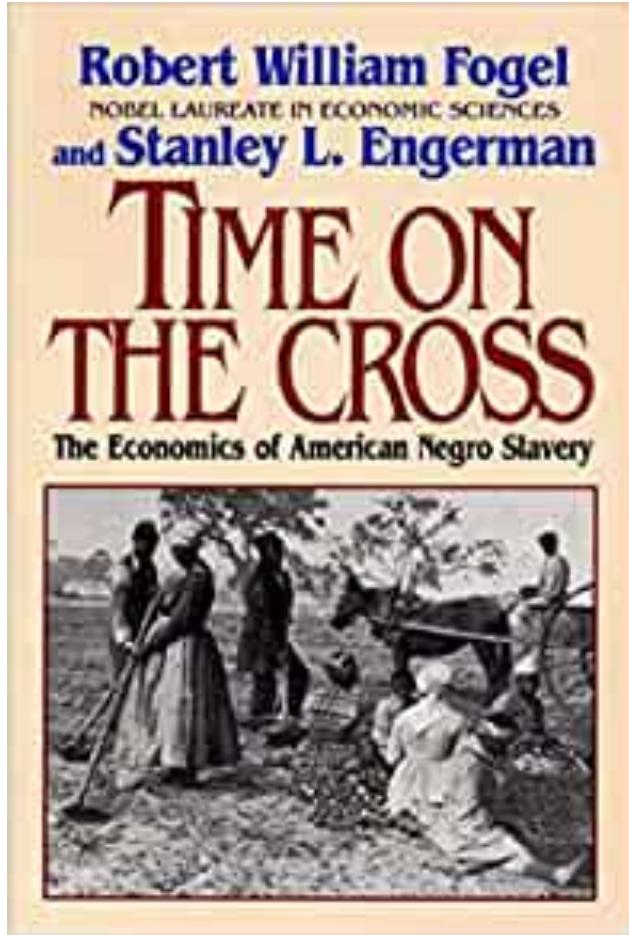
The Digital Humanities

- **Eludes easy definition** beyond nebulous “computers” + “humanities”; at its very basic, it is using computers to do things in the humanities (that we otherwise couldn’t do!)
 - “[A]t its core, then, digital humanities is more akin to a common methodological outlook than an investment in any one specific set of texts or even technologies.” (Kirschenbaum)
 - “Digital humanists share a commitment to collaboration, openness, and experimentation; a set of software tools, such as Voyant, Palladio, or Omeka; and a group of venues such as THATCamp. But disciplinary sources, questions, and approaches shape their projects, as well as their choice and use of digital tools.” (Robertson)
- **Big tent** bridging disciplinary differences? Or is it **digital literary studies** in disguise?

Digital History

- Arguably emerging out of public history (online projects to reach diverse audiences, from the public to high-school teachers)
- “to democratize the past – to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past.” (Roy Rosenzweig Centre for History and New Media founding mission)





Digital History

- Yet, as you will see in my lecture, and as we will discuss in Section Three; this also neglects critical lineages to social science history (for better or for worse)

Part One Discussion

What is digital history? What examples did you see in the readings that stood out? It is new?

What have your experiences been with digital humanities or digital history?

What obstacles, if any, have you faced when trying to do novel things with new technology?



Part Two: Public Histories

Reaching new Audiences through Technology

- Engaging the public through the web
 - **Websites** (blogs, SubStack newsletters, public commentary)
 - **Exhibits** (using platforms such as Omeka or working with cultural organizations to partner with museums, libraries, and galleries)
 - **Social Media** (social media, Twitter, Instagram)
- In SSHRC-ese, this is KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION
- The line between engaging the public and “digital history” can be a blurry one (beware gatekeeping).

Websites

Not Secure — activehistory.ca

Active History
History Matters

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Search... Search

Here We Come A-Picketing! Christmas Carols, Class Conflict, and the Eaton's Strike, 1984-85

December 23, 2020 □ No Comments

(This post by Sean Carleton and Julia Smith was originally published on 18 December 2014)

By mid-December, the holiday shopping season is usually in full swing for Canadian retailers. Thirty years ago, however, several Eaton's department stores in southern Ontario were experiencing a different type of holiday hustle and bustle: Eaton's workers were on strike.



