Words in Space: GIS, Data Mining, and the Visual Display of Religion

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The Digital Turn

*Digital Humanities Manifesto* (UCLA, 2008)

1. Integration - “Big Humanities”
2. Accessibility – avoid secret languages
3. Teamwork – collaborative and large scale
4. Affect Positive Scholarship – aesthetic
5. Shape Technology – drive innovation
6. Curation – argue with objects
7. Process – versus product
Challenge of Digital Humanities

“Productive Unease” Julia Flanders, *DHQ* (2009)

Trial and Error

Data Mining – theory-driven?

Outcomes and Conclusions

Collaborative Discomfort

Emergent Semantics
Spatial Turn

The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship
David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, Trevor Harris (2010)

- Thinking without (not quite) language or textuality
- Physical space and objects in space
- Spatial-Temporal axes
- Imagination
- Multimedia “Supplements”
- Argument, Voice, and Proof

- Virtual Center for Spatial Humanities
Words in Space

- Georeferenced Textual Data
- Linguistic Decontextualization
- Patterns and Correlations
- A Thousand Words
- Continuous Mapping
- Thinking Spatially
Religious Words in Space

- Space: Atlantic World
- Words: Colonial American Publications
  - Religious Writings
  - 1676-1740
  - Sample: 26 documents
  - 2200 db lines
  - Pilot Data
Words: Fear, Africa, Devil, Slave

- Appear in all documents
- Linked in Reading
- Spatial Consciousness
- Proximity to Place Names: 5pp.
- Place names: City, State, Country, Continent, Region
Purpose

What does the colonial consciousness of space in relation to four central linguistic terms tell us about how the terms are related conceptually and how might that lead us to read the religious documents differently?
Method Issues

- Proximity search – Boolean logic
- Words: markers of spatial awareness
- Colonial awareness of the Atlantic World
- Writers, Readers, More Writers
- Spatial clustering
Out of Africa

• AFRICA: Is it religiously dangerous?

• ENGLAND: witch-hunting in the 17c

• NEW ENGLAND: Holy Commonwealth and the witchcraft cosmology

• THE SOUTH: Proslavery religion
Correlation of the Term Fear to City and State
Correlation of the Term Slave to City and State
Slavery and the Religious Wordview

• Development of proslavery religion
• Antecedents
• Debates
Correlation of the Term Africa to Country, Region and Continent
Correlation of the Term Slave to Country, Region and Continent
Correlation of the Term Fear to Country, Region and Continent