



Reports and Commentaries

DIGITAL MNEMONICS IN SLAVONIC STUDIES
(AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE JOINT SPRING SCHOOL
BY THE UNIVERSITIES OF CAMBRIDGE, OXFORD AND PASSAU)

Dirk Uffelmann

The Spring School *Digital Mnemonics in Slavonic Studies* tries to set new standards for the study of digital memory cultures based on communication genres from the World Wide Web. One of the main objectives of the Spring School is to explore the effectiveness of combining the qualitative methodology of humanities (area studies, politics, and history), with the quantitative methods of computer linguistics and statistics (data mining, text mining/analysis, web mining etc.). Relying on the participants' diverse knowledge in the cultural and professional area of concern, the Spring School will gain insights into the digital representations and the reprocessing of cultural memories and their mutual dynamic interdependence in East Central Europe and Russia.

The impact of the internet on today's social and political reality is undeniable. In 2011-2012, rallies and rebellions in Iran and Arab countries have shown the propelling effect of Twitter, Facebook and the blogging sphere on essential political processes. Similar trends are visible in today's Russia, where the resistance-movement against President Vladimir Putin is using internet-based methods of communication to organise and review its protests.

It is clear that internet communication platforms and blogs change not only the pace and complexity of communication. They also have an undeniable impact on social organisation and the social imaginary that goes beyond struggles for civil rights and political freedom: digital media is fundamentally changing the way that societies are dealing with their history and cultural memory. In order to reflect upon this digital shift a new method of research is needed, which combines political science, cultural studies, and humanities on the one hand, and technical sciences on the other.

The Spring School's research issue is to explore cultural memory as a process. This process continuously develops in time and leaves traces in various media that can then be empirically studied. The development and distribution of new media and cultural technologies changes conversely with cultural memory so that they coexist in a complex reciprocal interdependence. Hence, nowadays new methods of scientific research and theoretical approaches to memory studies are required concerning their manifestation in new digital media. Special

attention must be paid to the fact that the internet is not merely a medium for representations of cultural memory, but also an object of study (digital mnemonics).

The Spring School is a pioneering project that will develop relevant methodologies for quantitative studies of cultural memory and will also test these methods in a series of comparative studies. These methods will allow the participants to formulate and prove or disprove hypotheses that address developments, asymmetries, and disruptions in cultural representations of the past in the World Wide Web.

On the other hand, the project will explore new options (for Slavonic Studies) for qualitative and quantitative analyses of mnemonic topographies of digital memory cultures (resources, knowledge, actors, and recipients). Further, it will investigate the different communication genres of the internet, especially the form of communication they require and the way this form of communication interferes with memory culture and how it influences its various manifestations.

The significance of the project for the participants of the Spring School lies in combining the current research projects of young scholars with pioneering methods of investigating digital memory cultures. Especially important will be establishing conditions for lively discussions and dialogue between leading and young scientists, which will prepare the foundation for future (joint) research. The Spring School acquaints young academics with advanced knowledge important for the further development of research on digital memory cultures – a rapidly developing field of academic interest. Above all, they are encouraged to initiate cooperation beyond national or disciplinary borders at a very early stage of research, technically supported by the Spring School's website project.

The Spring School *Digital Mnemonics in Slavonic Studies*, generously funded by Volkswagen Foundation, which will take place in Freising, Germany, from March 23rd to 30th, 2013, is a joint project of the Universities of Cambridge (UK), Oxford (UK) and Passau (Germany). Initiated by Alexander Etkind (Cambridge), Polly Jones (Oxford) and Dirk Uffelmann (Passau), the school also comprises input lectures by leading scholars on memory cultures (Julie Fedor, Andrew Hoskins and Martin Schulze Wessel), the technical dimensions of web-based data mining (Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa and Gudrun Wirtz), and the confrontation of memory representations on the Internet (Adi Kuntsman and Ellen Rutten). The Spring School will address 15 graduate and post-graduate students with Slavonic expertise (selected by the Spring School's supervising board after an international call for applications) from different disciplines and countries (Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Serbia, UK, Ukraine, USA).

The outcomes of the research will be documented online on the website <http://digital-mnemonics.rzblogs.uni-passau.de/> created for the purpose, which portrays the project and functions as a fundamental database of findings. In addition to documentation the website will facilitate a media archive and profiles of all the participants.

