**Work-in-Progress Abstract, IALJS-12**

**Title:** The Continuous Line: Visualizing the History of American Literary Journalism

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**Abstract:**

In his preface to *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism*, Thomas B. Connery conceptualizes the history of literary journalism through a series of distinct periods. While the periodization of the history of American literary journalism is well-established, Connery insists, “the line from the nineteenth through the twentieth century is continuous” (xiii). For a genre that is routinely reintroduced to the public under different monikers—creative nonfiction, New Journalism, and most recently, longform—understanding the history of literary journalism as a continuous line starting in the nineteenth century is essential to situating it in the broader context of American literature, a category from which it has long been excluded.

My project builds upon Connery’s conception of literary journalism’s history as a continuous line with distinct periods—an understanding shared by other prominent scholars like Norman Sims and John Hartsock—and seeks to visualize that history using methods derived from the digital humanities. In order to make the periods of literary journalism visible, I am creating interactive data visualizations—visual representations of data in graphs and charts that viewers can study and manipulate online—based on a comprehensive bibliography of the genre, which I am compiling by mining and combining already extant bibliographies, as well as adding to the available bibliographies.

With this data I can visualize Connery’s continuous line of literary journalism through its various periods by grouping bibliographic entries by date and plotting them on a graph. Ultimately, researchers will be able to identify periods of interest and easily access relevant primary and secondary source materials from that period, while at the same time seeing the various periods in the larger context of literary journalism’s long history. The value of these efforts is two-fold: in creating a comprehensive searchable bibliography, this project will fill a need identified by scholars including Miles and Roberta Maguire in the Fall 2011 issue of *Literary Journalism Studies*; and, by visualizing the history of literary journalism as a literal continuous line on an interactive graph, scholars will gain a better understanding of the history of the genre, thus enhancing their ability to make the case for literary journalism as a well-established literary genre worthy of consideration as such.