Crowdsourcing Transcription: Putting Users in the Driver’s Seat

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Mark Anderson
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Conclusion

Crowdsourcing is not the most cost-effective way of generating transcriptions for manuscript materials.

Crowdsourcing is a very worthwhile activity and yields numerous benefits.
Viewpoints

“The concept of a wisdom of the masses is ...fanciful, and erroneous... A CW project such as this requires the reader/transcriber to not only decipher handwriting, but to have some sense of the verbiage of the times, the forms of address and even of the artifacts or implements that might be mentioned in the context of such entries... Crowdsourcing may provide interesting ethnographic lab opportunities, but is a lousy way to get anything done.”
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“...the best argument: not that crowdsourcing saves time or resources but that it gets a larger community of people involved and interested. This could, in fact, be a key component to rescuing the humanities from oblivion: give more people access to and a vested interest in our work by inviting them to help.”
“...the best argument: not that crowdsourcing saves time or resources but that it gets a larger **community** of people involved and interested. This could, in fact, be a key component to rescuing the humanities from oblivion: give more people access to and a vested interest in our work by inviting them to help.”
confide in and fear your love but if you are afraid to trust it to my keeping again I will have to be satisfied for it is my own fault but I do not think you will ever have reason to doubt me again if can again trust me The weather is cool and disagreeable it has been raining some to day and snowing and then the sun will shine. I have been to two turky roast this week and one oyster supper and had an invitation to one last evening at Mr Adams but had the sick head ache so could not (but went to prayer meeting instead they did not like it much but I could not help it) I know I enjoyed my self when I was better than if I had went with them to Mr Adams I am going to Mr Sallenhagers to a turky roast to night it is the fifth one in the last two weeks dont you
Shelton family papers, 1864-1936

Saturday April 23rd
This has been a day of some excitement. The surgeon in charge and Dr. Litchfield called early on the morning. Mrs. Logan and I were sent into town to get in some eggs. The girls stood in the town and raised the white flag. It made us feel like asking them to leave us. I shall not forget the mile filling bed in which we were all refilled to let us have an arm balance. The girls knelt on the dirt and raised the white flag.
June 07, 2011

Crowdsourcing the Civil War

By Elizabeth Grant

Have a little time to spare? Consider helping transcribe Civil War letters and diaries online.

In commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the libraries of the University of Iowa put together the exhibit “Now Do Not Let Your Courage Fail: Voices from the Civil War,” currently on display at the university, which incorporates letters and diaries from three manuscript collections. As a part of this exhibit documents were scanned and made available online here (image below).

While the scanning of 3,013 pages of letters and diaries is an accomplishment, they still need to be transcribed to make them more readable and searchable for those who visit them online (see an example of a transcribed and finished document). Since transcribing is a time-consuming and costly endeavor for a small staff at a university library, they’re turning to the help of the masses to get this done.
TIL how to participate in history while sitting on my ass by transcribing Civil War diaries online.

In a way, you are already doing that by logging in to some websites with captchas from google reCAPTCHA :) . Currently digitizing old New York Times editions. See how it works.

That knowledge makes me actually a little happy every time I have to deal with one. It also makes me extra careful, because if I mess up it has actual consequences beyond just having to retyp it.

Civil War-era Reddit:

"DAE have a weird red line growing up their arm after getting cut?"
"TIL how to reload one-handed [PICTURE!]
"IAmA crewman on the USS Merrimack (IRONCLAD!) AMA!!"
"I got sent to the front lines, and need all the karma I can get..."
[–] Dude_man79  32 points 4 months ago

Anyone else getting a really slow connection to this site?

[–] CommentsInHaiku  234 points 4 months ago

Reddit the giant
Wants to pet the small website
Squishes it instead
Handwritten cookbooks, ca. 1600s-1860s, documenting culinary history in America and Europe and how tastes have changed over the years. Help improve access to these historic documents by transcribing handwritten pages, reviewing transcriptions (look for items marked “Needs Review”), and correcting typewritten text. Select an item below to start transcribing or create an account to enjoy additional features.

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<th>Cookbook Name</th>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Start Percentage</th>
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<td>Dr. J. C. Smith family</td>
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Enter your transcription below:

- Copy the text as is, including misspellings and abbreviations.
- No need to account for formatting (e.g. spacing, line breaks, alignment); the goal is to provide text for searching.
- If you can't make out a word, enter "[illegible]"; if uncertain, indicate with square brackets, e.g. "[illegible]".
- View more transcription tips.

Cure for Caked Begr in Cows
Give one lb Epsom Salts, and a few hours after a warm Bran Mash made by scalding the bran with boiling water bathe the Bag with hot water followed with dry rubbing.

To remove films from the Eyes of Cattle and Horses
Take a piece of Leather, burn it to Cinder, pulverize it to a powder fine, blow a large Goose quill full into the Eye affected - one application generally

Save edits