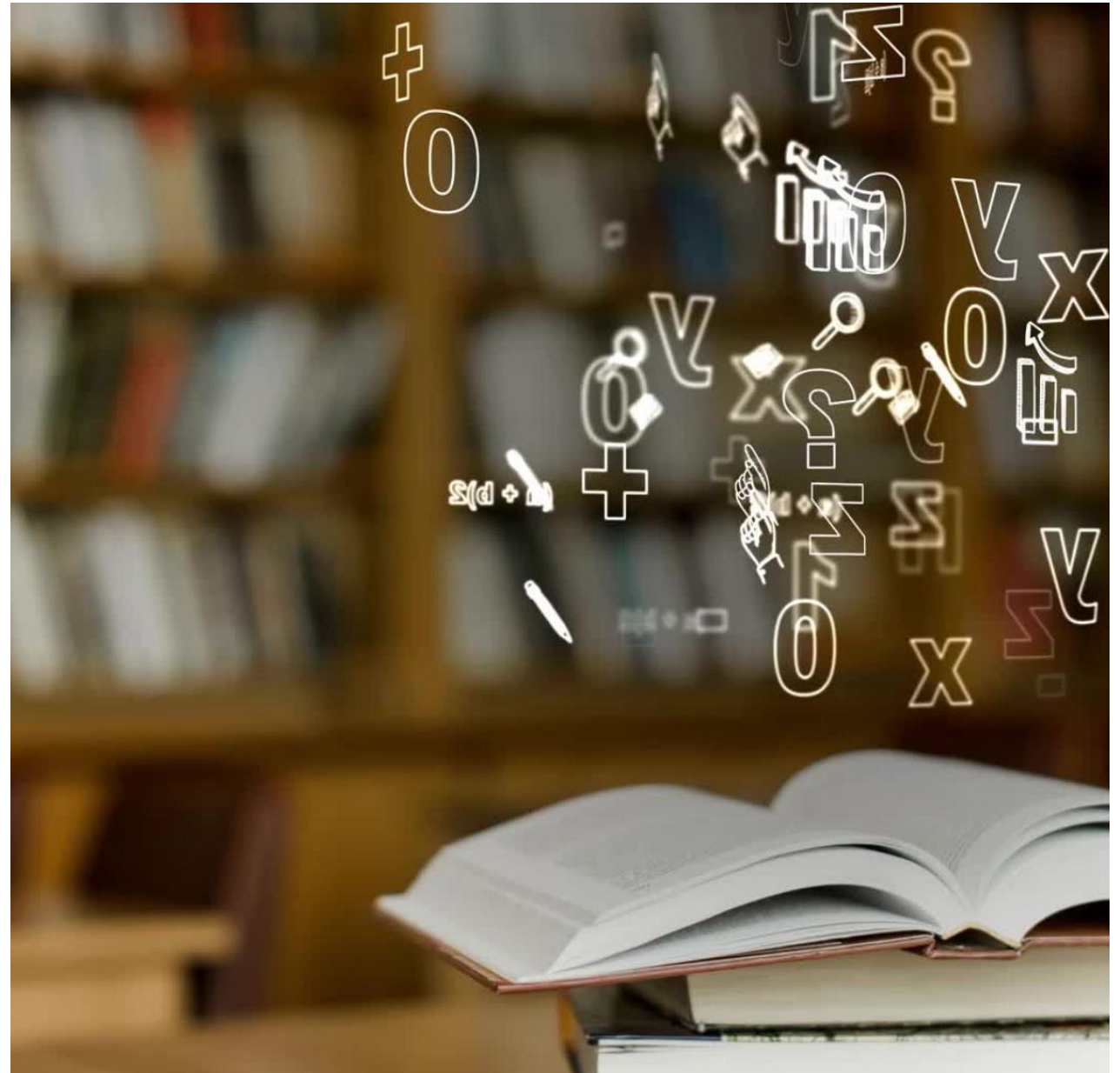


Understanding literary preferences and impact

Mads Rosendahl Thomsen
Aarhus University

It-vest – 3 October 2022

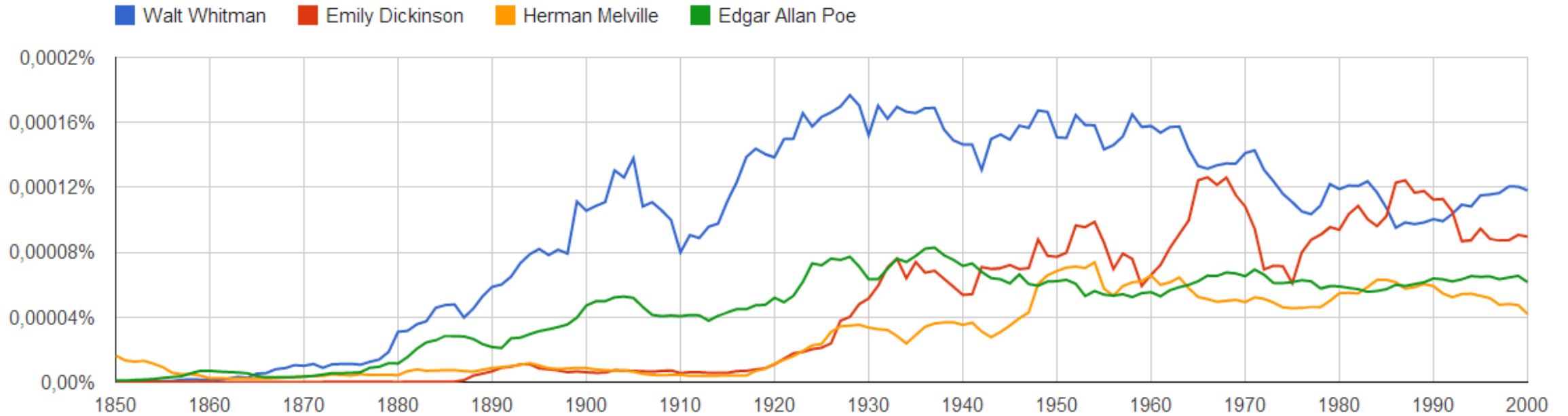


My path into digital methods

- Thesis on canonization in literary history (2002)
- Post.doc on world literature
- And then: New data that was hard to ignore
- On translation, library holdings, citations
- Revisiting earlier work
- And coming up with new ideas



