Interdisciplinarity in the Digital Humanities and Social Sciences

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Future Education
Belgrade
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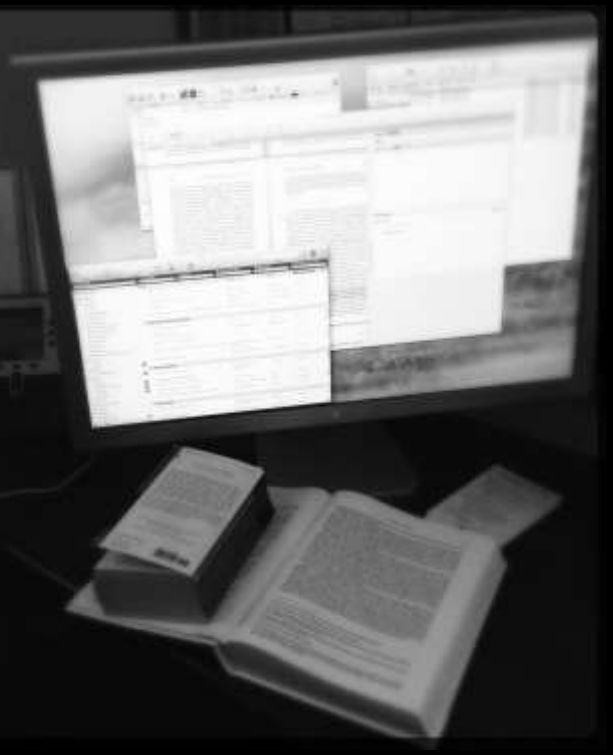


“I went to sleep one day a cultural critic and woke the next metamorphosed into a data processor.

Alan Liu, 2004

2010-ongoing

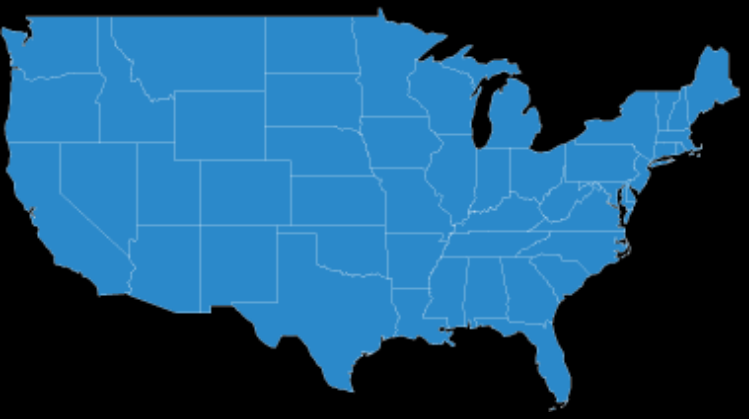
Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences

