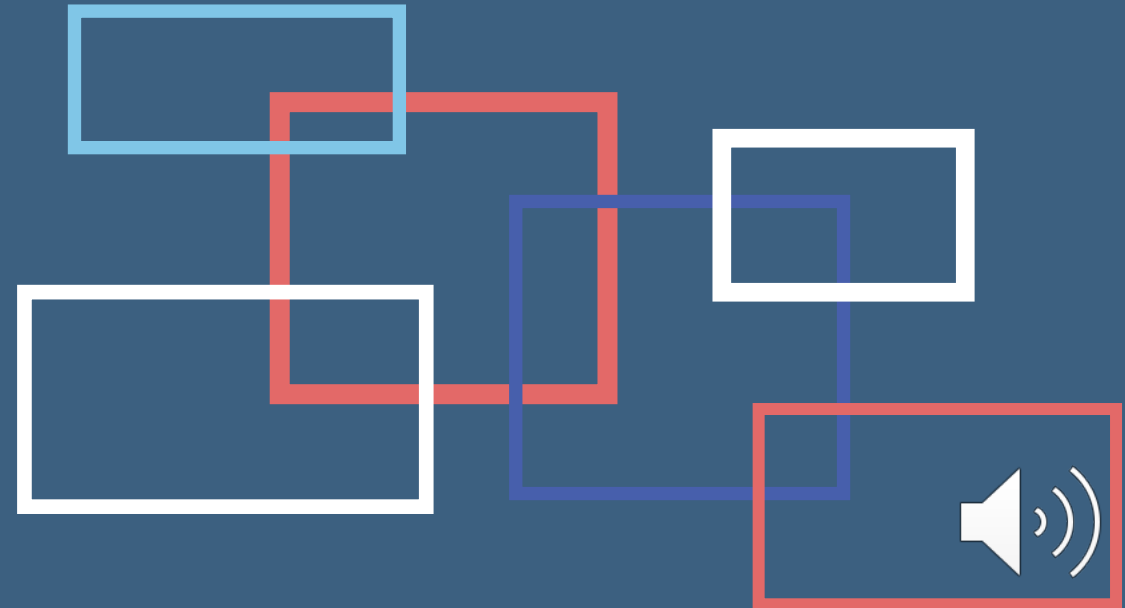


# Intersecting Fields



# Proximal Reading

*a network-scaled approach to  
digital literature analysis*

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Intersecting Fields Conference  
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# Near, Far, Wherever You Are...

The application of quantitative techniques to aid text analysis in the literary humanities

From Burrow's *Conjectures into Criticism* (1987) to Franco Moretti's *Graphs Maps and Trees* (2005), and beyond...



near

close reading

the New Critics: I.A. Richards and followers

*Each of the New Critics emphasized his own set of concerns and priorities... even at the New Criticism's height, the New Criticism was wrongly perceived as unified and consistent in its approaches (Gang, 2011)*







far

## distant reading

Franco Moretti, and followers

*Far from opening new perspectives, distant reading may actually blunt our critical faculties, inviting us to inadvertently adopt biased views of literature under the mask of objectivity.*  
(Ascari, 2014)



# far out...

*Unlike most of his critics, Moretti is therefore aware that a theory cannot be falsified by empirical facts... Like any proper theory, Moretti's is the strongest where it seems the weakest... (Habjan, 2012)*



# wherever you are...

## proximal reading

*We can change our parameters and our questions simply by reading more: more widely, more deeply, more eclectically, more comparatively. Browsing in addition to quantification; incessant rather than distant reading: the unsystematic nature of our discipline is actually its salvation (Trumpener, 2009)*