Google Books Ngram Viewer as a gateway drug





Into the texts and large datasets

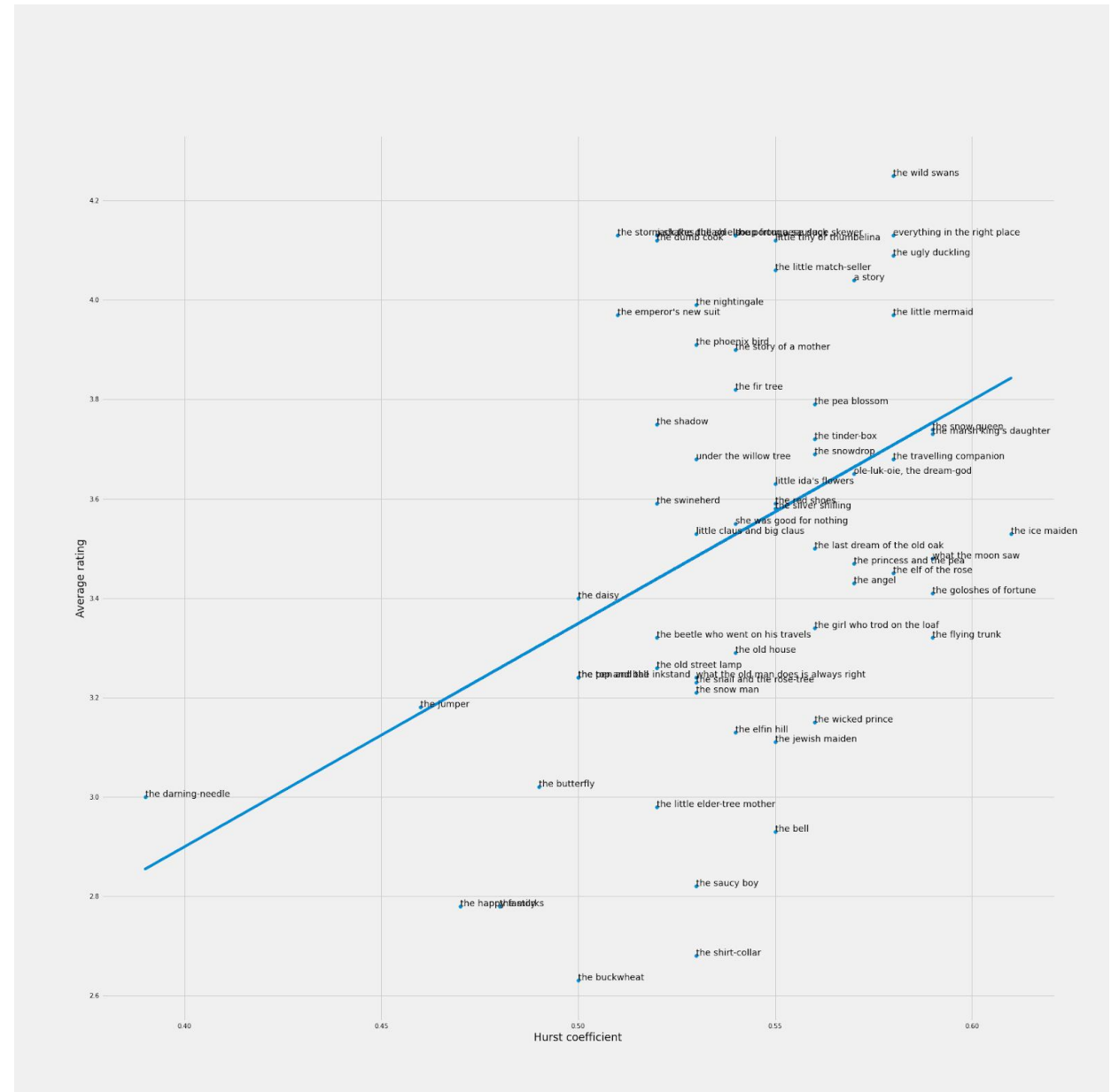
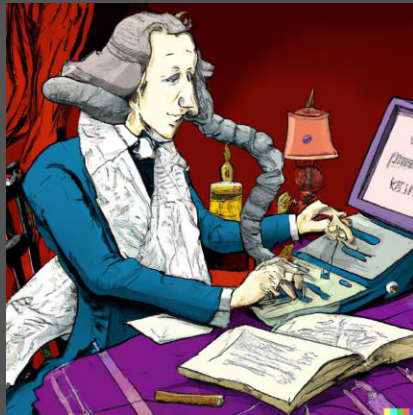
- Fabula-NET: Velux-project with Kristoffer Nielbo et al.
- Working on full texts: H.C. Andersen, 9,000 American novels, etc.
- And on large datasets of reviews, user reviews, etc.
- A lot of media hype: can we predict the next Nobel laureate?



