

Digital Scholarship Lab, G/F, University Library, CUHK  
12 June 2017 (Monday) 9:00am-5:30pm



Presentation Details
Title: Visualizing the Origins of a Global Classical Chinese Common Core
Speaker: Timothy R. CLIFFORD (University of Pennsylvania)
Abstract:  Early anthologies of classical Chinese prose in translation include Angelo Zottoli’s <i>Cursus Litteraturæ Sinicæ</i> (1879-1882), Herbert Giles’s <i>Gems of Chinese Literature</i> (1884), and Georges Margouliès’s <i>Le Kou-Wen Chinois</i> (1926). Even a cursory glance at these books’ tables of contents reveals that they include more or less the same corpus of “ancient-style prose” ( <i>guwen</i> 古文) texts, a corpus also found in major Qing dynasty literary anthologies such as the <i>Guwen Guanzhi</i> 古文觀止. This corpus served as an important starting point for the academic study of Chinese literature in the west. Where, when, and how did this global common core take shape? In this talk, I describe how I tried to answer this question through counting shared titles in a group of thirty-four earlier literary anthologies, and using this data to visualize clusters of anthologies that we can associate with distinct editorial strategies. I focus mainly on the technical details of this process: how I compiled a master list of all the titles in all thirty-four anthologies, compared pairs of title lists, sorted out false matches, and imported this data into the network visualization tool Gephi. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of issues that I will need to address before scaling up the project, notably, whether to continue comparing lists of titles instead of entire anthologies (in the manner of the Chinese Text Project’s text tools), and the best way to normalize edge weights.
Biography  <b>Timothy R. Clifford</b> has recently completed his PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, with a dissertation titled “In the Eye of the Selector: Ancient-Style Prose Anthologies in Ming Dynasty China.” His research interests include Chinese literature of the 15th-19th centuries, textual transmission and literature as social practice, the history of books and printing across East Asia, and the digital humanities.