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Data and Annotation in Literary Studies (Abstract)

From the perspective of literary studies, the introduction of computational literary studies both questions and enhances established text analysis. The most apparent consequence of the use of computation is that data becomes central in literary studies. This has effects on different levels. Most importantly, in the computational approach, the very object of analysis shifts from literary text(s) to data. In consequence, both the concept of text and the practice of text analysis need to be revised, or at least be scrutinized for the need of revision.

Moreover, text analysis in literary studies normally does not rely on the analyzed texts only. Instead, a variety of contextual information is included, ranging from author, epoch, or genre to other texts (literary and not) as well as information about social contexts. Depending on the methodology of literary analysis and on the degree to which it is implemented computationally, this additional information also needs to be modelled as data in order to be included in the analysis.

Furthermore, the computational approach provides another opportunity similar to this inclusion of contextual information: The results of (human or computational) analysis or interpretation of literary texts can be documented in the form of annotations. When such annotations are used, there is a third type of data that needs to be integrated in the computational process.

In my talk, all three aspects—i.e., text, context, and interpretation as data—will be discussed from a literary studies perspective. I will look at the consequences of the datafication of literary studies and make suggestions on how to approach some of the related challenges, considering both the computational and the literary studies point of view.