
**Abstract from Chad’s blog:**
In *Macroanalysis*, Jockers argues that “literary scholars employ the same methods of investigation as scientists” (5), implying that the knowledge is generated through the collecting of evidence in support of a hypothesis. Jockers spends the rest of the book arguing that DH methods can be used to collect evidence, analyze evidence, and discover new types of evidence that we could not have even been able to fathom before. The reason being that the literary cannon is too vast to be able to engage with closely without the help of a computer. From using methods such as filtering metadata, charting “lexical richness,” clustering data points, and analyzing ngrams, Jockers argues that we can produce new, rich evidence, that counts as knowledge and shapes our reality.

**Alternative Abstract from Amazon.com:**
In this volume, Matthew L. Jockers introduces readers to large-scale literary computing and the revolutionary potential of macroanalysis--a new approach to the study of the literary record designed for probing the digital-textual world as it exists today, in digital form and in large quantities. Using computational analysis to retrieve key words, phrases, and linguistic patterns across thousands of texts in digital libraries, researchers can draw conclusions based on quantifiable evidence regarding how literary trends are employed over time, across periods, within regions, or within demographic groups, as well as how cultural, historical, and societal linkages may bind individual authors, texts, and genres into an aggregate literary culture.

Moving beyond the limitations of literary interpretation based on the "close-reading" of individual works, Jockers describes how this new method of studying large collections of digital material can help us to better understand and contextualize the individual works within those collections.

**Citations**


**Key Quotes**
“Technology has certainly changed some things about the way literary scholars go about their work, but until recently change has been mostly at the level of simple, even anecdotal, search” (4).

“Literary scholars employ the same methods of investigation as scientists” (5)

“This is a book about evidence gathering. It is a book about how new methods of analysis allow us to extract new forms of evidence from the digital library” (10).

“By way of an analogy, we might think about interpretive close readings as corresponding to microeconomics, whereas distant reading corresponds to macroeconomics. Consider, then, the study of literary genres or literary periods: are the microanalytic” (25)?

“…macroanalysis provides a practical method for approaching questions such as: whether there are stylistic patterns inherent to particular genres; whether style is nationally determined; whether and how trends correlate with historical events; whether the literature of a nation or region produces is a function of demographics, time, population, degree of relative freedom, degrees of relative education; whether literature is evolutionary; whether successful works of literature inspire schools or traditions; whether there are differences between canonical authors and those who have been rationally marginalized; [and] whether factors such as gender, ethnicity, and nationality directly influence style and context in literature” (28).

“The methods described and the results reported represent a generational shift away from traditional literary scholarship, and away even from traditional text analysis and computational authorship attribution” (32).

“…metadata has been largely untapped as a means of exploring literary history” (35).

“Simple counting and sorting of texts based on metadata inform the analysis of Irish American fiction provided above by no means provide material for an exhaustive study” (48).

“Even with a suitable statistical method and an appropriate feature set, there are still outstanding problems that challenge authorship-attribution researchers” (68).

“In terms of giving scholars a means of tracking thematic trends over time, the release of the Google Ngram Viewer in 2011 lowered the bar considerably” (120).

“Thus far, my focus has been on describing thematic presence, but the thematic tendencies of nations and of genders may be seen not only in the those that are overrepresented in their novel but also in those that are conspicuously absent” (145).

“My objective now is not to classify novels into nationalities or genders but rather to capture for each book a unique book signal and then to look for signs of historical change from one book to the next” (158).

“I argue throughout these chapter that large-scale text analysis, text mining, “macroanalysis,”
offers an important and necessary way of contextualizing our study of individual works” (172).

Questions
1) Jockers assumes an epistemology based around the concept of evidence. Are there any other epistemologies values in rhet/comp? How can the digital humanities creating knowledge within those alternative epistemologies?

2) Are the digital humanities shifting the epistemological orientation of the humanities as a whole?

3) Jockers argues, “Thus far, my focus has been on describing thematic presence, but the thematic tendencies of nations and of genders may be seen not only in the those that are overrepresented in their novel but also in those that are conspicuously absent” (145). How does this work? Can DH assist in negative theology? Can DH methods help us know something though what it is not?