University of Amsterdam

University of Oxford

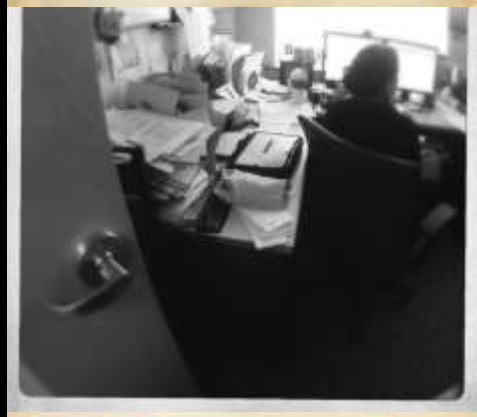
The Pennsylvania State University

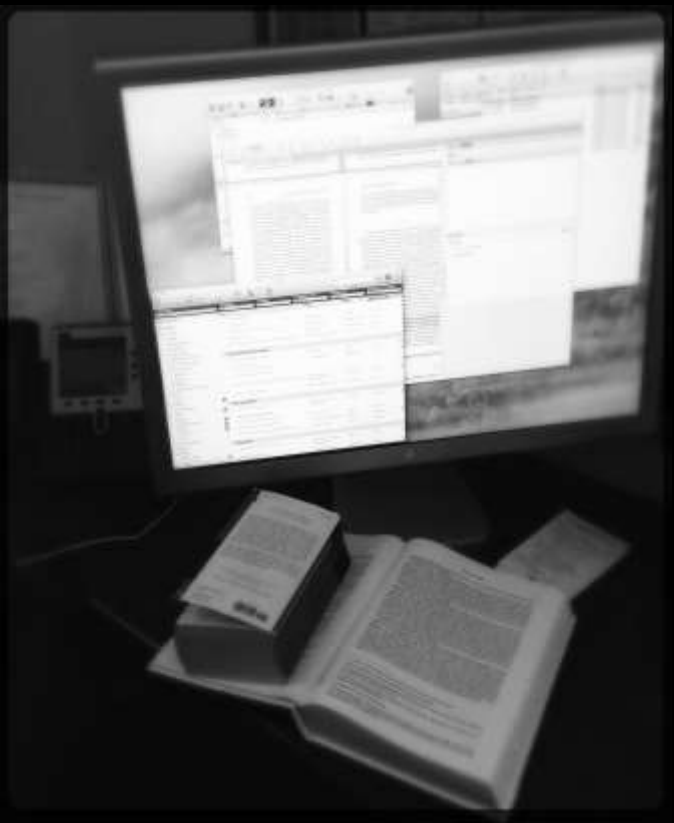
Illinois Institute of Technology



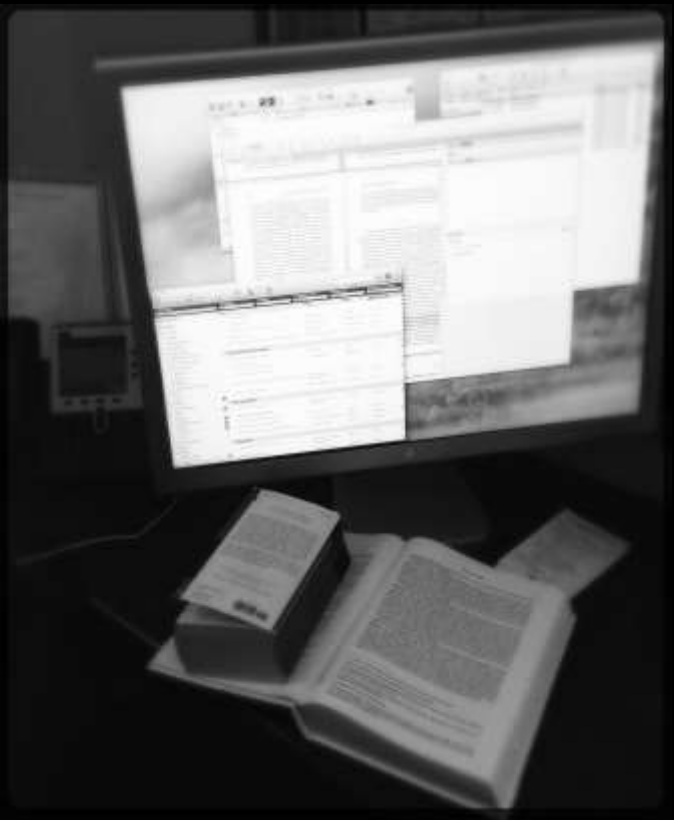
- 23 institutions, USA and Europe; 258 participants
- Researchers; programmers; administrators; librarians; funders
- Interviews, case studies, observations, surveys
- Sciences; social sciences; humanities
- Theoretical and action-oriented work

