# Transverse Reading -- Summer Research 2017 Planning Document

Director:      Jeremy Douglass <jeremydouglass@gmail.com>
RAs:           Alanna Bartolini <alanna.bartolini@gmail.com>
               Ryan Leach <rkleach@umail.ucsb.edu>

## Overview

**The Transverse Reading Project** is conducting a series of structural surveys of interactive narrative, graphic narrative, and poetic scansion, among other media forms. This phase focuses on interactive narrative (such as electronic literature, video games) etc. and in particular on gamebooks -- that is, playable print stories.

UCSB Library hosts the largest collection of interactive print in the world:

> **The Demian Katz Gamebook Collection** is perhaps the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of gamebooks. It contains more than 2500 print game books (primarily paperback) along with smaller number of related works in other media, including magazines, comics, audio recordings, films, and software, with works from 1948-2013 and written in 18 languages. It spans 71.0 linear feet (71 cartons).

This project will data mine, analyze, and visualize branching story structures in hundreds of works. Researchers will:

1. receive training in mapping the shapes of interactive stories
2. encode branching narratives at UCSB Library Special Collections
3. visualize patterns in game story structures--and report on results

Works addressed by this project are predominantly print genre fiction (sci-fi, fantasy, horror), children's literature, and experimental literature (metafiction, Oulipean writing), but are wide ranging, including parodies, ephemera, non-fiction instructional texts and more, and may extend to select online works and games (Twine, Choicescript).

This project is supported by an Arnhold Collaborative Research Grant, which funds a project director, 1-2 graduate student research coordinators, and a group of 10 undergraduate researchers. Each participating undergraduate research will receiving a $500 stipend upon successful completion of 5 wks of part time summer research engagement. (~10 hrs/wk). Students may request more hours/wk or more weeks as post-stipend hourly funding (~$12/hr).
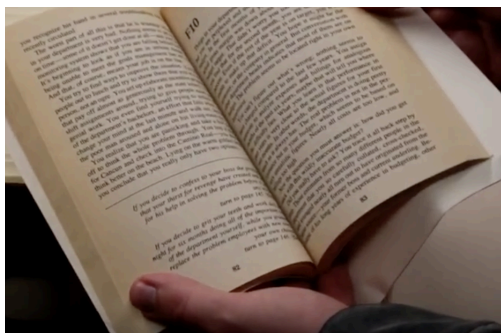
# What does this work look like?



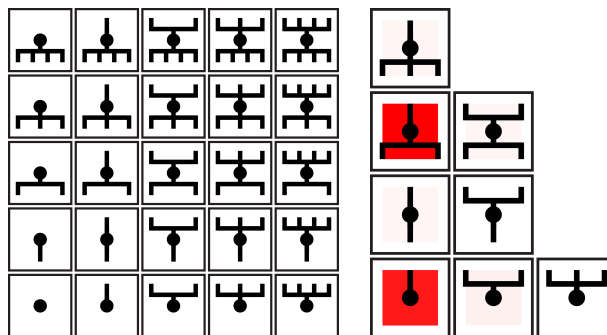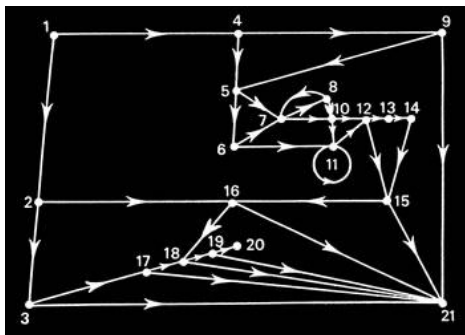Encoding is conducted at UCSB Library, Special Collections reading room.



The Demian Katz collection is checked out in archive boxes, with one paperback per folder.
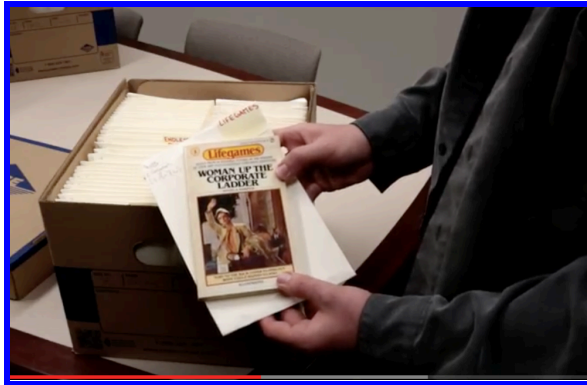


Researchers spend a few moments encoding each page, recording each choice as data.
A typical book might be 125 pages and take 20-30 minutes to encode.



Information visualization of the data produces networks, motifs, and signatures for each work.

A 3-minute video discussion the collection (2013):
https://youtu.be/IunKT4_zi6w

## Projects Phases

1. planning and recruitment (~1-2 wks)
2. undergraduate archival research (~4-5 wks)
3. analysis, reporting, and wrap-up (~1-2 wks)

## Graduate RA Role:

1. receive training on interactive narrative data collection
2. develop training materials
3. develop a data collection protocol for UCSB Special Collections
4. participate in recruiting interested undergraduates
5. conduct training of the undergraduates
6. supervise undergraduates in archival work at UCSB Special Collections
7. survey undergraduates on questions / problems, insights, and points of interest
8. compile a final report based on undergraduate collected data and write-ups / feedback

## Undergraduate Researcher Role:

1. receive training on interactive narrative data collection
2. receive training on data collection protocol for UCSB Special Collections
3. conduct archival research work at UCSB Special Collections
   by encoding interactive narrative data
4. participate in data analysis and information visualization
5. write a short 2+ page report based on a unique area of specialization within the team
6. fill out a questionnaire

# Recruiting Call

**Research Project**

The Transverse Reading Project is studying the media structures in comic page layouts, poetic rhyme schemes, and video game plots. This phase focuses on gamebooks -- that is, playable print stories. This project will data mine, analyze, and visualize branching plot structures in hundreds of interactive stories, principally gamebooks from the Demian Katz Gamebook Collection.