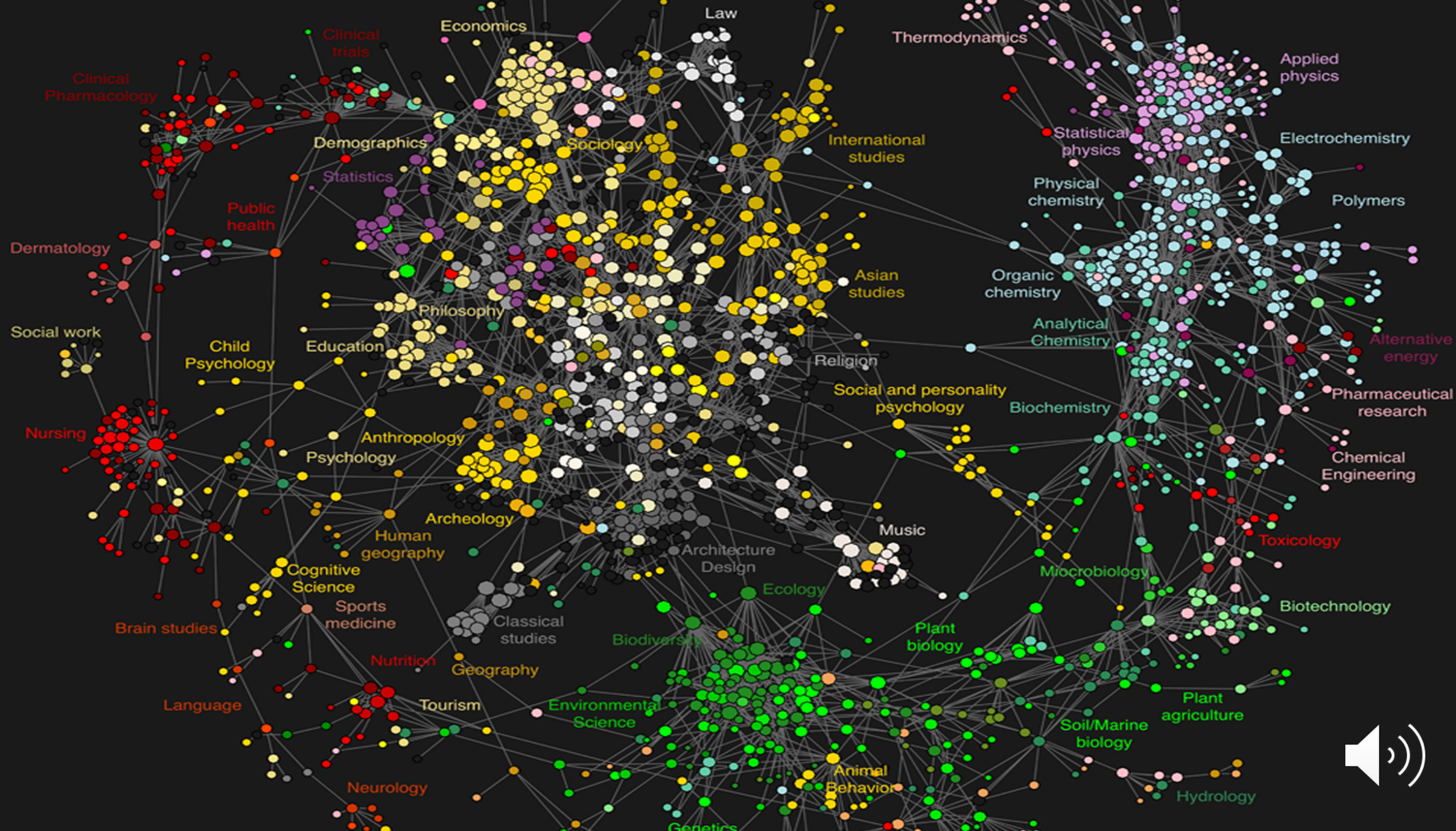


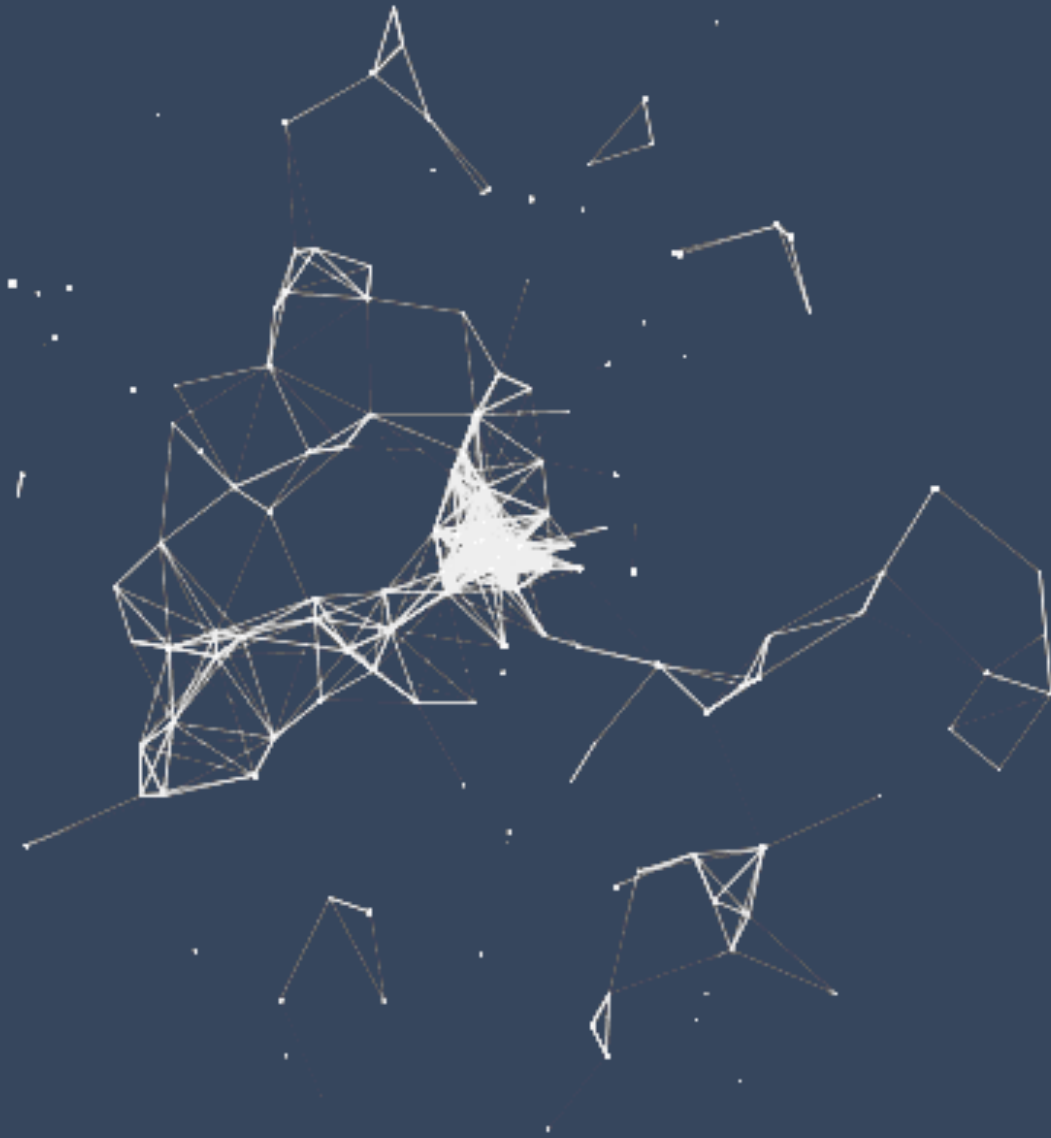
# degrees of separation

...and the random walk









# intersecting lines

rhizomes

slices

granules

temporality





# applied digital humanities

what do we want to know?

what can literature tell us about it?

what are the limitations?





# corpus text

- ...internally and self-referentially consistent
- ...defines research scope
- ...reader characteristics are distinguishable



The background of the slide is a photograph of a room. At the top, a ceiling fan with a central light fixture is visible. Below it, a large potted plant stands in the center. In the foreground, there are two dark-colored armchairs, each with a small side table and a lamp. The room is dimly lit, with the primary light sources being the ceiling fan light and the two side lamps.

