

THATCamp Luxembourg/Trier 2012

The Humanities and Technology Camp Luxembourg/Trier 2012,
organised by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE)
and the Trier Center for Digital Humanities (University of Trier)
Abbaye de Neumünster, Luxembourg, 22. bis 23. März 2012

THATCamp is a highly collaborative, spontaneous and productive unconference. People from different disciplines and professions come together to exchange their experiences and develop new approaches to the Digital Humanities. The programme is almost entirely created by the participants during the first day. Sessions can be used to generate ideas, or discuss and solve problems.

Forty-nine participants from Luxembourg, Germany, France, the USA, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK attended THATCamp Luxembourg/Trier 2012. Working for different institutions such as universities, libraries, archives, museums or design studios, the participants had in common a field of work connecting the humanities and technology. The diversity of their backgrounds (e. g. computer scientists, humanists, designers, sociologists, pedagogues, natural scientists, students) enriched every workshop and discussion, and gave the participants the opportunity to deal with topics beyond their usual perspective.

For more information and blogs about THATCamp Luxembourg/Trier 2012 see
<http://luxembourg2012.thatcamp.org/>.

The workshops

The workshop “Digital Literacy for Historians” was chaired by *Enrico Natale*. The first goal was to give information about browsers and add-ons to create a personal research environment. Then different possibilities to stay up to date like RSS feeds and Twitter were proposed. This gave rise to a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of Twitter. Finally, the lecturer gave a short introduction to online search portals relevant for historians, such as, OAIster.

Isabelle Jouve provided the workshop “Friendly ways to reach a broader audience: mediating museum content with digital media”. The focus was on creating quizzes, identifying problems related to museum content and catching the audience’s interest by using digital media.

An “Introduction to Zotero” was hosted by *Frédéric Clavert*, who explained the advantages of this program in a very practical way. Zotero allows users to automatically extract and generate bibliographical references from sources such as books, articles, web pages and PDFs. Libraries of these can be built and shared with others online.

In “From rights clearance to online availability” *Patrick Peiffer* spoke about “The Europeana Licensing Framework” – a collection of metadata with special guidelines and standards – and discussed problems of rights clearance for online publishing.

Julianne Nyhan and *Stefan Büdenbender* gave a paper on TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) and, as a basis for that, a short introduction to XML in general. Special attention was paid to the methods of digitisation of texts at the Trier Center for Digital Humanities.

Another workshop on Thursday was hosted by *Lars Wieneke*: “The Hacking Humanist: A modest introduction into Python”. Using “Pythonanywhere”, this session gave a brief introduction to Python, including the use of the shell, and handling variables, functions and objects. Furthermore, participants were shown how to use modules, and, as a practical example, a Twitter message was analysed.

On Friday, *Amanda Shuman* and *Fien Danniau* led a discussion on “Training the next generation of digital humanists”. This led to a broader discussion of what “Digital Humanities” actually is and what should simply be considered “teaching with technology”. *Julianne Nyhan* has since blogged about this discussion here: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dh-blog/2012/03/26/reflections-on-thatcamp-luxembourg-trier-2012/>.

At the same time, *Frédéric Clavert* provided a workshop on “Website API’s”, which asked how Digital Humanities can benefit from API’s. One considerable advantage of API’s is that they can be used to connect numerous kinds of digital resources, thereby allowing a dynamic aggregation of a dispersed dataset to be automatically built and displayed. Thus, API’s have the potential to connect Digital Humanities projects more “densely”. In turn, this can simplify the aggregation of digital resources, in some cases accelerating the initial stages of research projects.

Under the direction of *Pascal Föhr*, the question “Can we use websites as sources?” was discussed. A conclusion of the discussion was that one cannot generally treat websites as authoritative sources, but there are ways to make websites more trustworthy. Many people who create online data are not aware that they are creating historical sources, e. g. people who write on Wikipedia or Twitter. So, how to make websites more trustworthy? First, websites can be made usable as a source by adding metadata. Moreover, there are ways to make sure that documents will not get changed once published online. Trustworthiness can also be achieved by making it clear when a document has been changed, e.g. by allocating version numbers. Building up (an) archive(s) of the internet as a source is a problem because the internet develops dynamically, which makes it difficult to stabilise archived data.

The workshop “Visualisation & Design” was hosted by *Ghislain Sillaume* and *Isabelle Jouve*. The brainstorming and discussion dealt with the question of how open tools can be used for visualisation. Which tools are freely available, what can they support, and what is the research effect of such tools? Is visualisation a part of research or plain presentation?

“From the newspaper to the iPad app” was the title of a workshop led by *Yves Maurer*. He showed sensible ways to manage the workflow of digitising printed media. From modelling the respective objects, scanning and implementing a search engine to presenting the digitised contents on the web, Mr Maurer hinted at problematic issues and their possible solutions. Finally, the participants discussed questions of user contribution (correction of OCR mistakes, comments on the data, annotation of contents).

