20 Cooper Square, Room 538
New York University
New York, NY 10003

609.619.0629 ☎
bs145@nyu.edu ✉
benschmidt.org 🌐
benmschmidt 🐦

Benjamin MacDonald Schmidt

appointments

New York University

Clinical Associate Professor of History. September 2019-Present.
Director of Digital Humanities. September 2019-Present.

Northeastern University

Assistant Professor of History. August 2013–June 2019.
Core Faculty, NuLab for Texts, Maps, and Networks. August 2013–June 2019.
Affiliate Faculty, Program in Information Design and Visualization. November 2014–June 2019.

Harvard University, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

Graduate Fellow, Cultural Observatory @ Harvard. 2011–2013.

education

Princeton University, Ph.D. in History, November 2013

Dissertation: "Paying Attention: The psychological subject in advertising, education, and culture, 1890–1960."
Committee: Daniel Rodgers (advisor), Emily Thompson (first reader), Anthony Grafton (second reader), Daniel Cohen (outside reader).

Princeton University, M.A. in History, June 2007

Major field in U.S. History 1865–2000.
Minor fields in European intellectual history 1870–2000 and American intellectual and cultural history.

Harvard University, A.B. in Social Studies, magna cum laude, June 2003

Honors thesis: "Adorno on the Air: Theodor Adorno and the Princeton Radio Research Project."
Advisor: Peter Eli Gordon.

publications

Academic Publications

"Creating Data: The Origins of Digitization in the American State, 1840-1940." Digital Monograph, in progress.

"Stable Random Projection: Lightweight, General-Purpose Dimensionality Reduction for Digitized Libraries." *Journal of Cultural Analytics.* 2018-09-30.

"Modeling Time,." *in 'The Shape of Data in Digital Humanities,' ed. Julia Flanders and Fotis Jannidis.* (Routledge, 2018)..

"Do Digital Humanists Need to Understand Algorithms?." *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, ed. Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein. 2016.

"Plot Arceology: A Vector Space Model of Plot." *Proceedings of the 2015 IEEE International Conference on Big Data.* 2015.

"Words Alone: Dismantling Topic Models in the Humanities." *Journal of Digital Humanities*, Vol. 2 No. 1. April 2013.

"Theory First." *Journal of Digital Humanities*, Vol. 1 No. 1. April 2012.

"Sapping Attention." November 2010-Present. Blog publishing original research and discussion in digital humanities, data visualization, and text mining.

"Bookworm." 2011-Present. Interactive website, database, and API.

Benjamin MacDonald Schmidt and Matthew Chingos, "Ranking Doctoral Programs by Placement: A New Method." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol 40, pages 523-529. July 2007.

General Audience Publications

Benjamin Schmidt, "The History Major since the Great Recession." *Perspectives*. December 2018.

"Is It Fair to Rate Professors Online?, The New York Times (Room for debate)." December 16, 2015.

Ben Schmidt, "The Humanities are in Crisis." *The Atlantic*. August 23, 2018.

Ben Schmidt and Mitch Fraas, "The Language of the State of the Union." *The Atlantic*. January 18, 2015.

Mitch Fraas and Ben Schmidt, "Mapping the State of the Union." *The Atlantic*. January 18, 2015.

"The data shows there's no real crisis." *The New York Times*, Room for Debate. November 4, 2013.

"The Language of Lincoln." *The Atlantic*. January 10, 2013.

"The Foreign Language of Mad Men." *The Atlantic*. March 22, 2012.

"Prochronisms." 2012-2015. Blog discussing changes in historical language through the lens of anachronisms in popular culture.

grants and fellowships

Similarity and Duplication in Digital Libraries. IMLS grant. Co-PI; Peter Organisciak, University of Denver.

NEH-Mellon Fellowships for Digital Publication for *Creating Data*, Calendar Year 2018. $50,400.

Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs: Visiting Fellow, Spring 2017

Proteus Project, development grant from Mellon Foundation. Join with University of Massachusetts. Northeastern co-director (with David Smith, Ryan Cordell, and Elizabeth Dillon). 2015-2016.

Bookworm Project, $350,000 implementation grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (2014-2016). Joint with University of Illinois and Rice University; Northeastern University project lead.

Bookworm Project, $50,000 continuation grant from the Digital Public Library of America (2013). Project developer and grant-writer. 2013.

invited talks   "Data in search of an argument." History as a Data Science Workshop (guest), Columbia University, New York. January 14, 2020.

"Reordering the digital library: what do 21st century algorithms make out of 19th century collections." University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. January 28, 2018.

"Visualizing and classifying large digital libraries." New York Public Library, New York City. July 29, 2016.

"Data Visualization for the Humanities." Digital Futures Initiative, Grinnell College. June 7, 2016.

