

In This Issue

This is a special issue on digital history, devoted to articles that consider the ways in which historians of law have made use of digital resources. The articles were submitted in response to a call for papers that we sent out last fall, and it is gratifying to see both the number and the range of submissions we received.

The articles we are printing in this issue offer a map of the different approaches that legal historians have taken to digital history. The first three pieces discuss sustained, but ultimately very different, work to digitalize legal materials. The article by Jason Eiseman, Whitney Bagnall, Cate Kellett and Caitlyn Lam describes the efforts to digitalize the Litchfield Notebooks and the decisions that went into that process. David Seipp's article tells of his creation of a database of Year Books. The last piece in this section, by Mark Finnane and Alana Piper, describes the creation of a large database of Australian criminal trials, and provides an example of some of the patterns that the database suggests.

The next set of four articles show the different ways that legal historians have used databases to understand legal patterns and trends. In their article, Richard Ward and Lucy Williams describe a project that linked several digital sources to create a database that allowed them to create "life archives" for several thousand people convicted of crimes in England in the period from 1780 to 1925, and then data-mined those archives for patterns. In the next article, Tim Hitchcock and William Turkel recount their use of text mining to search the Old Bailey digital archive for evidence of shifts in court behavior in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the third article in this section, David Tanenhaus and Eric Nystrom describe one stage in their larger project that will use text mining algorithms to discern similarities across legislative documents. And in the final work in this section, Charles Romney used a word-context vector space model to look at the how habeas corpus was used and understood in the Kingdom of Hawaii between 1852 and 1892.

The article by Michael Ng, T. Edwin Chow and David W.S. Wong shifts the reader's focus away from words to space and mapping. Ng offers a

preliminary glimpse of the ways in which using a mapping tool, geographic information systems (GIS), can help legal historians understand the role of law in colonial Hong Kong. The forum closes with an article by Stephen Robertson. In his piece, Robertson wraps up this forum by considering these articles in the larger context of digital history. He puts the different articles in this issue into conversation with one another and with other works in the developing field of digital history. Along the way, he offers some thoughts about where digital history and digital legal history may go next.

This issue concludes with a selection of book reviews. We invite readers to also consider American Society for Legal History's electronic discussion list, H-Law, and visit the Society's website at <http://www.legalhistorian.org/>. Readers may also be interested in viewing the journal online, at <http://journals.cambridge.org/LHR>, where they may read and search issues of the journal.

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