References

- Adler, N. "Reconciliation with – or Rehabilitation of – the Soviet Past?". *Memory Studies* 5,3 (2012), pp. 327-338.
- Assmann, A. *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011.
- Berry, D.M. *Understanding Digital Humanities*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2012.
- Boym, S. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books 2001.
- Connerton, P. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989.
- van Dijck, J. *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press 2007.
- Erll, A. *Memory in Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2011.
- Etkind, A. "Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror". *Constellations* 16,1 (2009), pp. 182-200.
- Etkind, A., et al. *Remembering Katyn*. Cambridge: Polity 2011.
- Fedor, J., & G. Nikiporets-Takigawa. "What's the Colour of Russian Protest?". *East European Memory Studies* 10 (2012), pp. 6-12. <http://www.memoryatwar.org/enewsletter-May-2012.pdf>.
- Garde-Hansen, J., A. Hoskins & A. Reading (eds.). *Save As... Digital Memories*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009.
- Hirsch, M. "The Generation of Postmemory". *Poetics Today* 29,1 (2008), pp. 103-128.
- Hoskins, A. "Digital Network Memory". *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Theory*. Ed. by A. Erll and A. Rigney. Berlin: de Gruyter 2012, pp. 91-106.
- Howanitz, G. "Stalin and Computer Games". *East European Memory Studies* 10 (2012), pp. 1-5. <http://www.memoryatwar.org/enewsletter-May-2012.pdf>.
- Gold, M. (ed.). *Debates in Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis (MN): University of Minnesota Press 2012.
- Kunstman, A. "Online Memories, Digital Conflicts and the Cybertouch of War". *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* 4 (2010), pp. 1-12. <http://www.digitalicons.org/issue04/files/2010/11/Kuntsman-4.12.pdf>.
- Leggewie, C. 2009. "Battlefield Europe: Transnational Memory and European Identity". *Eurozine*. <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2009-04-28-leggewie-en.pdf>.
- Levy, D., & N. Sznajder. *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. Philadelphia (PA): Temple University Press 2006.
- Maj, A. & D. Riha. *Digital Memories: Exploring Critical Issues*. Oxford 2011.
- Manovich, L. "Trending: The Promises and the Challenges of Big Social Data" (2011), http://www.manovich.net/DOCS/Manovich_trending_paper.pdf.
- Morenkova, E. "(Re)creating the Soviet Past in Russian Digital Communities: Between Memory and Mythmaking". *Digital Icons* 7 (2012), pp. 39-66. http://www.digitalicons.org/issue07/files/2012/06/7.2_Morenkova.pdf.
- Nikiporets-Takigawa, G. "Komp'juternye resursy dlia gumanitarnykh issledovaniy". *Journal of Japanese Association for Slavonic and East European Studies* 27 (2006), pp. 3-24.

- Nikiporets-Takigawa, G. "4 November and the History of Russian Protest". *East European Memory Studies* 9 (2012), pp. 8-10, <http://www.memoryatwar.org/enewsletter-feb-2012.pdf>.
- Olick, J., et al. (eds.). *The Collective Memory Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011.
- Rogers, R. "Internet Research: The Question of Method". *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 2/3 (2010), pp. 241-260.
- Rothberg, M. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2009.
- Rutten, E., J. Fedor & V. Zvereva (eds.). *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*. London: Routledge (forthcoming).
- Ryan, L. "Memory, Power and Resistance: The Anatomy of a Tripartite Relationship". *Memory Studies* 4,2 (2010), pp. 154-169.
- Saunders, R.A., "Wiring the Second World: The Geopolitics of Information and Communications Technology in Post-Totalitarian Eurasia". *Russian Cyberspace* 1,1 (2009), pp. 1-24. http://www.digitalicons.org/issue01/pdf/issue1/Wiring-the-Second-World_R-A-Saunders.pdf.
- Stone, D. "Memory, Memorials and Museums". *The Historiography of the Holocaust*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, pp. 509-532.
- Uffelmann, D. „Umriß einer crossmedialen und grenzüberschreitenden Slavistik“. *Medien und Wandel*. Ed. by Christoph Barmeyer et al. Berlin: Logos 2011, pp. 161-183.
- Vermeulen, P., et al. "Dispersal and Redemption: The Future Dynamics of Memory Studies – A Roundtable". *Memory Studies* 5,2 (2012), pp. 233-239.
- Welker, M., & C. Wunsch (eds.). *Die Online-Inhaltsanalyse. Forschungsobjekt Internet*. Köln: Halem 2010.
- Winter, J.M. *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press 2006.
- Zhurzhenko, T. "Heroes into Victims: The Second World War in Post-Soviet Memory Politics". *Eurozine* 2012. <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2012-10-31-zhurzhenko-en.pdf>.

DIRK UFFELMANN studied Russian, Polish, Czech and German Literature at the Universities of Tübingen, Vienna, Warsaw, and Constance. He obtained his PhD from the University of Constance in 1999 and defended his second thesis (Habilitation) at the University of Bremen in 2005 before teaching as Lecturer in Russian at the University of Edinburgh. He also was a visiting professor at the University of Bergen, Norway, Western Michigan University, USA, and visiting fellow at the University of Cambridge.

At present, he is Professor and Chair of Slavic Literatures and Cultures and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs at the University of Passau. His research interests are Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Central Asian literature, philosophy, religion, migration and internet studies. He is co-editor of the journal *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* as well as of the book series *Postcolonial Perspectives on Eastern Europe* and *Polonistik im Kontext*. [uffelmann@uni-passau.de]