WHAT IS ACTIVE HISTORY?

ActiveHistory.ca is a website that connects the work of historians with the wider public and the importance of the past to current events.

Please direct queries to Daniel Ross, Public Outreach Coordinator, via info@activehistory.ca.

For author guidelines, click here.

Visitez notre partenaire francophone, HistoireEngagée.ca

ONGOING PROJECTS

- Beyond the Lecture
- Canada's First World War
- From Juno to Victory

Not Secure — digitalharlem.org

Digital Harlem
Everyday Life 1915-1930

HOME ABOUT THE MAP SOURCES SEARCH Events SEARCH Places SELECT A Person TIMELINE PUBLICATIONS FAQ 1920s HARLEM

Map-Timeline List

Events Places select a person ...

Map Satellite

Zoom to: Harlem

- Bronx Fire Risk Maps
- Black Harlem 1920
- Black Harlem 1925
- Black Harlem 1930

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Maps Legend

CHURCHES SPORTS

NUMBER ARRESTS JANUARY 1925

NIGHTLIFE

Exhibits (Physical to Digital)



Social Media

Congressman Nunes pursued the Russia Hoax at great personal risk and never stopped standing up for the truth. He had the fortitude to take on the media, the FBI, the Intelligence Community, the Democrat Party, foreign spies, and the full power of the Deep State. Devin paid a price for his courage. The media smeared him and liberal activists opened a frivolous and unjustified ethics investigation, dragging his name through the mud for eight long months. Two dozen members of his family received threatening phone calls.

January 4, 2021

There is a frantic feeling in the political air as stories fly around: the leader of the Proud Boys has been arrested in Washington, D.C.; senators will contest the counting of electoral votes; Georgia election officials destroy Trump's accusations of a fraudulent election.

Heather Cox Richardson 475 266

New Top Community What is Letters from an American?

January 3, 2021

Today's news starts yesterday, when Trump called Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to demand he overturn the results of the presidential election.

Heather Cox Richardson 664 553

January 2, 2021

Today the fight to pick up Trump's supporters continued. Eleven senators, led by Ted Cruz (R-TX), said they would object to certifying certain state election results.

Every Three Minutes 1M Tweets

Every Three Minutes @Every3Minutes [In the United States] a slave was sold on average every 3.6 minutes between 1820 and 1860 – Herbert Gutman

books.google.com/books?id=TUf... Joined November 2014 0 Following 1,765 Followers Followed by Dr. Lorena Gauthereau, Dr. Katherine Cook, and 23 others you follow

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

Every Three Minutes @Every3Minutes · Dec 7, 2020 In the antebellum U.S.--someone's parent was just bought.

Global TV @GlobalTV · Dec 7, 2020 Prodigal Son returns with a killer new season January 12. Also on STACKTV.

Home Browse Radio YOUR LIBRARY Made For You Recently Played Liked Songs Albums Artists Podcasts PLAYLISTS My Peloton Music ... Beats to think to Rain Sounds - Rain ... Bob Dylan Covers The New Retro Acoustic Covers Discover Weedy Feel-Good Indie R... Starred Indie Workout + New Playlist

Educational

GETTING CURIOUS Jonathan Van Ness A weekly look at all the things Jonathan Van Ness (Queer Eye, Gay of Thrones)...
Stuff You Missed in HISTORY CLASS Jason Weiser tells stories from history and folklore that have shaped...

MYTHS AND LEGENDS Jason Weiser talks stories from history and folklore that have shaped...

99% INVISIBLE Jason Weiser is everywhere in our lives, but most importantly in the places...

DAN CARLIN'S HARD CORE HISTORY Dan Carlin's Hardcore History In "Hardcore History" the very unconventional Dan Carlin takes his "Martin", outside...

TED TALKS DAILY ASMR TED Talks Daily Every weekday, TED Talks Daily brings you the latest talks in audio. Join the host and...

YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT Mike and Sarah are journalists obsessed with the past. Every week they reconsider a...

In Bloom Shagil Simpson 3:55 4:00 Listening on Office speaker

A screenshot of a web browser window displaying the Omeka.net dashboard at www.omeka.net/dashboard. The browser interface includes standard controls like back, forward, and search, along with a tab for the current page.

