Ever since the 10th century, a large number of local gazetteers (*difangzhi*) have been produced throughout China. Popular from the time of their publication up until today, local gazetteers have always been important sources of knowledge about a place, as they contain extensive information on a variety of topics about a locality: geography, infrastructure, local products, customs, population, officials, literature, hydraulics, weather records and disasters, and more. The large quantity of digital versions of local gazetteers now available makes it possible for historians to collect and make use of the "big data" that this unique genre contains. This workshop brings together historians of China and computer scientists experienced in exploring the possibilities and challenges in working with Chinese local gazetteers.

Triggered by pre-circulated statement papers and short presentations, the participants critically reflect on the historical role and frame of the data presented in local gazetteers, and explore what new questions can be generated and what new knowledge can be produced when looking at not just dozens but hundreds, thousands, or more of these texts. What can be achieved analytically after transforming the information these texts contain into "data," that is, computer-digestible pieces? What questions would historians ask, if local gazetteers were not prose texts but a big relational database? Can computer scientists design systems that are efficient for specific questions and, at the same time, generic for questions to come? What analytical tools and interactive visualizations are needed for users to explore and understand the tendencies and changes in this stream of data coming from local gazetteers?

Organizers

Shih-Pei Chen, Martina Siebert
Department III
Artefacts, Action, and Knowledge

Venue

Main Conference Hall
Max Planck Institute for the History of Science,
Boltzmannstraße 22, 14195 Berlin

Web Presence

https://drupal.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/workshops/node/54

** Online registration required **

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MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

Chinese Local Gazetteers (*difangzhi*)

Historical Method and Computerized Data Collection and Analysis
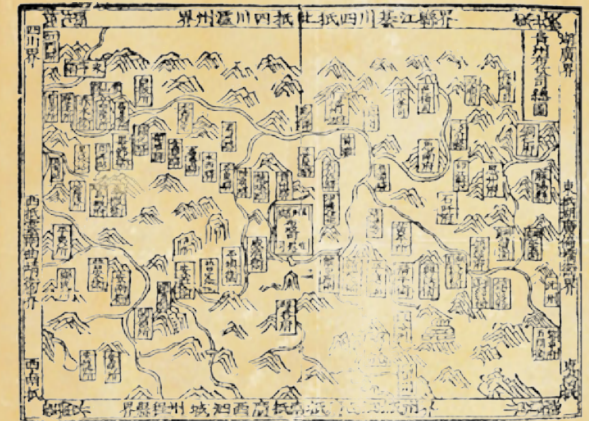
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Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschafts-geschichte

Monday 27.04.2015

09:45-10:15
Welcome and Introduction

10:15-11:15
Historical Studies on Local Gazetteers – Part I

Chair: Andreas JANOUSCH, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Presenters:
CHEN Hsi-Yuan, Academia Sinica
"Retrieving History from a Tattered Map: A Case Study of the Use of Local Gazetteers"
Dagmar SCHÄFER, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science
"Silk, Everywhere. Ming Gazetteers and Sericulture"

11:15-11:30
Coffee Break

11:30-12:30
Historical Studies on Local Gazetteers – Part II

Presenters:
WU Micha, National Taiwan University
"Using Approaches in Digital Humanities for the Studies of Chinese Local Gazetteers"
Joe DENNIS, University of Wisconsin
"Using Data from Chinese Local Gazetteers: Opportunities and Problems"

12:30-13:30
Lunch

13:30-15:30
Computational Methods on Local Gazetteers – Part I

Chair: Jakub HRUBY, Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences

Presenters:
CHANG Sufen, Taiwan Normal University
"Data Extraction and Analysis: The Taxonomy of Fauna and Flora of Taiwan Local Gazetteers in the Qing Dynasty"

Peter BOL, Harvard University
"Local Gazetteers as Databases: Joining the Biographical and Geographical"
Adam MITCHELL, Harvard University
"Encoding China's Past: Computational Methods of Historical Analysis"

15:30-16:00
Coffee Break

16:00-17:30
Computational Methods on Local Gazetteers – Part II

Presenters:
CAO Ling, Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology
"Study on Visualization Disclosure of Meteorological Disasters in Chinese Ancient Chorography: GIS Application and Database Design"
CHEN Shih-Pei & Martina SIEBERT, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science
"Turning Texts into Data: The Chinese Local Gazetteers Project at MPIWG"

17:30-18:00
Wrap-Up

19:00
Dinner

Tuesday 28.04.2015

09:45-11:05
GIS and Local History

Chair: HSIANG Jieh, National Taiwan University

Presenters:
Lex BERMAN, Harvard University
"A Temporal Gazetteer for Chinese History"
ZHAO Siyuan, Shanghai Jiao Tong University
"Compilation, Digitalization and Research: Historical Local Archives in Shanghai Jiao Tong University"

11:05-11:25
Coffee Break

11:25-12:45
Text Mining and Analysis

Presenters:
HO Hou Leong, Leiden Institute for Area Studies
"MARKUS: A Semi-Automatic Markup Platform for Classical Chinese"
TU Hsieh-Chang, National Taiwan University
"DocuSky: A System for Personal Text Databases"

12:45-13:45
Lunch

13:45-15:30
Round Table Discussion

Chair: Siyen FEI, University of Pennsylvania

Discussants:
Pierre-Etienne WILL, Collège de France
Joe DENNIS, University of Wisconsin
HSIANG Jieh, National Taiwan University
Peter BOL, Harvard University

15:30-16:00
Coffee Break

16:00-17:00
Discussion: Using Local Gazetteers in the Digital Age

Chair: CHEN Shih-Pei, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science