Genealogy as digital objects with stories to support research

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ach2023

29 June - 1 July 2023, Virtual Conference

Outline

Humanities research on genealogy data in library

- Cultural heritage data in library

- Genealogy data

- Stories in GLAMs and genealogy stories to support research

Methodology

- Bakhtin's theory of chronotope

The Chinese Genealogy Knowledge Service Platform at Shanghai Library

- Data used, methodology, functions

- From digital objects to research contexts

- What we have achieved and the challenges

Cultural heritage data in library

"Culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a society or a social group" *(UNESCO)*

- Books and manuscripts
- Photographs
- Audiovisual materials
- Genealogy materials, stone inscriptions & other forms of human knowledge

Stories in GLAMs

GLAM institutions:

- Repositories for the human record and creativity
- Collections of various forms of human narrative
- Need appropriate ways to fully present, reconstruct, and disseminate those 'stories'
- Stories are important elements of cultural heritage[1]

***Digital
Turn***

Methodological and epistemological shift in GLAMs (Barber, 2016; Daković, 2021)
'Storytelling' to 'Digital storytelling'

[1] https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights/history-and-memorialisation-narratives-about-past-examined-through-lens-cultural-rights

Genealogy data

Genealogy book: record of family names and members (traditionally males) since the Western Zhou Dynasty (Chinese: 西周; c. 1045 – 771 BC)

- A valuable source to understand family history: how families grow, immigrations, important events, celebrities in the family, etc.
- An evidence of social history: events recorded in family history are also events in that area at that time (wars, population policy, etc.)
- A material to educate later generations: instructions recorded on the genealogy book

Genealogy stories towards research:

- Family dynamics and social structures over time
- Patterns of migration and settlement
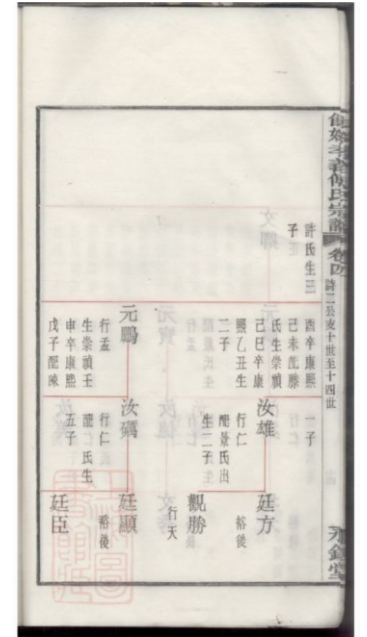
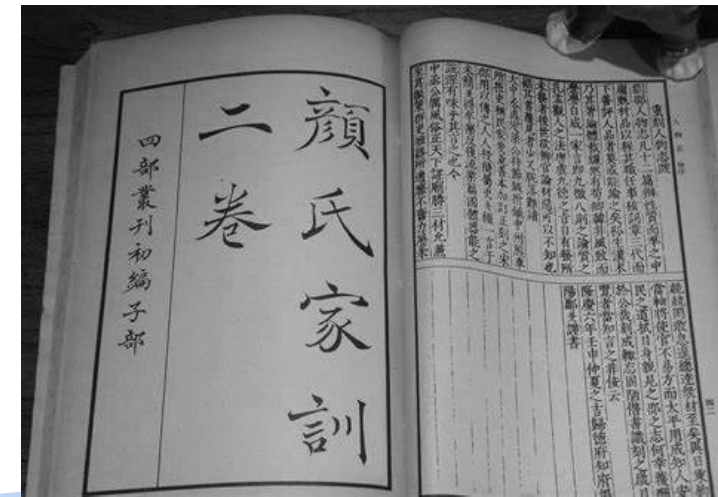Fig1. Digitized image of a genealogy book

Fig2. Image of Family Yan's instruction

Bakhtin's theory of chronotope

Narrative time-space continuum in the context of cultural heritage resources

"Chronotope":
- relationship between time and space in literature
- a specific way of organizing time and space within the narrative
- shapes the way the characters interact with each other and with their environment
- reflects the cultural and historical context in which the work was created

Application:
- analyze the ways in which cultural practices and discourses are shaped by the temporal and spatial contexts in which they occur
- provides a framework for analyzing the complex relationships between time, space, and culture

The Chinese Genealogy Knowledge Service Platform

- around 70,000 entries
- event ontology designed
- more than 100,000 migration events
- spanning more than 3,000 years

https://jiapu.library.sh.cn/

Research process and research methods

Data collection
Related historical literature and multimedia resources (old photos, movies, music recordings, etc.)