# science fiction as a text corpus

there is an interdisciplinary research relationship between  
science fiction and human culture (Menadue & Cheer, 2017)



# science fiction magazines

bounded scope and unbounded content

changes in recurring themes and ideas reflect social and cultural change (Menadue, 2017)

advertising, letters and editorials: outward reading content (Scholes & Wulfman, 2010)



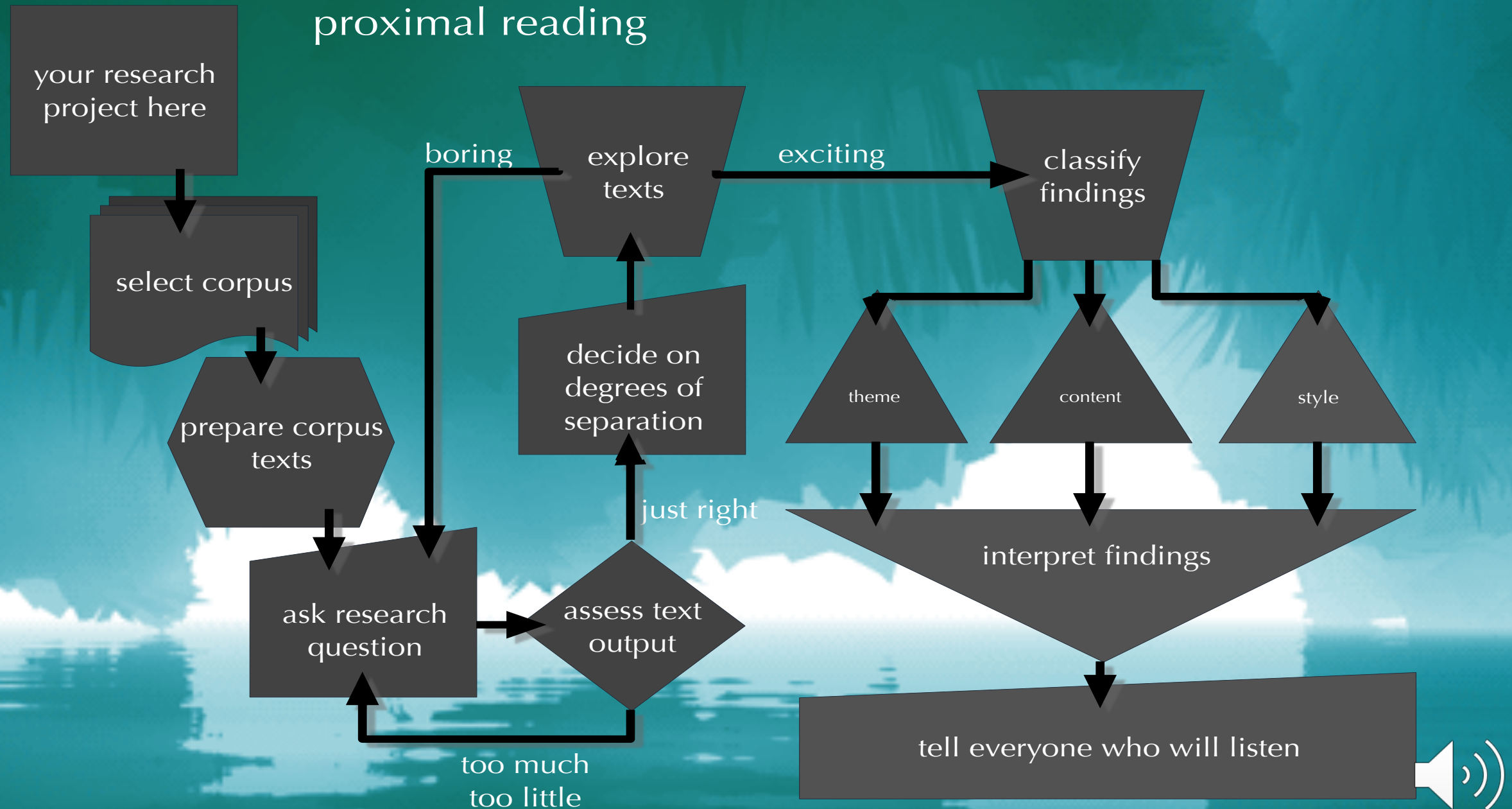


analysing the science fiction magazine

editorials  
stories  
articles  
letters  
reviews  
poems  
serials  
pictures  
feature  
advertising



# proximal reading



# digital tools for non-specialists

Excel for statistics and cataloguing

Google forms for surveys

Nvivo or other CAQDAS

wordcloud generators





# summary

it's (not so) complicated

literary corpus text is a good place to look for cultural insights

computers count and sort much more quickly than humans, but humans are better at interpretation

quantitative, empirical methods eliminate selection bias

qualitative analysis discovers meaning

Integrating both is a logical approach to text analysis



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