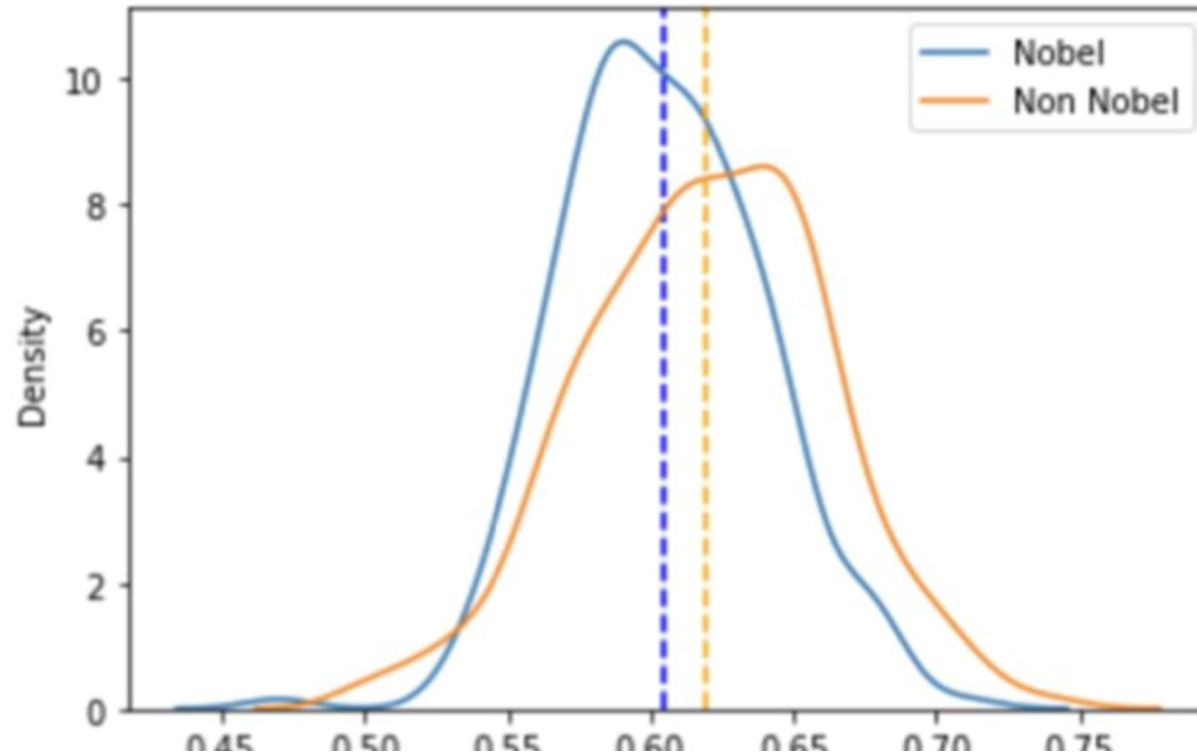
A theory of reading

- Variation studied through sentiment
- Not too predictable, not too random
- A sweet spot for narrative optimality
- Just one aspect of literature – but an important one
- And something that would never reveal itself in close reading

