DLA

the Digital Liberal Arts
@ Middlebury College

April 2018 Newsletter

March and April at the DLA featured a number of talks and events, with plenty on the horizon for the first weeks of May.

In two Behind the Scenes events, we glimpsed what colleagues are up to with digital research and teaching. Matthew Dickerson spoke about his work with students on digital storytelling about trout and ecology; and 2017-18 DLA Fellow Sarah Laursen presented a talk about the key digital components of her research on gold in ancient China for her book as well as an upcoming exhibition she is curating at the Middlebury College Museum of Art.

We also began a new series on "Digital Fluencies" so that the DLA can help foster more critical and robust engagement with technology for faculty, students, and staff. These conversations combine theoretical and practical approaches. In April, we turned to the database, which Lev Manovich refers to as the new symbolic form of the digital epoch (notes on our initial gathering here). Next up, on May 9, we take on the pressing issue of Algorithmic Racism. Please sign up if you wish to join us for the conversation (lunch provided).

Additionally, in the first week of May, digital historian Scott Saul visits Middlebury to discuss his work. And Quoctrung Bui from the *New York Times* joins us for a workshop on what scholars can learn from data journalism. See below for more information and to sign up for various events.

This year's DLA Fellows—Sarah Laursen, Amy Morsman, and Florence Feiereisen—continue to develop their digital projects. We have begun a monthly "One Object" lunch session at which we gather to explore one artifact or tool or issue emerging in particular digital research-in-progress. In April, Florence and her colleague Erin Sassin (HARC), along with their research assistant student Emma Harnett, presented their work on the audible architectural history of the Meyershof building in 1932 Berlin.

In the May newsletter, we will introduce the incoming 2018-19 DLA Fellows. As always, if you are interested in consultation about DLA ideas, funding, or other related matters, don't hesitate to contact me.

—Michael Kramer

Assistant Professor of the Practice, Digital History

Associate Director of the DLA

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Upcoming: Scott Saul Visits Middlebury To Discuss Digital Research, Teaching, & Public Scholarship, May 2-3

Please join the DLA and Davis Educational Foundation Curricular Grant Steering Committee on Wednesday, May 2nd, and Thursday, May 3rd for a series of talks and discussions with Scott Saul, professor of English and American Studies at University of California-Berkeley. Scott will be discussing his digital research, teaching, and public scholarship. The following events are open to faculty, students, and staff.

Wednesday May 2

DLA Lunch Conversation: Scott Saul, The Berkeley Revolution—Students Develop a Digital Archive of One City's Transformation in the Late-1960s & 1970s, 12-1:30 pm, CTLR Lounge, Davis Library. Lunch served, please sign up.

Talk: Scott Saul, Reckoning with Richard Pryor—The Seventies Comedy Explosion in the Wake of #BlackLivesMatter & #MeToo, 4:30-6 pm, Axinn 229. Light refreshments, open to the public.

Thursday, May 3

DLA Lunch Conversation: Scott Saul, Chapter & Verse—Podcasting the Digital Public

Humanities, 12-1:30 pm, Library 105B, Davis Library. Lunch served, please sign up.

Scott Saul is a Professor of English at UC-Berkeley, where he teaches courses in American literature and history. The author of *Becoming Richard Pryor* and *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties*, he is also the creator of Richard Pryor's Peoria, an extensive digital companion to his biography of the comedian, and The Berkeley Revolution: A digital archive of one city's transformation in the late-1960s & 1970s, a website and collective project that emerged from an honors undergraduate seminar in American Studies at UC-Berkeley, "The Bay Area in the Seventies," taught by Scott in the spring of 2017. He also writes as a cultural critic in the *New York Times, Harper's Magazine, The Nation, Bookforum*, and other publications and hosts Chapter & Verse, a books-and-arts podcast sponsored by UC-Berkeley's Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities that probes the cultural imagination—what Joan Didion once called the stories we tell ourselves to live. It delves into novels, nonfiction, poems, music, film, and other touchstones of our culture, with an eye to the spells they cast and the questions they raise.

More info & sign up for Scott Saul lunchtime seminars

Upcoming: What Scholars Can Learn From Data Journalism—Quoctrung Bui, Graphics Editor, *New York Times*, May 4

Please join us in the CTLR Suite at Davis Library on Friday, May 4, 4:30-6 pm for a presentation and conversation with Quoctrung Bui, graphics editor at the *New York Times*'s The Upshot. He has written stories on insurance, inequality, zoning, taxes, and other topics. He started his career in journalism at NPR's Planet Money after a stint at the Federal Reserve Board.

