



Winter Schools “Computer Vision for Digital Humanists” & “Digitizing the Materiality of the Pre-Modern Book”

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CLARIAH Schools at the Uni Graz

The video schools discussed here were prompted by an internal discussion at the Centre for Information Modelling – Austrian Centre for the Digital Humanities (ZIM-ACDH, now the Department of Digital Humanities) of the University of Graz about the limited resources that scholars outside of established research clusters in our region had to access certain types of DH training. Looking at the example of the Rare Book School in the US, we think there is a lack of stand-alone course material to address common needs in the digitization of heritage materials in order to support smaller institutions and research groups, especially.

Challenges and Takeaways

Developing the schools for in-person participants helped with designing the school and meeting deadlines, but filming while teaching live turned out to be somewhat disruptive. The first school was filmed live, but we found that created competition between participants and the video for the focus of the sessions. For the second school, we developed it for the participants, and with feedback from those sessions, shot the majority of the lecture video on a separate day, with no distractions, speaking to the camera and a small audience of our colleagues.

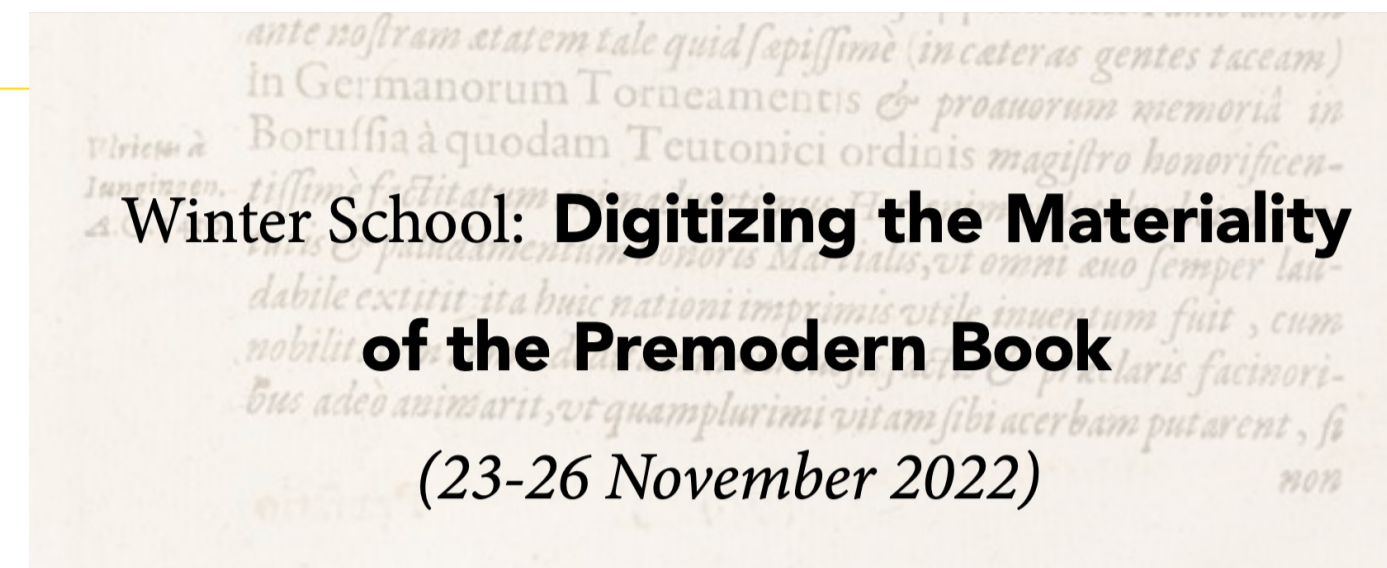
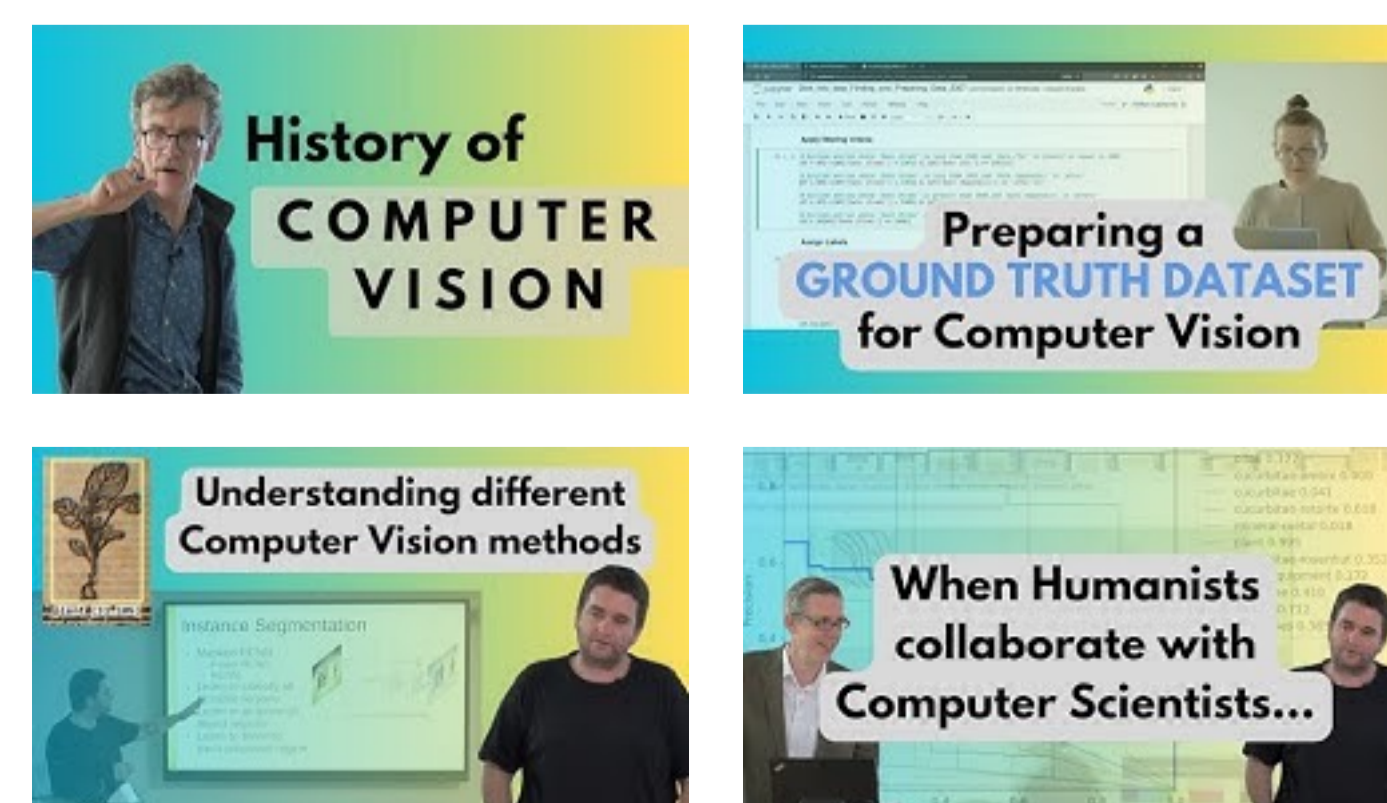
Integration into the DARIA-Teach platform is currently in progress, but in hopes of broadening the reach of the videos, we uploaded them to YouTube. Unfortunately, the way that platform algorithmically serves up videos has proved challenging. Without a large established viewer base or content designed to promote ‘engagement’, the videos do not get served up to people who would not already be in our target audience. In an age where ‘content creator’ is a full-time job, there is a need for academics to strongly consider the skills needed to create material which will engage with a wider audience.



