Establishing a Research Agenda for Computational Archival Science (CAS) through Interdisciplinary Collaborations between Archivists and Technologists

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CT-LoS:

Computational Treatments *to re-member* the Legacy of Slavery
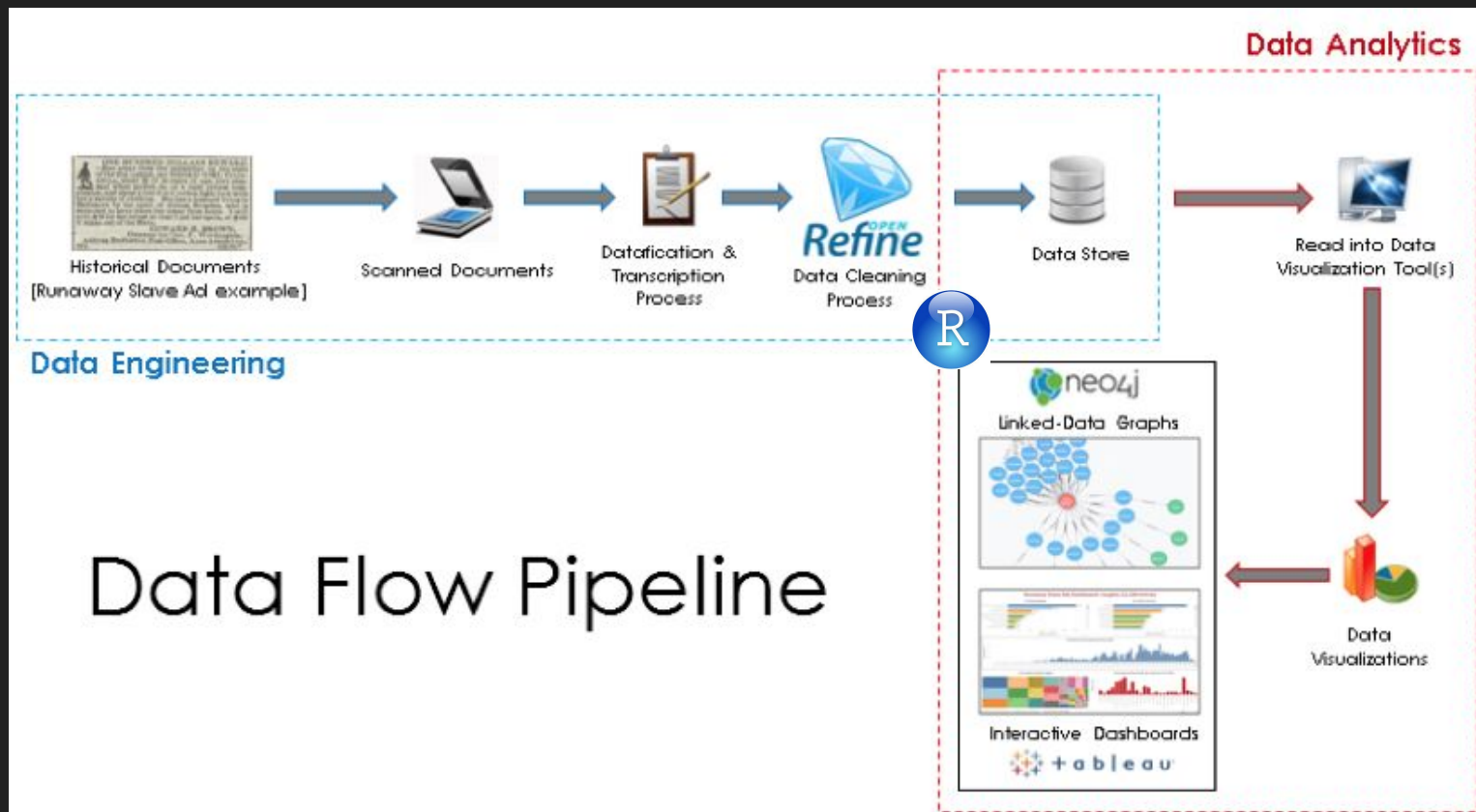
"Reasserting Erased Memory"

AHRC US-UK Student-Led Datathon, October 28-29, 2019

MSA Document Databases

A **manumission** is the legal document freeing an enslaved person. Manumissions can be found in land, probate, and chattel records. There is also a separate record series called Manumissions.

A **Certificate of Freedom** is a legal document that was issued to African Americans who were required to record proof of their freedom in the county court. The court would then issue them a Certificate of Freedom. If the person had been previously manumitted by an act of the slaveholder, the court clerk or register of wills would look up the manumitting document before issuing a certificate of freedom.