The main header features the Omeka.net logo, navigation links for PRICING, SHOWCASE, HELP, and NEWS, and a MY ACCOUNT link in the top right corner.

A prominent message box in the center states "Your site has been deleted." in a bold, black font.

Sites

Below the title, there is a horizontal menu bar with links: Sites, Account Information, Edit Personal Information, Change Password, Upgrade Plan, Deactivate Account, and Logout.

A message below the menu indicates the user's current plan: "You currently have the **Basic** plan, using **0** of **1** sites and **0 MB** of 500 MB of storage space."

My Sites

A large, light blue button labeled "Add a Site" is centered on the page.

At the bottom of the page, there is footer information: "Omeka.net is a project of the Corporation for Digital Scholarship. Copyright © 2021 Corporation for Digital Scholarship." To the right, there are links for Contact Us, Terms of Service, and Privacy Policy. At the very bottom left, the URL <https://www.omeka.net/account> is visible.

**Leveraging new and
emerging technology to
engage new publics.**



Complications

- What does it mean to present **historical scholarship** that doesn't have an argument? OR do all databases/maps/etc. have implicit arguments?
- Linear vs. non-linear scholarship.
- Recognition in a profession still largely dominated by books, articles, and book chapters.
- Accessibility and sustainability of these products.

Discussion

What projects, either here or in your own experience, have been the most engaging or effective?

Do you engage online? Why?
Why not?

How should historians engage with and *on* the web?

A complex, abstract network graph serves as the background for the title. It consists of numerous small, dark gray dots representing nodes, connected by a web of thin, light gray lines representing edges. The graph is highly interconnected, with many nodes having multiple connections to others, creating a sense of a large, dynamic system. The overall effect is a blurred, glowing network against a dark background.

Part Three: Computational Histories

Computational Histories

- The other main avenue in DH are computational histories, drawing on lineages stretching back to the 1970s and earlier
- Using new and emerging technologies to do better or different histories
 - i.e. taking approaches from Computational Linguistics, Natural Language Processing, Computer Science and applying it to historical questions

The civilizing process in London's Old Bailey

Sara Klingenstein^a, Tim Hitchcock^b, and Simon DeDeo^{a,c}

^aSanta Fe Institute, Santa Fe, NM 87501; ^bDepartment of History, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RH, United Kingdom; and ^cDepartment of Informatics, School of Informatics and Computing, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408

Edited by Charles Stanish, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, and approved May 22, 2014 (received for review April 1, 2014)

The jury trial is a critical point where the state and its citizens come together to define the limits of acceptable behavior. Here we present a large-scale quantitative analysis of trial transcripts from the Old Bailey that reveal a major transition in the nature of this criminal justice system. By mapping the semantic content of trials into synonym sets and dividing the trials based on indictment, we demonstrate the emergence of semantically distinct violent and nonviolent trial genres. We show that although in the late 18th century the semantic content of trials for violent offenses is functionally indistinguishable from that for nonviolent ones, a long-term trend of increasing synonym overlap increases the degree of distinction between violent and nonviolent acts. We separate this process into the shifting patterns that drive it, determine the relative effects of bureaucratic change and broader cultural shifts, and find that synonym sets are most responsible for the eventual genre distinguishability. This work provides a new window onto the cultural and institutional changes that accompany the monopolization of violence by the state, described in qualitative historical analysis as the "civilizing process."

criminal evolution | group cognition | social systems | bureaucracy | information theory

Over the course of the 19th century two developments helped to shape the modern world. First, the Western nation-state took on a newly bureaucratic form, including a newly regulated system of law and justice (1–3). And, second, the levels of violence in Western societies responded to the unique, all-time low (for an overview of the historical record) levels of violent decline in violence, see ref. 4. Most recently, this literature and argument forms the basis for ref. 5). Throughout Western Europe, murder became a rarity, whereas the judicial systems of both Europe and North America took on a new professionalism marked by comprehensive record keeping. Scholars using traditional methods have described this decline in violence as the central component of what is called the "civilizing process." (This is building on ref. 6. For the specifically British experience, see refs. 7–10.)

