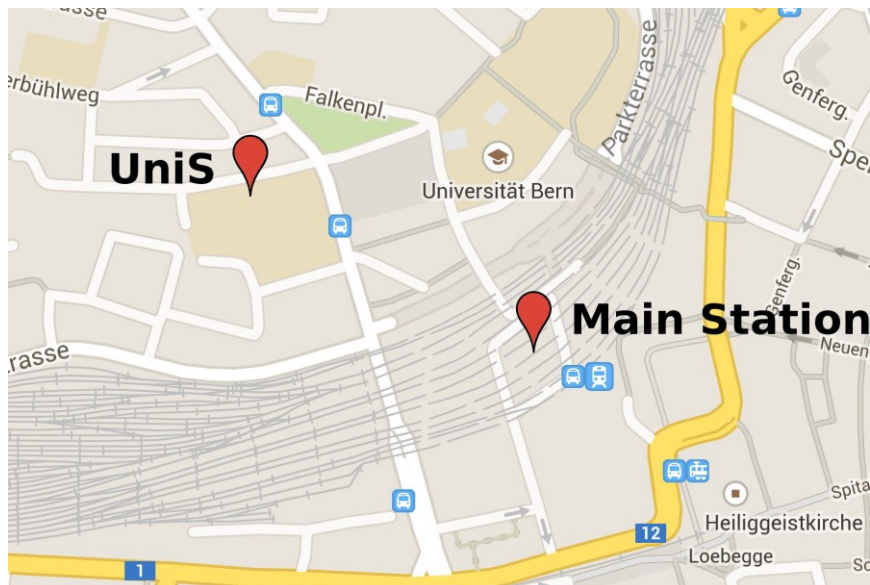# Software in Scholarship, Scholarship in Software

29–30 January 2015
Universität Bern, UniS room A201

Programme – 30 January 2015: Roundtable on Peer Review for Digital Scholarly Work

09:00 – Welcome

09:10 - 10:40 – Position papers (max. 15 min. each)

10:40 - 11:00 – Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 – Collective Discussion on specific issues

13:00 – Lunch for all roundtable participants

Participants (in alphabetical order)

- JAMES BAKER, Digital Research Team, British Library – *Stepping back - playing as research*
- CLAIRE CLIVAZ, Laboratoire des cultures et humanités digitales, Université de Lausanne – *Reshaping the peer-review process: heretic remarks in a digital time*
- SETH DEMBO, Director of Scholarly Communication and Digital Initiatives, American Historical Association – *AHA's Ad Hoc Committee on Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians*
- INGRID KISSLING, Head of the Humanities and Social Sciences division, Swiss National Science Foundation – *Peer review under revision - The digital challenge for funding agencies*
- EUGENE LYMAN, University of Boston – *Publishing digital projects reviews: practical suggestions*
- NICOLAS THÉLY, Professor for Digital Humanities, Université de Rennes 2 – *Toward an evaluation grid for Digital Humanities projects*
- PHILIP STEINKRÜGER, Editor of RIDE (Review Journal for digital editions and resources); KU Leuven and Institute for Documentology and Digital Editing (IDE) – *Toward a catalogue of criteria for the review of digital editions*
- SACHA ZALA, Director of the Swiss Historical Association & director of the Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland – *Some dogmatic postulates for the digital historical sciences*
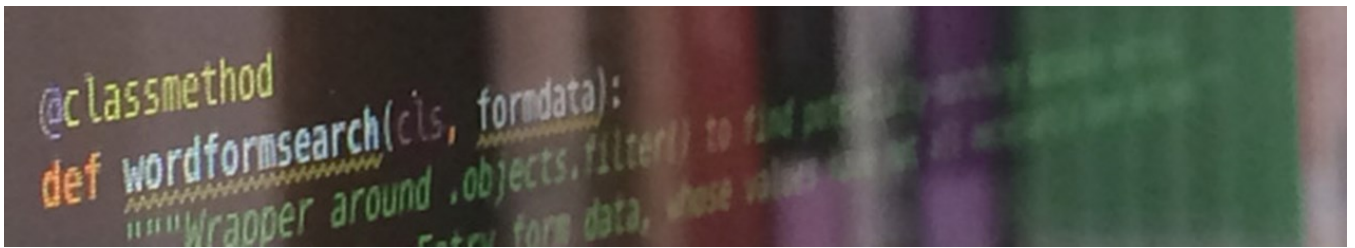
Roundtable Abstracts
30 January 2015

Stepping back – Playing as Research

By James Baker

According to the Software Sustainability Institute, systems of credit for good software development and reuse practice are fundamental to high quality and innovative research in the digital age. These systems of credit must exist before peer review. For to advance humanities research in an era of rapid growth and diversification of digitised and born-digital research data, key stakeholders in the arts and humanities must ascribe the same value to the development of and experimentation with research software and digital scholarly work as they do to traditional practices such as literature surveys, source critique, and written publications. This is a step back from the peer review of digital scholarly work, but - I argue - that acceptance by key stakeholders of a research practice that includes playing with software is a pre-requisite for widespread, enduring, and embedded acceptance by the arts and humanities research community of the necessary evolution to peer review that this round table seeks to address.