"Historical Data Visualization." Institute for Quantitative Theory and Methods Data Visualization speaker series, Emory University. November 12, 2015.

"Plot Arceology." Literary Lab, Stanford University. May 11, 2015.

"Reconstructing the Map." Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis, Stanford University. May 10, 2015.

"Aggregate Americans: The US Census Bureau, data visualization, 1880-1940." Washington University in St Louis. February 26, 2015.

"Applying a grammar of visualization to millions of texts: the Bookworm project." College of Art, Media, and Design, Northeastern University. November 12, 2014.

"Bookworm: Exploring Massive Textual Collections through Metadata." Yale University Library, Yale University. May 12, 2014.

"Data-Driven Histories: Reinterpreting Nineteenth-Century Data." Department of History, University of Georgia. April 22, 2014.

"Data narratives and group dynamics in digital history: a case study in ships' logs." Digital History symposium and roundtable, University of Nebraska, Lincoln. April 11, 2014.

"History for the Digital Future: Digital Forms of Historical Scholarship." Friday Workshop Series of the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, University of Michigan. January 31, 2014.

"'Big Data' across Disciplines, from Cultural Studies to Culturomics." Workshop in History, Culture and Society, Sociology Department, Harvard University. March 27, 2013.

"Unintended Consequences: Digital Reading and the Loci of Cultural Change." Institute for Historical Research, London, UK. March 12, 2013.

"Digital Reading." Digital Humanities and the Americanist Seminar, Center for Cultural Analysis, Rutgers University. January 31, 2013.

"Humanities Research with Digital Libraries." ITHAKA S+R and Jstor teams, ITHAKA building, New York City. April 16, 2012.

"A History of Attention." Emily Harvey Foundation, New York City. March 17, 2012.

"Bookworm." Beta Sprint Competition Selection, Digital Public Library of America Plenary Meeting, Washington, DC. October 21, 2011.

workshops   "Text Mining the Digital Library with Hathi Trust Extended Features." NYC Week of DH. January, 2020.

"Thinking Through Word Embeddings for the Humanities." Carnegie Mellon University. June, 2018.

"Thinking Through Word Embeddings for the Humanities." NYC Week of DH. January, 2018.

"Classification and the Library." History Lab group, Columbia University. April 19, 2016.

"Text Analytics for Medical History (Instructor, NEH/NIH workshop)." National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD. April 11, 2016.

"An Introduction to Text Analysis for Historians." Digital History Workshop Sessions, Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, New York. January 2, 2015.

"Global Literary Networks Work Retreat." Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, University of Chicago. December 4-5, 2014.

"Doing Digital History: A Graduate Student Workshop." University of Georgia. April 21, 2014.

"Digital Methods for conceptual history." International Research School in Conceptual History and Political Thought; two-day guest instructor, Helsinki University. August 2012.

conference talks   "What will the liberal arts look like in 10 years?." ITHAKA Next Wave Conference 2018, New York City. November 29, 2018.

"Stable Random Projection: Universal, Minimal Dimensionality Reduction for Books." Digital Humanities 2017, Montreal. August 2017.

"Drawing the frontier line at the US Census, 1870-1920." Columbia University, New York. April 8, 2017.

"A public exploratory data analysis of gender bias in teaching evaluations." IEEEViz Workshop on Visualization for the Digital Humanities, Baltimore. October 24, 2016.

"Invited presentation." Integration of education in the sciences, engineering, and medicine with the arts and humanities at the undergraduate and graduate levels, National Academy of Sciences, Cambridge MA. October 14, 2016.

"Exploratory Narratives." Digital Humanities + Data Journalism conference, University of Miami. October 1, 2016.

"Data Revisualization as Critical Humanities Practice: Reinterpreting 19th Century Data with Modern Tools." Digital Humanities 2015 Conference, Sydney, Australia. July 1, 2015.

"Historical data revisualization: Turner, Walker, and envisioning the frontier." Roundtable on data visualization and historical practice, Annual Meeting of the American History Association. January 3, 2015.

"Bookworm: Building an expressive grammar of humanities text analysis." The Digital Crucible, Dartmouth College. October 7, 2014.

"Why we worry about humanities enrollments." Panel on responses to the American Academy Report on the Humanities, National Conference on Public History; Monterey, California. March 2014.

"Transforming Texts into Cartesian Spaces." New Media in American Literary History symposium, Northeastern University. December 2013.

"Reading texts with Big Metadata: the Bookworm platform for digital books, newspapers, and other libraries." Featured Talk, Boston Area Days of DH, Northeastern University. March 19, 2013.

"Reading Genres: Exploring Massive Digital Collections From the Top Down." Big Data and Uncertainty in the Humanities, University of Kansas. September 22, 2012.

