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Amsterdam Privacy Conference, Oct. 7-10, 2012

By Samir Passi



The Amsterdam Privacy Conference, October 7-10, 2012, focused primarily on the issues of privacy and trust in relation to the widespread diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Organized by the Amsterdam Platform for Privacy Research (APPR), in participation with institutes such as University of Amsterdam and Felix Meritis, this conference brought together a large number of scholars, practitioners, and policy makers from the field of privacy and technology research. Keynote speakers included leading scholars such as Helen Nissenbaum (New York University), Alessandro Acquisti (Carnegie Mellon University), and Ross Anderson (Cambridge University). ICTs have become part and parcel of our daily lives. Every day we interact with smartphones, tablets, laptops, cloud computing, social media, surveillance devices, sensors, and more. In doing so we generate large quantities of data not only about ourselves but also about people we interact with. Internet profiling, behavioral marketing, digital archiving, and business intelligence have become norms within internet commerce. Not to mention the vast quantities of sensitive medical and government data out there. In this context, one of the biggest issues facing us today is how to ensure the privacy and anonymity of user information in the sociotechnical landscape of Big Data. How to provide better services and still meet user expectations regarding their privacy?

Privacy by design, sociological information contexts, do-not-track, privacy laws and regulation, and data encryption thus become important aspects, having considerable impact on privacy issues in all everyday aspects. Traditionally, privacy has usually been addressed from singular perspectives (such as legal, sociological, philosophical, technical etc.). However, recognizing the multiplicity of perspectives concerning privacy this conference facilitated a unique interdisciplinary gathering of people from different professions such as law, business, policy,

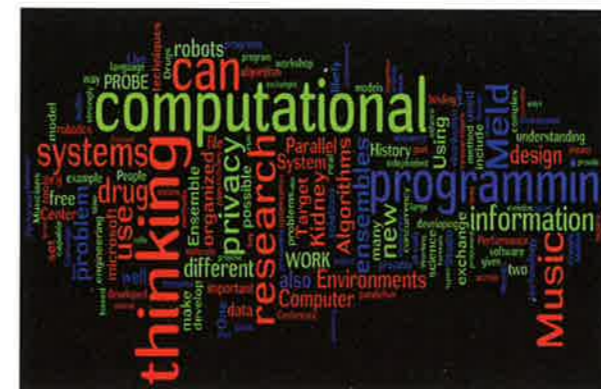
academia, computer sciences, and medicine. I attended the conference as part of the research work concerning the Excellence in InterNet Science (EINS) project that Sally Wyatt and I are currently involved with. Within the project, we focus on the mechanisms of identity, privacy, trust, and reputation in relation to the use of online social media technologies. A special panel discussion, focused on the aforementioned mechanisms, was organized by EINS at this conference. The panel consisted of four presentations addressing these issues from a multiplicity of perspectives. There were presentations that dealt with the ethical questions facing researchers regarding the vast quantities of data that is available online (by Sally Wyatt), the socio-technical responses to privacy concerns related to internet use by Dutch children (by Isolde Sprengels & Irma van der Ploeg), the weight-loss bloggers' disclosure of personal information (by Anne-Marie Oostveen), and the analysis of group based access control models on social network sites (by Ralf De Wolf & Jo Pierson). In case you are interested in the presentations, you can find them here.

The conference had a wide scope, but I was mainly interested in sessions that dealt with the relationships between privacy and trust, social media technologies, and users. These relationships encompass not only the ways in which users experience privacy and trust in relation to social media but also the ways in which social media companies and policy makers manage user expectations regarding their privacy. In this regard the conference offered many interesting insights into various issues such as the new EU data-regulation act (famously known as the 'right to forget'), the mechanisms through which Facebook profiles its users, mobile phones and privacy issues related to location based services, longitudinal data identification, big data and data mining, child users of social media, and the market value of user information.

Lastly, I would like to leave you all with two interesting pieces of information. First, as we all know Facebook has peculiar ways to document our lives – sometimes even without giving us a clear choice in the matter. For those of you who are on Facebook, you might want to check out this link. <http://www.thewire.com/technology/2012/09/facebook-tracking-you-drug-store-now-too/57183/>. Facebook has recently partnered with Datalogix (a user tracking company) to link our online profiles to our consumer behavior in terms of what we buy and from where both online and offline. All of Facebook users are included in this by default, and not surprisingly there is no option within Facebook to opt-out. Instead, you have to go to a third-party website to do the honors. Second, an interesting initiative is Privacy.net – a website that allows you to analyze the basic privacy of your internet connection in terms of the public information you give out, the cookies that are stored on your computer and why, and also a list of third-party applications that are profiling you from within your own computer.



