Maddy Casey- Graduation Portfolio Write Ups

Project title: Queer Speculative Fiction LibGuide

Project Link: https://prattlis.libguides.com/c.php?g=1379726&p=10201673

Project description: A guide for college aged students interested in incorporating analyses of speculative fiction into their academic work. The LibGuide includes examples of primary sources and relevant academic theory, in addition to a collection of databases and journals students may explore in their research. The guide also includes two informational videos.

Methods: For this project, alongside a team of peers, I reviewed existing libguides to determine an effective scope, user community and layout for our selected topic. The highlighted sources included in the guide were identified using Pratt's library catalog, Google, and our prior experience with the topic. To build the guide we used SpringShare's LibGuides, which was modified with CSS. Finally, we used Loom to make the videos featured on the guide.

My role: For my contributions to this group project**,** I contributed sources to the primary source section we used for the guide, and participated in brainstorming for the guide's design and structure. I wrote and recorded the video "How do I find scholarly content about queer speculative fiction?", and made slides to use as visuals for both videos featured on the guide. I also drew all of the clip art featured in the guide using Adobe Illustrator, and worked on customizing the appearance of the guide.

Learning outcome achieved: Foundations of Library & Information studies

Rationale: This guide was conducted with a foundational tenet of information literacy, the ACRL framework, Authority is Constructed and Contextual, in mind. The focus of the guide was to provide a jumping off point for student researchers approaching a genre which is not traditionally held in the same esteem as other academic sources. The project includes multiple points of access to the content. The construction of the guide provided an opportunity to practice multiple foundational skills in librarianship, including the curation of a list of information resources targeting a specific user community, and the identification of sources which helped to fill gaps (in terms of representation) in canon fiction literature. The project also provided practice in verbal and written communication to a public facing audience, which was supported through the guide itself and an in class presentation of the project.

Project Title: Book as Art, Art as Data

Project Link: https://studentwork.prattsi.org/bookarts/

Project Description: Books as Art, Art as Data is a digital humanities project created by a group of five students, in collaboration with the Center for Book Arts, a small New York City based cultural heritage institution. For this project, my peers and I built and documented a series of digital humanities projects using data about the Center for Book Arts' collections and institutional history.

Methods: For my contribution to the project, I researched and learned how to build a website using WordPress, to house the projects produced by my peers. I also served as a "documentarian" of the project's methods and process, which I accomplished both by collecting survey data throughout the semester of my peers' progress on the project, and by conducting long-form interviews with my peers about challenges they faced in the project. I transcribed, and edited these interviews, which I used to write blog posts about the process of the project, with the aim of supporting the replicability of the project, in order to offer guidelines for other students or practitioners new to digital humanities as a field of practice. Throughout the project, I worked to incorporate audience feedback into the project's construction and design, by soliciting informal and formal feedback through a survey, interactive presentation, and usability testing. Both the feedback collection and iterative development of the project built upon previous experience I developed in the program conducting usability testing.

My role: For this project, I built and designed the project website using WordPress, created a site index to facilitate multiple avenues of user discovery across the project, and researched and wrote a series of blog posts documenting the process of the project. I also collected data through regular surveys of my peers across the course of the project which I used to create a zine documenting our project's process. Finally, I developed a series of questions and categories for user feedback about the project's process which were used for analysis of our work and modifications. As part of the project, I also independently conducted an audit of the website's compliance to WCAG guidelines, to ensure the website conformed to basic accessibility standards, such as appropriate color contrast.

Learning Outcome Achieved: User-Centered Services

Rationale: As part of this project I conducted interview-style user testing of a small group, and incorporated feedback drawn from these sessions to modify and improve the project's website design. I also participated in a mid-semester work in progress presentation at which feedback was solicited about the project's design and implementation. For example, I used feedback from a work in progress presentation conducted during the semester to develop an index, featuring definitions of key book arts and digital humanities jargon which were unfamiliar to the audience at our presentation. At the beginning of the project, I also helped create a survey to assess field practitioner needs, which was distributed via email to Book Arts and Digital humanities scholars, and used to inform the content and direction of our project. The goal for this project was to create a resource which could serve as an introduction to digital humanities methods and book arts, and foster engagement with the Center for Book Arts' collections.

Project Title: Python Metadata Validator

Project Link:
https://colab.research.google.com/drive/1J88jqKmxqtc3x2wLsYQ9fF3meKnfLRsS?usp=sharing
(requires accompanying files to function)
Project Description: The project built upon python programming skills I developed across a semester, in the course Programming for Cultural Heritage, and incorporated work I completed concurrently in another class, Metadata Design. In Metadata Design, alongside another team member, I developed a metadata application profile, which included cataloging guidelines, a domain model, an element set, and an entry mechanism, for a collection of oral histories held at NYU. As part of this project, our guidelines and entry mechanism were tested by a group of our peers. In programming for cultural heritage, I wrote a metadata validator, through which I tested the quality of the metadata written by our peers. The project also served as an experiment to explore the components of metadata which a machine could or could not validate.

