

Lesson Plan: Six Degrees of Francis Bacon

Two Class Meetings

Day 1: From Network to Documents

Students together pick a prominent person in SDFB and view that person's two degree network. Each student will be responsible for working on a single edge, validating, correcting, typing, providing citations, or enriching it through descriptions.

Questions:

How do we verify an early modern relationship?

What documents can we use to verify or evidenciate it?

What primary (ex. EEBO, Google Books) or secondary (ex. ODNB, JSTOR) documents can we consult online or in the library? How do we find them?

How do we decide to assign an edge a type or types?

What if the existing types are insufficient? Do we need combine types? Add new ones?

What information should be added to a description of a relationship?

What can a prose description capture about a relationship that other data fields cannot?

Day 2: From Document to Networks

Present students with an early modern book – either an actual, physical book if in a rare book library or special collection, or a facsimile or EEBO .pdf. Set students with the task of inferring a network of relations from the document as a textual and/or material object.

Questions:

What persons are mentioned in the text of a book?

What evidence does the book provide for the relationships between those persons?

How are different kinds of relations evidenced by various paratexts (title page, commendatory letters or poems, dedications, prefaces, etc.)?

What persons are involved in creating the book? What are their roles?

What can we infer about the relations between authors, printers, publishers, booksellers, stationers, etc? Who was connected to whom and how?

Why are some names given in full, some abbreviated, and some omitted?

How might we determine the identity of persons whose names are abbreviated or omitted?

Which relations would be worth adding to the SDFB network? How confident can we be in those relations on the basis of the document?