

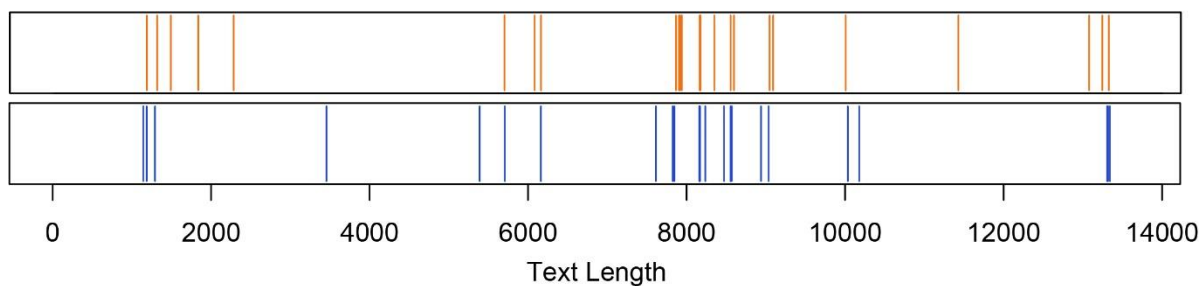
THE ART OF MONEY GETTING: A STUDY IN TEXTUAL CONTRAST

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Phineas Taylor Barnum is perhaps best known as a founder of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. A self-proclaimed showman by profession, Barnum was also a store owner, publisher, real estate speculator, museum owner, politician, and author. Throughout his many business ventures, he experienced extremes in terms of both wealth and popularity. In 1880, Barnum wrote *The Art of Money Getting* in which he shared his business knowledge and strategies for success. The following analysis of this text examines his use of the words “poor”, “rich”, “debt”, “wealth”, and “fortune” through the lens of his personal experiences.

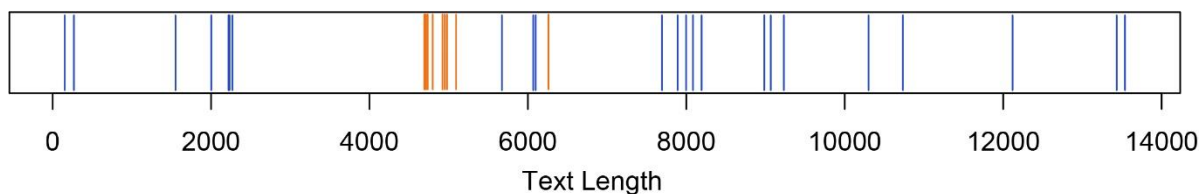
The set of dispersion plots below shows that Barnum’s use of the words “poor” and “rich” was fairly evenly distributed throughout the text. The two words were often used together in phrases such as “nine out of ten of the rich men of our country today started out in life as poor boys,” and “the poor boys get rich and the rich boys get poor.” The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.689 confirms this strong positive relationship in Barnum’s use of the two words. This usage could be interpreted as a reflection of the swings in Barnum’s career as he repeatedly suffered misfortune through bad investments, museum fires, circus train disasters, and other setbacks, yet always managed to recover.

Dispersion Plots of ‘poor’ and ‘rich’ in The Art of Money Getting



Unlike Barnum’s use of “poor” and “rich”, his use of “debt” versus the terms “fortune” and “wealth” shows little to no correlation. “Debt” appears in only two of the text’s twenty-two sections while “fortune” or “wealth” appear in ten. The correlation coefficient of -0.073 reinforces the independent use of these two subjects shown in the plot below.

Dispersion Plot of ‘debt’ versus ‘fortune’ and ‘wealth’



While the text’s fourth section, aptly titled “Avoid Debt”, strongly urges the reader to do just that, the scarcity of the word in the remainder of the work may reflect Barnum’s own use of borrowing to achieve some of his greatest successes. In 1850, Barnum promised Jenny Lind, a popular European singer, \$1000 a night plus all expenses paid for 150 shows in America. This was an unheard-of amount of money that Barnum was unable to provide without borrowing heavily against his own assets and asking for additional loans. In the end however, the venture was wildly successful and netted Barnum the equivalent of over \$15 million in today’s dollars.