Part of a formal theory of cultural development designed to explain the emergence of the modern Western state, this civilizing process is taken to include a wide variety of forms of institutional regulation, ranging from the rules of politeness to the relationships between classes. The core claim of the theory is that the state effectively monopolized the use of violence over the course of the 16th to 20th centuries, becoming an important actor in both the control of the cultures that encouraged violence, and in the direct policing and control of violence itself.

The bureaucracies that characterize this shift undertook information gathering on an unprecedented scale, designed in part to inform later decision making, and the digitization of these records makes it newly possible to study the civilizing process in a quantitative fashion. The data here come from the detailed records of the Central Criminal Court, or Old Bailey, in London (11, 12). The Old Bailey has held trials for serious crimes in London and the surrounding counties since the 16th century, and forms one of the longest-running bureaucracies in the modern Western world.

We analyze the 112,485 trial records, encompassing more than 20 million (semantic) words of testimony recorded between 1760 and 1913, a period during which trial reports were at their most comprehensive. We focus on the lexical semantics of spoken testimony, and find that words and speech acts can be grouped as synonyms at different thresholds of similarity. Our methods allow us to study the explicitly named semantic structures of these texts over more than 2 orders of magnitude in resolution, from the word-store level (2.6×10^7 categories) to a synonym set level, with 1,040 categories, to a highly coarse-grained representation with only 116 categories.

We repeat our major finding. Over time, the emerging genre, at the beginning of the 19th century, of an increasingly clear distinction, within the record of spoken language, between trials associated with violent and nonviolent indictments. The result amounts to the creation of a new bureaucratic genre (13, 14) concerned with the management of violence, and its emergence follows a long-term secular trend. In the next 100 years it receives the greatest increasing distinction of trial types over time. The increasingly distinctive forms of statements associated with the management of violent crime provides strong quantitative evidence for the emergence of new social norms and cultural controls on behavior as context: the decline of violence over the course of the 19th century.

Our results also allow us to describe the particular categories most responsible for the distinction, and to determine their changing influence over time. Based on this analysis, our second finding concerns the large-scale structure of the genre's creation. Rather than the amplification of a particular initial pattern, we find significant change in the nature of the distinctions drawn. The civilizing process is not only a strengthening of underlying signals, this long-term shift in the underlying norms of the system involves both changes in bureaucratic practice and in civil society as a whole.

One of the characteristics of the modern era is the emergence of new bureaucratic and social mechanisms for the management and control of violence. Our analysis of 150 y of spoken word testimony in the English criminal justice system provides new insight into this critical process. We show how, beginning around the 1800s, trials for violent and nonviolent offenses begin to diverge sharply. Driven by a shifting set of underlying signals, this long-term shift in the underlying norms of the system involves both changes in bureaucratic practice and in civil society as a whole.

Author contributions: S.K., T.H., and S.D. designed research; S.K., T.H., and S.D. performed research; S.K. and S.D. contributed new reagent/analytic tools; S.K., T.H., and S.D. wrote the paper.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Direct Submission article had a prearranged editor.

This article is freely available online through an open access option.

*To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: sdede@indiana.edu.

This article contains supporting information online at www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/1405984111.