Bui will discuss with faculty how to share their work with the media (such as at The Upshot) and how to do it without diluting their ideas. He will also talk about which

ideas tend to play better to a general audience—more than you think!—and how visualizations can communicate those ideas compellingly.

Light refreshments served.

Sign up for What Scholars Can Learn From Data Journalism

Upcoming: Digital Fluencies 02: Algorithmic Racism

Please join us for lunch on Wednesday, May 9th, from 12 pm-1:30 pm in the CTLR Lounge for the second meeting in our <Digital Fluencies> Series. Sign up to receive link to PDFs of readings and so we know how much lunch to order, but feel free to attend last minute too.

Our second meeting focuses on Algorithmic Racism. We increasingly live in an algorithmic society, our everyday lives shaped by interactions with Google searches, social media platforms, artificial intelligence software, and myriad devices and programs that rely on the execution of computational algorithms. Algorithms at once bake into their equations the assumptions and biases of their human makers and also take on lives of their own, for we now even have computational algorithms developing other algorithms. But what are algorithms, exactly? And how have they turned out to reinforce or extend larger structures of racism, oppression, injustice, and misrepresentation? How might we develop better critical understanding of the computational algorithm when it comes to race? And how might we harness the power of algorithms for better ends in scholarship, teaching, inclusivity, freedom, and citizenship in the contemporary world? These are big questions. We will explore them through a few readings as well as a case study. Faculty, students, and staff at all levels are welcome to attend participate regardless of digital skills.

READINGS:

Safiya Umoja Noble, "Introduction: The Power of Algorithms," in *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), pdf provided after sign up

Navneet Alang, "Turns Out Algorithms Are Racist," *New Republic*, 31 August 2017

Zeynep Tufekci, "YouTube, the Great Radicalizer," *New York Times*, 10 March 2018

Virginia Eubanks, "The Digital Poorhouse," *Harper's*, January 2018

CASE STUDY:

Zeynep Tufekci, "What Happens to #Ferguson Affects Ferguson: Net Neutrality, Algorithmic Filtering and Ferguson," *The Message*, 14 August 2014

ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Benjamin Schmidt, "Do Digital Humanists Need to Understand Algorithms?," *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*

Benjamin Schmidt, "Why Digital Humanists don't need to understand algorithms, but do need to understand transformations," *Sapping Attention*, 20 July 2016

Yeshi Milner, "An Open Letter to Facebook from the Data for Black Lives Movement," *Medium*, 4 April 2018

What Is the <Digital Fluencies> Series?

The Digital Fluencies Series investigates what it means to develop critical awareness, engagement, and competency with digital technologies. Meetings usually combine 1-3 readings (a link to materials will be provided when necessary) and a case study for hands-on exploration. Faculty, students, and staff at all levels are welcome to attend participate regardless of digital skills. Upcoming topics include: Bots, Data, Platforms, Archives, Gender in Code, Open Access, Podcasting, Remix, Publishing and Peer Review, Animation, Glitching and Deformance Tactics, Memes, Web Design, the Template, Data Visualization, GIS and Spatial Data/Thinking, and User Experience. Feel free as well to suggest a topic as well. Co-sponsored by DLA, CTLR, Davis Library, and DLINQ. Organized by Leanne Galletly, User Experience & Digital Scholarship Librarian, and Michael J. Kramer, Assistant Professor of the Practice, Digital History/Humanities and Associate Director of the Digital Liberal Arts.

Sign up for Digital Fluencies 02: Algorithmic Racism

Project Spotlight: Florence Feiereisen and Erin Sassin Sound Out the Spaces of Berlin's Working-Class Life

In their digital project, DLA Fellow Florence Feiereisen (German Department) and colleague Erin Sassin (History of Art and Architecture) explore the soundscapes and architectural spaces of the working-class Meyershof building in Berlin, circa 1932. Read more about their project and hear a sample soundscape created by students in Erin Davis's Introduction to Podcasting course on the DLA website.

Read "Sounding Out the Spaces of Berlin's Working-Class Life"

If you have any questions about the DLA,
please contact us at dla@middlebury.edu.

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