Session for Interaction and Engagement (SIEs)

Title: Data StorySLAM

Organizer(s):
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Key Participants: same as organizers

Abstract: A 150-word abstract to be published in the program schedule.
Storytelling has been an integral part of the Library and Information Science curriculum for a century. Increasingly we are seeing an awareness of the importance of storytelling in various sectors of society. Storytelling can be used to share a strategic vision for a corporation, a non-profit, a city, or a country. With the growth of data informed decision-making, data storytelling is a powerful and effective skill helping people to understand what the results of data analytics mean, and what we can do with that analysis.

In this SIE, we will explore the potential of data storytelling by inviting the sharing of stories about data. We will also explore approaches to and challenges of teaching data storytelling, including teaching students who may not be at all familiar with this approach. We will of course be doing that exploring by telling stories about teaching data storytelling.

Description:
Storytelling has been an integral part of the Library and Information Science curriculum for over a century. Increasingly we are seeing an awareness of the importance of storytelling in various sectors of society. Storytelling can be used to share a strategic vision for a corporation, a non-profit, a city, or a country. With the growth of data informed decision-making, data storytelling is a powerful and effective skill helping people to understand what the result of data analytics means, and what we can do with that analysis.

In this SIE we aim to explore the potential of data storytelling by inviting participants to share stories about data. We also want to explore approaches and challenges of teaching data storytelling, including to students who may not be at all familiar with this approach, and are not pursuing an LIS degree. We will of course be doing that by telling stories about teaching data storytelling. These two kinds of stories, exemplary data stories and stories about teaching data storytelling, will form the basis of our interactive Data StorySLAM, where participants will share approaches, best practices, and insights about these emerging story forms.

Purpose:
The purpose of the SIE is
- To explore aspects of data storytelling and how it compares and contrasts with other kinds of storytelling and other parts of data analytics.
- To share approaches, best practices, challenges and how to overcome them
- To share motivating examples: data stories that can help persuade people of the power of data storytelling
- To share ways of teaching data storytelling

Intended Audience:

- People who teach data storytelling who are willing to share their experiences of what has and has not worked for them.
- People who teach data analytics, data visualization or 'regular' storytelling who are interested in how to incorporate data storytelling into existing courses or in creating a new course, workshop or other event to teach data storytelling.
- People interested in how data storytelling might be integrated into research or outreach activities, including people with stories to tell about how they did just that.

Proposed activities
Send out invitations to join a data storySLAM
- Prior to the event we will solicit people who have a data story they are willing to share.
- We have examples ourselves, but we want to collect sets of data stories, and stories of the teaching of data storytelling.
- We will group these to create a series of different themes of alternate sets of storytelling and discussion within the 90 minutes.

The following agenda is thereby provisional as it is based on our initial thinking about themes, but will be revised as we collect stories.

Brief introduction to this SIE, what it is about, how it works.
- Hand out index cards so that people can volunteer additional stories, or issues that we can incorporate into the SIE as it unfolds.

Theme 1: Stories that show the power of data stories
- Sharing stories that reveal different ways in which a data story can help people understand data.
- Classics - such as John Snow and the London cholera map, Florence Nightingale and her coxcombs, the Challenger disaster
- and Contemporaries - new examples to share.
Collectively scoping out the ways that data stories can help understanding or interpretation, reframe the problem, or deal with unexpected or counterintuitive findings.
- Discussing various contexts, including the use of props, both physical and computational (such storytelling around a data visualization)

Theme 2. Stories about teaching data storytelling
- These stories will include but not be limited to our experience with a new course offered at Illinois in Data Science Storytelling
- Quest stories: explaining the problem, barrier, misconception or resistance that needed to be addressed by the ingenuity of our storytelling hero.
- Success stories: where things went right and lessons to learn from them
- Disaster stories: where things went wrong and lessons to learn from them
- Plot twists: the result of the action was not quite what was expected or intended
Collectively scoping out the challenges in teaching data storytelling can help, and various ways these can be addressed.

Theme 3 Data stories inspired by those heard today and volunteered by audience members
- What will they be?
- How does one story inspire another?

- How can a live audience help to inspire innovative and creative approaches to data storytelling?

Wrapup: Emergent themes and ways to make use of what has been shared beyond the session. From constructing to categorizing data storytelling, we hope this SIE will leave all participants with some novel ideas and approaches to storytelling, data stories, and teaching data storytelling.

Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field:
The organizers have heard on many occasions from prospective employers of data scientists something like this: "We don't pay people to analyze data for the fun of it. The point is to turn analysis into actionable results. How will what has been discovered influence our bottom line? We need people who can explain what they have found to senior management - including busy people who are not data scientists but who need to make decisions." We believe that data storytelling is a critical part of the data analytics pipeline; enabling people to understand, interpret, and communicate the data wisely. Appropriate and well-evidenced storytelling can get to meaning and embrace issues of degrees of trust in the finding and the impacts of bias and provenance in the datasets being analyzed. It allows a productive multidisciplinary fusing of the quantitative and the qualitative, the analytic and the interpretive, and pushes us from information to meaningful findings. We believe that this is what many aspects of our society needs, and it just so happens to be something that iSchools are particularly good at doing.

Duration: one 90-minute session.

Special Requirements: None