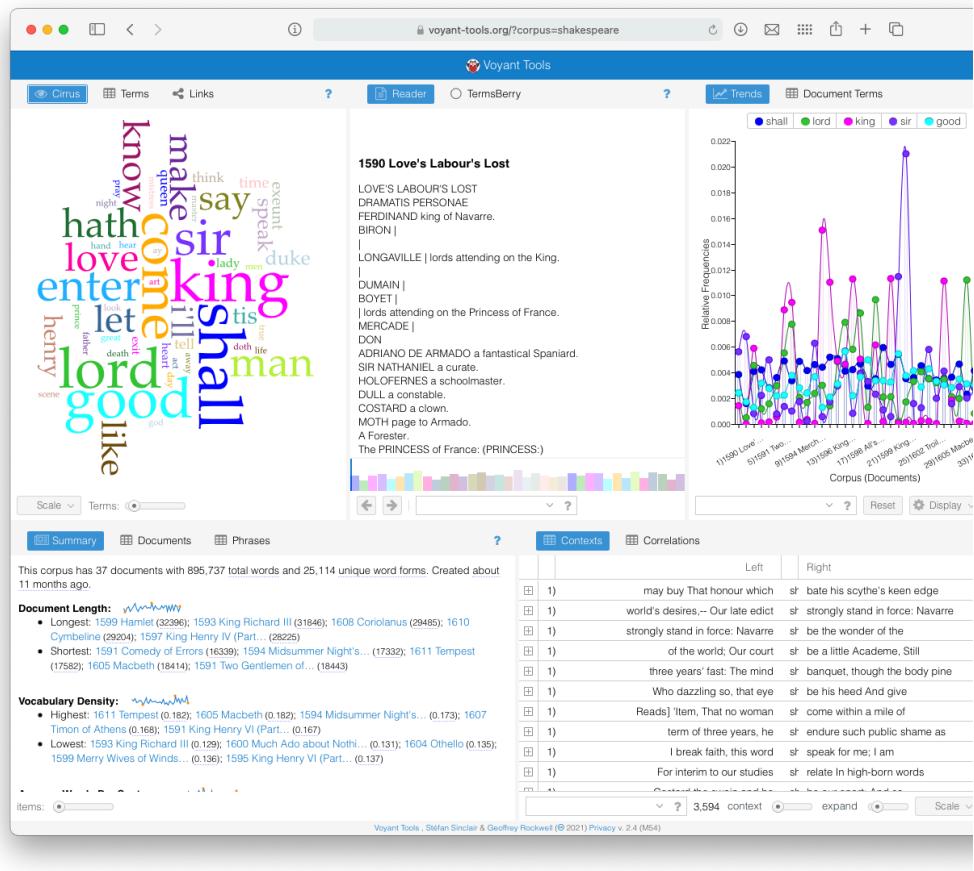
www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1405984111

PNAS | July 1, 2014 | vol. 111 | no. 26 | 9419–9424



Computational Histories

An entry-level resource: **Voyant Tools**



An Example

- Download State of the Union speeches
- Upload to Voyant Tools
- And Explore

The State of the Union is an annual address by the President of the United States before a joint session of congress. In it, the President reviews the previous year and lays out his legislative agenda for the coming year.

This dataset contains the full text of the State of the Union address from 1989 (Regan) to 2017 (Trump).

Gentlemen of the Senate and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:

I was for some time apprehensive that it would be necessary, on account of the contagious sickness which afflicted the city of Philadelphia, to convene the National Legislature at some other place. This measure it was desirable to avoid, because it would occasion much public inconvenience and a considerable public expense and add to the calamities of the inhabitants of this city, whose sufferings must have excited the sympathy of all their fellow citizens. Therefore, after taking measures to ascertain the state and decline of the sickness, I postponed my determination, having hopes, now happily realized, that, without hazard to the lives or health of the members, Congress might assemble at this place, where it was next by law to meet. I submit, however, to your consideration whether a power to postpone the meeting of Congress, without passing the time fixed by the Constitution upon such occasions, would not be a useful amendment to the law of 1794.

