CCSU
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES
COLLOQUIUM

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4:30 – 5:30 PM
Maria Sanford, Room 101

DIGITAL ART HISTORY

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Abstract: Digital humanities dates back to 1949 when Roberto Busa went to IBM seeking help in creating a concordance of all of the works of Thomas Aquinas. Working with metadata and images, however, is more challenging, so the application of sophisticated computer hardware and software to art history is more recent. This talk starts with Lev Manovich's framework for digital art history as well as examples of relevant data made available by Getty Research and the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS). Literary critical theory has contributed to art history, and Frank Moretti's approach of distant reading is compared and contrasted with Jacques Derrida's process of deconstruction. As a concrete but simple example, the question of whether or not Thomas Cole regularly painted Native Americans in his paintings, a problem inspired by Judith Hansen O'Toole's iconology of the Hudson River School. Finally, my current project is described, which attempts to quantify the interplay among 1825-75 American landscape painting, geology, and tourism using the text mining of 19th century works available from Google Books. This talk is meant for a broad audience, and, in particular, no mathematics beyond arithmetic is used.