Unveiling the Ezpeleta Affair: Using AI to Explore Cervantes's World

María Ángeles Fernández Cifuentes, Ph. D., and Alexis Skidmore, UNF alumna

Introduction

"Unveiling the Ezpeleta Affair: Using AI to Explore Cervantes's World" explores the unresolved mystery surrounding Don Gaspar de Ezpeleta's murder in 1605, which occurred near the residence of Miguel de Cervantes. By utilizing AI tools such as image generators and interactive agents, along with data visualization, the project aims to illuminate the **complex social fabric of Cervantes's era** and examine the **documents related to Ezpeleta's case.** The integration of digital tools for enhancing historical narratives into interactive and immersive experiences provides an intimate look at life in Spain's capital during Cervantes's time and highlights personal and collective connections that extend beyond traditional family ties. This project has also made the key documents from the police investigation into Ezpeleta's death, previously inaccessible in English, available in an interactive bilingual format, in an effort to advance active learning and promote equity and accessibility.
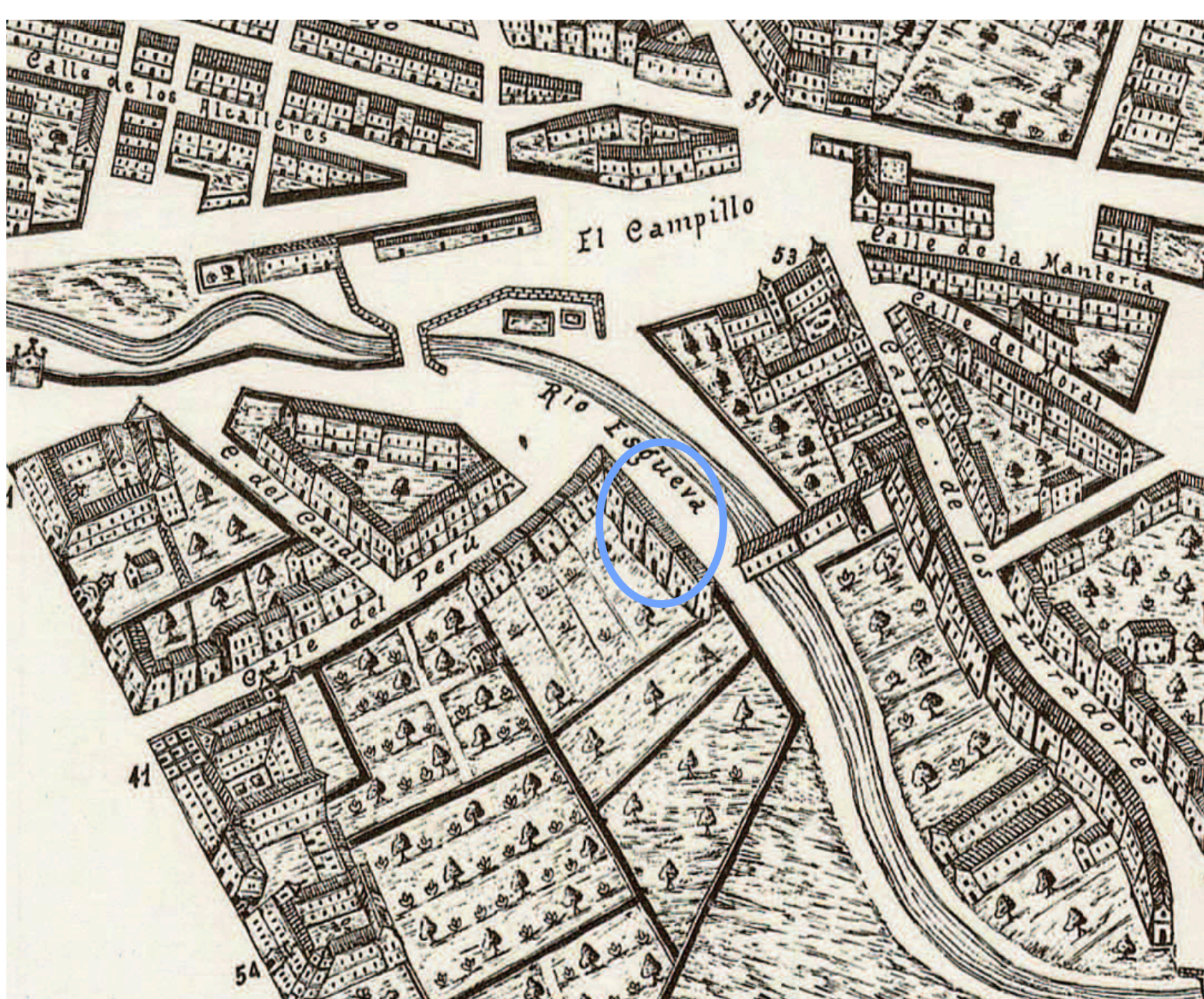

Figure 1. Map of Valladolid with the exact location of Cervantes's dwelling (Ventura Seco, 1738).

Methodologies

The methodology employs a multimodal approach, using AI tools and digital technologies to create an interactive, immersive exploration of the *Ezpeleta affair*:

- **Data Visualization**: The project greatly benefited from the instrumental efforts of Alexis Skidmore (BA in Spanish, 2023) who categorized crucial information about the individuals interrogated and prepared it for data analysis, in both Spanish and English. We used Microsoft Excel for data visualization purposes, leveraging its wide range of functions and its accessibility and user-friendly interface.
- **3D Renderings of Maps**: These visualizations provide a spatial context to Cervantes's world, augmenting the geographical understanding of the era and the specific locations pertinent to the investigation.
- **AI Image Generators** helped bring the historical figures associated with the *Ezpeleta affair* to life by creating visual representations of the individuals interrogated, based on their descriptive information (when available).
- **D-ID Interactive Agents**: Interactive AI agents combine language model analytics with the immediacy of direct communication, simulating dialogues with historical figures like Cervantes through custom scripts. This enables the generation of hypothetical scenarios related to the Ezpeleta's case, enhancing engagement and offering speculative insights into the era's testimonies and interactions.

Results

This project will be published as an **open educational resource** and featured in a monograph titled "The Cervantes Universe: Digital Synergies in the Classroom", currently under contract with Peter Lang. This publication showcases five additional student projects affiliated with the UNF Digital Humanities Institute (DHI), further emphasizing the role of digital methodologies in enriching academic research and teaching. Specifically, it aligns with the goals of the DHI-affiliated *OER-Immersive Multimedia Materials Project,* aimed at designing and developing Open Educational Resources to enhance community-based learning and undergraduate research across language and literature courses at UNF.

Figure 2. Image of Cervantes's daughter, Isabel de Saavedra, using Shutterstock AI Image Generator.

Conclusions

The project aligns with the US Department of Education Office of Educational Technology's AI recommendations by showcasing how AI technologies can overcome educational barriers, enrich learning experiences, and advocate for a human-centric approach to technology in education.

AI agents are a prime example of AI's **transformative potential**, not just in education but also in fields like healthcare. In education, they can enhance language learning, provide immersive historical simulations, enable personalized learning, and foster engagement in debates.

Benefits in the field of health could include simulated patient interactions for medical training, support in psychological therapy, patient education, health monitoring, and crisis intervention.

Beyond these fields, AI agents improve customer service, legal assistance, accessibility, entertainment experiences, and professional training.

Bibliography

Scan the following QR to access the project's bibliography.