

# Digital Tools for Humanists Summer School 2026

## May 25 to May 30 - Program

### Monday May 25

*AM: Refresher on computers and networking*

[Vittore Casarosa \(ISTI-CNR and University of Pisa\)](#)

One (simple) way to think of Digital Humanities is to think that it is just the use of “digital tools” in the study and research activities carried on by scholars in the Humanities. To better understand how digital tools work, and for the benefit of all those who were exposed to Computer Science a long time ago, or have been only marginally touched by it, we will briefly review the basics of computer architecture and the representation of information within a computer.

We will also see how the evolution of computer technology and of communication networks has led, in the early '90, to the explosive growth of the Internet and the Web, and how the actual Web is (slowly) evolving towards the Semantic Web.

*PM: Designing a project in Digital Public History*

[Enrica Salvatori \(University of Pisa\)](#)

The main characteristics of a Digital Public History project involving private and public realities of the territory will be illustrated, with the description of the main phases of its organization, implementation, maintenance and conservation. In the practical part we will try to create a work team on a concrete project and to design a possible work plan. Some existing projects will be analyzed by evaluating their characteristics from the point of view of the structure, sustainability, transparency of information and relations with different audiences.

### Tuesday May 26

*Methods and tools for digital philology*

[Roberto Rosselli Del Turco \(University of Torino\)](#)

Digital philology is a fairly recent discipline aiming at applying ICT methods and tools to textual criticism. Quite a number of new digital editions have been published during the last twenty years or so. Many of them, however, are achieved by programming and configuring complex frameworks only accessible to medium-large research groups. Although the encoding of text in TEI-XML format allows the individual scholar to prepare a digital edition, the online publication and navigation still remain a complicated, potentially expensive, operation. EVT (Edition Visualization Technology) is an open-source tool the purpose of which is to allow the publication of scholarly TEI-based editions in an easy way, through a user-friendly interface and making available several research tools. This course will introduce the subject of digital philology and text encoding using the TEI-XML standard. It will be followed by a hands-on final session in which students will be able to experiment with EVT.

### Wednesday May 27

*Computational Linguistics and Generative AI: An Introduction*

[Rachele Sprugnoli \(University of Parma\)](#)

This lesson provides an introduction to computational linguistics and Large Language Models (LLMs). The first part will illustrate the discipline's fundamental concepts and approaches, with a focus on the main linguistic tasks and the methods used to address them. Subsequently, the focus will shift to LLMs, the models underlying technologies such as ChatGPT, to explore their operating principles, prompting techniques, applications, challenges and social and cultural implications they raise.

## Thursday May 28

### *Historical GIS*

[Tiago Gil \(University of Pisa and University of Brasilia\)](#)

In recent years, cartography has made significant advances in the representation of narratives and historical processes, both in literary criticism and in studies on displacements in social history, such as migrations, pilgrimages, transhumance, and commercial flows, amongst other instances. The purpose of this course is to discuss the cartographic representation of the movement and to develop skills in the creation of cartography aimed at representing historical processes as well as (textual and oral) narratives. Journey diaries, literary sources, and general documentation on population displacement will be sources used to discuss cartographic methods and techniques. Purpose software for cartography and languages such as R and python will be used through specific “libraries” (software packages) for these approaches. The session will consist of: 1) An introduction to cartographic language and preparation of simple maps; 2) An introduction to thematic cartography and databases focusing on narratives; 3) Training activities based on different sources: 4) A map production workshop.

## Friday May 29

### *AI Meets the Archive: Refining Generative Tools for Historical Research*

[Seamus Ross \(University of Toronto\)](#)

How can Generative AI help us unlock the past—and where does it fall short? This class invites participants to explore the transformative potential of AI tools like ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Claude.ai for historical research. Through a combination of lectures and hands-on experimentation, we will examine how these tools can be applied to three distinct historical document sets: 19th century plantation business records, a mid-18th-century cookbook, and an archive of early 19th century personal correspondence.

Participants will refine prompting strategies to maximize accuracy, compare outputs across different AI models, and identify validation techniques to assess reliability and bias in AI-generated interpretations. Key topics include text normalization, named entity recognition, thematic analysis, and historical validation, all framed within a critical approach to AI that emphasizes active engagement over passive acceptance.

Special attention will be given to examining strategies for working with large document collections that require analysis in manageable parts due to model limitations (e.g., token constraints). By the end of the session, participants will have a deeper understanding of how to shape AI outputs for research, recognize its limitations, and apply best practices for AI-assisted humanities inquiry.

## Saturday May 30

### *AM: Reading the past with AI: eScriptorium and Transkribus*

[Michela Galli \(Università di Roma - La Sapienza\)](#)

This lecture will focus on automatic text recognition (ATR) software, providing participants with a theoretical basis, key terminology, contexts of use and an overview of current functionalities. The session will include a detailed introduction to the two main ATR platforms: eScriptorium and Transkribus. In the practical part of the workshop, participants will work in groups on both platforms using real handwritten materials. Practical exercises will cover software use in the cloud, uploading images, applying models and the entire workflow required for transcribing manuscript documents.