Edited by Virginia Kuhn and Anke Finger

Shaping the Digital Dissertation

Knowledge Production in the Arts and Humanities

https://www.openbookpublishers.com

Cover image: Erda Estremera on Unsplash, https://unsplash.com/photos/eMX1aIAp9Nw. Cover design by Anna Gatti.

5. The Gutenberg Galaxy will be Pixelated or How to Think of Digital Scholarship as The Present

An Advisor's Perspective

Anke Finger

A PhD in the humanities traditionally requires a book-length study of original scholarship, aka a dissertation. As a matter of initiation into the world of academics, I wrote one, too, typing away at my Toshiba laptop, equipped with a feeble 120 megabyte hard drive. When I was not staring at the rhythmic heartbeat of the blue cursor on the screen that, I so hoped, would send sparks of life to my writing, I jotted down ideas on paper flash cards, to be used (or not) later. Digital text and ASCII code, that was the extent of the multimodal versatilities at my fingertips in the early and mid-1990s. Hyperlinks, images, graphs, video, audio, animation— common digital features in today's world—were absent. At the time, the book concept was easily transferable to early personal computing since the laptop, no matter how revolutionary its technical capacities at the time, produced text for which one simply did not have to use whiteout anymore. Paper saved, and typo nightmares and grammatical errors avoided with a simple click.

The book as a medium and as an artifact has changed significantly since then. According to Matthew Fuller, 'Nobody Knows What a Book Is Anymore', and he suggests that we consider the 'book as diagram':

> As we see books entangling with computational structures and entities we can perhaps see them undergoing a further transition: incunabula,

codex, book, stack, queue, heap. [...] The book is an essentially shifting, capacious form—there is not one aspect of its characteristics concerning binding, titling, authorship, typesetting, pagination, orthography, and so on, that has not been exceeded, gone beyond or done without in various and numerous cases.[1]

Few would dispute that, while the publishing industry is doing just fine producing print books, a plethora of digital book forms have emerged over the last twenty and more years, speaking to the enticingly experimental potential of what used to be called 'new media', but also to democratizing authorships and readerships beyond national, linguistic, economic and media limitations. What about academic books, however? The present in academia is not so innovative or manifold as of yet. Paul Spence lists a number of reasons for both resistance to and difficulties of producing digital book forms for scholarship. Among them he emphasizes the 'many challenges of technical sustainability and preservation, education and training, not to mention effective business models and integration into the wider fabric of scholarly communication'; a lack of understanding of 'the "digital book" (or its alternatives) as intellectual systems'; the meager number of 'studies regarding how digital publication actually facilitates or encourages new forms of knowledge production'; and a two-tiered and even oppositional relationship between print and digital forms.[2] He concludes that we have yet to figure out the 'many opportunities in fully integrating complex scholarly argument into a potentially more connective, participatory and visually expressive medium'.[3] If Spence dampens Fuller's perception of a rich and colorful landscape of book forms in the digital realm, Robert B. Townsend's 'Are Historians Still Ambivalent about Getting Published Online?' on the History News Network crushes anyone's enthusiasm about forging ahead for the future of academic digital scholarship and publishing. Based on a 2015 national survey conducted in history departments with and without PhD programs, he counted almost 80% of respondents who never published online because of the 'lack

---

1   Matthew Fuller, 'Nobody Knows What a Book Is Anymore', *Urbanomic* (2017), https://www.urbanomic.com/document/nobody-knows-book/
2   Paul Spence, 'The Academic Book and Its Digital Dilemmas', *Convergence*, 24.5 (2018), 458–76 (at 462–63, 466, 467, 471), https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856518772029
3   Ibid., 473.

of scholarly prestige'.[4] Over 90% confirmed that a print book is key for tenure. Notably, as Townsend points out early in his report, 'this ambivalence [about online publishing] appeared to arise from two principal sources—personal doubts about the value of this form of work, and a larger sense that there is little professional appreciation or credit for this form of work'.[5] I should note here that Townsend does not define 'online publishing' further, leaving the genres comprised by 'online publishing' wide open.