Enhanced Data Flow from Original Source Documents to Computational Exploration

Data Mining - Runaway Slave Ad

Fugitive Slave Data

Slave Owner Data

*Fugitive DOB calculated by subtracting age from the date

Sample Data Issues (Incorrect Entry) - COF

Sample Data Entry (Missing Information) - COF

	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
	Date	Date_New_Ra	Freed_FirstName	Freed_...stName	Alias	Sex	PriorSt	PriorStatus_new	Age	Age_Final_Raj	Height	Height	He
	184006	06/01/1840	Jeremiah W.	Brown	Jerry	M	Slave	Slave	50	50	5'	5	

Sample Data Issue (Transcription - Height Feature) - COF

Data Cleaning - Prior Status Column - COF

- Narrowed the Prior Status column down from 25 text facets to 4.
  - Research was conducted to determine the prior status of those who were categorized as a "Descendant of a white female woman". Source: Wikipedia - History of slavery in Maryland
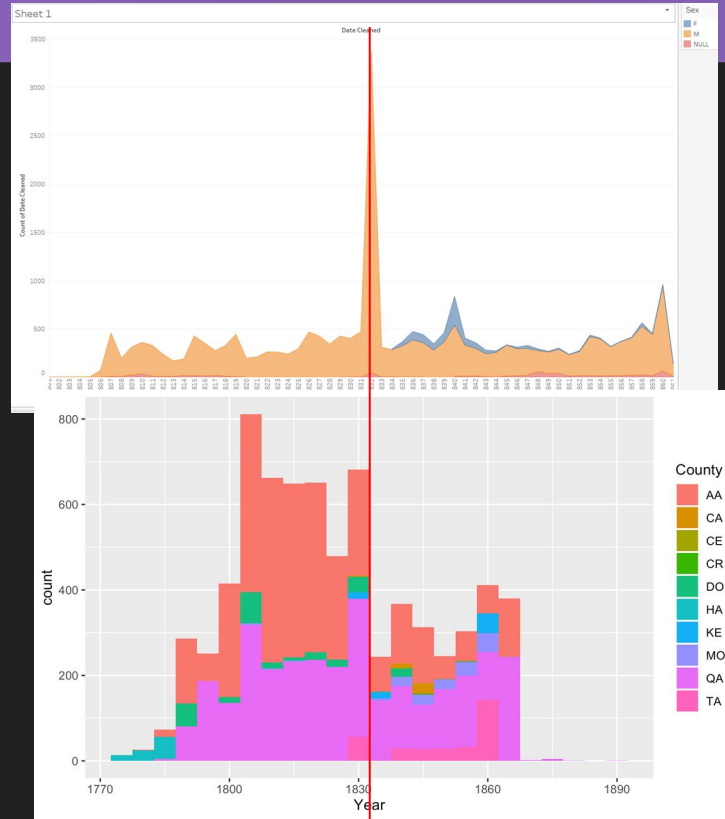
Data Visualization: Identifying Patterns
What happened around 1832?

Maryland Historical Context

1642- The first cargo ship with 13 Africans arrives in St. Mary's City. The legal status of indentured servants and slaves in Maryland remains in contention.

1664- Maryland legalizes slavery.

1775- The Revolutionary War begins.

1783- Maryland prohibits the importation of slaves.

1783- The *Maryland Gazette* published "Vox Africanorum", an editorial denouncing the inequality in the newly formed America, which promoted liberty and freedom while enslaving thousands.

1796- The Maryland General Assembly liberalizes the state's manumission laws regarding how and when a slave owner can free his/her slaves.

1831- The Maryland Colonizational Society forms to colonize Maryland blacks in Africa.

1832- In response to the Nat Turner Revolt, Maryland's legislature prohibits free blacks from entering the state.

1857- The U.S. Supreme Court hands down the Dred Scott decision, which denied African Americans equal rights as citizens.

1860- The Maryland General Assembly outlaws manumission by deed or will.

1861- The Civil War begins.

1862- Slavery is abolished in District of Columbia.

1863- Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, which frees all slaves in the territories currently in rebellion.

1864- On November 1, slavery is abolished in Maryland.

1865- Slavery is abolished in all of the states by the 13th Amendment.

Implications of Computational Archival Science

- Limitations of two dimensional technical tools
- Data elements lost or ignored
- Who captures the information
- Information can be understood in context of creation & continuing use
- Ability to compute the information for research & discovery
- Information retained & available for future use
- Combining interdisciplinary fields to understand data problems in context