H.C. Andersen: Correlation between Hurst- scores and GoodReads scores



Nobel laureates are different



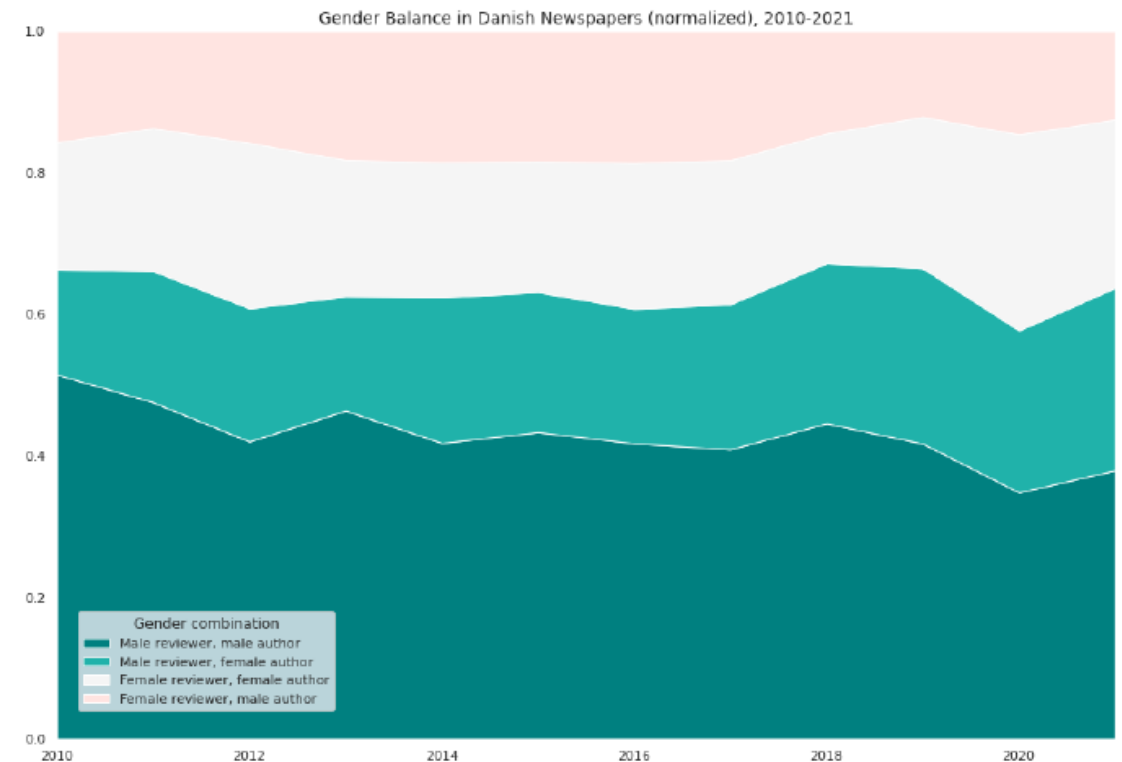
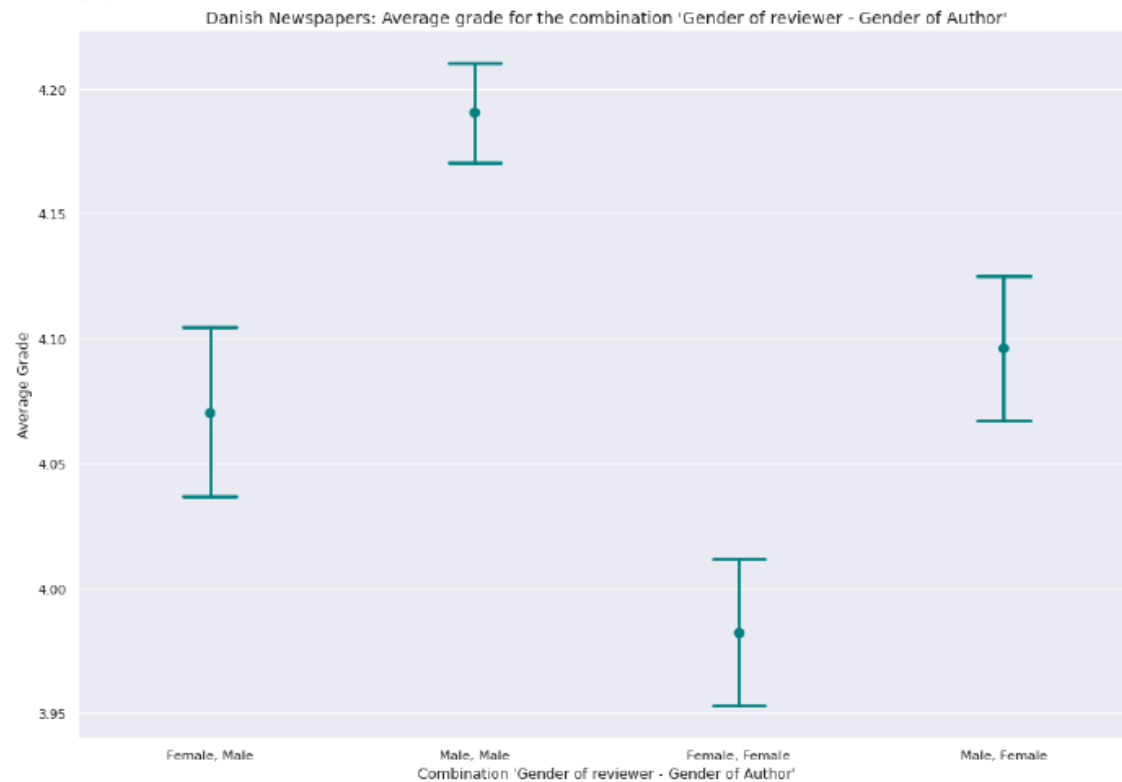
The other side of the project: Preferences and biases