Methods: The final project is available as a Google colab workbook, which is designed to run a series of tests on an accompanying csv file. In practice, the guidelines and entry mechanism I developed in Metadata Design resulted in very high-quality metadata, thus I added several errors to the sample dataset in order to assess the ability of the validator to flag errors. Throughout the project, I developed skills applying python to a practical context, built capacity working with regex, and with python libraries including pyspellchecker, and pandas. In this project I iteratively developed portions of the script to ultimately address a complex problem, by dealing with one part of the problem at a time, thus practicing breaking down complex technological tasks into achievable components.

My role: I researched, wrote, and modified the python scripts for this project independently, and presented the project in class.

Learning Outcome Achieved: Technology

Rationale: This project demonstrates knowledge of python, a programming language, and serves as an example of my ability to explore and apply programming skills to a complex task. The project also addresses a fundamental issue in information management and governance, by focusing on a core function of library systems; metadata management and quality assessment.

Project Title: Exploring Demographic Homogeneity in Librarianship: A Data Driven Approach

Project Link:
https://studentwork.prattsi.org/infovis/visualization/exploring-demographic-homogeneity-in-librarianship-a-data-driven-approach/

Project Description: For this project, I modified and analyzed a series of data visualizations which I created across a semester of work, related to professional diversity within librarianship as a field. The project sought to explore the research question, "What is the demographic breakdown of librarianship as a field, and what potential underlying causes may contribute to the overrepresentation of white women in librarianship (relative to the demographic breakdown of the population of the United States?", using a collection of graphs, maps, and network visualizations.

Methods: For the project I used several data sources, and practiced both cleaning of an existing dataset, and creation of a new dataset from an information source. For example, I created several charts using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about the demographic breakdown, and payscale of librarianship compared to other professions. I also built a dataset of ALA accredited library programs using data from the ALA, which I used to create a map of career outcomes relative to program locations. Finally, I also built a dataset of subject terms from *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* articles from 2013-2024, which I used to conduct subject analysis in a series of network visualizations, to explore the frequency with which articles mentioned topics related to equity and labor from 2013-202. For this project, I utilized the data visualization tools Tableau and Gephi, and utilized Open Refine, Google Sheets, and R scripts to analyze, organize and clean the 3 datasets I used for the project.

My Role: For this project, I independently gathered the data I used, conducted user testing on the charts I created, designed and produced the data visualizations, and wrote the final report I produced about the project.

Learning Outcome Achieved: Research

Rationale: This project sought to address a complex issue which is a frequent topic of conversation within librarianship as a field, the diversity of librarianship. The project incorporated data collection, analysis, and three different methodologies for data visualization, which were used both as tools for exploratory data analysis, and to convey my findings in a visually appealing manner. The project used data to explore multiple potential causes or contributing factors for the nature of the field. The project's findings and written analysis are also supported by a literature review incorporating contemporary scholarship around this topic.

Project Title: This Book is Challeng(ing/ed)

Project Link:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HuH0seW0bNzvem_PunJa3wIFWnCLK9Hlss8SkC8cKfI/edit?usp=sharing

Project Description: In this project, I built upon skills and information I developed in a summer Data Physicalization Course, to explore data about the most challenged books in the U.S. from 2023. In the course, I learnt about Data Physicalization as an avenue for promoting data and information literacy amongst the public by conveying information in an engaging, accessible, and tangible medium. Throughout the project, I developed skills in conveying information through creative praxis, and in using creative design and structure as a means to redundantly express factual information. The project resulted in a physical book, which used collage as a method to convey information about the thematic commonalities between some of the most challenged books in U.S. libraries in the year 2023.

Methods: For this project, I scanned and OCRed the texts for the five most challenged books in the U.S. from 2023 (based on data from the ALA), and conducted Latent Dirichlet Allocation (topic modeling) analysis on the texts to identify common themes. I then converted the results of the analysis to the physical collage, which used images (drawn by me in Adobe Illustrator) to represent a subsection of the concepts and themes addressed in the books. One interesting finding of the project was the frequency with which themes related to romance and sexuality were featured in the challenged literature, which I chose to specifically highlight in the final project. The project built upon work I conducted in a prior class, Intro to Digital Humanities, in which I explored topic modeling as a methodology, using the open source tool Voyant.

My role: For this project, I developed the research question, collected the data for the project, and created the collage, or physicalization, independently.

Learning Outcome Achieved: Ethical/Creative/Critical Practice

Rationale: This project addresses a pressing issue in the field of librarianship, as book challenges and bans have dramatically surged in recent years. In particular, the project sought to explore whether the stated justification for book removal requests actually align with the content of the books themselves, due to the implications the "accuracy" of the challenge requests may have on effective responses on the part of library staff. For example, if a book challenge is submitted for a book on the grounds that it contains LGBTQ+ content, and the book does contain depictions of the lives and experiences of queer people, it is not effective to dismiss the challenges' justifications as false. Rather, a clearly outlined and publicly communicated collection development policy which supports intellectual freedom and the inclusion of books by and about the experiences of marginalized people can be a more effective tool. This project is rooted in a passion for intellectual freedom, and critical exploration of the nuances of this topic, and was informed by existing scholarship regarding this issue, in particular, *Book Banning in 21st-Century America* by Emily J. M. Knox. The project also seeks to share data about a complex topic in a tangible, engaging, and creative medium, through the practice of data physicalization and the art of collage.