If historians were to resist, for example, blogging, web page design or hybrid outlets promoted by first-tier academic presses, how is the dissertation, as the precursor to an academic book (presumably with which tenure will be secured), to arrive at the digital stage? Why would anyone be reckless enough to put effort into the multitude of skills and hours needed to collaborate on and produce a dissertation in multimodal format? Why invest in so much technical knowledge and innovative energy when it is valued so little by those evaluating the work for one's future scholarly potential? As Virginia Kuhn succinctly put it in her article concerning the digital dissertation, 'the academy's resistance to the digital remains. […] and tenure review boards have consistently shown themselves to be unprepared to reward or even credit junior faculty who produce digital scholarship'.[6] Kuhn here refers to her own 2005 dissertation, and, arguably, a considerable amount of time has passed since then, by digital measures. However, while hybrid or born-digital dissertations have appeared within the realm of possible humanities and art scholarship at many institutions, not much has changed in these years regarding evaluative measures. Most review boards continue to rely on the scholar's own explication of her or his work, and on a doctoral advisor's translational acumen, navigating traditional and multimodal approaches to scholarly communication. At issue are the variety of digital scholarship genres, formats or cultural techniques and collaborative work (which is standard in digital scholarship) that pose the most significant challenges for evaluating committees or units. These

---

4   Robert B. Townsend, 'Are Historians Still Ambivalent about Getting Published Online?', *History News Network* (2018), https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/168871

5   Ibid.

6   Virginia Kuhn, 'Embrace and Ambivalence', *Academe*, 99.1 (2013), n.p., https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1004358

genres or cultural techniques are often unfamiliar, and collaborative authorship may remain a quantitative exercise in who did what and how much. The evaluation debates, however, also require a return to the most central of questions, namely: what is scholarship? What shapes and forms does it take now and in future decades? And who are its audiences? While many PhD advisors are digital-scholarship-positive or -curious, they may lack the training to guide the graduate student with expertise and themselves require assistance from numerous university networks. The graduate student, in turn, must learn new digital tools and methods, collaborate, write grants, and, importantly, become an adept communicator of one's own digital scholarship. They are obliged to explain their process, contrary to the traditional scholar whose methods and approaches are tacitly beyond reproach. These are time consuming and highly disruptive activities in addition to seeking employment within or beyond the academy or simply going about one's everyday teaching and research obligations. How can the academy provide a more supportive environment whereby the budding digital scholar is not also required to repeatedly defend and explain her or his process, methods, and tools?

In the following, I offer my perspectives as a PhD advisor and as the inaugural director of Digital Humanities and Media Studies at the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Humanities Institute[7] to suggest steps towards incremental change at the dissertation stage. For even at universities with limited tech support and no detailed guidelines on how to evaluate digital scholarship at any stage of academic research, such as the University of Connecticut, graduate students must receive access to scholarly inquiry and research innovation beyond print, beginning work with digital tools early in their graduate career, and move towards what Jeffrey Schnapp has called knowledge design.[8] Indeed, digital dissertations have been around for decades. More often than not, they must have been the product of a maverick or adventuring spirit who had the goodwill and generosity of an advisor ready to embrace their student's vision. Or the dissertation project was supported by an existing unit—a DH center or a digital lab—that provided the conceptual,

collaborative and tech support needed when fellow graduate students and, specifically, faculty advisors remained untrained in guiding the project and/or unsupportive of its epistemological endeavors. Smiljana Antonijevic, in her seminal study of that 'tribe' called digital humanists, repeatedly notes how often DH practitioners are self-trained and self-motivated, stoically weathering misunderstanding, dismissal or even ridicule of their work with digital media and computerization. At issue are cultural dissonances: peers and advisors maintain long-held values and practices in academia, with some unprepared or unwilling to adjust to means of communication and scholarly inquiry that move beyond print. Importantly, Antonijevic emphasizes, 'In discussing how to change this mindset [humanists' insular attitude toward the purpose of their work] my respondents commented further that these attitudes reflect economic circumstances and the overarching academic structure of tenure and career advancement in the humanities'.[9] Learning new digital tools and methods, collaboration, grant writing and, importantly, becoming an adept explicator of one's own digital approaches, are demanding activities in addition to what is assumed to be the focus of any ABD (all but dissertated) graduate student: researching and writing the dissertation such that a wad of paper, topped with a neat title page, will find its way to the graduate school for official approval towards the PhD degree.

