Building Capacity for Digital Scholarship & Publishing: Three Approaches from Mellon's 2014–2015 Scholarly Communications Initiative

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The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's 2014-2015 Scholarly Communications Initiative funded more than thirteen projects of various sizes and orientations as part of an effort to strengthen the scholarly monograph publishing ecosystem in a time of increasing disruption. While the projects are seemingly divergent in their approaches, a recent report from Simon Fraser University, "Reassembling Scholarly Communications: An Evaluation of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Monograph Initiative" (May 2016) identifies points of thematic alignment and overlap. Many of the funded projects are explicitly based in university presses, with the goal of either enhancing existing monograph programs or developing digital capacity where little or none exists. But three projects, located at University of Illinois, Brown University, and University of Connecticut, are instead focused on exploring new forms for scholarly expression and developing models for faculty digital publication outside the traditional press framework.

The "Building Capacity for Digital Scholarship & Publishing" panel brings together representatives from each of these three projects to investigate unique and complementary dimensions of their work. Presenters include Maria Bonn from the University of Illinois, Elli Mylonas from Brown University, and Sara Sikes from the University of Connecticut. The session will address the development of project outcomes and encourage participation in a discussion about large-scale shifts in structural and cultural approaches to faculty-led digital scholarship production and publication. Rather than building new publishing platforms, these three Mellon-funded projects are focused on exploring workflows and work cultures suited to the creation of multimodal scholarly communications. The University of Illinois will explore how current tools align with scholars' publishing requirements and address the gap between scholars' needs and the existing publishing systems for digital scholarship. At both Brown University and University of Connecticut, the scholarly publications initiatives are focused on developing an infrastructure to support digital scholarship projects, facilitating new workflows and work cultures, and revising criteria for tenure and promotion.

Publishing Without Walls

Maria Bonn

"Publishing Without Walls" is a Mellon-funded initiative at the University of Illinois, led by the University Library in partnership with the School of Information Sciences, the department of African American Studies, and the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. The objective is to develop a model for library-based publishing services that can be adopted broadly by other academic libraries to address scholars' emerging needs in a contemporary publishing environment. Both an embedded research effort and programmatic development are strategically designed to address known gaps within the current landscape: the gap between what and how scholars want to publish and what existing systems of print publishing can afford; the gap between the everyday practices of humanities scholars and the high-level tools that exist for digital scholarship; and the gap between digital scholarship and publishing at resource-rich institutions as opposed to at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Most experiments with new forms of and models for digital publishing focus on parts of the process rather than taking a holistic, scholar-

centric view of publication: for example, tools are often developed with only an abstract sense of scholarly requirements, and new funding models are suggested without exploring whether and how existing systems meet scholars' needs. In order to guide the development of a more holistic and widely shareable service model, the University of Illinois is undertaking a significant qualitative study on how emerging services and tools align with scholars' publishing needs and using the findings to shape and inform the development of tools and services for Publishing Without Walls.

The Role of the University in Scholarly Communication

Elli Mylonas

The purpose of Brown University's Mellon-funded digital scholarship initiative is to establish an infrastructure to support the development and publication of digital scholarly monographs. Anchored in the University Library and the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, this digital publishing initiative extends the University's mission of supporting and promoting the scholarship of its faculty, while also playing a role in shaping the future of digital scholarship in the humanities more broadly.

Brown will first address questions about the evaluation of digital scholarship within the academic validation process. The initiative promotes the creation of language and criteria at the department level upon which digital scholarship will be evaluated for tenure and promotion purposes, and this process is, as of Spring 2017, substantially complete. With these guidelines established the initiative is now supporting two digital scholarly publications. Mellon grant funds have been used to augment the library's staff, adding new positions including the Digital Scholarship Editor, a Designer for Online Publications, and graduate- and undergraduate-level researchers. Funds from the grant are also designated to bring in speakers who are engaged in digital projects or other efforts to introduce digital scholarship and publication into the formal academic process in order to spark discussions around best practices and innovative approaches. By tackling first the issue of evaluation and then assisting with the creation of innovative, digital-first scholarship as well as innovative digital publication, the initiative will remove barriers in place at Brown and potentially serve as an example to other institutions that are engaging with emerging forms of writing, publication, and dissemination.

The Scholarly Communications Design Studio

Sara Sikes

The Digital Media & Design Department at the University of Connecticut (UConn), in collaboration with the University Library and UConn Humanities Institute, is implementing Greenhouse Studios | Scholarly Communications Design at UConn. Greenhouse Studios will facilitate a design-based, inquiry-driven, collaboration-first workflow that addresses the divided processes and counter-productive labor arrangements that have complicated scholarly communications in the digital age. Even as the scholarly communications field pursues the opportunities presented by digital technology, its routine operations remain anchored in print-centric regimens. For those striving to evolve digital scholarship production and publication in the Internet age, particularly as it bears upon long-form scholarship, there is compelling need to productively disrupt and reconfigure the processes and work cultures that have naturalized around the production of printed products.

The proposed approach of Greenhouse Studios is undergirded by design-thinking methodologies that foster divergent creativity in generating and developing ideas directed toward solving complex problems while keeping end recipients of a project squarely in mind. Design thinking practices do not, in and of themselves, address cultural or workflow hierarchies, therefore a refined design process model has been established so that work begins with a prompt, an inquiry-in-common, that is set before a project team. In the design process model for the Mellon initiative undertaken at UConn, the potential audiences of a publication are explored at the very outset of a project, in specific rather than vague terms, as an essential element of the workflow. The team members hail from the areas once conceived of as the transactional links in the scholarly communications process, including librarians, web developers, editors, and designers, and they are assembled as a

collaborative unit at the very outset of each undertaking. The power of the values and ways of working to be instantiated through the Greenhouses Studios places continuous, equitable communication between all kinds of scholarly communications labor at the heart of its mission.

In its broadest sense, "scholarly communications" is conceived of as communication of scholarship to specific audiences in a manner designed to make the expression of knowledge informative, useful, and relevant to that particular community. By employing the use of multimodal communications, researchers and their scholarship are connected to broad peer or public constituencies, and a work may be expressed in multiple form, each tailored to a different type of audience. As we look beyond inward-focused text, the visual, aural, and interactive forms of expression open pathways into understanding complex material that print alone cannot.

Bibliography

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