Building interdisciplinary digital research capacity



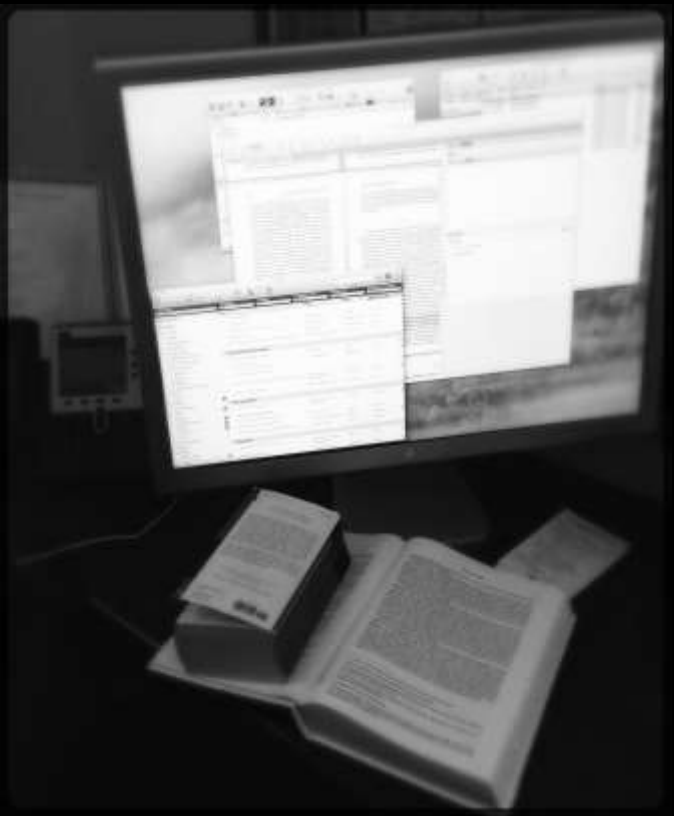


Knowledge capacity



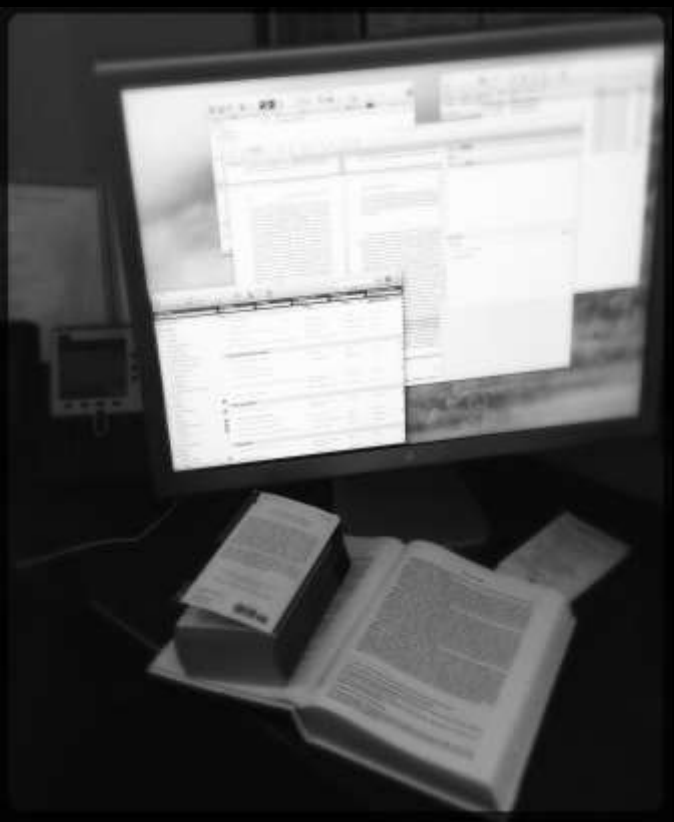
“ I ask around, it’s just like word of mouth, I sort of bump into it, or a colleague will shoot me an e-mail. It’s not organized or strategic at all.

Associate professor of Linguistics

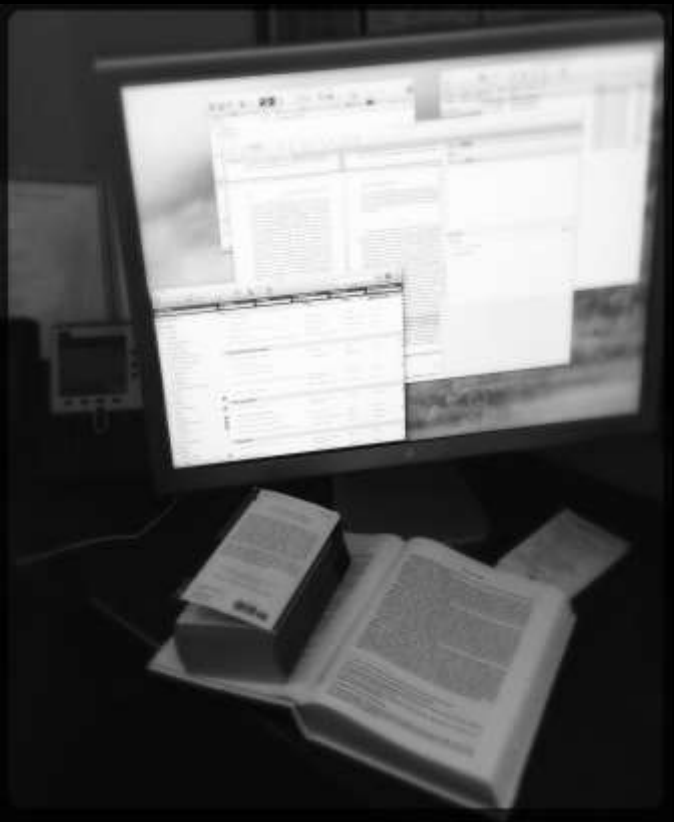


“I haven’t used technology in my research in a pervasive way to really, really think about epistemological issues. I’m not opposed to using technology to analyze, but I haven’t had a chance to learn it.