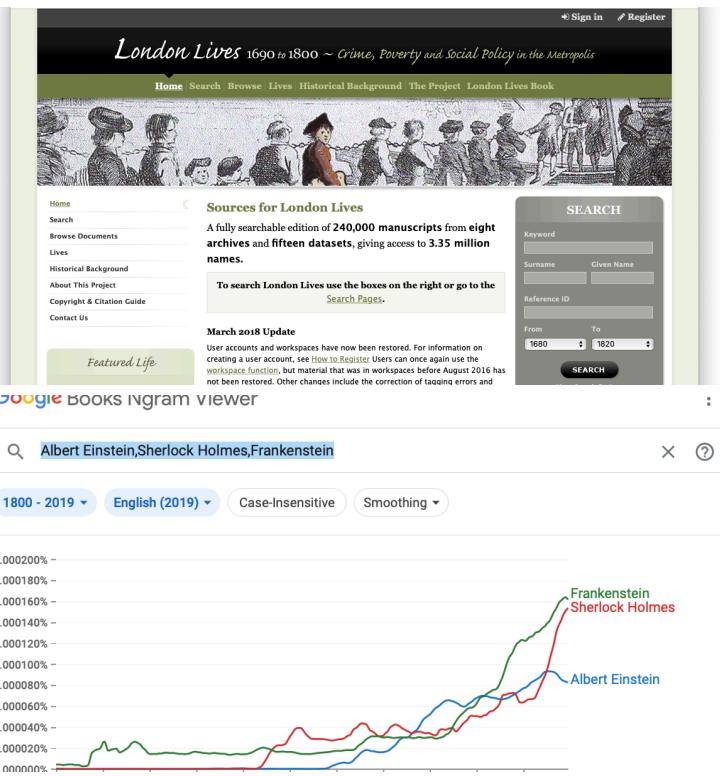
<http://bit.ly/queens-workshop>

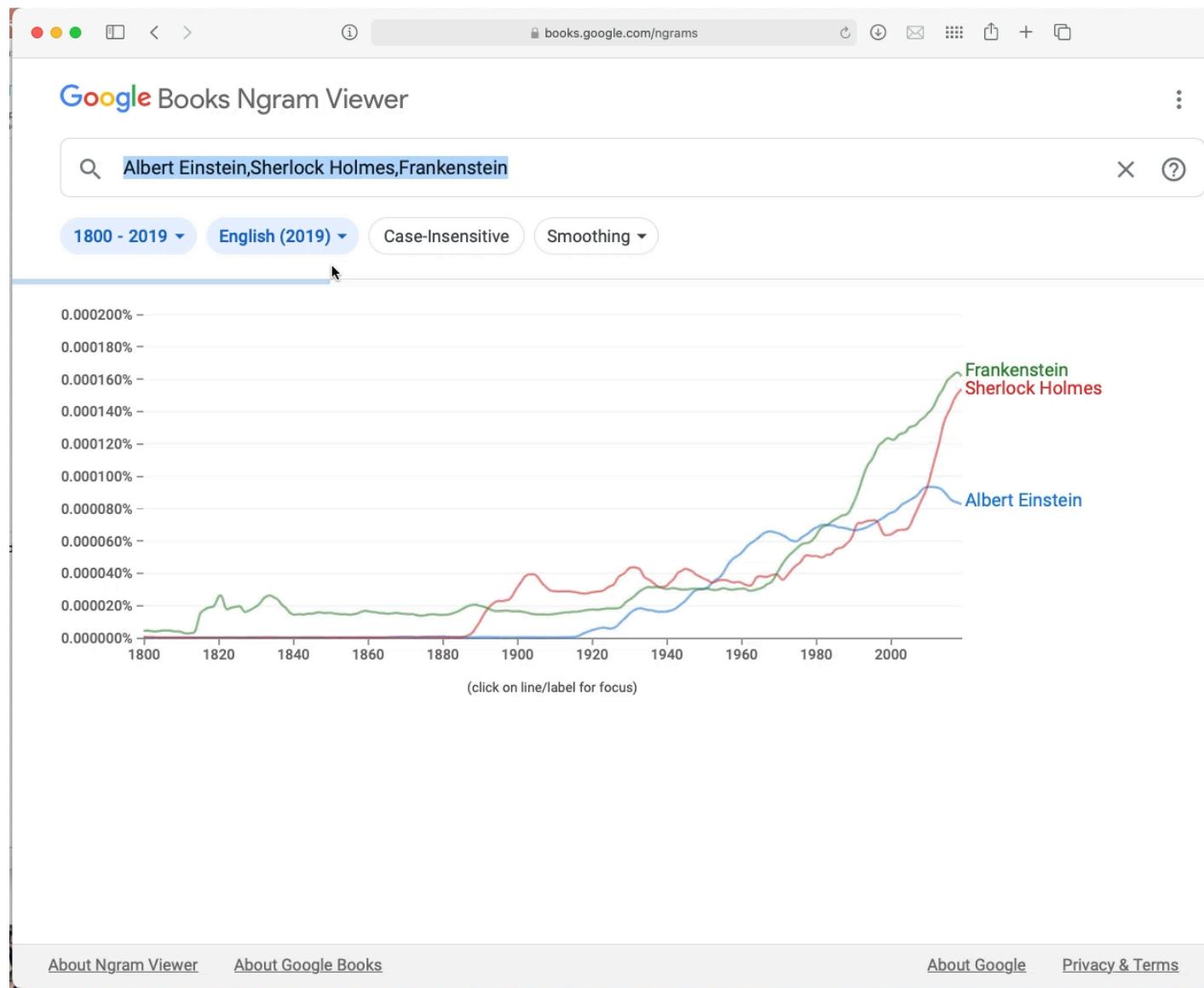
Computational Histories



Some Exemplar Examples

- Sara Klingenstein et al., “**The Civilizing Process in London’s Old Bailey**” (2014)
 - Analyzing 112,485 trial records; 20 million words between 1760 and 1913, finding an increasing shift in the language between violent and non-violent acts
- Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., “**Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books**” (2011)
 - Google N-Gram Viewer
- Taylor Arnold and Lauren Tilton, “**Distant Viewing**” (2019)
 - Approaches to take video files and begin to annotate them and mark them up, to lead to profound unlocking of that medium





Discussion

Have you considered using computational methods? Why? Why not?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

Should this be a separate field or should it be “mainstreamed”?

Concluding Discussion



Want to know more?

- Come to my lecture!
- But more importantly, get involved in this emerging field/sub-discipline.

A Discipline is Defined by Common Resources/Conferences/Events

- **American Historical Association** annual meeting “digital history” panels; the annual “Getting Started in Digital History”
- **Digital Humanities Summer Institute** (usually June; online June 2021 and hoping for in person in June 2022 😭)
- Conferences
 - **Canadian Society for Digital Humanities** (CSDH), part of Congress (same time as the Canadian Historical Association)
 - **Association of Digital Humanities Organization conference** (DH), international locations (N America, Europe, Oceania; Tokyo 2022)
 - **Association of Computing in the Humanities** (US-based, tends to be held when DH is out of North America; newer conference)

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES /
PERSPECTIVES HISTORIQUES



Is the Revolution a Click Away? Historical
Perspectives on Digital History

MATTHEW HAYDAY AND TINA LOO

Odds are very good that you are accessing this introduction to the *Canadian Historical Review's* latest Historical Perspectives feature on Digital History in a digital format. While a significant number of *chr* subscribers still receive print version of this journal, the vast majority of our subscribers receive it electronically, and many more access our articles individually in online formats. You may have found this piece by conducting a search in a database, and your search may have been facilitated by the embedded metadata that the *chr*'s production team have created for it, or by software programs and algorithms that allow full-text searching and sorting of results. Perhaps a friend emailed you a copy. Or you clicked through on a link from Twitter or the University of Toronto Press Journals' blog. The way we discover and access published research has undergone a sea change in recent decades, the result of the rise of new computing technologies.