Digital scholarship, if understood not only as working with digital methodologies and tools, but also as communicating and publishing beyond print media, presents the traditionally trained humanist with further challenges: how is the humanities scholar to navigate the plethora of media and media affordances? What about the variety of literacies required to read and produce such scholarship? How to negotiate the possible semiotic playing fields? Up for debate are not only local structures for digital scholarship (workshops, capable and supportive faculty and librarians, tools, equipment and archivists), but also continuing misconceptions or differing ideas about what constitutes digital scholarship in humanities and art departments, and, importantly, the necessity to dialog about what presents as an intercultural glitch

---

9   Smiljana Antonijevic, *Amongst Digital Humanists. An Ethnographic Study of Digital Knowledge Production* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2015), p. 126, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137484185

between two increasingly disconnected groups: those who 'do' digital scholarship and those who do not 'do' digital scholarship. Ultimately, I suggest, digital scholarship methodologies and practices continue to demand additional communication skills to translate between digital and analog epistemologies in humanities and art research. At minimum, it behooves advisors and faculty to equip graduate students with those skills so that they can advocate for themselves and their research; ideally, faculty and advisors would recognize at the local level that digital scholarship is very much The Present and adjust and update curricula and PhD programs accordingly.

Hybrid Dissertations

In the following I share a few humble first steps any instructor and advisor can implement into their graduate seminars or dissertation work to discover and explore approaches towards digital scholarship with their students and advisees. Over the years of advising graduate students towards authoring a dissertation, I began to integrate multimodal forms of expression and technical tools early in the graduate curriculum. First and foremost is the decidedly non-digital exploration of non-linear thinking. Different disciplines, including design and psychology, have established specific corpora of scholarship to explore this cognitive approach; in my case I employ the semiotics of multimedia or multimodality since my dissertation, and eventually book, took on the topic of the total artwork, requiring me to understand different codes and modes of communication in converged form. Nonetheless, a theoretical understanding of interart processes or word and images studies, for example, does not necessarily help with learning a certain middleware, as Johanna Drucker and Patrick Svensson explain,[10] nor does it teach one approaches beyond qualitative hermeneutics that take advantage of the computational, quantitative power of computer technologies. Or, more confusingly, how to design a product that employs the possibilities of non-linear, multi-layered and multimedia communication and design forms. A digital dissertation on the total

---

10   Johanna Drucker and Patrick B. O. Svensson, 'The Why and How of Middleware', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 10.2 (2016), http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/10/2/000248/000248.html

artwork in modernism using today's technical means would present as a carefully networked, intricately designed composition consisting of mp4 and mp3 files, enhanced by JPGs and text-mining graphs, and ngram-based data on the use of the term while urging the reader to cruise through the work using a variety of platforms. But how does one begin to think in this dimension?

Every graduate course I teach includes at least one media project feature. This media project is completely open, the only guidelines I offer are a) it must NOT be a linear text in print and b) the project content should be a first exploration of a possible topic for the final seminar project. Accompanying the project itself are 4–5 pages or about 1000 words of process writing, laying out explicitly how the author came up with the idea for the project, chose the medium/media used and why, and reflecting on mistakes and challenges along the way. I describe this process writing as a blueprint, should the author wish to produce the same project again, so that she or he can retrace these first, exploratory steps, both practically and theoretically. In my digital humanities seminars and for the DHMS Graduate Certificate I will describe below, I apply a more sophisticated model, derived from Shannon Mattern's foundational piece 'Evaluating Multimodal Work, Revisited'.[11] For students who have never embarked on multimodal scholarship (and considering the conundrum of multiple literacies), however, and who require assistance with stepping over a digital tech threshold for the purpose of producing scholarship, the intricacies of criteria laid out by Mattern's guidelines are far too complex. In that case, I offer Alan Liu's treasure trove of a toy chest with which students are emboldened to experiment, focusing on one or two tools of interest.[12] It encourages them to create a vast variety of works, from visual interpretations of texts to video to audio to games to installations. Some of them are completely new to the medium they produce: they have to familiarize themselves with the technical skills necessary to reach an audience (sound has to be audible, images have to be clear and used fairly, for example); they do the research to justify which (editing) tool they used; they are required