Reshaping the Peer-Review Process: Heretic Remarks in a Digital Time

By Claire Clivaz

In her 2009 book *Planned Obsolesence*, Kathleen Fitzpatrick has challenged the usual notion of peer-review, arguing that the "peer review threatens to become the axle around which the whole issue of electronic scholarly publishing gets wrapped" (2009: 10). She underlined the collapsing of authority structures, and predicted that the peer-review would become a step post-publication, rather to stay a pre-publication one. She was also claiming for developing "the ability to respond to video with video; if we can move seamlessly from audio files to images to text as means of representing music, it may behoove us to think about exactly what it is we're producing when we write, how it is that these different modes of communication come together in complex document forms. […]". (2009:27). Developing this precursor remarks, this paper position will underline the impossibility to maintain a blind peer-review process for Humanities in a digital culture, and explore some ways to offer a post-publication peer-review process. Peer-review and certification are really among the most important issues in the digital edition shift. It matters all the more to explore them, that the economic events are precipitating the evolution of the situation, with the recent bankrupt of Swets, for example.

AHA's Ad Hoc Committee on Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians

By Seth Dembo

For over a century, historians have built professional reputations through print publications, but now the means for dissemination of ideas are changing. We are communicating our ideas in a multitude of ways, many of which did not exist even a decade ago. Many scholars are using digital tools in the classroom, to analyze data, and to publish their research. The American Historical Association (AHA) seeks to respond in creative and responsible ways to these exciting developments in digital scholarship.

As a discipline we must be open to the possibilities that the digital environment affords. To do so we need a more capacious definition of publication and a conception of scholarship that allows departments to understand and evaluate a multitude of forms. This will require us to devise ways of evaluating scholarship that can adapt to unforeseeable technological, social, and institutional changes.

The AHA has established a Committee on the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians to help departments effectively integrate the evaluation of digital work into the assessments required for professional advancement. This talk will report on the activities of that committee, look at the draft guidelines, and discuss plans for the future.

Peer Review under Revision – The Digital Challenge for Funding Agencies

By Ingrid Kissling

A reasonable number of scientific studies on peer review of articles submitted to journals are available, but only few such studies exist on the effects of the peer review process of grant proposals.

The ongoing developments in Digital Humanities regarding tools and methods along with the changing outputs of research (Digital Editions, data visualization etc.) affect criteria and benchmarks for the evaluation of digital scholarly work.

This contribution gives an overview of the ongoing developments concerning the promotion of DH in Switzerland (Call for editions and infrastructure, multi-year-planning), on the pros and cons of the current peer review process and on the evaluation of output data by the SNSF (DORA declaration). Eventually, we will discuss first ideas on how the peer review process for grant proposals (non-peers participating, applicants evaluate competing grant, double-blind review etc.) and the assessment of output data could be adapted.

Publishing Digital Project Reviews: Practical Suggestions

By Eugene Lyman

My contribution to the discussion of the evaluation of digital scholarly work will focus on cases where software is intimately entwined with a project's status as scholarship – that is, cases where software itself may legitimately lay claim scholarly status.   At present there are several venues where the legitimacy of this claim, and accompanying academic recognition for the software's creators, should be asserted.   Among them, perhaps the most fruitful as a means of "institutionalizing" software's status a form of scholarship would be the establishment of a lively tradition of published critical reviews having scholarly software as their principal focus of attention.

At present, one typically encounters passing mention of the software associated with digital projects in reviews geared toward the evaluation of the results of such undertakings considered apart from the technologies bound up in their production. Sadly, the ad hoc character of such comments, together with what is often a lack of appropriate technical expertise on the part of those offering them, substitute for the serious scrutiny that might be carried out within the context of an ongoing dialogue based on a widespread recognition of the role that the vigilant critical vetting of such software could play in advancing digital scholarly work. The development of a robust critical discourse embodied in pointed published reviews would (1) drive the continuous improvement of the quality of such software, (2) be an important step toward appropriate academic recognition of those who create it (a role that published reviews play for scholars involved in more traditional scholarly endeavors) , and (3) serve to further acquaint the scholarly community, including, but not limited to, those associated with digital humanities projects, to the foundational role that can be played by well-conceived, well executed software.

My participation in the discussion will include practical suggestions as to how such a discourse of published critical reviews might be initiated. The situation calls for a strategy that will seek to bootstrap a workable solution to the critical void that now exists. As a means of lending substance to my remarks, I will draw illustrations from "reviews" of scholarly software that I have created for the display and exploration of documentary editions of medieval manuscripts.