Ontology design
Ontology designed to describe the relationships between the persons, places, time, the literature itself, and with each other.

RDF description
Ontology-modeled data is converted into RDF format

Linked data
Data is published on the web by linked data. Identified and located by an HTTP URI

Digital storytelling
Family names and related narrative elements are extracted to help user explore family stories

chronotope theory
places the narrative time-space continuum in the context of cultural heritage resources

Library collections

Interface design

Functions

Search and refine function

Functions

View digital images with IIIF

Functions

Explore celebrities by family name

Project website

From digital objects to research contexts

Genealogy materials scattered around

Build ontology and extract entity

Used in multiple contexts (targeted research, open data product design, art design etc.)

Repair, preserve & digitize
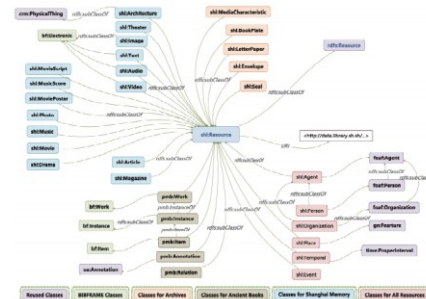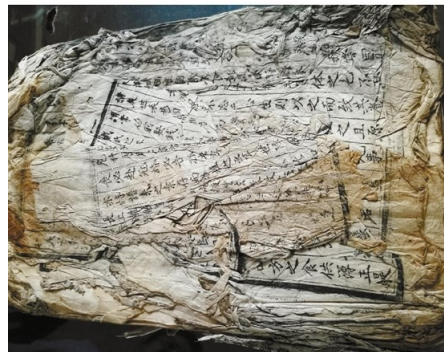
Build platform to support browsing, retrieval and research
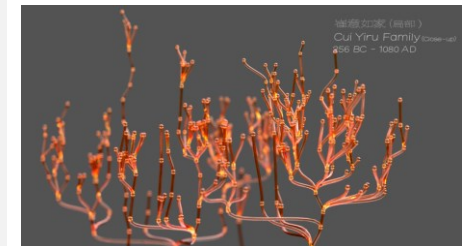
Diverse research context

Fig1. Website of the 8th Shanghai Library Open Data Contest (https://opendata.library.sh.cn/)

Fig2. Open data SHL provides (More than 150 million), Genealogy data (More than 89,000 items)

Fig3. Family tree design by Xiangfan which used SHL genealogy data

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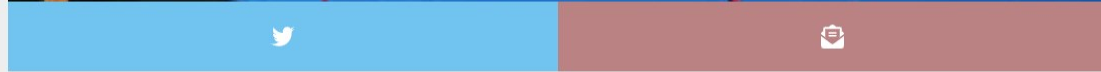
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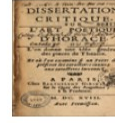
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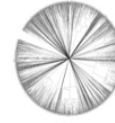
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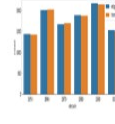
The Journal of Open Humanities Data

- Launched in 2015; open access and peer-reviewed
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- Vision: be a key part of a thriving community of scholars sharing humanities data
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- Submission guidelines: https://openhumanitiesdata.metajnl.com/about/submissions/

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To close

Currently:
- we have library users exploring their own family history
- some research context, such as our open data contest each year

But...
- challenge is to facilitate more collaborations with researchers
- need to find diverse research context to explore the value in the genealogy data
- for the librarians to work closely with researchers in supporting their research journey

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Thank you!

The Chinese Genealogy Knowledge Service Platform:
https://jiapu.library.sh.cn/

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