



Ethical Argumentation in DH

Defining the scope and what is knowable given the information at hand is crucial to forming ethical, data driven research in DH. Be transparent about the data you have and, most importantly, the data you don't have. An initial critique of how and why that data was collected and its initial goals can help to identify the biases that already exist and to sculpt the way you address these pre-existing biases in the data as well as examine what biases you bring to your own work.

Why was the data (text, records, newspapers, locations etc.)
made and collected in the first place?
Who made the data available?
Who/what is represented by the data?
What is missing?

Use a reasoned thesis to make a claim based on the information you have. The more precise the claim, the better and the more ethical the approach. The thesis has two parts, the claim or assertion, and the "because clause" which is the reason why the audience should accept this assertion.

EXAMPLE:	The spotted owl should be protected because it is an indicator species.
Assertion:	The spotted owl should protected.
Reason:	The spotted owl is an indicator species.

The reason and assertion must have shared subjects.

Research question:

- ◆ What is your theory? How would you answer your own question?
- ◆ Why is this question important?

Reasoned Thesis:

- ◆ What needs to be defined?
- ◆ How could you measure/test these assumptions?
- ◆ What is the next step in this hypothesis?

Example thesis based on the [Digital Panopticon](#).

Research question: Did male and female convicts get different types of tattoos?

Thesis: More male prisoners are tattooed than women prisoners were tattooed.

Reasoned Thesis: Men more frequently received naval tattoos than women BECAUSE men were recruited to the navy where tattoos were common

Can you actually dive any deeper on this question with the data at hand?

Reasoned Thesis 1: Tattoos appeared on more male prisoners while tattoos were present on fewer women prisoners BECAUSE tattoos were only given to nefarious criminals who were rarely women.

Underlying assumption: Anything given to only nefarious criminals was given to more men than women.