The workshop “Finding and Organising Digital Sources” was hosted by *Serge Noiret* and *Gerben Zaagsma*. A goal of this session was to analyse the course of one’s own searching process. Then, different possibilities to get online primary historical sources were introduced, especially “BASE” and “European History Primary Sources”.

Sean Tudor provided a discussion of “Presenting digital collections online”, showing good and bad examples of digital museum collections in order to fathom collaboratively how an online collection should be.

At the same time, there was an active discussion about “How to build a multilingual, widely open, European Digital Humanities organisation”, led by *Marin Dacos*. At the centre of attention was the aspect of multilingualism and that English should not be the only acceptable language in scientific discourse.

Marc Tebeau chaired a workshop entitled “Conceptualising Mobile”. Considering that mobile access to the internet represents a paradigmatic change in the way we perceive and access the world, he led the audience into a discussion of how this change will transform the humanities in terms of professional self-understanding and methodologies, but mostly in terms of how it presents results to the public. Issues discussed during the workshop included personalisation, participation, commercial or open access, open source/crowd sourcing, convenient visualisation, and playful applications.

A presentation of the “Rousseau Online” project was held by *Enrico Natale*, asking the audience for advice on technical matters. *Stefan Büdenbender* replied by introducing the “Christian-Dietrich-Grabbe-Portal” and explaining the advantages of XML tagging.

The workshop “Digital Preservation” was led by *Armin Straube* and *Sean Tudor*. Participants discussed how to archive digital objects in order to make them available as historical sources in the long term. It was emphasised that there is no need to preserve all properties of digital objects – only the ones that are necessary to make them valuable as historical sources. Tools for archiving should be open source, and new approaches need to be based on well established and documented standards.

One of the last workshops, called “Web analytics/Altmetrics/Search engine optimisation”, was hosted by *Sascha Kaufmann*. Primarily, the participants broached the issue of web analytics, but different ways to use generated statistics were also subjects of theoretical questions.

Detailed notes on every workshop can be seen on <http://luxembourg2012.thatcamp.org/schedule/>.

The unconference offered two days of intense and fruitful discussions, which provided new insights and approaches to solving problems, and diverse perspectives on how to do research and present results in the Digital Humanities. THATCamp Luxembourg/Trier 2012 broke with the common routine of conferences in a very productive way which proved the scientific worth of unconferences. Besides, the discussions made a significant contribution to emphasising that Digital Humanities is an up and coming scientific discipline which is able to answer traditional questions with advanced methods and is able to create new knowledge by asking questions that are otherwise impossible to ask. Many participants expressed how much they appreciated this thought-provoking, interdisciplinary event and that they would recommend future THATCamps.

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About the authors

The authors of this small report, four associates from the Trier Center for Digital Humanities, were present in each of the 18 workshops and documented every one of them in detail (see link above). Thereby, they gained a general overview of this unconference and are able to provide information about the event.

Conference overview

Thursday, 22nd March 2012

Enrico Natale (Académie suisse des sciences humaines et sociales): Digital Literacy for Historians

Frédéric Clavert (CVCE): Introduction to Zotero

Isabelle Jouve (Ysalide Multimedia): Friendly ways to reach a broader audience: mediating museum content with digital media

Lars Wieneke (CVCE): The Hacking Humanist. A modest introduction into Python

Julianne Nyhan & Stefan Büdenbender (Trier Center for Digital Humanities): TEI Workshop

Patrick Peiffer & Yves Maurer (Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg): From rights clearance to online availability

Friday, 23rd March 2012

Amanda Shuman (University of California) & Fien Danniau (Ghent University): Training the next generation of digital humanists

Pascal Föhr (University of Basel): Can we use websites as sources?

Frédéric Clavert (CVCE): Website APIs

Yves Maurer (Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg): From the newspaper to the iPad app

Ghislain Sillaume (CVCE) & Isabelle Jouve (Ysalide Multimedia): Visualisation & Design

Serge Noiret (European University Institute) & Gerben Zaagsma (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands): Finding and organising digital sources

Sean Tudor (Canada Science and Technology Museum): Presenting digital collections online

Marin Dacos (Centre pour l'édition électronique ouverte): How to build a multilingual, widely open, European Digital Humanities organisation

Mark Tebeau (Center for Public History & Digital Humanities, Cleveland State University): Conceptualising mobile

Enrico Natale (Académie suisse des sciences humaines et sociales) & Stefan Büdenbender (Trier Center for Digital Humanities): Collaborative Editions/Rousseau

Armin Straube (Archiv der sozialen Demokratie) & Sean Tudor (Canada Science and Technology Museum): Digital Preservation

Sascha Kaufmann (CVCE): Web analytics/Altmetrics/Search engine optimisation

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