Editorial



Welcome to the sixth edition of the e-Humanities group (eHg) newsletter. We continue to take seriously our role in providing a virtual and physical meeting point for scholars interested in 'e-Humanities' in all of its possible manifestations. Below you can read about some recent events that members of the eHg have organized and/or attended. Our Thursday afternoon meetings, 'New Trends in eHumanities', continue to attract a rich variety of both presenters and public. We look forward to welcoming two visitors at the beginning of April – our first Computational Humanities visiting fellow, Macej Eder from Poland, plus Seda Gürses, based in Leuven. More information about them can be found below, and they will make presentations about their work some Thursday afternoon soon.

In discussions about eHumanities there is often talk about the need to train a new generation of scholars, skilled in both humanities and computational methods. To this end, we were very pleased to welcome a group

of 2nd year students from the University of Amsterdam in early March. I gave a short introduction to both e-Humanities and the eHg, and then Christophe Guéret introduced them to the possibilities of linked data. They all stayed on for Wido Peursen's talk about computational approaches to Old Testament scholarship. To help humanities scholars develop their skills, we've also offered some hands-on workshops in recent months, and will be contributing to the Nijmegen spring school being held in early April (details below).
Sally Wyatt, Programme Leader, e-Humanities Group

Workshop Public-Private Initiatives in Digital Humanities

By Theo Meder



For decades the general opinion about humanities has been that it was "useless for the economy", but recently companies like Apple and IBM have started to consider humanities as "the next big thing". This sudden interest in humanities has much to do with the recent rise of digital humanities, a.k.a. computational humanities or eHumanities. Now is the right time to look for cooperation, not only with universities and institutes, but also with private companies and businesses.

On March 21-22 at NIAS in Wassenaar, Rens Bod organized a Workshop about Public-Private Initiatives in Digital Humanities. The aim of the workshop was to obtain an overview of results achieved so far in different projects funded by the UvA, VU and KNAW. All these projects have in common that researchers in the humanities are working together with private partners for six to nine months to do computational research and develop digital tools and products that benefit them both. All of these projects need to be regarded as experiments or pilots to see how fruitful these partnerships can be, and if this kind of cooperation should be continued on a larger scale. The first day was devoted to the present (the results

so far), the second day to the future (towards a Center for Humanities and Technology).

Five projects from the University of Amsterdam:

- **Digital Canal** showed an application that charts the activity of painters in Amsterdam through the seventeenth century
- **Music Similarity** is making an app that is able to compare timbre in electronic dance music and search for similarities
- **Expose** develops a smart search engine for Dutch parliamentary proceedings
- **Emotions in Film** monitors and registers basic emotions of people watching movies
- **Evaluating the Humanities** ranks publishers using bibliographic citations.

Three public-private projects from the KNAW:

- **Dynamic Drawings** visualizes old drawings into colorful (2D or 3D) animations
- **TINPOT** developed TweetGenie that is able to predict gender and age of Twitter users by looking at the language used in their accounts
- **Politieke karikaturen** uses crowd sourcing to annotate cartoons from the national socialist newspaper Volk en Vaderland (1933-1945)

Three presentations from the VU University:

- **First Aid Online** uses graphics, animations and narration to optimize e-learning, in order to double the number of owners of a First Aid certificate
- **Creative Industries in the Dutch Republic** is integrating different datasets on books
- **BiographyNed** provides an analytical tool to connect historical characters and events. However, this is a project from the Netherlands eScience Center (founded by SURF and NWO; see <http://esciencecenter.nl/>) and is not a public-private project as such.

One topic of discussion was that not every project would lead to publications, whereas writing articles is considered to be the core business of scholars. Shouldn't developing software, tools and apps start to count as output as well? Another point of discussion was identifying which journals to publish in. It seems that many of the traditional humanities journals are reluctant to publish results from digital humanities research. Do we need to get more specialized journals for eHumanities, or should we change our culture of publication and start publishing in proceedings of conferences and workshops, familiar to computer scientists? Another issue was the matter of open access: open source and open data. Although we all agree that all data and software developed with taxpayers money should become freely accessible, some of the data cannot be shared for reasons of privacy or public safety. The second day of the workshop was devoted to the future. Rens Bod argued that computational humanities research should focus on patterns in context, towards assigning meaning, and recognition of value (although, during the discussion, the concepts of meaning and particularly value were considered problematic, by linguists and philosophers for instance). A draft version of the White Paper prepared by Rens Bod (UvA), Charles van den Heuvel (HuygensING) and others, offers the

following summary: "The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the VU University Amsterdam and the Netherlands eScience Center have joined forces to make the next big step in digital humanities: computer-assisted interpretation. That is, assigning meaning and value to historical patterns, literary works, music or visual arts by computational means. This ambitious goal will be the major challenge for 2020 and will be carried out by focusing on a small number of research questions that have the potential to be turned into concrete products. To achieve this goal, the four partners aim to establish an e-Humanities Alliance which provides a framework for developing computational methods for humanities research in collaboration with other universities, research institutes and private companies. This e-Humanities Alliance will actively engage in knowledge utilization and valorization by developing concrete applications and products that emerge from the public-private partnerships. It is planned that the e-Humanities Alliance will develop into a fully integrated institute with one coherent scientific program and infra-structure by 2015."

