

A detailed, green-toned woodcut-style illustration of a sea scene. In the foreground, a large, scaly sea monster with a human-like face and tusks is shown in profile, looking towards the right. In the background, a ship with a flag is on the water, and another figure is visible in the water. The letters 'A' and 'M' are scattered throughout the scene.

# GALE FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTS DIGITAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION A CASE STUDY

*Read how a digital humanities fellow is using Gale's wide-ranging collections and digital tools to provide new insights into the history of Australian politics using linked data methodology.*

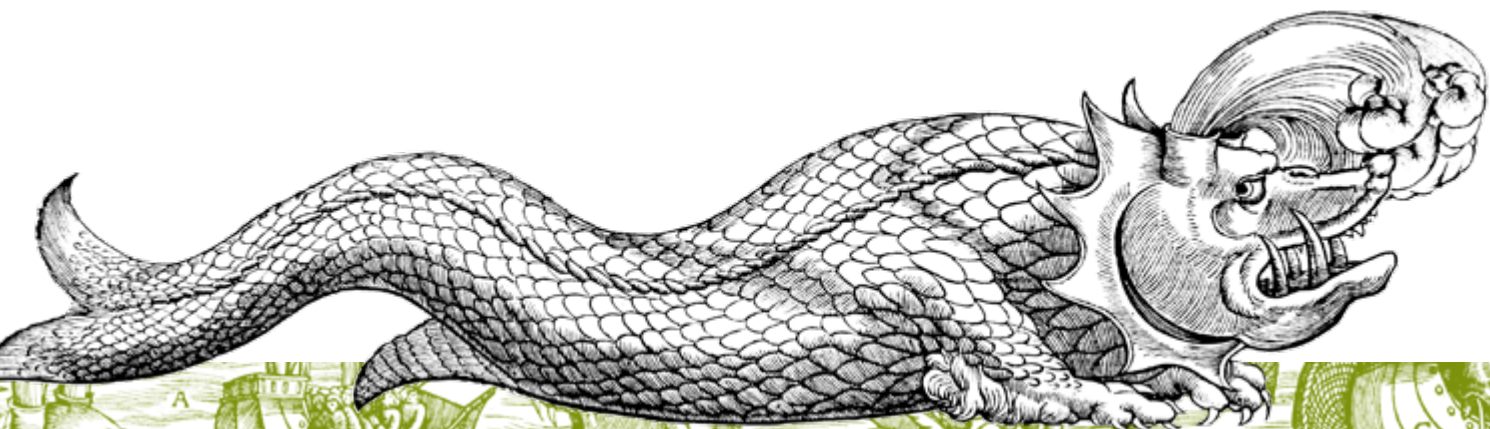
## ADVANCING DIGITAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Most digital humanities (DH) programs and centres are located in North America and Europe, where DH has been taking root as a separate field of study since the early 2000s. While the gap is closing rapidly, other parts of the world lack DH scholarship and training opportunities. Continued progress in the field depends on removing barriers to information and computational tools. The Gale-Oxford DH Fellowship does so by providing three months of funding to scholars in the Asia-Pacific region conducting DH research.



One of the candidates from the fellowship's second cohort is Dr. Terhi Nurmikko-Fuller, a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Research and Methods at the Australian National University who has been a DH practitioner for over a decade. She considers herself a methodologist whose research focuses on interdisciplinary experimentation into how digital technologies can support and diversify research in the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

Nurmikko-Fuller's fellowship project is titled: *Transnational Liberalism: A Linked Data Case Study of Australian Political History*. It uses an information publication paradigm called the linked data method to provide new insights into how political and social relationships between 19th-century leaders led to the emergence of Australia's Liberal Party. The party, whose ideology has since shifted to a conservative platform, has dominated the country's national government since World War II and exerted influence in the Asia-Pacific region for decades.



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## DIVERSIFYING DIGITAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH

The fellowship aims to diversify DH research by encouraging emerging scholarship in the Asia-Pacific region, supporting the contribution of non-Western and regional perspectives, and facilitating collaboration between scholars. As a fellow, Nurmikko-Fuller worked out of the University of Oxford Centre for Digital Scholarship at the Bodleian Libraries, where she had access to both *Gale Primary Sources* and *Gale Digital Scholar Lab*, as well as the libraries’ physical collections.

