

In response to the third prompt for this workshop, which divides creative writing and code by their effects with creative writing as "imaginative" and "aesthetic" and code as "executed" while both exceed their literal texts through these effects, my concerns relate to the cultural perception, use, and need for the politics of information representation online. In particular, given our contemporary frame, where millions of books, letters, photographs, videos, and other media are online and their numbers grow exponentially, the web defines--for much of our culture--computers and code, how do we represent lack in meaningful ways? How do we use code as a form of creative writing to speak to absence in a huge and totalizing information environment? Code can be utilitarian for solving problems, but more often it is about or it solves problems by making connections or offering translations and transformations. How do we transform the image of codework through problems and situations which require more than utility and objectivity for utility?

Code is creative and will only become more so as standards are better adopted and formed, so the needs from code emphasize more creation, design, problem solving, play, and interpretation. With the semantic web on the horizon through improved methods and tools for entity extraction from existing webbed materials, the development of new applications and tools, and transformation/creation projects (like DBpedia and FOAF), new issues of how to display information in searchable and browseable interfaces emerge.

How do creative writing and code overlap in relation to problems related to massive amounts of data and emotion? Antonio Damasio has written extensively on the importance of emotion to reason (using the example of Phineas Gage), and Sherry Turkle's new edited collection explores the significance of emotion for objects as objects evoke thought. This is also an issue with large datasets for the semantic web because there are established systems for ontologies, coding, aesthetics, and so on and all rely connections for materials that exist. The operational—what we have—approach to information makes sense, but what it elides is the fact that we don't have so much.

Our current methods of search and display focus on data and basic aesthetics. Soon, many of the semantic web components that haven't been available will. These will allow for more ways of focused searching, but they will not on their own enable exploration or information searching through emotional and evocative sets. Our current methods have refined the value of emotional and aesthetic choices for display, improving design and building on existing affordances, but the meaningful nature of the connections isn't yet supported. Lev Manovich has called the random access an indicator of "symptomatic of the 'decline of the field of rhetoric in the modern era,'" because it removes the normal frames and contexts for argument and narrative progression (qtd. In Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*, 111). Existing projects already have or are developing ontologies and digital gazetteers to build to a system for presenting information as a narrative of sorts by creating structured and contextualized frames for geographical and chronological information, and frames that create connections to other points in meaningful ways and within visual forms. These types of narratives follow Hayden White's argument that all histories are narratives, in that information is selected and de-selected, ordered, and given context, all building to a subjective system for ordering and presenting information. In order to build from the existing data and the added functionality of the semantic web, enhanced by additional standards of metadata, further systems will need to address meaning and emotion. Adding standards, systems, or methods will need to support the possible connections, be able to preserve the evocative qualities of the narrative and of the stories, objects, and characters in the stories.

However, with the semantic web and information rich system, additions will also need to represent lack in ways that are not simply errors. In "Inheritance and Loss? A brief survey of Google Books," Paul Duguid analyzes problems in the Google Book project, by looking at different versions of *Tristram Shandy*:

"By the time this page [27] has been reached, the astute reader will also have noticed that the book has other, quality control problems. Famously, on the death of Parson Yorick, Sterne quoted Hamlet's phrase, "Alas, poor Yorick!", and inserted a black page of mourning. The version of the Sterne's novel that Harvard offered and Google scanned evidently overlooked this iconic page, perhaps assuming it was an inky disaster in the print shop rather than part of the author's design. We can see the problem if we compare the Google page to the same page from the Penguin edition (Sterne, 1967). (Section "Results: Finding a cock and bull story")

In Duguid's example, the error in the page is taken as an unacceptable error and a reason to reject the entire system, and this immediate rejection for lack and representations of lack is common when those absences or representations exist within the same normative information frame. The need to represent lack or loss needs to place itself within a frame that still has a representation. Within the utilitarian cultural frame for computing and code, lack needs a form of representation that is more than or other than error and the representation needs to operate outside of the database quantity-based systems or by another means. Another means includes the creating of narratives, as digital gazetteers do, and for fictionalized methods. "Fiction... gives the reader something more than information. Complex understandings, indirect, intuitive, and nonverbal arise from words of the story... an instructive emotion is generated in the reader from the illusion of suffering an experience not his own" (E.L. Doctorow, "False Documents," 386). Fiction represents and informs other realities and shows the interface and its contents as artifice, as with trap streets and false entries in dictionaries/thesauri that show their construction and the falseness of totalizing objectivity that underlies their forms. Fiction and even the passing-for-objectivity of other narratives offer other means for viewing, exploring, and interacting with information that points to the lack and loss of information and to the unavailability of the full aspects of the objects/materials online because of the representations' lack.

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- Sherry Turkle (ed). *Evocative Objects*.
- Donald Norman. *Emotional Objects: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things*.
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- Noah Waldrip-Fruin. *Impermanence Agent*. (1998).
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<http://maryflanagan.com/courses/2007/07psycho/07psycho.pdf>
- Buckland, Gey, Larson: *Going Places in the Catalog: Improved Geographical Access*. (Gazetteer and changes to named places/ambiguity):
<http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~buckland/catplace.pdf>
- Narrativizing Visualizations: <http://delivery.acm.org/10.1145/1150000/1148496/p17-blumenkrants.pdf?key1=1148496&key2=0369386021&coll=&dl=&CFID=15151515&CFTOKEN=6184618>
- Visualization-as-Narrative:
<http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/Xplore/login.jsp?url=/iel5/4271943/4271944/04271973.pdf?temp=x>

Existing Standards & Tools

- MARC: <http://www.loc.gov/marc/umb/um01to06.html>
- LOC Authorities: <http://authorities.loc.gov/>
- EAD: <http://www.loc.gov/ead/>
- SemTime: <http://www.newsblip.com/tr/nbtr2003001.pdf>
- TimeMap:
http://www.timemap.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=124&Itemid=147
- CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model: <http://cidoc.ics.forth.gr/>
- Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative: www.ecai.org
- Simile & Exhibit from MIT
- Continuum: <http://mspace.fm/projects/continuum/> and article on Continuum: Timeline, context, concept overview: <http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/14548/1/continuumchi.pdf>
- Historical Event Markup Language (HEML):
<http://heml.mta.ca/samples/blocks/heml//description#N100A3>
- Paul Duguid, "Inheritance and Loss? A brief survey of Google Books,"
http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue12_8/duguid/

Using/Enhancing Existing Standards to Create Narratives

- ECAI 2004 IMLS Grant to create the Who, When, Where, What Atlas/Gazetteer: <http://ecai.org/imls2004/>
- ECAI 2006 IMLS Grant “Bringing Lives to Light: Biography in Context” (builds from 2004 grant to create and enhance digital biographical texts that can in turn be connected to a wider world of contextual information, geographical, historic) <http://ecai.org/imls2006/>
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