**Undergraduate Contribution**

Researchers will receive training and conduct archival research at UCSB Library Special Collections, encode game narratives, map interactive stories, and participate in data analysis, information visualization, and write up research results.

**Requirements**

Reliable and eager to learn. Archival research requires being detail-oriented and organized. No technical skills required, but researchers should be open to working with software and learning new things. Interests in literature, games, and interactive media are an asset.

# Training Materials

Graphing Mapping Narrative
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LVA7au0Z1Z4-qiRy77yib8lmeL7rjeIp1V3lPaaUYbo/edit?usp=sharing

# Special Collections: Hours and Directions

https://www.library.ucsb.edu/special-collections/directions

# The Demian Katz Collection

- Overview
  - http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c84q7wbw/
- Details
  - http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c84q7wbw/admin/
- Works in English: Complexity: Simple

- ○ http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c84q7wbw/dsc/#ref132
- Finder's Guide
  - ○ http://pdf.oac.cdlib.org/pdf/ucsb/spcoll/cusb_mss294.pdf

# Box Ordering

The research project is scoped to initially only address with books of "simple" complexity (however only the English language material is classified by complexity in the guide -- works in other languages must be visually inspected in order to determine whether they are "simple" or "complex"). Additional materials in English(Simple) are spread across many boxes.

The project will begin with part of the collection from the guide under the "English: Complexity: Simple" heading. This is a huge portion of the collection. It comprises 1060 folders, with the majority (860 folders) concentrated in Boxes 1-16. In addition, it will sample foreign language works and some visual and mixed media works.

Already available at Special collections (according to Daisy Muralles):

- English(Simple) -- all box contents
  - ○ 15, 16
- English(Simple) -- partial box contents:
  - ○ 23, 38, 39, 40
- English(Simple) -- only a few examples in box:
  - ○ 41, 53
- Other
  - ○ 22, 36

On-order boxes:

- English(Simple) -- all box contents
  - ○ Box 1-5 (CYOA) (~290 folders)
- English(Simple) -- most box contents
  - ○ Box 42 (27 folders)
  - ○ Box 43 (28 folders)
- Romance Languages sample
  - ○ Box 32-34 (Italian / French / Spanish)

The follow-up order -- to be submitted once work is underway:

- Mixed Media
  - ○ Box 56-57

- English(Simple) -- all box contents
    - Box 6-16 (~570 folders)

I have listed them below sorted by value -- from boxes with many relevant folders down to boxes with only 1-2.

- English(Simple) -- most / all box contents:
    - Box 42 (27 folders)
    - Box 43 (28 folders)
- English(Simple) -- partial box contents:
    - Box 38 (15 folders)
    - Box 39 (18 folders)
    - Box 40 (10 folders)
    - Box 45 (10 folders)
    - Box 46 (15 folders)
- English(Simple) -- only a few examples in box:
    - Box 21 (3 folders)
    - Box 23 (4 folders)
    - Box 27 (7 folders)
    - Box 41 (5 folders)
    - Box 44 (2 folders)
    - Box 47 (7 folders)
    - Box 48 (6 folders)
    - Box 50 (1 folders)
    - Box 51 (9 folders)
    - Box 52 (1 folders)
    - Box 53 (3 folders)
    - Box 54 (1 folders)
    - Box 56 (1 folders)
    - Box 57 (1 folders)
- French / Italian / Spanish
    - Boxes 32-34 (examples)

In addition, mixed media examples are concentrated in Boxes 56-57.

# Meeting Minutes

**July 11, 2017**

1. Project overview

Maybe we will do a few screencasts and get a sense of the procedure and the little tricks and observations. This has to do with craft, creating a narration of doing the first part of the book and discussing what those decisions are. Recording screencasts might be a small project to set up training materials.

2. Special Collections

We have ten boxes coming in. Our contact is Daisy Morales. There's also some there now. Each student could have their own box, no problem of overlap. Lists – the finder's guide/cat info is that if you read through the materials it is assuming you want to work with titles names of authors etc but never for a box as a unified entity. We need to know what work the students are working with, the title, the box, and the folder number. We can fix this up but we should really have a EBBA style master list – spot checking per batch of ten of fifteen books.

Spot checks for transcription errors. Handwritten maps vs. straight into the spreadsheet - seems like its going to minimize transcription error to have students input data straight into spreadsheets, although we may end up with mistakes that are harder to catch/can only be caught at the back end.

Students can work longer if they want and transition to hourly pay after meeting their research obligations.

Matching students to areas of interest? Might be good for them to see new things, maybe even develop new areas of interest.

- Schedule next meeting and grad training times.
- Sort out the logistics of data collection protocol
    - assignment logistics -- who is assigned what boxes / folders
        - need data organize-able by boxes
    - library side logistics -- who asks for what boxes
    - collection-side logistics -- data turned in in what form, where
- Create training materials
- Schedule undergrad training times

Ryan To-Do:
- Clean up book spreadsheet

- Do a walk-through of at least two books on-site

Alanna To-Do:
- Step up recruiting - Email students about the project with a deadline for Friday 14 July, check with undergraduate mentee network
- Initiate thinking through the romance language data set (starting with French as a test group)
- Do a walk-through of at least two books on-site