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Computational Humanities

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### Reflective Essay

I knew that I was going to get a quality education when I chose Furman University. Initially, I thought that I was going to be a computer science major, but in taking the two courses that I have here, I have decided that it is not the path for me. I am beginning to think that I will be an English major, but anything could still change. My major is undecided for the time being, but come this time next year I will have selected my major and will already be working toward that degree. I now know though, that computer science is not my forte and that its okay that it did not work out.

I have learned much this semester in my computer science course through the analysis of texts using computational tools. In my course this semester I analyzed a text for unique words, or words that were spelled in a peculiar way. We also examined the overall reading level of certain texts by analyzing the difficulty of the words. We achieved all this by using a virtual machine on our computers to run Scala. Everything we did was in our virtual environment. Nearing the end of the year, we each were working with our individual texts. I worked with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, and we compiled it into a .CEX file. After it was able to be cited in the CITE environment, we turned the CEX file into a series of HTML links that could each be accessed by the HTML pages. We also coded in CSS to stylize the html page so that it

would be visually pleasing and easy to navigate. I found this part of our project particularly difficult because I had never worked in HTML before. Once I learned the basics, however, I found it much easier to handle issues that occurred and in general I thought it was easy to stylize the page.

On a more “big picture” note, the computers were integral to what we were trying to achieve. We used our virtual environments to collect our texts into a single vector, after it was in a vector, we would map and filter that text. When we mapped it would alter or analyze every aspect of that text, or vector, and when we would filter we could “filter” out any unwanted parts of that text. The computer essentially does what humans do worst; count. From what I have learned this semester, I feel that I can effectively analyze a text using computational tools, and that in general my knowledge of text analysis has increased a great amount. If I do decide to be an English major then the text analysis skills that I have learned should prove to be helpful in that career and major path. Possibly the greatest skill that I have learned from this semester is how to effectively collaborate and work with others to solve problems and achieve common goals. These are skills that I can carry with me throughout my life and use frequently.