Everybody had it in imagination if not in reality.

Digital Humanities and Network Analysis as Research Methods to Understand a Global Influenza Epidemic, 1889-1890

Tom Ewing, Professor of History, Virginia Tech
etewing@vt.edu / @ethomasewing

Presentation for the workshop: Reconstructing Historical Networks Digitally: New Approaches, Opportunities and Epistemological Implications of Social Network Analysis

German Historical Institute
October 2018
To the Committee on Matters of Professional Interest:

Gentlemen:

I have solicited papers for this report but have received no material for it. Probably some have lacked sufficient leisure to communicate what we know would interest.

I hesitate to allude to the great influenza of last Winter because so much has been said and written upon the subject. My treatment of the above disease was expectant, advising as in the case of a "hard cold," precautionary advice and sometimes treating them homeopathically when I noticed that they did not need any medicine.

We observe that during a rainy season if in the cold months with prevalent fogs, influenzas prevail which are identical with the one of last Winter, except that this latter epidemic went the "wide world round."

Respectfully submitted,

C. B. Newton, M.D.,

Stafford, May 24, 1890.

Tolland County Reporter.
I hesitate to allude to the great influenza of last Winter because so much has been said and written upon the subject. My treatment of the above disease was expectant, advising as in the case of a "hard cold," precautionary advice and sometimes treating them homeopathically when I noticed that they did not need any medicine.

We observe that during a rainy season if in the cold months with prevalent fogs, influenzas prevail which are identical with the one of last Winter, except that this latter epidemic went the "wide world round."

It reminds us of the yellow atmosphere of a few years ago, which was observed upon both continents, with the difference that no harm to the people was associated with it. The many theories advanced regarding the true inwardness of this malady which had its starting point in Russia, are interesting but not proven.
The epidemic, on account of its foreign name, caused as much mischief as the disease itself, and the press made the matter still worse till everybody had it in imagination if not in reality, and wherever led the foot of man the grippe was sure to go, like Mary's little lamb, and no amount of quinine or antipyrin could drive it out. We hear persons to-day admit that they are in good health, but fear they have it in their system and that it is liable to reappear at any time, so strongly were they mentally impressed by it. The quantities of medicine taken by the people was vast. Dr. Knorr, the discoverer of antipyrin, it has been estimated, put into the market nearly forty tons of this drug, and as to quinine, we will never know how much was used.

So far as can be learned by statistics, the mortality from pneumonia was no greater during last Winter than in previous Winters. The movement of this ailment with the speed of the wind over so vast an area of the globe was surely phenomenal.
Tracking the Russian Flu in U.S. and German Medical and Popular Reports, 1889-1893
Virginia Tech and Leibniz University Hannover
bilateral digital humanities grant

Workshop Themes: Simone Lassig, Introduction
➢ Transnational history and the digital humanities
➢ How far can historians apply methods such as SNA developed in other fields?
➢ Knowledge travel: how actors make knowledge travel through networks?
➢ Temporality and change over time as central to historical interpretation
➢ Ordinary people as producers, carriers, and consumers of knowledge
No. 69.

Legation of the United States,
St. Petersburg, December 5, 1889,

To the Honorable James G. Blaine,
Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Sir,

