NC STATE UNIVERSITY

News Release

NCSU Libraries opens pioneering new possibilities for data mining historical content

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Raleigh, N.C.)—The North Carolina State University Libraries has signed a pioneering license that enables its researchers to data mine the extensive archival collections that the Gale publishing firm holds for texts and other materials important to historians and humanists.

While data mining is widespread in the social and natural sciences, publishers have traditionally not offered blanket rights to mine historical archives. The agreement with Gale marks the first such license ever signed between an academic research library and a major commercial publisher of historic archival collections.

With research-friendly, electronic access to the material in Gale's databases—including the ability to mine archival data on NC State servers—NC State scholars can further their use of data mining strategies to take the next groundbreaking steps forward in the digital humanities.

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Assistant professor in the NC State English Department, Dr. Paul Fyfe will be among the first to use the new license, researching patterns of content within collections of nineteenth-century British newspapers at scale.

“This partnership represents an exciting frontier for scholars interested in exploring new approaches to digital source materials, whether text, metadata, or image,” he explains. “For humanities researchers, digitized historical content helps us to test new methods of inquiry. It also opens doors to collaborating with partners across disciplines, including computer scientists who are intrigued by how to recognize feature sets and higher-order relationships in large semi-structured bodies of data.”

“We applaud Gale for this bold move,” says Susan K. Nutter, Vice Provost and Director of the NCSU Libraries. “The NCSU Libraries is committed to being at the fore when it comes to opening up electronic and licensed collections for computational research in analytics, content mining, and data visualization. We hope the agreement with Gale further stimulates our many partners in the publishing arena to help us accelerate progress in these promising areas of research.”

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