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Introduction: Projects


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INTRODUCTION: PROJECTS

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In the Notes section of this cluster, we present six descriptions of ongoing projects that use digital methods to support and enhance the study of Dante's works, both as they were understood and experienced in their own time and as they are in ours. Together with the projects discussed in the Essays above, these research endeavors represent unique corners within the vast landscape of possibilities that would apply digital methodologies to Dante's oeuvre. The projects described herein run from professionally designed and developed visualization tools, to bespoke uses of sophisticated academic computing platforms, to independently maintained projects on open-access platforms and free servers. We are delighted to showcase such a range, not only because it makes evident the long history and rich diversity of projects that utilize digital methodologies to further study of Dante's works and legacy, but also because we hope that it will encourage the DH-curious to imagine new possibilities for this ever-growing and -changing field of study.

The section begins, appropriately, with the work of one of the earliest adopters of open-access digital publication in Dante studies: Julia Bolton Holloway. Holloway's discussion invites readers to follow her trajectory as a self-starting digital entrepreneur, whose innovative use of well-worn academic computing technologies showcases her decades of deep study into the Florence of Dante and Brunetto Latini. Also inviting us into the literary and cultural environment of Dante and his interlocutors is the team behind [Dante's Library](#), hosted by Duke University and platformed on WordPress. Alyssa Granacki, the site's managing editor, details the team's investment in recovering the material experience of reading in Dante's imagined library. [Dante's Library](#) bridges text and image to ground Dante's system of intertextual resonances in the physical world of books and other material artifacts.

Continuing in the vein of visualizations are two projects that seek to build on the work of virtual galleries like those contained within Deborah Parker's [World of Dante](#) and Guy Raffa's [Danteworlds](#). The Visual Agency's [Divinecomedy.digital](#), online

since 2021, offers a glimpse into the visual reception of the poem across time. As detailed by Matteo Bonera and Anna Bardazzi – two leading members of the eighteen-person professional team that developed the tool – [Divinecomedy.digital](#) enables a “slow surfing experience” of the poem’s visual reception, with its horizontal scrolling feature that permits the user to peruse the 1,194 artworks in the database. While [Divinecomedy.digital](#) offers a diachronic view of Dantesque iconography, the team of researchers behind *Literary Visualization* – led by Simone Marchesi and Pamela Patton of Princeton University – aims at a synchronic view, presenting a “visual encyclopedia” of medieval iconography linked to the figures, places, events, and other visualizable elements of Dante’s poem. In their effort to recreate the visual media a medieval reader might have associated with the poem, they upend current expectations for visualization, which have long been filtered through 19th- and 20th-century illustrative traditions.

Another project that seeks to recuperate readerly experience is Dartmouth University’s [Dante Lab](#), the successor to the revolutionary [Dartmouth Dante Project](#). As Danielle Callegari describes, the [Dante Lab](#) allows the researcher to call forth the text of the poem alongside translations and commentaries in up to four windows on the desktop, replicating the reader’s desk with its stacks of texts all simultaneously open for comparison. Likewise, the [Hypermedia Dante Network](#) builds on the success of the [Dartmouth Dante Project](#), enriching the potential of its predecessor by applying Semantic Web standards to the study of Dante’s primary sources. Gaia Tomazzoli introduces the [Hypermedia Dante Network](#), an extension of their team’s previous success with [DanteSources](#), which had allowed researchers to query the primary sources related to Dante’s *opere minori* according to source, author, theme, and reference. The team behind the [Hypermedia Dante Network](#), then, created a new ontology to extend these search capabilities to the sources of the *Commedia*. Together, these projects do not merely replicate conventional methods of study; they enrich these methods by enabling simultaneous study across multiple modalities, at greater speeds and across grander scales.

For all its richness, the range of projects applying DH methods to Dante’s texts has by no means been exhausted. Suffice it to consider the pioneering work of Prue Shaw and Peter Robinson, whose critical edition of the *Commedia* saw an open-access reboot in 2021, or the early iterations of University of Pennsylvania PhD student Andrea Gazzoni’s now-defunct *Mapping Dante* project, which was online from 2016–2020. As recently as November 2022, Guyda Armstrong announced Manchester University’s new *Envisioning Dante* project, which

uses machine learning techniques to examine the production and transmission of the *Commedia* in the first century and a half of print technologies. One could well imagine projects that would apply the principles of text encoding and text mining, network analysis, GIS and other mapping tools, IIF manifests, digital archives and curatorial work, virtual and augmented reality systems, and machine learning – among other possibilities – to explore and expand the universes of Dante’s works. There are, of course, also countless possibilities for pedagogical projects that would challenge students to hone critical technical skills while delving into the worlds of Dante’s poem. While many of the tools that are described in this cluster represent incomparable teaching aids for self-study or further exploration of the poem, the possibilities of incorporating digital methodologies into the Dante classroom – along the lines of Laura Ingallinella’s Wikimedia collaboration, or the work of Duke PhD students on [Dante’s Library](#), Princeton PhD students on *Literary Visualization*, and Columbia PhD students on [Digital Dante](#) – would permit students to develop the kinds of technical skills that transfer to an exciting array of humanities careers, both academic and not.

Whatever the future holds for Dante studies in the realm of the digital, and however ephemeral its products may prove to be, the long and rich history of digital engagement with the *Commedia* suggests that this is only the beginning. We look forward to all that lies ahead.