---

11 Shannon Christine Mattern, 'Evaluating Multimodal Work, Revisited', *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 1.4 (2012), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-4/evaluating-multimodal-work-revisited-by-shannon-mattern/

12 See http://dhresourcesforprojectbuilding.pbworks.com/w/page/69244319/Digital%20Humanities%20Tools

to communicate design decisions for a medium like a website, including color coding and wireframing; and they are asked to reflect on how this new medium helped them approach the topic or text at the base of their media project anew. Invariably, these projects become mini-independent studies. I help with technical issues, reframing questions, refer students to get assistance elsewhere or push them out of their intellectual comfort zones when there is fear of failure or mere frustration with the assignment. They all overcome the fear or concerns eventually since the assessment is not punitive: they get an A for this element of the seminar as part of their participation, provided they have an initial product they have reasoned though and applied a creative process that moved the epistemological bar to a next level. What is different is the critique: the process writing allows for deeper reflection on the making of, and especially the why, and the entire group critiques the final product such that the experimental nature of the assignment is embraced, not whether the video or audio is technically flawless or the topic itself is well-presented. Several students further refine the project, using the media affordances so effectively that the student could apply with it to one of their first conferences. Some, in my independent studies, for example, have produced an impressive corpus of data, complete with a thoroughly designed research approach, but need extra encouragement to present their work at meetings as it is considered 'unfinished'. It is this first adventure with digital scholarship that counts, it is the first application of digital tools that applies non-linear thinking and creativity, and it is the first exploration of nontraditional hermeneutics that—as they all avow—provides an entirely new perspective on the topic or text they chose to 'translate' in the first place.

I urge all dissertating students to apply this creativity as epistemology in their dissertations as well. Should anyone wish to write a born-digital dissertation, I am all for it. So far, most choose to stay either within the traditional parameters or they pick a chapter that becomes a digital humanities project, either accompanying the larger text of the dissertation or figuring as an integral part of the larger argument. The biggest challenge, I have found, is not the acquisition of new skills in the digital realm; students can build their own support system, and within our department, they have offered each other training on platforms or tools like Scalar or WordPress or Omeka or software languages. It is

joining a community of practitioners, a new culture group, that speaks a different language and subscribes to and develops entirely new approaches to what we call literary or cultural studies.

Interculturally speaking, those who 'do' digital humanities and, by extension, digital scholarship move in a different communicative world that prevents uninitiated grad students just as much from approaching or being able to evaluate digital scholarship as it does established faculty. In May 2018, I was invited to speak about digital scholarship at an Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) seminar for department heads in the languages, and, in preparation for my talk, I asked some Tenure and Promotion Review (PTR) committee members in my own department what they thought of digital scholarship. The responses were mainly positive, most were all for encouraging it; however, without fail, everyone was at a loss as to how to evaluate it. Not only did I come across readily admitted gaps in technical knowledge, there was also confusion as to how to 'read' a dissertation or book that clearly did not meet traditional parameters of peer review or metrics conventional in humanities and art scholarship.

