



What to do with a million books? The challenge of scalable reading.

Knowledge production in the humanities has long been based on the hermeneutic tradition of “close reading”: the careful study, contextualization and interpretation of archival sources and published texts. With the mass digitization of both archival and library collections, scholars are confronted with an abundance of retro-digitized material, asking for new heuristic practices of information retrieval, data management, and visualization of empirical evidence from the past. To cope with the “big data of the past” and to make sense of it in a tradition of critical hermeneutics, a new cultural practice of “reading” is needed, combining the machine-based exploration of large quantities of information with close reading practices based on subjective interpretation. How to acquire and develop this new art of scalable reading as a central element for future knowledge production is at the heart of this talk.

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