Some foreign journals having assisted in spreading exaggerated reports of an epidemic of cholera that has swept over and is still raging at St. Petersburg, this last month, it may be well in order to allay the anxiety of those having relatives and friends there, to give an accurate account of the malady.
Sir.
Some foreign journals having circulated greatly exaggerated reports of an epidemic that has swept over and is still raging at St. Petersburg this last month, it may be well, in order to allay the anxiety of those having relations and friends here, to give an accurate account of the malady.
About three weeks ago public attention was called to the large number of persons falling ill, with much the same symptoms, fever, severe pains in the head, back, and limbs, the attack taking them with more or less violence, some experiencing only fever, others laid up only by racking pains, but most of the victims suffering from a combination of these affections...The illness in the generality of cases is very light and over in a few days, the most protracted being of a couple of weeks duration; it leaves, however, all persons who have been touched by it in great debility and depression of spirits; in fact, the after effects in this lasting longer, are rather more unpleasant than the complaint itself.
There is no exaggeration in putting down the number of the sick in this epidemic at fully two-thirds of the population of St. Petersburg. Certainly not a house has escaped its visitation. It has attacked the highest as well as the most humble in social station. The Emperor was very ill with it for several days, and scarcely a member of the Imperial family has been free from it. Almost all the diplomatic corps has suffered. More than 40,000 cases have been medically authenticated, but these represent merely a small portion of the sufferers, many of whom have not considered the illness serious enough to require the help of a physician.
December 24, 1889: 2 newspapers
December 25, 1889: 21 newspapers
December 26, 1889: 8 newspapers
December 27, 1889: 3 newspapers
December 28, 1889: 3 newspapers
(newspapers.com)
Some foreign journals having circulated greatly exaggerated reports of an epidemic that has swept over and is still raging at St. Petersburg this last month, it may be well, in order to allay the anxiety of those having relations and friends here, to give an accurate account of the malady.
St. Petersburg, Russia, Weekly Deaths October 1889-January 1890

- **Tuberculose der Lungen (Tuberculosis of the Lungs)**
- **Croupose Lungenentzundung (Lobar Pneumonia)**
- **Other Causes**

Week ending:
- 10/28/188
- 11/4/1889
- 11/11/188
- 11/18/188
- 11/25/188
- 12/2/1889
- 12/9/1889
- 12/16/1889
- 12/23/1889
- 12/30/1889
- 1/6/1890
# Abstract of Reports of Mortality

And its causes throughout the State, and specially in the Towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants, for the Month of January, 1890.

The population as stated below was given by the Town Clerks of the respective Towns. Total estimated population of the State, 759,719.

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<th>Total Pops.</th>
<th>White Pops.</th>
<th>Colored Pops.</th>
<th>Sexes</th>
<th>Marriages</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Infant Deaths</th>
<th>Inflammable</th>
<th>Explosive</th>
<th>Poisonous</th>
<th>Municipal</th>
<th>Territorial</th>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Cerebral</th>
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<th>Tubercular</th>
<th>Typhoid</th>
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<td>590</td>
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</table>

The following towns are reported as having no deaths in January: Andover, Bolton, Enfield, Goshen, Franklin, Enfield, Locke, Newtfield, Union, Warren, Westfield, Watertown.

The reports of the following towns have made no report for January: Monticello, Torrington, Woodbridge.
Connecticut, Deaths from All Causes and Average, January 1885-1890

- All Causes
- Average 1885-1889

January Deaths

- 1885: 800
- 1886: 700
- 1887: 750
- 1888: 900
- 1889: 750
- 1890: 1,700
Stafford, CT, Deaths from All Causes, Mar 1889-Jun 1890
Influenza Deaths in Connecticut, 1886-1895

Year
1886 1887 1888 1889 1890 1891 1892 1893 1894 1895
Deaths caused by influenza
2 4 9 4 185 366 563 252 217 276
Connecticut, Pneumonia and Influenza Deaths, November - March

<table>
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<th>Year Range</th>
<th>P &amp; I Deaths</th>
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<td>1892-1893</td>
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<td>1893-1894</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<td>1894-1895</td>
<td>900</td>
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THIRTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
OF THE
STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
FOR THE
YEAR ENDING NOVEMBER 30, 1890.
WITH THE
REGISTRATION REPORT FOR 1889, RELATING TO BIRTHS,
MARRIAGES, DEATHS AND DIVORCES.

Printed by Order of the Legislature.

NEW HAVEN:
TUTTLE, MOREHOUSE & TAYLOR, PRINTERS.
1891.

REPORT ON EPIDEMIC INFLUENZA IN CONNECTICUT DURING THE WINTER OF 1889-90.

By C. PURDY LINDSEY, M.D.

