

Beyond patterns: Using digital methods to find and think about particularities

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Digital humanities methods divide the historical community in much the same way as the quantitative methods did in the 1970s: into an enthusiastic minority and a dismissive majority. The latter's disapproval can be explained by the fact that the digital methods that are most widely known in the historical community focus on finding patterns based on correlations in so-called big data; while historians are in general (rightfully, we think) more interested in particularities than in patterns. However, we argue, this does not mean that historians should reject digital humanities methods altogether. The discipline of digital humanities entails much more than pattern searching; it also offers us digital methods that leave room for ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty, and that can help us find and think about particularities. In this talk we discuss how we apply such methods in our research, which belongs to the project *Translantis: Digital Humanities Approaches to Reference Cultures*. *Translantis* investigates identity formation in Dutch public discourse; it does so through analyzing the National Library's digitized newspaper collection with the help of a new tool, Texcavator, which is being developed in the project, and of which we will demonstrate a first version.