Networks are chains, systems, interrelations, threads, wires, links, and connections arranged with crossovers, intersections, and interstices. This Collegium brings together a small group of internationally renowned scholars to explore networks, through intense discussion, as a way of conceptualizing and quantifying the transmission and reception of textual objects and words.

We live in a networked world. The Internet, public transport networks, and power grids make our everyday lives possible; our careers are dependent on networking; and social networking sites provide an online account of our professional and personal capital. Networks have become a metaphor for connectedness, but also a concrete framework for visualizing and measuring complex systems of knowledge in the era of big data.

In textual studies, social networks form between correspondents; between scribes, manuscript compilers, audiences; authors, printers, and publishers; and between characters in a novel or play. Networks provide a model for the transmission of texts, concepts, and metaphors across time and space; they allow us to quantify influence and describe associations. We can also conceptualize as networks relationships that are not normally conceived of as such: between individual poems and miscellanies, or between dramatists and playhouses. But the question of methodology remains. How do we actually use networks? How can we integrate quantitative methods from the fields of mathematics and computer science? What is the role of visualization, and what does it add to our knowledge? How do such developments change the way we engage with primary texts, and how do they change the way we write and disseminate scholarship?