"Paying Attention: A Case Study in Conceptual History with Millions of Texts." Panel on Digital Approaches to Conceptual History, 15th International Conference on the History of Concepts, Helsinki, Finland. August 24, 2012.

"Drifting Metaphors: Using Digital Libraries to Describe Discursive Change." Panel on Computational Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Literary History, Conference of the American Literature Association, San Francisco. May 24, 2012.

"Digital Collections and Research Libraries." Research Libraries in the Digital Age: Needs and Opportunities Conference (invited presentation), American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. March 30, 2012.

"A Conversation about Text Mining as a Research Method." Roundtable participant, Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago. January 8, 2012.

"Practicing Intellectual History on the Digital Archive." Paper, Modern America Workshop, Princeton University. March 2011.

"The Rise of the American Attention Span, 1890-1935." Paper, Modern America Workshop, Princeton University. March 2010.

courses taught

"Bostonography: Exploring the city through texts, maps, and networks. Co-taught with Ryan Cordell." Fall 2016. (Undergraduate)

"United States History from 1607 to the present." Spring 2019; Fall 2017. (Undergraduate)

"Texts, Maps, and Networks: Readings and Methods for Digital History." Fall 2015; Fall 2016; Fall 2017. (Graduate)

"Humanities Data Analysis." Spring 2019; Spring 2015. (Graduate)

"The Making of Modern America: The United States, 1877-1945." Fall 2014. (Undergraduate)

"The History of Big Data." Fall 2013, Fall 2014. (First Year Honors Seminar)

"History in the Digital Age." Spring 2014. (Undergraduate)

"Introduction to Digital History." Fall 2013. (Graduate)

public history

Museum

American Whaling exhibits at the New Bedford Whaling Museum 2014-2015.

Mapping the Frontier, Boston Public Library 2019.

Language Consulting

Historical Language Consultant, "Masters of Sex," Season 2. Showtime Television. 2014.

Historical Language Consultant, "Vegas," Season 1. Eye Productions/CBS television. 2012-2013.

TV and Radio Appearances

"Think" with Krys Boyd, KERA Dallas. "Go ahead, Major in Philosophy." September 10, 2018.

Morning Edition, National Public Radio. Discussing gendered language and teaching evaluations. February 23, 2015.

WBAL, Baltimore. Discussing the State of the Union Address. January 20, 2015.

New England Cable News. Discussing "The Simpsons." September 2014.

The Kojo Nnamdi Show, WAMU Washington DC. Hourlong guest discussing Digital Humanities. February 19, 2013.

On the Media, National Public Radio. Discussing historical fiction and computational changes in language. (Version of Lexicon Valley interview, below). June 15, 2012.

Lexicon Valley podcast, Slate.com. June 11, 2012.

Weekends with Alex Witt, MSNBC. Discussing Mad Men. March 24, 2012.

Selected media coverage

Is the Professor Bossy or Brilliant? Much Depends on Gender When F-Bombs Went Mainstream, Who Talks about Terrorism, and Other Surprising Cultural Insights from Big Data Nobody Said That Then! Quants Ask: What Crisis in the Humanities?

service

Service to the Profession

Advisory board, "What Every1Says." Mellon Foundation-funded project on public discourse around the humanities.. 2017-2019.

Working Group on Big Data and History, Social Science Resource Council. 2015-Present.

Advisory Board, Culture Analytics. 2015-Present.

Grant reviewer, National Endowment for the Humanities. 2014.

Digital Content Advisor, The American Yawp, Online History Textbook. 2014-Present.

Participant, Hathi Trust Research Center Un-Camp. September 10-11, 2012.

Invited Participant, Digital Public Library of America Technical Development Meeting. December 2011.

Service to the Department and University

Committee on undergraduate research, College of Social Sciences and Humanities.. 2016.

Committee on experiential liberal arts, CSSH. 2015.

Graduate Committee, Northeastern University History Department. 2014-16.

Faculty Search Committee, Northeastern University. 2015-16.

Undergraduate Research Committee, Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities. 2014.

Committee on Digital Humanities Graduate Certificate. 2015.

Working Group on Evaluation of Digital Scholarship, Northeastern University. 2015.

Faculty Search Committee, Northeastern University. 2014-15.

Participant, Digital Working Group, Harvard History Department. 2013.

Departmental Representative, Princeton Graduate Student Government. 2010–2011.

Treasurer, Princeton Graduate History Association. 2008-2010.

Secretary, Princeton Graduate History Association. 2006-2008.

Director, Modern America Workshop, Princeton University. 2007-2008.

research competencies

Computing Platforms

Substantial experience (could lead workshops): R, Python, Javascript, MySQL, D3.

Research/collaborative use: HTML5/CSS, Unix administration, Haskell, ArcGIS/QGIS, perl, La-Tex, JQuery.

Languages

German (intermediate), Spanish (reading), French (reading).