

'Text comparison and digital creativity'

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Venue: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Kloveniersburgwal 29, 1011 JV Amsterdam

The spread of digital technology across philology, linguistics and literary studies suggests that text scholarship itself is taking on a more laboratory-like image. The ability to sort, quantify, reproduce and report text through computation would seem to facilitate the exploration of text as another type of quantitative data (akin to protein structures or geographic features of the seabed). However, developing this potential also highlights text analysis and text interpretation as two increasingly separated sub-tasks in the study of texts. The implied dual nature of interpretation as the traditional, valued mode of *scholarly* text comparison, combined with an increasingly widespread reliance on digital text analysis as *scientific* mode of inquiry raises the question as to whether the reflexive concepts that are central to interpretation – individualism, subjectivity – are affected by the anonymised, normative assumptions implied by formal categorisations of text as digital data. This calls for a reconsideration of the scholarly/scientific and intellectual/computational 'co-production' of presence and meaning of text in philology. In this context 'presence' refers to the spatial relationship to the world and its objects. As Hans Gumbrecht has noted in his *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, some of the 'special effects' of new technology may turn out to re-awaken a desire for material presence.

A number of additional questions arise from that assessment. What are the effects of digital transformations in text culture on text scholarship? What rules and guidelines are appropriate for the digital interpretation of text? What 'virtual' values do we turn to as the object of digital humanities scholarship? What is the role of viewpoint, language, tradition and creativity in quantitative text comparison? What connections exist between text scholarship, interpretation, and e-infrastructures for research?

The Colloquium aims to face these challenges and will be hosted by the KNAW as part of their 200-year celebrations in the historical *Trippenhuis* in the old centre of Amsterdam. A select company of 15 speakers will present papers on the materiality, authenticity and meaning of text in contemporary digital text scholarship. Following each cluster of presentations there will be time for lively debate. A limited number of 20 places are available to take part in this colloquium.

Keynote speakers at the Colloquium are **David Crystal**, Honorary Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wales and a prolific author of books on language, language teaching, linguistics and Shakespearean literature. He is author of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (1990), the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (1995) and *How Language Works* (2006), and **Bella Hass Weinberg**, Professor in Library and Information Science at St John's University and a recognised expert on indexing.

