Introduction: Digital Methods and Media Section

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We are excited to introduce the Digital Methods and Media section to Encounters. The two works we feature in this issue exemplify the diversity of ways in which humanities researchers engage with digital methods.

One way in which humanities researchers use digital media is through web-based interactive research projects. Our first paper, ‘Altering Cooking and Eating Habits during the Romanian Communist Regime by Using Cookbooks’ by Ina Ghita, describes such a project, revealing how cookbooks were edited to conform to political mandates and reflect social realities. The project website serves as an educational resource, and invites users to contribute their own memories and experiences. In keeping with the web-based format of the project, the paper is presented in an html format that includes linked images, videos, and interactive graphics.

Another way in which humanities researchers can leverage digital methods is by using visualization methods to gain new perspectives on information. In the second paper, ‘Comparer’, researchers at Visual Analytics Lab at OCAD University describe the development of a novel visualization tool that displays a taxonomy of urban planning software, sorted by type, by task, and by user type. The tool was developed as part of an interdisciplinary urban planning project, in part to facilitate communication between the disciplinary teams. We are excited to publish the tool on our platform, and readers are encouraged to interact with the work. While this tool was developed within the scope of an urban planning project, it can, in principle, be used to visualize any set of objects and their related attributes. The authors share the code in an open github repository (at this address: https://github.com/ocadu-val/ocadu-val.github.io/tree/master/cmpr ) with the hope that other researchers can use it and adapt it to their needs. We believe this visualization tool, as well as the authors’ well-documented design-thinking methodology, can be useful for humanities researchers organizing and cataloging sources and ideas.

The core mission of Encounters is to publish rigorous, peer-reviewed work that democratizes both the process of publication and the knowledge produced by research. As such, we provide a place for web-based works, and each of the works featured in this issue engage the notion of democratizing knowledge. Ghita’s work functions as a direct public resource for collecting, contextualizing, and understanding memories and memorabilia, while the work of Gordon et al. serves as an open resource for other researchers, and demonstrates how visualization methods can convey knowledge across and beyond disciplinary boundaries.

Both of the works in this issue’s Digital Methods and Media section are published here as visually engaging html pages, which underscores one of the motivations for developing this section: to showcase digitally native work, and to explore the role of visual communication in scholarly texts.