Assistant Professor of Sociology

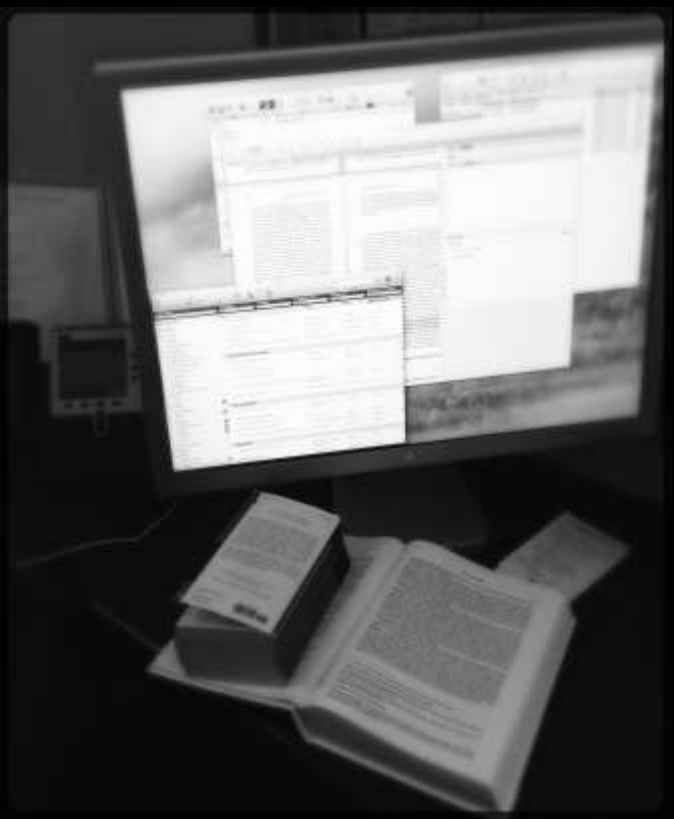


- Impediment 1: structure of disciplinary incentives and rewards.

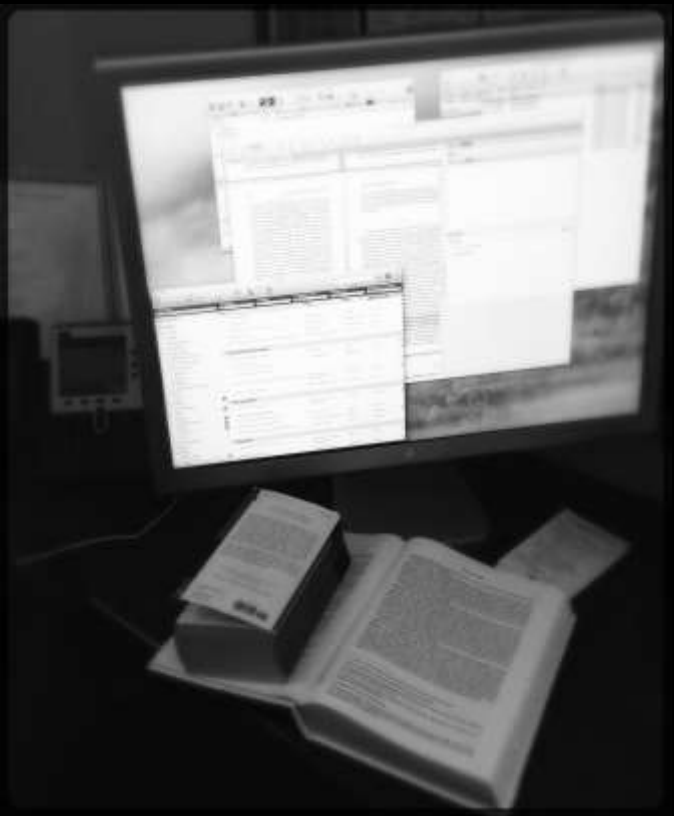


“We’re not rewarded for doing that. What we’re rewarded for is publishing, and going to one of those sessions takes away time from our publishing. So, there’s a lot of resistance.

Assistant Professor of Art History



- Impediment 2: digital scholarship outside central disciplinary workflows, treated as a set of technical skills.



“That’s really a big question for us, figuring out what kind of services we want to offer to get scholars to use this. We’re not sure what’s going to happen on the first day when we open the doors. Are people going to come in, sit down and check e-mail?

Director of a DH center

Humanists and social scientists favor and best learn in practice, when instruction is closely integrated to their area of study, and when it unfolds organically, through collaboration with colleagues.