Undoubtedly, the lingo can be daunting: in Johanna Drucker's reflection on 'Why Distant Reading Isn't', terms such as 'tokenization', 'probabilistic inference techniques', 'grayscale value', and 'ASCII string' will likely make most of my colleagues wonder how such terms figure in any part of their work, even if they are familiar with the practices of distant reading and data mining.[13] And a part of me does not want to bother them, for who am I to disturb the experts in the fields they have come to navigate superbly and for which I admire them as colleagues and fellow intellectuals. But can I? Do not we, as advisors, have an obligation to learn this language and culture of digital scholarship such that we can at least help guide those students who wish to move the profession forward with the tools that the twenty-first century provides them? Should we, as advisors, not at least foster digital dissertations as explorations into a different communicative world—especially in language and culture departments—such that our PhD students take full advantage of the intellectual and technical tools at hand to create for themselves novel academic and non-academic career paths? Who

---

13   Johanna Drucker, 'Why Distant Reading Isn't', *PMLA*, 132.3 (2017), 628–35, https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2017.132.3.628

are we, as advisors, to close ourselves off from a fully digitized universe in which learning and thinking and communicating has long embraced multimodal forms?[14] We need to develop reference materials and introductory guidelines for dissertation committees, such as the FICUS heuristic presented in the next chapter, as well as PTR committees that are far more detailed than the helpful, but locally and practically too nebulous guidelines laudably provided by the MLA (Modern Language Association), AHA (American Historical Association) or CAA (College Art Association). We need to equip advisors and faculty evaluators with insight into the language and culture of digital scholarship in practice and into its intellectual value. We need more reference anthologies like *Literary Studies in the Digital Age*,[15] or continued updates to foundational criteria, such as the 2012 list provided by Todd Presner,[16] where advisors and faculty evaluators gain access to information required for their work with graduate students and junior faculty. And we need administrators, at the very least department heads and staff at the graduate school, to fund and create repositories of such materials and sample works so that each institution can build case study histories that speak to the local evaluative culture and to the distinct disciplines within it.

The Making of Flusser 2.0—The Long Game

Obviously, as an advisor and a faculty member at a research institution one is to keep up within one's field(s). This may include learning a new language for a research project, applying a new sub-field or, in my case, making sure one has a nascent understanding of this area called digital humanities and digital scholarship. Trained in comparative literature and reorienting myself toward media studies, when I started out with

---

14 On the term multimodal, see Virginia Kuhn, 'Multimodal', in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities: Concepts, Models, and Experiments*, ed. by Rebecca Frost Davis, Matthew Gold, Katherine D. Harris and Jentery Sayers (New York: Modern Language Association, n.d.), https://digitalpedagogy.mla.hcommons.org/keywords/multimodal/

15 Price, Kenneth M., and Ray Siemens, eds (2013-present), *Literary Studies in the Digital Age. An Evolving Anthology* (New York: Modern Language Association), https://dlsanthology.mla.hcommons.org/

16 Todd Presner, 'How to Evaluate Digital Scholarship', *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 1.4 (2012), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-4/how-to-evaluate-digital-scholarship-by-todd-presner/

building rudimentary websites for scholarship and teaching, I drew inspiration from my own research to translate from print to digital as well. While I re-interpreted the 'correspondences between the arts' as a model for interarts communication and twenty-first-century cross-media relationships, my focus on the theory and analysis of art and media convergences eventually shifted to the making of multimodal scholarship (starting out with launching and co-editing an online journal, *Flusser Studies*, for ten years). The project presented here, *ReMEDIAting Flusser*, merges media studies—by focusing on the media philosopher Vilém Flusser—with digital humanities by building a multimodal e-book using Scalar, entitled 'Flusser 2.0: Remediating Images, Reimagining Text'. The project is collaborative, with three main contributors, a PhD student, an undergraduate and myself as co-constructors.

Building and collaborating are themselves considerable, nontraditional academic elements of scholarly work I had myself vastly underestimated. The 'invisible labor' behind such scholarship is significant, involving a creative and non-linear process that is recursively evolving, interactive, and multilingual. The Flusser project is conceived as open-ended and starts out with an introductory video, available on Vimeo.[17] This first element required learning how to write script, record technically adequate audio, acquire basics of Adobe Premiere Pro, and, with the help of a media agency, design meaningful and provocative correspondences between visual and textual codes that point to Flusser's philosophy of the technical image. The video itself has garnered 12,600 views, a whopping success considering metrics in the humanities.

