

## **Digital Technologies and Narrative: Working with Text and Tech in Two Contexts**

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This summer, I worked on two projects with Professor Nascimento in the Digital and Computational Studies department exploring interactions between digital technologies and narratives.

The first activity continues work I did last summer with the Digital Ricoeur, a website that provides digital text analysis tools for scholars of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Over the course of his long intellectual career, Ricoeur explored topics from phenomenology to memory, history, narrative, justice, and more. The goal for this summer was to better understand how Ricoeur's topics of interest changed over time using digital text analysis methods.

The corpus created for this project began with Ricoeur's English texts available through the Digital Ricoeur. To determine which texts represented Ricoeur's scholarship at different points in his career, we developed and documented a robust heuristic for text selection. We then used R to perform Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling on the corpus. Each decade of Ricoeur's production was topic modeled separately to see how Ricoeur's patterns of inquiry changed over time. This process results in clusters of words that make up each topic. These results were used to create visualizations displaying the prevalence of each topic in a specific decade, the most salient and relevant terms for each topic per decade, et cetera. These visualizations, along with an explanation of the model and heuristic for text selection, will be added to the Digital Ricoeur website as a tool for Ricoeur scholars.

The second activity built on a paper Professor Nascimento and I presented at the International Conference on Computer Ethics: Philosophical Enquiry in May 2023, in which we argue that systematic exposure to narratives can counterbalance the immediate, egocentric convenience of digital technologies utilizing recommender systems. This summer, we expanded this work, adding another dimension of convenience: effortlessness. As AI-based digital technologies continue to advance, seemingly improving our lives through their effortless, egocentric, immediate convenience, we must consider the long-term implications. The convenience these technologies provide comes at the cost of thinking about others and the future. Effortless, immediate convenience for the self conceals our ethical responsibility. Narratives present a way to rebalance the convenience equation, revealing the hidden costs of digital convenience and potentially pulling us towards a more responsible form of convenience that takes into account the current and future common good.

Using three cases (privacy, chatbots and AI relationships, and digital immortality), we demonstrate the potential for narratives to push toward responsible convenience in three spheres of deliberation: users, developers, and regulators. Although developers and regulators have their own convenience equations and motivations (profit, re-election, etc.), we focus on how their decisions impact user convenience. Through the interactions of the three spheres, narratives not only impact user deliberation directly, but also through the regulator and developer spheres. The final product of this aspect of my summer research is a paper we hope to submit to a journal for publication.

**Faculty Mentor: Fernando Nascimento**

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