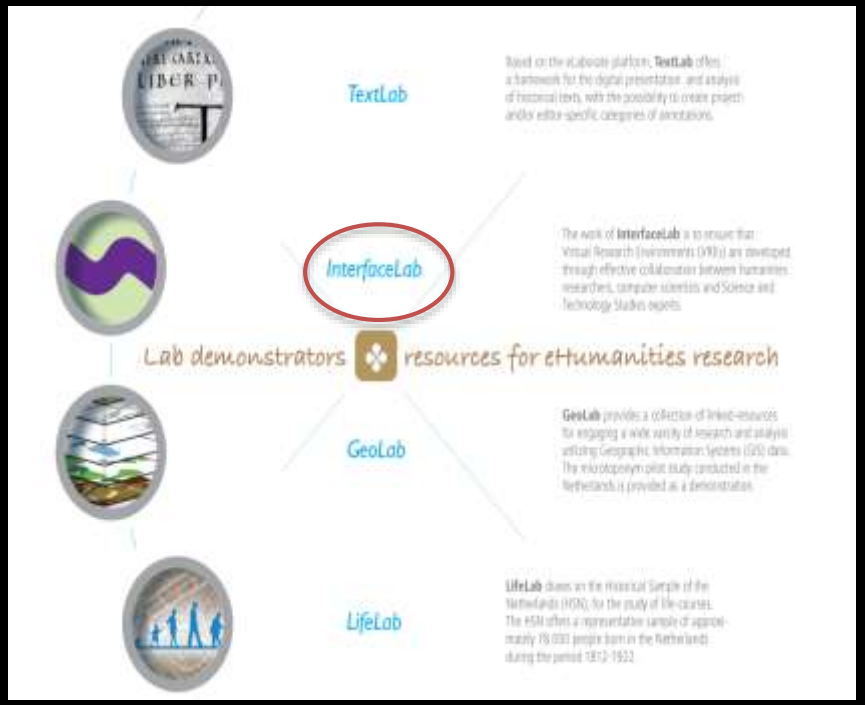
Alfalab.Portal

Alfalab

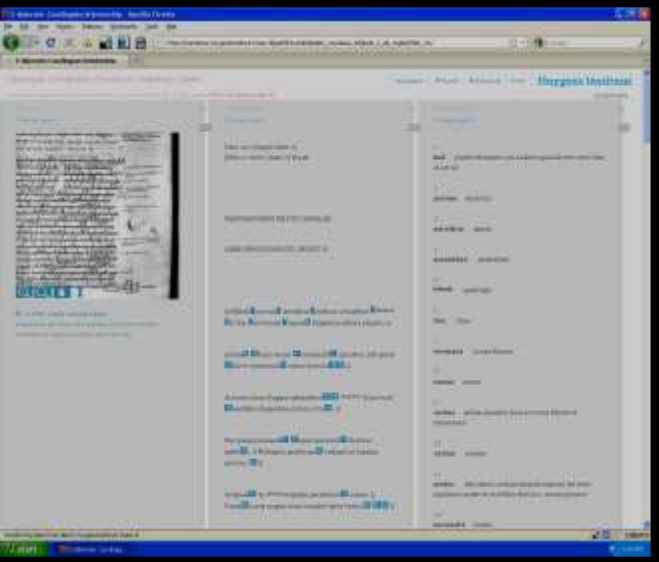
Integrating knowlegde, experience, data, tools

Integrating humanities

Search for: Search



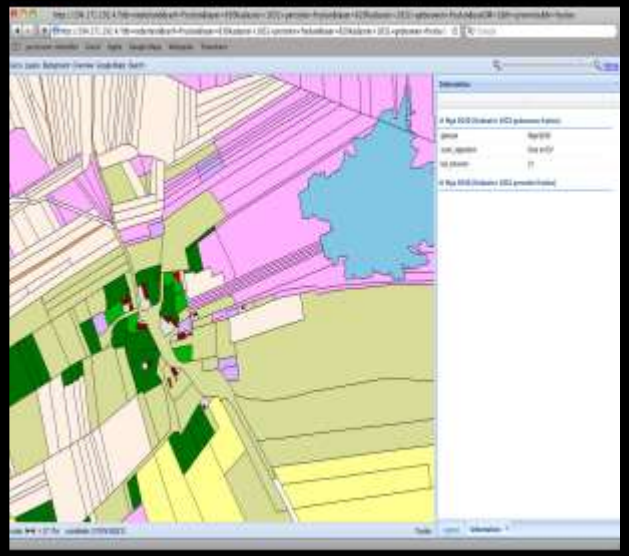
- Six institutes of the Dutch Royal Academy
- ‘Traditional’ and digital HSS; IT specialists.
- Establishing research network for digital HSS.
- Developing a set of prototype tools for research in the HSS.