The second stage consisted of editing and designing contributions from a variety of international Flusser scholars to structure and build the e-book in Scalar. The goal is to interconnect these contributions using a variety of media and to 'translate' core aspects of Flusser's philosophy into digital forms such as hypertext, visuals, video and audio. The final multimodal and multi-lingual product (Flusser wrote in four different languages) will consist of an interactive visualization of Flusser's main ideas, moving well beyond what he long ago identified as the end of the linear and alphanumeric code.

---

17   See 'ReMEDIAting Flusser', 5:19, posted online by Anke Finger (2016), *vimeo*, https://vimeo.com/156304605

The epistemological re-wiring necessary when engaging with multimodal critical making as scholarship is profound, both for myself and the now graduated PhD student I co-edit with, Britta Meredith. The various technical challenges inherent to Scalar, once one dives beyond the surface features, remain thorny. I received an internal grant to work with an undergraduate student, Katherine Riedling, on the coding, and she, too, grappled with D3 and the semantic web structures Scalar supports and that, we thought, so perfectly reflected both Flusser's thought processes and the network of his entire oeuvre. Britta and I, in turn, grappled with redefining the responsibilities of editing a digital scholarship project as well as time issues. We were a team of two for content and a team of three for tech elements: how did we want to divide the labor of editing content, including reviewing submissions, editing style, communicating with and encouraging (delayed) authors, writing the introduction and composing our own contributions? How deeply did we want to engage with the technical and structural possibilities of a platform like Scalar, including its annotation and interactive features? A print dissertation and book medium envisions an unknown reader, making integrated communication with an audience impossible. Given Flusser's philosophy of dialog, however, we also wanted to include a response or annotation feature, encouraging readers of the Scalar project to respond to us with their thoughts and ideas. We are not there yet. The coding is done, and Britta and I have managed to collect and curate the site such that all contributions are ready to be edited into their multimodal form (including links to video, audio, images and more). We have presented the project at different conferences, but time continues to elude us both to finish not 'just' the editing of the content, but also the designing of the Scalar product.

In fact, 'doneness', 'finitude', 'completion', within digital scholarship, also become fuzzy concepts, given the emphasis on process and collaboration. When we presented the most current version at a conference seminar focusing on digital humanities projects in progress, no one was more surprised than us when we were met with enthusiasm and a repeated refrain of 'this looks so done, you are so close'. Really? We did not think so, but perhaps we had also lost perspective? A project like 'Flusser 2.0', and, by extension, a digital dissertation, can quickly turn into the black hole that sucks up all energy and resources, not unlike the

traditional dissertation. Only that we sweated over pixelation and D3 on top of citations, scholarly dialog and innovation. The proverbial 'the good dissertation is a done dissertation',[18] a phrase I have often repeated myself, inspired by my own dissertation advisor, becomes a hollowed phrase if you need to rely on other collaborators, an intercultural and interpersonal enterprise all its own, and your skill sets need constant updating and practice. Working within a program like Scalar requires engagement with intricacies of design and coding that are entirely absent from print publications. In short: we are not done yet. But at least Britta's contribution, a part of her dissertation, is composed in its full multimodal form, and it is by far the most 'done' part of the project.

Inaugurating DHMS

My experience with 'Flusser 2.0' and other projects I pursued over the last ten years influenced how I conceived of the new initiative of Digital Humanities and Media Studies (DHMS), launched in 2016. I became the brand new assistant director of the Humanities Institute with a $4,000 budget, in charge of what I named DHMS and fully responsible for development and programming. How did I want to entice graduate students and faculty to participate such that they saw digital scholarship as an endeavor worth pursuing in the humanities and arts? How to bring Digital Humanities and digital scholarship to UConn such that it becomes a viable, recognized and rewarded field of inquiry? Dan Cohen, in a summary blog post that is based on his 2017 talk at Brown University on 'Institutionalizing Digital Scholarship', identified three steps for sustainable DH initiatives: routinize, normalize and depersonalize.[19] In my case, finding space and support within a fully institutionalized unit such as the Humanities Institute, thanks to the director, Michael P. Lynch, was a major step towards visibility, since I was able to work from within the routines of the institute itself. This first step of securing a