Similarly, Theo Mulder from the KNAW argued that together with earlier initiatives, like Alfalab and Computational Humanities, these new developments should lead to further innovation and cooperation towards 2020. He announced the planned creation of CHAT: the Center for Humanities and Technology in the centre of Amsterdam, and added that negotiations for future alliances with companies like IBM are taking place already. In Mulder's vision, eHumanities should be a magnet, for attracting more and more iron.

In the future, half of the entire NWO budget will be spent on nine designated economic top sectors, including creative industries and cultural heritage. All in all, it is important that we start focusing on crash courses in eHumanities tools for researchers, and on new courses to educate students in the field of eHumanities.

Newsletter #6 > Recent events

Lost in Story Worlds

Symposium 14-15th March 2013

By Kim Jautze, Corina Koolen en Karina van Dalen-Oskam



The University of Utrecht and University of Amsterdam organized a two-day symposium in the context of a NWO research project 'Varieties of Absorption in Narrative and Film'. The main questions addressed during these two days were: how do narratives make viewers and readers lose awareness and make them feel that they are part of the story world? And can the story world become a part of themselves? Particularly interesting for our own research are the *textual elements* that can be held responsible for absorbing experiences. Certain narrative features, such as delay or a detective-like structure, make for suspense and curiosity and therefore transport the reader to the story world. The question arises whether such absorption experiences influence the notion on the narrative as being 'literary' or 'good'. Also the formal features that defamiliarize the reader and make her reflect on – instead of become absorbed in – the narrative caught our attention. Such features can be of use when measuring literary quality if they can be localized within the text of a novel.

For more information about the project 'Varieties of Absorption in Narrative and Film' visit: <http://blog.hum.uu.nl/storycenter/the-project/>

Newsletter #6 > Recent events

World Summit on the Information Society

By Sally Wyatt



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Sally Wyatt attended the World Summit on the Information Society in Paris in February, preparation for the 10-year review in 2015. She took part in a session organized by the International Social Science Council about the place and role of critical social sciences in the digital age, and how digital technologies can be used to promote access to social science knowledge. Dominique Babini, from the *Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO)* explained how open access repositories can help give Latin America and other "peripheral" regions a greater voice within international social sciences.

Nazli Choucri from MIT insisted on the emergence of cyberspace over the past 20 years as a third dimension in human and social life, along with "societies" and "nature." Using the field of international politics, Choucri showed how factoring in cyberspace opens up entire new dimensions of critical research and spaces for new social science theories. Christina von Fürstenberg, from SHS / UNESCO, presented the work done within the Management of Social Transformations programme (MOST) to promote open access to knowledge, insisting on the numerous facets of copyright. She explained the functioning of CLIC, a content database developed by MOST in partnership with the Open University that allows access to research abstracts, policy recommendations and OA sources. Sally questioned the impact of digital technologies on social sciences, and how, and to what extent they are affecting the value of humanities and social sciences, their methods, but also the larger research context within which researchers now work.

The digital age is changing drastically the research context within which social scientists think, write and teach about societies. During this session, the contributors helped to sketch the contours of the importance of critical social sciences to understand the digital age:

1. Whereas uncritical approaches regard digital technologies as providing solutions to almost any set of problems, being "critical" should not imply the reverse position that technologies are the problem. The role of critical social sciences should rather be to analyze how digital technologies are impacting societies and also, reversely, how societies self-appropriate and influence technological developments in unexpected ways.
2. With more knowledge and data being generated and accessed, the need for theories is increasing not fading. Past and current theories / paradigms / questions can be re-visited to see if they provide helpful tools to understand the digital age, but new theories more immediately adapted to the new contexts are also required.
3. Digital tools allow for new questions and research methods to develop (e.g., collaborative knowledge production, citizen sciences). "Open access" can contribute to correcting some enduring problems in the production of knowledge (issues of power and regional hegemonies) by treating knowledge as a global commons and fostering the production of local knowledge and its access worldwide.

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Five years of eHumanities

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