Text Lab

Named entity recognition.

Transcription and annotation of textual sources.



Geo Lab

Historical GIS.

Web-based map annotation.

Life Lab

Portal for historical population counts.

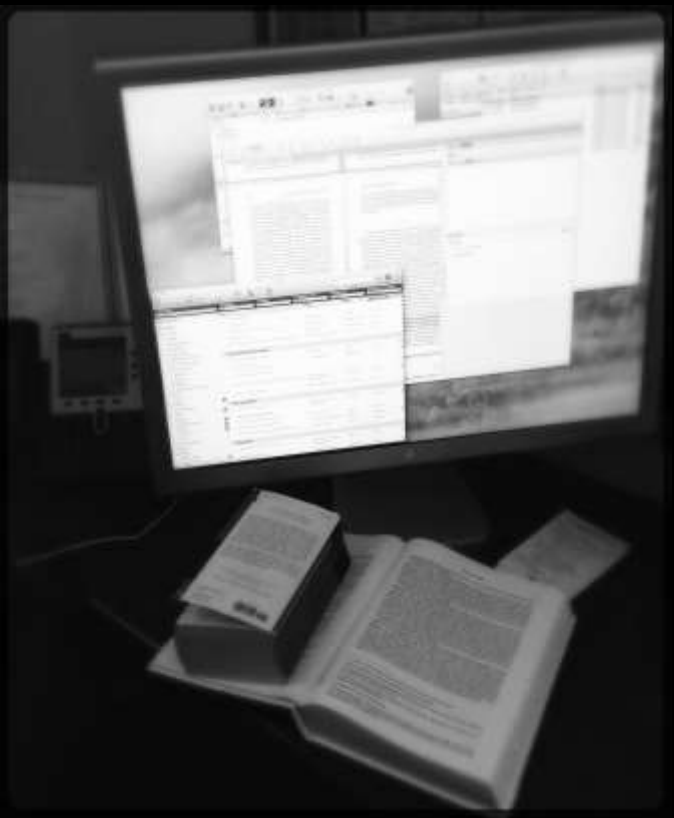
Open and easy access to the data of the Historical Sample of the Netherlands.

- Creating a safe space for learning and exploration.
- Identifying and deliberating epistemological and methodological transformations.
- Understanding challenges encountered interdisciplinary practice.
- Facilitating researchers' sensibility to new ways of working and approaching objects of inquiry.

Prof. Dr. Mariken Teeuwen, Senior researcher in Intellectual Culture

- Articulating discipline-specific research needs that inform the tool design process.
- User-centered approach throughout the development cycle.
- Collaborative outputs; developing common vocabulary.

Maarten Hoogerwerf, Senior information specialist



Technical capacity

Digital scholarship is not merely supported by technology, but constituted through it, as research tools shape both the object of inquiry and the way(s) of knowing it. Thus, scholars' involvement in digital research tool development is a profound question concerning the kinds of research practices and ways of knowing that digital tools enable and promote. It is the question about the configuration of technology that shapes both *how* we can know and *what* we can know.

Influence on tool development

> We seem to have no influence at all, because no one talks to us, or asks us, or listens to us.
>
> Professor of History

Influence on tool development

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Professor of History

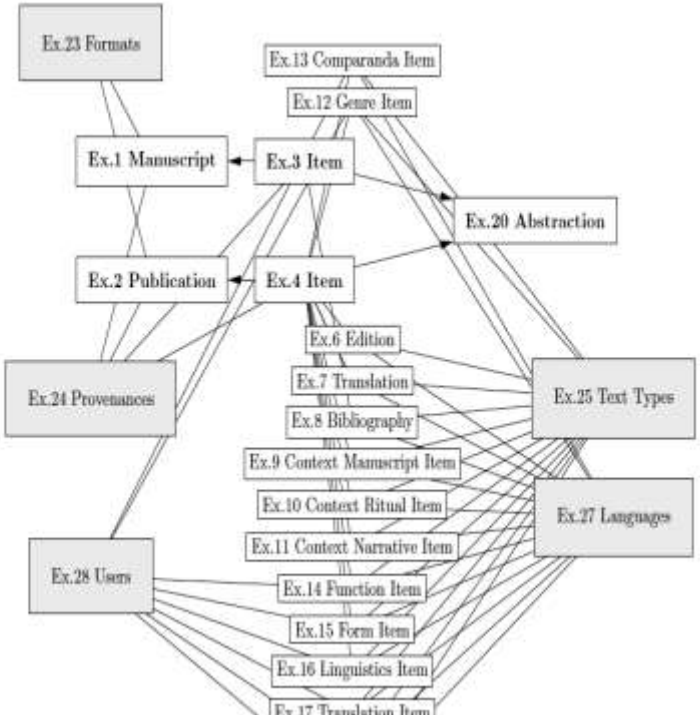
> Humanities scholars lack a frame within which to say what they might expect, or what they might want, in a way that would help the design process.

