ARIA Position description: “Solving Mysteries” Projects

Summary

Working with at least one other McGill student (based in the Humanities), this ARIA intern support development of book-length research project that examines riddles and riddling culture in the 18th and 19th centuries. Broadly construed, the project examines various types of riddles (enigmas, charades, rebuses) and their emergence, popularity and subsequent sublimation into juvenile literature. The emphasis this summer will fall on using distant reading methods to trace the lineage of specific riddles through time and geographical location. The intern will be working with a specific subset of riddles, enigmatic bills of fare, which consist of a menu whose dishes are comprised of riddles. We will be attempting to create data visualizations of the emergence, recurrence and movement of these enigmatic menus. In addition to developing these visualizations, our goal will be to assess the relative merits of two distance reading platforms: the Hathi Trust Research Center and Gale’s Digital Scholar Lab. Specifically, this intern will be key to supporting the development of a conference paper and article assessing the pros and cons of the two platforms.

In conjunction with a McGill graduate student, the research intern will also be responsible for locating additional bills of fare and researching their origins in scholarly literature. This will include searching library catalogues and manuscript material, contacting libraries or other institutions of interest who have copies of these bills of fare, obtaining reproduction permissions for these riddles and developing precise research memos and notes towards the bibliography of the book.

McGill is one of the founding partners of the Hathi Trust, and benefits from access to support. Similarly, McGill’s subscriptions to Gale give us excellent access to research support. Consequently, this intern will have the benefit of consultations with institutional partners, as well as various units within McGill Library, Digital Initiatives and Rare Books and Special Collections in particular.

Requirements

According to terms of the ARIA, students must be available for 11 weeks during the summer, 30 hours per week; see details: https://www.mcgill.ca/arts-internships/research. Professor Cooke is flexible about which weeks will be those chosen as work weeks. The value of the award is $4,000. Please submit a CV to nathalie.cooke@mcgill.ca by March 20, 2019.

Students must be eligible for an ARIA. More details on requirements can be found here: https://www.mcgill.ca/arts-internships/research/about.

- Knowledge of data visualization using Python or R.
- Good research skills, especially an ability to search through both detailed finding aids and large databases such as Gale or Hathi Trust.
- Familiarity with data citation software (Endnote most likely to be used)
- Some knowledge of 18th/19th century culture an asset.