
Network Analysis in Humanities

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Abstract

Network analysis has provided scholars of different disciplines with new ways to analyse and present their data. Social network analysis (SNA) has established itself in social sciences, however, its advances into the humanities have started only in the very recent years. In case of historical or archival data the methods enable to reveal the communication networks that have long since become inaccessible. The prevalence of social media or the Internet per se in the contemporary world has literally made it visible how networks emerge from interconnections among individuals. It has also intensified the awareness of how social structures are formed, maintained and and restructured. In addition to the social networks (i.e. the communication networks between fictive or real human beings) the network analysis methods are growingly used for any kind of data representable as networks i.e. the data where the items and relationships between them are to be detected and quantified, e.g. word networks based on the collocations of the words showing the most central words in a literary work, or networks of different texts based on the similarity rates of word frequencies (stylometry) for authorship attribution of texts or the peculiarities of a distinct group of texts.

There is an increasing interest from all disciplines towards network analysis, and this growth is suitably supported by advances in technology. Side by side with other more conventional fields where network analysis has already been used for decades, humanities has risen as the new potential user of SNA. The tools made available to researchers in the humanities are becoming more numerous, with programmes like Gephi or NetMiner becoming household names. Vast amounts of data in cultural archives and elsewhere is waiting to be analysed via the methods SNA has to offer. The aim of the proposed session is to offer a discussion forum for humanities scholars using network analysis as one of their research methods.

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