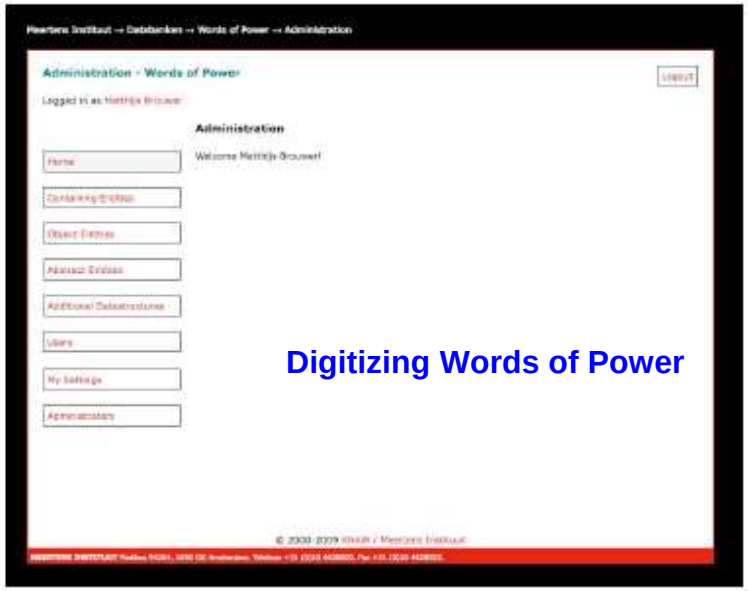
Software developer

Influence on tool development

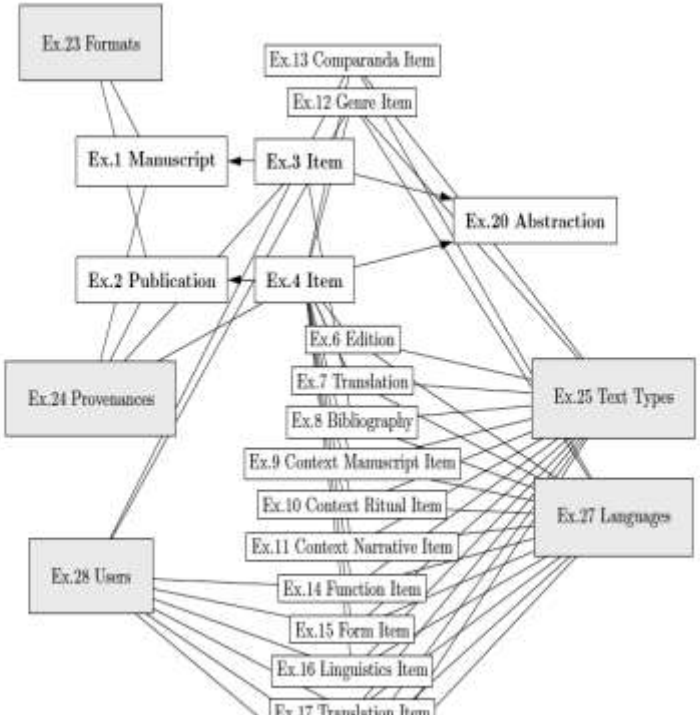
“ Unless humanists and social scientists take seriously the value of their own contributions and perspectives on the nature of knowledge, digital tools and resources will be built without the HSS values. It’s not *why* do the HSS matter, but *how* do they matter that we need to put forward.

