

Rethinking the State of the Union: How Digital History Reshapes Research

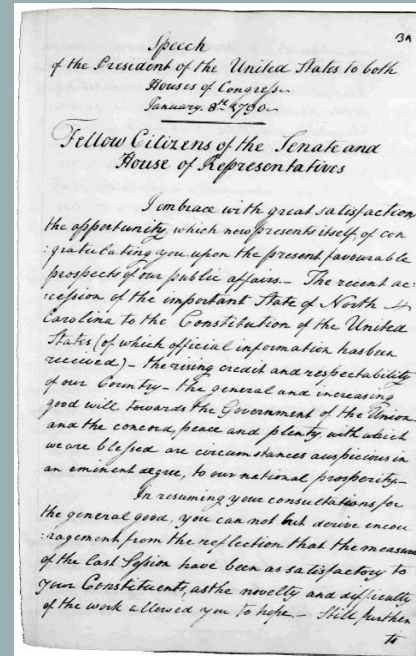
Abstract:

The State of the Union Address is a fantastic primary tool to use as a comparison for each administration. These addresses can be further dissected and analyzed with the help of digital history tools. In this case, Voyant Tools. This text searching tool allowed me to quickly and easily examine each address and note the total word count, words per sentence, and the most frequently used words and phrases. It allowed me to complete this research project way faster than reading each address by hand!



SOTU Fun Facts:

- It was delivered in person until Thomas Jefferson wrote his and sent it to Congress. That continued until President Wilson shocked the nation and gave his 1913 address
- President Truman's 1946 address was over 27,000 words. He did not give that address in person. He had it typed and delivered to Congress



President Washington's page one of his first SOTU

I looked at three areas of the State of the Union:

- (1): First addresses by five presidents
- (2): The three presidents who gave SOTU addresses at the turn of the century. What kind of message was given at these historic moments in time?
- (3): Youngest and oldest presidents who took office. How does age play into the content of the address?



Findings:

- President Truman gave the longest address by word count, but President Clinton gave the longest address by total time
- Presidents Adams, McKinley, and Clinton all gave SOTU addresses at the turn of the century
- President Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest president to assume the office and President Trump is the oldest to assume the office.