“For me, the most exciting kinds of questions are the ones where my link data methodology really has a chance to shine,” Nurmikko-Fuller said. “And that’s when we have opportunities to combine information from wildly different sources.”

Between the Bodleian’s analog collections, the wealth of documents found in *Gale Primary Sources*, and the text and data mining tools in *Gale Digital Scholar Lab*, Nurmikko-Fuller had little difficulty finding and navigating different sources to fuel her research.

“There isn’t just one collection that I want to focus on,” she said. “There are several collections [in *Gale’s Nineteenth Century Collections Online*] that look at specific niche aspects of materials from the 19th century ... So I’m just as excited to look through newspaper collections as I am the collections on theatre and high-end and public culture ... Even if a collection looks like it might not immediately be relevant, I’m sure there are going to be some wonderful things in there.”

Those “wonderful things” have allowed Nurmikko-Fuller to build a comprehensive picture of what was happening in colonial Australia and also gather data on the cultural and social movements happening in Great Britain and the rest of the British colonies.

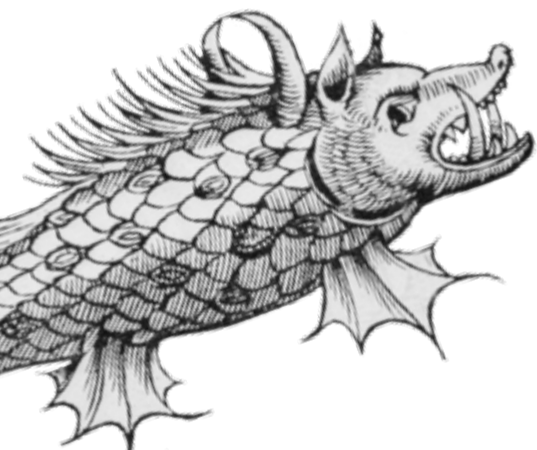
## MAKING HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

While there have been plenty of biographical studies of the individuals responsible for shaping colonial Australia’s political landscape, few researchers have explored how they interacted with each other in and outside political settings. Nurmikko-Fuller mined the Gale and Bodleian collections to gather data on everything from attendees of dress balls and social club memberships to the types of costumes worn by Sydney’s elite and whether they named their children after political leaders in the United Kingdom.

“We have historical people who are in a position of power, but they’re still human beings,” Nurmikko-Fuller said. “They will have made decisions based on the policies of their political party, but also based on conversations they might have had, and we’re trying to map these hidden social connections.”

Nurmikko-Fuller maps the connections using the linked data method, which relies on a database of interlinked representations of people, places, events, ideas, and other information that a computer program can process. In her methodology, Nurmikko-Fuller uses existing web architecture called Uniform Resource Identifiers, or URIs.

“Your dataset is long strings of potentially millions of these URIs put together that create a graph that a piece of software can navigate,” Nurmikko-Fuller explained. “We can use that to query for things, to find answers, or even to infer information that isn’t explicitly in the graph.”



“The [Gale] collections are so huge, and they enable such diverse and interesting research [...] going forward, working with the Gale collection is going to be a huge part of my research paradigm.”

#### Nurmikko-Fuller has two goals for her research:

1. To infuse more information and data into the history of Australian politics, which will give future scholars greater context about historical events and figures. Her linked data method even allows the inclusion of sources that have never been digitized by using identifiers that represent both the information and the documents where it can be found.
2. To further develop DH methodologies. Most research uses linked data to manage large datasets, but Nurmikko-Fuller is interested in exploring how to use the paradigm when data is nuanced, incomplete, or ambiguous.

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## REMOVE BARRIERS TO THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES WITH GALE

Nurmikko-Fuller said it best that digital humanities research combines modern technology with “all the beautiful things” about human endeavor. As a result, DH furthers our understanding of the forces that shape the world around us in ways that weren’t possible before the advent of computers. In that process of discovery, scholars also develop and refine methodologies that allow everyone in the field to continue to push the boundaries of knowledge.

The Gale-Oxford DH Fellowship supports those efforts by intentionally diversifying the perspectives included in DH. Academic leaders worldwide can do the same by removing barriers and supporting DH research when they bring *Gale Primary Sources* and *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* to their institutions.

[View a video](#) of Nurmikko-Fuller discussing her experience of the fellowship at Oxford.

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