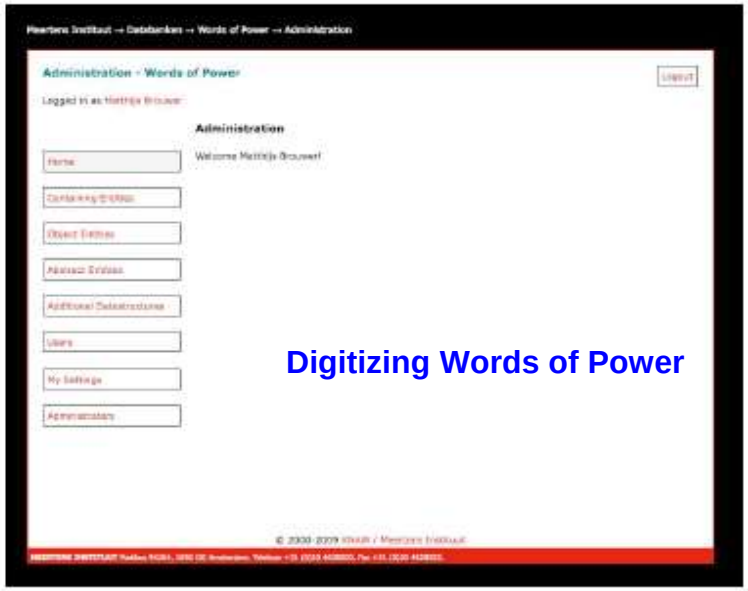
Professor of Bibliographic Studies



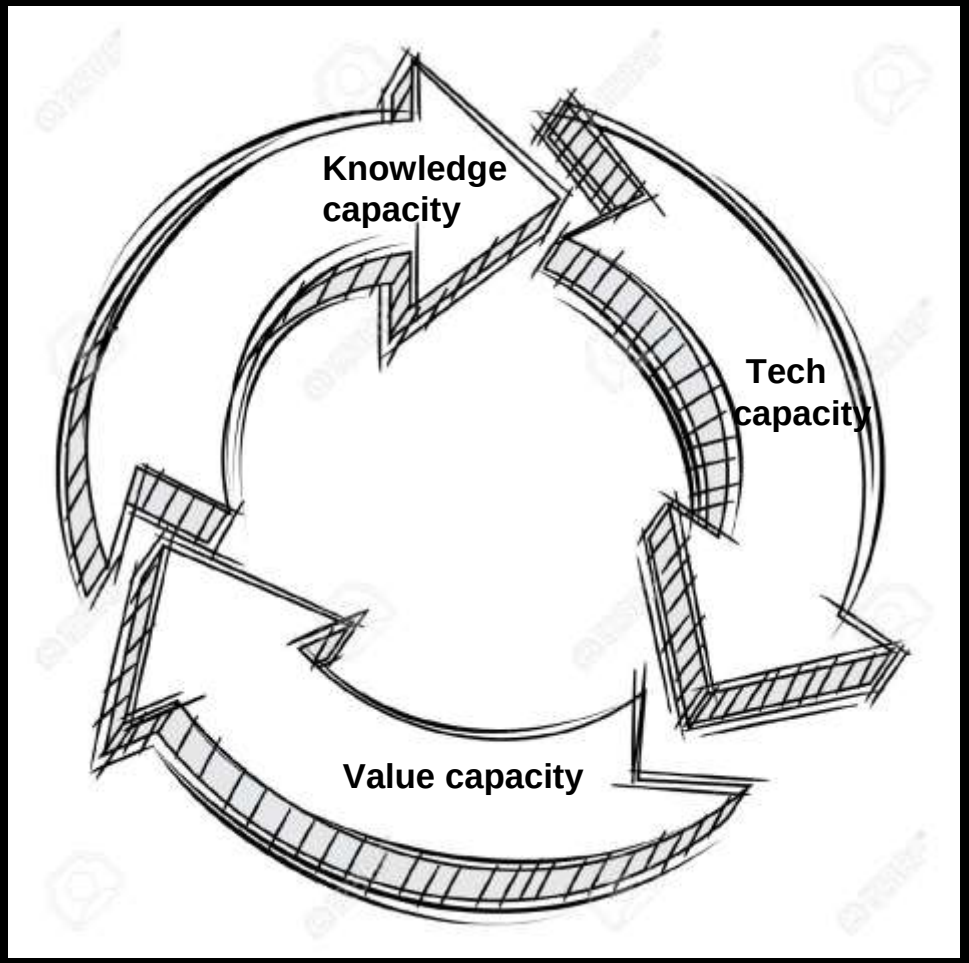


- *The Power of Words in Traditional European Cultures*; charting the history and cultural continuity of the power of words; 9 teams (Netherlands, UK, Russia, Finland)
- Portal for interdisciplinary and multilingual study of ‘words of power’.
- Textual and audio-visual corpora; content & tools; philologist, historians of religion, anthropologists, computer scientists, STS.





- More than simply “digitize.”
- How digitized sources would be used in research; a digital resource shaped by research practices, reflecting humanists’ ways of working.
- Humanistic and technological aspects integrated throughout the product development cycle.


Knowledge capacity
Tech capacity
Value capacity

Thank you

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