

A team lead by [Jean-Baptiste Michel](#) and [Erez Lieberman Aiden](#) (Harvard University) just published in [Science](#) a paper "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books" that promises to open a new era in the study of cultural evolution.

We constructed a corpus of digitized texts containing about 4% of all books ever printed. Analysis of this corpus enables us to investigate cultural trends quantitatively. We survey the vast terrain of "culturomics", focusing on linguistic and cultural phenomena that were reflected in the English language between 1800 and 2000. We show how this approach can provide insights about fields as diverse as lexicography, the evolution of grammar, collective memory, the adoption of technology, the pursuit of fame, censorship, and historical epidemiology. "Culturomics" extends the boundaries of rigorous quantitative inquiry to a wide array of new phenomena spanning the social sciences and the humanities.

This research was partly supported by Google's work effort to digitize books. Visit their new [Ngram viewer](#)!