The quotation taken from Ecclesiastes i. 9, "There is no new thing under the sun," is well exemplified in the recent epidemic of influenza, which, while it came to many of us as an entirely new type and form of disease in our professional experience, yet was an old acquaintance to many of the older practitioners, and to their fathers and grandfathers before them, changed perhaps in some of its symptomatology, and yet easily recognized as the same old visitor. In writing its history and the experience of the profession during its late visitation to our State, it may be interesting before doing so to give a brief resume of past epidemics and the lessons they have taught. We can get this information from no clearer or more authentic source than is contained in "The Geographical and Historical Pathology of Infectious Diseases," by Dr. August Hirsch, which article is a compilation from nearly all the literature on the subject up to 1877, and the result of a careful study of hundreds of original writers, expressing their experience and views at the time of the various visitations. Confining ourselves to such outbreaks as originated in or were brought to this country, we find the first one, mentioned in the summer of 1847, had its origin in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and spread thence to the West Indies and South America. In 1853 the disease prevailed in the New England States. In 1897, Webster states it prevailed in America. Subsequent visitations were in 1792-3, 1795-6, 1799, 1801-2, 1807, 1792, 1780-61, 1789-90, 1796, 1807, 1815-16, 1824-5, 1830, 1832, 1843, 1850-51, 1857-8, 1861, 1873, 1874-5. A striking peculiarity of this disease, and one in which it differs from all other infectious diseases, is its invariable occurrence in epidemic form, whether confined to small areas or becoming widespread;
New Haven, Conn., February, 1890.

Dr. ........................................

Dear Doctor—With the object of compiling a brief history of the present epidemic of influenza in our State, for publication by the State Board of Health, I desire to obtain the experience of one or more of the leading practitioners in each town and city.

Will you please fill out the accompanying blank form as completely as possible, while the subject is still fresh in mind, returning the same to me as per enclosed address. I should be very glad to receive any additional remarks upon the subject which may occur to you.

Very respectfully,

C. Purdy Lindsley, M.D.
Report on Epidemic Influenza
Dr. ................................ Town of: ....................................... 1890
1. Approximate date of first appearance in your vicinity?
2. Approximate period of greatest prevalence?
3. Approximate date of decline?
4. Prevailing or common symptoms?
5. Rare or exceptional symptoms?
6. Relative frequency of neurotic symptoms?
7. Relative frequency of catarrhal symptoms?
8. Relative frequency of gastric or enteric symptoms?
9. Highest temperature you have observed?
10. Average duration of uncomplicated cases?
11. What sequelae most prevalent?
12. What unusual sequelae have you observed?
13. Does the epidemic influence the results of other diseases, and how?
14. Symptoms observed in uncomplicated fatal cases?
15. At what age has it been most prevalent?
Врач

ЕЖЕНЕДЕЛЬНАЯ ГАЗЕТА,

посвященная всем отраслям клинической медицины, общественной и частной гигиене и вопросам врачебного быта.

Под редакцией профессора В. А. Манассеина.
1) In which month did the first cases of epidemic grippe appear? (Beginning, middle, or end of the month?)
2) When did the epidemic reach its height of development? (Beginning, middle, or end of the month?)
3) When did the epidemic end? (Beginning, middle, or end of the month?)
4) Approximate scale of epidemic (relative to population): **did grippe sicken \( \frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{2}, \text{or} \frac{3}{4} \text{ of the population?} \)**
5) Which gender and ages was primarily struck by the epidemic?
6) What was the character of the epidemic and the forms of illness?
7) What was the length of illness?
8) Which were the main diseases complicated by grippe?
9) **If possible, statistical figures** from hospitals and ambulatory services about those sick with grippe.
10) Were there **deaths directly resulting from grippe and which illness were observed to have more deadly outcomes under the influenza of grippe**?
11) What distinguished the grippe epidemic from the general death rate of the population?
12) Were other epidemic diseases seen to occur or become stronger during the grippe epidemic or immediately after it came to an end?
13) Were any changes in the weather noticed (temperature variations, wind, etc.), in the properties of the soil, water, and so on, and what kind?
14) Were there any efforts to control the spread of the epidemic?
15) Treatment measures deemed more practical by doctors.
Information Network as Local Knowledge

Influenza epidemic

Cases

- General public
- Physicians
- Newspapers
- Board of Health

Deaths
G. Wurts, Dec 1889: More than 40,000 cases have been medically authenticated, but these represent merely a small portion of the sufferers, many of whom have not considered the illness serious enough to require the help of a physician.