---

18   Verena Kick, '"A Good Dissertation Is a Done Dissertation" — and Nothing Else Matters?', *HASTAC* (March 6, 2017), https://www.hastac.org/blogs/vkick/2017/03/06/good-dissertation-done-dissertation-and-nothing-else-matters

19   Cohen, Dan, 'Institutionalizing Digital Scholarship (or Anything Else New in a Large Organization)', *Dan Cohen* (November 29, 2017), https://dancohen.org/2017/11/29/institutionalizing-digital-scholarship-or-anything-else-new-in-a-large-organization/

recognized locale on campus appears to be particularly important since several colleagues from other institutions who consulted me wondered where to start looking for DH or digital scholarship support—which, in many institutions, means the library, or how to gather a community of interested faculty and graduate students, especially if the sheer size of the institution makes reaching beyond units difficult. An already established cohort of humanists was helpful and facilitated attracting an audience for talks and workshops. But how to routinize a practice of scholarship that was mostly unknown, sometimes mysterious or seemingly experimental? I created a multi-layered approach, focusing on building a network with regular meet-and-greets; organized regular roundtables (Fall) and talks (Spring) with well-known scholars in the field such as Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Cheryl Ball (both contributors to this collection) or Alan Liu;[20] collaborated with digital librarians to coordinate workshops and tech support; offered both resources and sample projects on the DHMS website;[21] and, most important, established a DHMS graduate certificate[22] that could be integrated with an MA or PhD program in the humanities and social sciences such that digital dissertations and scholarship would be supported.

Graduate students, once the certificate had met with approval from all necessary committees, regularly inquired about the course of study, with some unsure whether or not they would be able to squeeze more courses into their curriculum. Graduate students from different disciplines met with me on DH projects, mostly to discuss how to structure their project and to find out about resources beyond their own department. The events were well attended, especially by younger scholars and graduate students. After three years of building DHMS, from 2016–19, it is now in the capable hands of a younger colleague. While the DHMS initiative is far from normalized—given that collaborating units like the library or tech access remain in flux—I am much in favor of depersonalization as one faculty or staff should not dictate the course of

---

20   See 'DHMS Talk: Alan Liu, "Toward Critical Infrastructure Studies"', 1:32:20, posted online by University of Connecticut Humanities Institute, *Youtube* (August 18, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ojrtVx7iCw&ab_channel=Universit yofConnecticutHumanitiesInstitute

21   See, e.g., https://dhmediastudies.uconn.edu/professional-links/ and https://dhmediastudies.uconn.edu/projects/

22   See https://dhmediastudies.uconn.edu/dhms-graduate-certificate/

an institute program that promotes collaboration in the first place. I also conducted a survey within the humanities and social sciences units that, unsurprisingly, confirmed what I had observed in the first year. With 50% of the respondents signing in as graduate students, most cited the lack of technical skills or time to embark on digital scholarship (71%) and a great need for workshops and seminars (69%) in addition to tech support. The response to 'what do you think is the future of digital scholarship in your field?' was positive, with some 'meh' or 'not sure' sprinkled in. One response summed up the general sentiment seeping through the survey results: 'bivalent bs: do digital humanities but still produce a book for promotion'.

For a complete institutionalization, directing an initiative such as DHMS should be a full-time position, tenured or tenure-track, and with an advisory board that reflects the resources and networks necessary to support a nascent community of digital scholars. Importantly, networking beyond one's own institution is key. DHMS's and therefore UConn's representation in a couple of regional DH networks is ongoing, namely the New England Humanities Consortium (NEHC) DH network I founded as a group affiliated with the Mellon-funded NEHC network originating from the UConn Humanities Institute; the Connecticut DH network I co-founded with a number of institutional representatives in the state; and I co-founded a new network within a discipline-specific organization, namely the DH Network at the German Studies Association.

