Week 7: Data & Digital History

What is ?big data? and how does it change how we study history? How is data organized for history projects? Getting started with the Chicago Homicide Database. ~How do historians use evidence to make and support arguments about the past?

Before Class

 Read: James Grossman, ?Big Data: An Opportunity for Historians?? Perspectives on History, March 2012.
 Read: Graham, Shawn, Ian Milligan, Scott Weingart. "Putting Big Data to Good Use: An Overview,? The Historian's Macroscope.
- Explore: Historical Census Data, University of Virginia Libraries]
- *I'll provide you an excerpt (in a spreadsheet) of the Chicago Homicide Database, which we will use in class.

Blog Assignment
Due Sunday, October 25th at noon. Worth 3 points. Blog responses should be at least 300 words; they should be written in a semi-formal scholarly style (with complete thoughts and correct spelling, grammar, syntax, and full citations). Partial responses (including responses that fail to meet the minimum word length or clearly fail to answer the prompt) will receive partial credit. Late posts will not be accepted.

On your blog this week, I'd like you to write about the trends in the data about saloon deaths. After you've cleaned your data, do you notice any obvious trends? Anything particularly interesting to you? Anything that doesn't make sense? Write about those. Refer to the data as much as you can and be as explicit as you can with what you found.

Here are some other questions to help you formulate your response, but you don't need to answer them all: What questions are you asking yourself and if this were your topic, what other information would you want to know? Based on the information in the data, what do you already know about saloon deaths? What else would you like to know?

You are going to have to think critically about the data that is in front of you. You may need to do some initial analysis. Practice the skills we went over in class and try to make an argument about what's contained the database.

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