

'Digging into Data Challenge' grant awarded

4 December 2009

A professor at Tufts University will lead a team of international researchers to explore how humanities scholars can use data analysis to track topics about the Greco-Roman world as they appear in a million documents, spanning thousands of years. School of Arts and Sciences Professor Gregory Crane will be joined by researchers from three other universities on the project, which will be funded by one of eight recently awarded "Digging into Data Challenge" grants.

Using existing collections of Greek and Latin texts, the researchers will create a system that uses data mining to determine patterns and other connections in the primary and secondary sources. Researchers will be able to connect various editions and translations of classical texts to identify differences as well as possible errors in translations. In addition, they plan to create a database that lists when Greek and Latin authors or particular works are mentioned, quoted or alluded to in other sources spanning more than 2,000 years.

"This Digging into Data work will pave the way for undergraduate research. Students have access to tons of materials, but this project will provide tools that will enable a new generation of undergraduate research in classics and the humanities," says Crane, who is a classics professor at Tufts.

Other researchers involved on the project include John Darlington from Imperial College in London, Bruce Robertson from Mount Allison University in Canada, and David A. Smith and David Mimno from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"This database will allow young scholars to locate patterns in primary and secondary sources and then add their own critical thinking to go beyond the visualizations to determine what the patterns mean," Crane explains.

The Digging into Data Challenge is an international grant competition sponsored by four leading

research agencies, the Joint [Information Systems Committee \(JISC\)](#) from the United Kingdom, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), from the United States, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), from Canada.

Applicants were asked to answer the question: "What do you do with a million books?" The competition winners were announced at an event Thursday night in Ottawa, Ontario. The eight winning teams represent successful applications from 22 scholars and scientists from the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom. Each team includes [researchers](#) from at least two of the participating countries. With their awards, the teams will demonstrate how data mining and data analysis tools currently used in the sciences can improve scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Total project funding by all four agencies is approximately \$2 million.

Source: Tufts University

APA citation: 'Digging into Data Challenge' grant awarded (2009, December 4) retrieved 24 January 2022 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-12-grant-awarded.html>

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