Digital Scholarship and Privacy–sensitive Collections

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Introduction

Humanities scholars have historically used archives that include restricted or privacy-sensitive collections in order to conduct their investigations about sensitive topics. The recent developments in digitization and dissemination technologies present the possibility of making archival collections broadly available. Furthermore, collections of new, born-digital documents will be readily available to support and enhance scholarship. However, such access has also exacerbated threats to the privacy of individuals named in these records. Examples of such privacy-sensitive records include mental health institutional records, prison records, records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Nazi archives, and the Guatemalan police archives. In the physical world, access to these records is protected by distance, physical access, and a variety of national and local statutes. The legal framework for digital records is substantially behind that for physical records. Furthermore, the online availability of such records has a potential to stigmatize or embarrass the families or descendants of those named in the records when they bear no responsibility for the acts or afflictions of the named individuals, raising ethical issues in providing broad, open access to these records.

The organizers are studying the legal, conceptual, and practical issues in harnessing such privacy-sensitive collections in the service of scholarship—for example in history (of medicine and mental health), law, and social services. Our research is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (grant number: 11500653) under the scholarly communications program.

This workshop will invite broad participation from scholars and practitioners who work with or are interested in issues surrounding humanities scholarship supported or enhanced by digital, privacy-sensitive collections. A non-exhaustive list of topics of interest include:

- Digitization, curation, and preservation of privacy-sensitive collections
- Theoretical and metadata models
- Policies, workflows, and protections for accessing materials
- Issues in using cloud services for privacy-sensitive materials storage and scholarship
- Scholarly information behavior and needs
- Models for balancing privacy of named entities versus access to specific demographics
- Mechanisms and models for data retrieval from handwritten documents
- Privacy-aware digital repository architectures
- Privacy-aware crowdsourcing and transcription methods
- Privacy issues in designing user interfaces and data visualizations
- Privacy mitigation in data analytics and presentation
- Evaluation of existing software, infrastructure, and techniques
- Social justice issues and non-scholarly outcomes of work with restricted collections

Workshop organizers

Unmil P. Karadkar

Unmil P. Karadkar is an assistant professor in the School of Information at The University of Texas at Austin. He situates his work at the intersection of digital libraries, human-computer interaction, and visualization. He studies data practices of researchers with an eye toward identifying unmet information needs. Based on an understanding of these needs, he designs software to support their evolving practices and evaluates the impact of this software on their work. His research contributes to areas such as the design of digital collection interfaces and digital humanities. His research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, Texas General Land Office, USAA, and most recently, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

King Davis

King Davis is a research professor in the School of Information at The University of Texas at Austin and has made outstanding contributions in the field of Health and Mental Health over the last three decades. Dr. Davis held the Robert Lee Sutherland Chair in Mental Health and Social Policy at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work. From 2003-2008, Dr. King also served as the Executive Director of the Hogg Foundation, which awards grants and manages programs to improve mental health research and services in Texas. Prior to his work in Texas, Dr. Davis served as the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services for the Commonwealth of Virginia by Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder. He also has served as the John Galt Chair in Public Mental Health at the University of Virginia's Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Davis has held academic appointments at Washington University in St. Louis, Virginia Commonwealth University, Eastern Virginia Medical School and Norfolk State University. Dr.

Davis received his PhD from Brandeis University, Florence Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and his MSW from California State University Fresno, School of Social Work. He has written and published numerous articles and reports on mental health, fund raising, managed health care and social justice. His book, The Color of Social Policy, was published in 2004.

Target audience and expected number of participants

This is our first workshop on this topic and we are unsure what the interest will be. In this light, we have tried to make the topic as broad as possible, while retaining the core characteristics and constraints that we have found in our work. Our poster at DH 2014 was well-received and several conference attendees expressed an interest as well as challenges in working with collections similar to ours. The collections they described were geographically and topically diverse. With this experience, we anticipate receiving 10 to 20 submissions and accepting 8 to 10 for presentation at the workshop. We are unable to gauge the level of interest in the DH community in attending the workshop without presenting.

Length and format

We propose to hold our workshop for one day. This time frame will allow for adequate exploration of the various aspects of the workshop topics as well as domains via presentations, as well as in-depth discussion. We are open to conducting the workshop on a single day or as two half days.

The workshop will be held in a seminar style, with several short and long presentations. Individuals may participate in the workshop without presenting. The organizers will include an open discussion time to engage the audience and, especially, to tease out aspects of scholarship with privacy-sensitive digital collections that the presentations do not cover.

Program Committee

We will assemble a diverse program committee that includes scholars and practitioners with a diverse expertise. Potential invitees include:

- Tom Cramer, Assistant University Librarian-Library Technology, Stanford University
- Karen Estlund, Associate Dean for Technology and Digital Strategies, Penn State University Libraries
- Donald Fyson, Professor-History, Universite Laval
- Pat Galloway, Professor-Information Studies, The University of Texas at Austin Gary Geisler, UX Designer, Stanford University Libraries
- Geoffrey Rockwell, Professor-Philosohpy and Humanities Computing, University of Alberta Martin Summers, Associate Professor-History, Boston College

We welcome input from the DH 2017 program committee for additional suggestions for program committee members.