Computer Vision for Digital Humanists

Machine learning has been a huge development that has immense potential for the types of problems (e.g. disproportionately large historical datasets to the amount of labour available) that many face in the humanities. But as is so often the case in the application of computing, funds and skill levels have seen the humanities lag in adoption of these exciting new tools. As part of the ERC Project *From Digital to Distant Diplomatics*, the ZIM-ACDH has been building capacity in Machine Learning and Computer Vision, and this course was developed to help transfer some of those skills, raising the level of comfort for participants and home viewers to design Computer Vision approaches for their humanities research.

The video school introduces theory in an approachable way and showcases practical skills using Python. Topics include data preparation, model construction and optimization, as well as no/low-code alternative services. As a course capstone, we present a conversation between a traditional humanist and computer vision expert on the challenges and rewards of this kind of collaboration.



Digitizing the Materiality of the Premodern Book

Showcasing the strengths of the University of Graz’ Library Digitization service, which has produced rare book imaging setups for a variety of major institutions, this video school combines that with the ZIM-ACDH’s departmental expertise in Digital Scholarly Editing, to provide an approachable and holistic look at the elements involved in providing digital facsimiles of historical books.

Videos in this course include an introduction to some of the treasures of the University Library’s Special Collections, practical exercises in description and the use of transcription tools, introduction to digitization and multispectral imaging, theory of digital scholarly editing, and considerations in the use of the TEI msDescription module for the representation of historical materials.

We hope that this school’s mix of behind-the-scenes look into a busy digitization lab and a mix of basic and intermediate theoretical groundings will prepare participants to design their own projects by orienting them to the possibilities in the field as well as the tradeoffs that must be made for resource and workflow reasons.



Find the Courses on YouTube!

youtube.com/@sarahalang



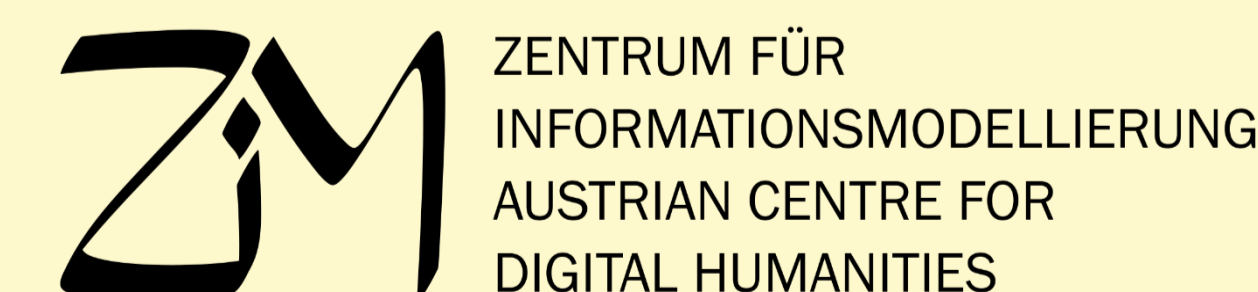
Computer Vision for Digital Humanists



Digitizing the Materiality of the Premodern Book

Acknowledgements

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