Multiple sources:

- Book reviews
- User reviews
 - GoodReads
 - Mofibo
- Prize awards



Simple, but important finding: Gender biases in Danish reviews



Cooperation and agency

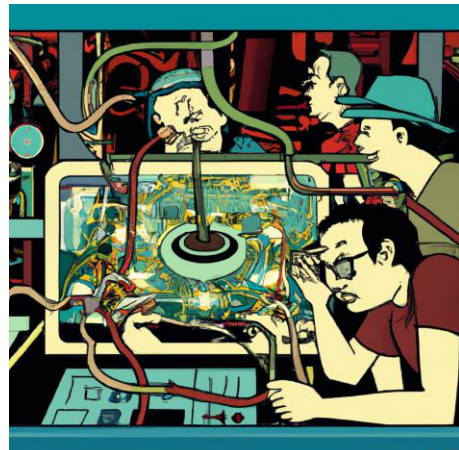
- New modes of working for a comparative literary studies scholar
- Finding a role where the RQs are driven by one's own field
- Educating oneself to be able to be critical outside of the comfort zone
- And keeping it simple – sometimes the quantity of data is the important quality and can provide something new.



Do it yourself and/or getting help?

DIY

- Having complete agency
- Understanding all aspects
- But limited range
- Untapped possibilities



Partnership

- Division of labor
- More advanced methods
- Loss of independence
- Learning enough about elements outside of your field to be able to explain the whole

Introduction to digital methods in literary studies: litdh.au.dk

Topics

