

# ASYMENC

asymenc.eu  
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## ASYMMETRICAL ENCOUNTERS

### THE ASYMENC PROJECT

How did the largest and most culturally powerful countries like England, France and Germany influence public debates in smaller countries like the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg? What roles have transnational cultures played in the process of European integration between 1815 and 1992?

This project explores these questions by using long runs of digitized newspapers, and applies multi-lingual text mining techniques to explore the nature of European cultural heritage.



### INTERNATIONAL & INTERDISCIPLINARY CONSORTIUM

Project combines insights from several academic fields (cultural history, history and computational linguistics and computer science) and several countries.



### SOURCES

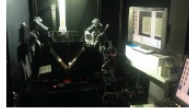
Newspapers are part of public debate; they give us insight into public opinion or, to use another term, the "collective mentality" of a people.

Our goal was to unify repositories of digitized newspapers and do comparative studies across Europe. Despite finding loads of goodwill, we ran into some problems, which included:

- multiple languages;
- data formats vary, it is therefore difficult to integrate them
- restrictions due to copyright



British physicist Sir William Thomson Kelvin (1824-1907), (Glasgow, before 1897).



Digitization equipment at the Adlonbibliothek Landeshilfsschule - Staat- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (2014).

### MULTILINGUAL TEXT MINING



De Telegraaf, 20 April 1912

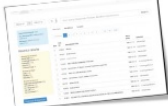
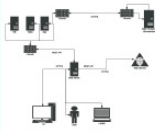
A single search should bring up the same news item in various national newspapers. We want to research the comparative reception of events in different European capitals using newspapers in different languages.

**TITANIC SUNK.**  
—  
TERRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE FRARED.  
—  
COLLISION WITH AN ICEBERG.  
—  
OFFICIAL MEMOROS.  
—  
The news about the wrecked liner Titanic has been in the papers. The British and American papers have been full of news, and the world has been talking about it for days.

The Times, 16 April 1912

### TEXT MINING: DIGITAL REPOSITORY & SEARCH INTERFACE

We aimed at building an extendable system which is a specialized multilingual search engine for historical texts. The system can be expanded to work with any language and source.



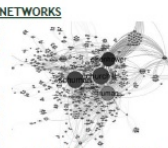
ASINO is different from other tools in that:

- it doesn't require all the data to be stored locally on the indexing server
- other developers can work on different clients: like mobile applications, narrowed visualization solutions etc.
- it incorporates sophisticated indexing techniques

### SOCIAL NETWORKS

We propose to improve the exploration of large collections of (historical) texts via new and existing technologies from the natural language processing field.

For example, we can represent collections of articles as a social network. Each node and relation in the social network contains information such as a link to the original sources and the list of relevant concepts discussed in the articles: in which each person name appears.



Part of the social network of the people named in articles in De Telegraaf in 1953 including the word "Europe".

### HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES



Unlike many digital history projects, ASYMENC is driven by three historical case studies rather than by the tool's development. We studied European culture in the realms of the city, mass culture and consumption.

Using digital tools still requires trained historians - digital tools can draw attention to links in public debates, but it is still up to the researcher to meaningfully draw insights from them.

Clusters of words that appear near the word "metropolis" in The Times. The first image (top) is for the period 1850-1900, the second one 1900-1950. It gives an indication that discussions of the city shift from an emphasis on health, water issues, sewage, and death in the nineteenth century to emphasizing the police and courts in the twentieth.



The Rolling Stones in the Mugan: an image showing the connection between youth and violence. (De Telegraaf, 10 August 1964)



Ad showing Heineken's strategy of opposing to oil cultures. (De Telegraaf, 19 June 1959)