Vers une grille d'évaluation des projets scientifiques en humanités numériques

By Nicolas Thély

De Nantes à Rennes en passant par Lorient et Brest, les projets se réclamant des humanités numériques se sont multipliés ces deux dernières années dans la région Bretagne. Ces projets concernent des recherches historiques, littéraires, artistiques, géographiques, etc. Toutefois, dans les campagnes de recherche de financement comme dans les réponses aux appels à publication, les porteurs de projet se sont souvent heurtés à de nombreuses reprises à des retours plaçant leurs recherches à l'écart ou en deçà des attendus habituels ("projet pas assez orienté usages numériques", "projet trop numérique", etc.) révélant ainsi une sorte d'incompréhension ou les limites de compétences de certains rapporteurs. De fait, la question des critères d'évaluation s'est rapidement posée. C'est pourquoi un groupe de chercheurs s'est constitué en vue de contribuer à la clarification des critères d'évaluations possible d'un projet scientifique en humanités numériques. Pour ce faire, un séminaire a vu le jour et sera l'occasion de présenter 12 projets (abouti, en cours ou en émergence) à partir d'une grille de questions portant sur les aspects scientifiques, épistémologiques, méthodologiques, informatiques, humains, etc. A partir des réponses apportées, le groupe de chercheurs en humanités numériques entreprendra au mois d'avril un travail d'analyse en vue de proposer une grille d'évaluation des projets en humanités numériques.

Le questionnaire est consultable à l'adresse suivante :

http://piratepad.net/rQ8rpAYTtR

http://www.mshb.fr/accueil/agenda/16_3337/seminaires_humanites_numeriques_mshb

Toward a Catalogue of Criteria for the Review of Digital Editions

By Philip Steinkrüger

RIDE is a new journal for the review of digital editions published by the Institut für Dokumentologie und Editorik (hence the acronym). Its central aim is to establish a place where digital editions can receive the attention and criticism they deserve.

Digital editions in the strict sense (which we distinguish from merely digitized editions that could be published in print without any significant loss of functionality) are nowadays usually very complex projects with a number of contributors and numerous technical features. Reviewers should try to appreciate these projects as unitary intellectual achievements that, ideally, are of such a nature that they cannot be appropriately received if they their 'content' and their 'technical framework' are separated. In order to handle this complexity, we established a catalogue of criteria for the review of digital editions. These criteria fulfill a double role: they prompt reviewers to consider many features digital editions might incorporate in order to achieve their aims; and they form the basis of a formal questionnaire of currently 50 questions which accompanies each review. In this way, the reviewers can gear their texts towards answering the essential questions the edition poses while the many potentially no less important information that are difficult to incorporate in a written review – such as the role different members played in the project – are available via the formal questionnaire. Moreover, since RIDE reviews require authors that understand both the respective subjects of the editions they review as well as an indepth understanding of the technical solutions, we subject each review to a blind peerreviewing process to ensure that both aspects are sufficiently covered and their interrelation appropriately presented.

Some Dogmatic Postulates for the Digital Historical Sciences

By Sach Zala

Historiography—the history of the historical sciences—has shown that the discipline is able to develop further. Considering only the last 50 years, it is for example the emergence of economic and social history, or a cultural studies approach to history that has proven to be extremely fruitful for the discipline. Furthermore, several «turns» have widened the focus of historical research. Consequently, the digital sciences of history should be confident in the knowledge that also their findings will speak for themselves and will be assessed in a convincing manner.

However, two things seem to be of little help for the future of an open and digital historical science: Firstly, the artificial construction of a fundamental contrast of digital versus analog instead of a constructive combination of digital and analog. Secondly, too rigid standards and evaluation criteria both for digital as well as analog aspects of our research. It should be considered that in Swiss and generally in the German-speaking historical sciences, evaluation criteria are still designed much more flexibly than for example in Anglo-American areas.

Therefore, openness and replicability should be central to the digital historical sciences.

In concrete terms, I advocate the three following postulates:

1. Open Data: Memory-Preserving actors (in particular state agencies) must provide digital sources as open data in order to allow free search algorithms. Data gathered in digital research processes must be accessible to the scientific community for further use.
2. Open Access: Memory-Preserving actors (in particular state agencies) must provide free access to digital sources. The digital historical sciences can act as a role model by consequently supporting free access to research findings.
3. Open Source: (Software-)Tools developed for historians and their source code must be freely accessible in order to guarantee replicability of findings (no secret algorithms).
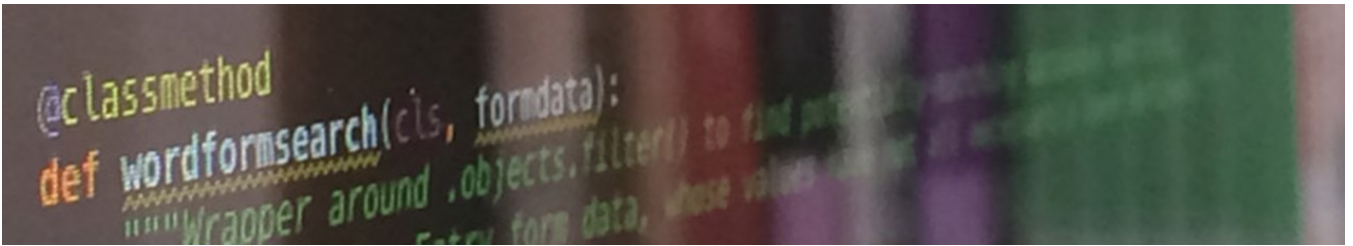
Organised by:

Tara L Andrews
Assistant Professor for Digital Humanities, University of Bern
Enrico Natale
Director infoclio.ch