This represents the tip of the iceberg in the ways that historical research has "gone digital" over the past several decades. As academic and public history positions requiring digital history and digital humanities expertise have started to proliferate, and new courses in these fields appear in post-secondary institutions, the editorial board of the *chr* figured the time was ripe – if not overdue – to reflect on how digital history has been transforming the practice, teaching, and understanding of Canadian history. The authors in this Historical Perspectives section were invited to reflect on the historical development, present practices, and future directions and considerations for the field of digital history in Canada.

The section begins with Chad Gaffield's reflections on the past several decades of Clio's relationship with computing in Canada. Exploring the ebbs and flows of digital history, he observes that there have been many predictions that a revolution in historical practice would result from the transformational potential of digital history. And yet, these predictions have often been only partly realized, had false starts, or failed to materialize. Why is this the case? As a central participant in and keen observer of these developments, Gaffield considers

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Publications

- **DH-specific venues**

- *Digital Humanities Quarterly*
- *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*
- *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*

- **Yet also increasingly mainstream journals**

- *Canadian Historical Review*
- *American Historical Review*
- *Social Science History*

- **Debate between whether DH should remain a sub discipline or suffuse around the field.**

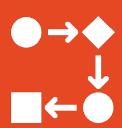
Discussion



What do you think of all this,
overall?



Should history “return” to more
quantitative, digital approaches? If
so, why? If not, why not?



How should we change the
discipline of history? Does it need
to transform? What can we do?

And Thanks!

- Thanks to you all and to Queen's Department of History and the support of the Nugent Lecture series.
- Stay connected!
 - **Ian Milligan**,
i2milligan@uwaterloo.ca

