DIGITAL HUMANITIES AUSTRALASIA 2014: 
*Expanding Horizons*

17-21 March, 2014, The University of Western Australia

The aim of DHA 2014 is to advance digital methods, tools and projects within humanities research and develop new critical perspectives. The conference will provide a supportive, interdisciplinary environment to explore and share new and advanced research within the digital humanities.

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The conference is being organised via the iVEC@UWA Facility.

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- iVEC@UWA
- Curtin University
- Edith Cowan University
- The University of Western Australia
- Perth Convention Centre, and
- The Australian Literature Westerly Centre.
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the question is the limitations of human resolving power: the human mind, is a powerful but highly limited research instrument. This is why researchers attempt to reduce complex problems to a model they can understand better or they take samples and then try to deduce predictions and assumptions. Although these tools offer some help and relief, they are imprecise, because the approach they take is a reduction of the complexity of a problem to something simpler, something we can understand. Given the intrinsic imprecision and limited nature of these tools, they cannot be the optimal approach to very complex problems.

Given that in recent times humanities is facing an explosion of research data, the question of how to research complex and abundant data is more important than ever. If we could invent an optical tool that helps to provide an overview of the whole complexity of the problem and if we learn to read the images and results of this tool properly, perhaps we can enhance human wisdom and understanding.

Katy Börner, inspired by the work and theories of Joël de Rosnay, provided a theoretical foundation for a new approach when writing her article ‘Plug-and-Play Macrosopes’: ‘Decision making in science, industry, and politics, as well as in daily life, requires that we make sense of data sets representing the structure and dynamics of complex systems. Analysis, navigation, and management of these continuously evolving data sets require a new kind of data-analysis and visualization tool we call a macroscope [...].’

Börner hopes that such a new tool will help explore the ‘infinitely complex’. Science and even more so the humanities, are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and data driven, and given the complex and fuzzy state of linguistic or historic data for example, there is certainly a need to apply such a macroscopic tool. In this paper I will present a small survey or selection of worldwide projects that research and visualise very complex data in the humanities, while I focus in particular on Social Network Analysis in a historical context. In conclusion I shall suggest some guidelines for constructing or working with a macroscope.

(Digital) Bread and Circuses: Reframing Ancient Spectacle for Different Screens
Anna Foka
HUMlab, The University of Umeå, Sweden, Sweden
It is commonplace that screen-based communication – i.e. TV, cinema, computer screens and ubiquitous devices is continuously mediating cultures (Galloway 2004, Giaccardi et al. 2012). Digital reconstruction is the process of graphically representing ideas and objects (Wileman: 1993). This process, however, requires a conceptual picture to be transferred to in a graphical medium. This paper focuses on the potentials of a conceptual digital construction of a Roman Amphitheatre for multiple screens. I argue that while current ‘historically accurate’ digital depictions of Roman amphitheatres are limited to lifeless and sanitized aerial 3D models, a more innovative, multisensory and participatory reconstruction of entertainment sites for multiple screens can elucidate our understanding of historically and geographically remote social and cultural concepts.

I propose new methodological tools for generating discourses that add layers of understanding to our contemporary knowledge of the Roman spectacle. A participatory (embodied- tangible computing) and multisensory (sound and vision) digital recreation of a Roman amphitheatre (along the lines of Betts: 2009, Drucker: 2009, and Favro: 2006) can engineer deeper and constructive analyses of the dynamics and systemic operations regarding [ancient and current] popular entertainment. It can generate questions about the cultural and
emotional context of ancient spectacle as well as the potentials and limitations set by our current technological grasp. It can further be applicable in research and education in order to anchor both ‘traditional’ research questions, as well as the importance of multiplicity within institutional material infrastructure.

9.2: Digital Editions & Editing
Location: Seminar Room 1

Presentations

Stable, sharable, referable, reusable digital scholarly editions (DSEs): future or fairytale?
Desmond Schmidt
University of Queensland, Australia

Scholarly editions have been around at least since the Alexandrian variorum editions and commentaries of the first century AD. And the modern scholarly edition has not changed so much in function or form from that early model. But how can such editions continue to be built in a digital world? Have the problems inherent in digital presentation and in the modelling of scholarly interaction with the text been solved to the same degree as in the print scholarly edition? Can such editions be created using general tools at low cost, that are stable and can be referred to, that earn money to sustain them, that can be easily repurposed, read, shared and published for the long term in a digital library? The uncomfortable truth is, none of these desirable things are currently possible.

Commercial formats like the eBook, scanned and OCR-ed copies of old books on Google, digital copies of open texts on Project Gutenberg can be downloaded or viewed online. Digital humanists have been outdone by the easy availability of such forms of digital edition, while their own efforts can still be characterised mostly as experimental. So why not simply allow industry and commerce to supply the technology to create the DSE? The problem is that the forms of data with which scholars work - the text of the edition itself - and the kinds of interaction needed cannot be easily recreated using industrial tools. Some of the work at least must be done by digital humanists themselves because they are the only people who truly understand what needs to be done.

But in working out exactly what an interoperable and sharable DSE might look like in the future one approach may simply be to eliminate possibilities. Firstly, a sharable and stable DSE cannot be composed of computer code. This seems to be impossible because sharing would require the establishment of an international standard for a functional interface to something that is in constant flux. Secondly, a sharable DSE must supply coherent, readable texts without embedded markup codes, at least in one of its forms. The possibilities for interpretative choice of different ways to encode the same information, and the selection of which information to record are so great that it is now generally recognised such texts can never be standardised. Thirdly, a DSE cannot be a collection of views because the future possibilities for visualising texts are practically endless, and depend on software. All that is left for a stable DSE to be is thus a disposition of raw data, a file structure, that facilitates the basic functions of the scholarly edition: comparison, commentary, cataloguing and referring, markup and structure. However, technology can never be completely banished from such a simple model: even the concepts of file, directory and digital text are technologies in themselves. One approach,