Registration Form Valorisation Grant

Name: Alan Moss
PhD Project Title: A Traveller’s Identity in Dutch Grand Tour Accounts of the Seventeenth Century
Start date PhD project: 1 September 2013
End date PhD project: 31 August 2017

Please answer the questions below by using a maximum of 1000 words in total.

1. What sort of activities would you like to implement and who are the stakeholders of your initiative?

In my PhD project, titled ‘A Traveller’s Identity’, I focus on Dutch travel accounts of the seventeenth century. In these books young men were able to reflect on the new and strange places, people, and cultures they encountered during their voyage and to rethink their own position and identity in this new world. Although these manuscripts can offer new insights into early modern Dutch society and contemporary ideas on other European countries, this large body of travel accounts remains mostly unedited and unexplored.¹ Since this genre usually consists of manuscripts, accounts are not readily available to an interested reader. Furthermore, travel accounts are highly convoluted texts that demand an immediate understanding of a traveller’s location and surroundings. The static and incomplete maps, which often accompany a paper edition, are inadequate tools that usually distract a reader instead of aid him.

In this valorisation project I would like to tackle these problems by editing several of these interesting, yet unedited and generally unknown travel accounts and making them available to a larger audience. The emerging field of Digital Humanities and its ever-growing collection of digital tools can counter these problems by visualising early modern journeys. Google Earth and similar programmes enable me to map a variety of early modern voyages in order to gain a better understanding of these travellers and their experiences (see the images below). Instead of publishing in a paper medium, I would like to create an online application in which these texts can be explored alongside the geographical tools employed by Google Earth and GIS software.

The working plan is twofold. First I will select, collect and edit three to five travel accounts. Secondly, these texts will be made available in an online application that allows a reader to follow the text alongside a fully-responsive visualisation of the actual journey. In later stages of this project we can implement additional data, such as modern and contemporary imagery, extensive notes and other features, as well as additional travel accounts.

One of the texts that will be used in this working plan is the travel account of Abraham van der Meersch through Denmark and Sweden in 1674. Although Van der Meersch was abroad to conduct business, his travel account is an exciting recollection of an uncomfortable, sometimes dangerous journey. His boat capsizes when it collides with an iceberg, Abraham is almost mauled by a ferocious tiger in the Danish zoo, and fears for his life when he gets lost in the Swedish wilderness. This exciting tale is interspersed with reflections on the glorious past of the Dutch Republic and his religious ideals. Abraham’s story is one of the many travel account that deserve our attention and can be given a new meaning by using digital tools.

This online tool will enable interested readers to easily access and explore several early modern travel accounts. A visual interface, such as Google Earth, allows a modern reader to browse through a travelogue and to imagine what it was like to travel through Europe several centuries ago.

¹ A notable exception is the publish house Verloren in Hilversum. Verloren has published a series of ego documents, in which travel accounts play a pivotal role.
1. Several routes of seventeenth-century travellers

2. Seventeenth-century travellers in Paris
2. Please explain the social benefit of your project and demonstrate the knowledge utilisation of your PhD project.

In recent years scholars have emphasised the numerous advantages of the developing field of Digital Humanities and its pivotal role in the future of the humanities at large. Universities, libraries and research institutes have worked together in collecting and digitising enormous numbers of texts which are now at our fingertips. However, scholars have mostly focused on the quantitative uses of digital tools, while its qualitative uses and benefits are yet to be explored. In this valorisation project I would like to investigate these new avenues of digital qualitative analysis. In this project Google Earth and similar GIS software are not used to statistically analyse the whole of early modern travel, but as a tool and a handhold for a modern reader to better understand a specific travelogue and digitally follow in the footsteps of a young Dutchman in the seventeenth century. While this project may give new input to the theoretical debate of Digital Humanities, it will first and foremost be an interpretative tool for a larger audience and a way to explore the early modern world.

Secondly, this project will aim to rehabilitate the genre of travel accounts. While travel texts were one of the most popular and well-read genres of the early modern period, historical scholarship, in my opinion, has not paid enough attention to these interesting and diverse texts. Creating an online application that explores new possibilities of Digital Humanities may strengthen interest in this rich topic.

Finally, the edition of these texts will be very useful for linguistic research, since the language used in the genres of ego documents and travel accounts closely approaches the actual, contemporary use of language. Fellow researchers and colleagues Nicoline van der Sijs and Margit Rem, who are both heavily invested in Digital Humanities and historical linguistics, are currently researching this largely unexplored genre of ego documents.
3. Please consider a detailed planning consisting of a timeline of deliverables as well as a budget plan to implement your initiative.

Firstly, several travel accounts need to be selected and edited. Several editions and transcriptions are already in my possession, but additional data will be collected in the following months of my PhD project. The first text that will be used is the aforementioned travel account of Abraham van der Meersch. Once these texts have been edited, they will be implemented in an online application next to a complete and fully-responsive visualisation of the actual journey, using Google Earth or similar programmes. During the final phase additional information, such as contemporary or modern imagery, additional notes, as well as additional travelogues, can be added. The Centre for Language and Speech Technology, whose members are very skilled in building new Digital Humanities tools, will aid in creating this programme.

**Output**

An online application, containing several fully edited travel accounts of the seventeenth century, which can be read alongside a fully-responsive visualisation of the actual journey.

**Timetable**

- Selection and editing of several travel accounts: January 2014-May 2015.
- Creating the online application at CLST: April 2015-September 2015.
- Organising a presentation on the website: October 2015.

**Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online application:</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programming and online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>storage costs by the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radboud Centre for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of the</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finished online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>