100+ articles with “medically authenticated” 1889-1890...but all quoting Wurts’s dispatch
perusing the works of foreign as well as American authors, found recorded but twenty-nine authenticated cases of drops of the hernial sac. My own incomplete researches have been far less contracted the disease. After diligent search he had failed to find a single well authenticated case on record of a human fetus at term showing evidence of tuberculosis; and the rarity of duodenal ulcers. Of this latter, it is doubtful if more than 70 authenticated cases are on record; while gastric ulcers, either cicatrized or open, are found in about spindle-celled sarcoma." the size and form of a human brain minus the The best authenticated case of primary sarcoma cerebellum. A longitudinal median incision of the lung is that of resection of the spine up to that time, and asserts that there is "no well authenticated case of cure after the operation when undertaken for fracture." Surgical writers previous to the strichnia. Dr. Conner stated that he had not been able to find a well authenticated case of alcohol amblyopia where tobacco could be excluded, and believes that tobacco causes the bathing was regularly employed. Brandt's latest statistics of typhus and typhoid embraced nearly 6,000 well-authenticated cases in which his method was systematically practiced, and the percentage of mortality was only not an uncommon thing to see mention of such cases in popular literature — but well authenticated cases are not so often found. It is recorded in history that the hair of
No. 69. Legation of the United States, St. Petersburg, December 5, 1869.

To the Honorable James G. Blaine, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

Sir,

Some foreign journals having spread greatly exaggerated reports of an epidemic that has swept over and is still raging at St. Petersburg this last month, it may be well in order to allay the anxiety of those having relations and friends here, to give an accurate account of the malady.
800+ articles about Walker Blaine, following death on Jan 14, 1890
Newspapers.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Residence Address</th>
<th>Business Address</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<td>Solicitor</td>
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<td>John W Blaine</td>
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<td>Laborer</td>
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<td>John W Blaine</td>
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<td>Laborer</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>James G. Blaine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Secretary Of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph A Blaine</td>
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BOYD'S DIRECTORY

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
TOGETHER WITH A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF ITS
Governments, Institutions and Trades,
TO WHICH IS ADDED A COMPLETE
BUSINESS DIRECTORY
AND A CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTORY.

ALSO,
A NEW MAP OF THE CITY,
PREPARED EXPRESSLY FOR THIS DIRECTORY.

SEE PAGE ELEVEN FOR NAMES NOT FOUND ELSEWHERE.

Wm. H. BOYD, Compiler.
1883.

TO FIND A NAME YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO SPELL IT.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

J. Bradley Adams, 111 T Street, nw.
J. H. Chapman, 911 Penn's Ave, nw.
William Ballinger & Son, 425 M Street, nw.

PRICE, $5.00.

Blaine James G, 20th c P nw
Blaine Jane, servt, 623 M nw
Blaine John F, 337 Mo av nw
Blaine Lizzie M, 1129 Park pl ne
Blaine Robert G, clk H R, 133 C se
Blaine Walker, assistant commissioner for United States Court Alabama Claims, 821 15th nw
Everybody had it in imagination if not in reality...

Digital Humanities and Network Analysis as Research Methods to Understand a Global Influenza Epidemic, 1889-1890

Tom Ewing, Professor of History, Virginia Tech
etewing@vt.edu / @ethomasewing

Presentation for the workshop:
Reconstructing Historical Networks Digitally: New Approaches, Opportunities and Epistemological Implications of Social Network Analysis

German Historical Institute

October 2018