From an advisor's perspective, directing DHMS has been quite successful as I can guide those students who work with me to utilize all available resources and begin to build their own networks. A graduate student who completed the DHMS certificate in 2020 published her digital scholarship in a peer review journal, was invited to present her work at a prestigious conference and ranked among top candidates for a DH position. Collaborating with other dissertation advisors should also help to build new networks, share knowledge and skill sets, and support graduate students in becoming digital scholars. However, it will take time, money and merit before digital scholarship at the dissertation level becomes fully institutionalized, at least judging from my vantage point at a large public, research one institution. We, as advisors, need this time, money or merit. As senior or tenured professors and as advisors, we are

required to update curricula and integrate digital scholarship into the dissertation process: digital scholarship is part and parcel of humanities and art scholarship—who are we NOT to train our graduate students to be at least conversant in it, at the very least for career diversity and, ideally, for creating new epistemologies? Conversely, the university should create a central unit, either in the library or a humanities institute or DH lab, that becomes the go-to meeting place, exchange hub or brainstorm space to begin digital scholarship at any level and for a variety of purposes. As an advisor, I could send a student there should I not know how to advise her or him otherwise. And each PhD granting institution that has not established itself within DH cultures and aspires to a Duke or Michigan State or Northeastern or Brown or USC and many more, should give those professors credit, time, money or merit (preferably a combination thereof), for familiarizing themselves with digital scholarship such that they can train their graduate students for the twenty-first century. In Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, we read:

> The Gutenberg Galaxy is concerned to show why alphabetic man was disposed to desacralize his mode of being.[23]

It is time to desacralize traditional modes of academic being to allow for career diversity and experiments in knowledge production.

Bibliography

Antonijevic, Smiljana, *Amongst Digital Humanists. An Ethnographic Study of Digital Knowledge Production* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137484185

Cohen, Dan, 'Institutionalizing Digital Scholarship (or Anything Else New in a Large Organization)', *Dan Cohen* (November 29, 2017), https://dancohen.org/2017/11/29/institutionalizing-digital-scholarship-or-anything-else-new-in-a-large-organization/

Drucker, Johanna, 'Why Distant Reading Isn't', *PMLA*, 132.3 (2017), 628–35, https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2017.132.3.628

---

23   McLuhan, Marshall, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 69

Drucker, Johanna, and Patrick B. O. Svensson, 'The Why and How of Middleware', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 10.2 (2016), http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/10/2/000248/000248.html

Fuller, Matthew, 'Nobody Knows What a Book Is Anymore', *Urbanomic* (2017), https://www.urbanomic.com/document/nobody-knows-book/

Kick, Verena, '"A Good Dissertation Is a Done Dissertation"—and Nothing Else Matters?', *HASTAC* (March 6, 2017), https://www.hastac.org/blogs/vkick/2017/03/06/good-dissertation-done-dissertation-and-nothing-else-matters

Kuhn, Virginia, 'Embrace and Ambivalence', *Academe*, 99.1 (2013), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1004358

Kuhn, Virginia, 'Multimodal', in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities: Concepts, Models, and Experiments*, ed. by Rebecca Frost Davis, Matthew Gold, Katherine D. Harris and Jentery Sayers (New York: Modern Language Association, n.d.), https://digitalpedagogy.mla.hcommons.org/keywords/multimodal/

Mattern, Shannon Christine, 'Evaluating Multimodal Work, Revisited', *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 1.4 (2012), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-4/evaluating-multimodal-work-revisited-by-shannon-mattern/

McLuhan, Marshall, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

Presner, Todd, 'How to Evaluate Digital Scholarship', *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 1.4 (2012), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-4/how-to-evaluate-digital-scholarship-by-todd-presner/

Price, Kenneth M., and Ray Siemens, eds (2013-present), *Literary Studies in the Digital Age. An Evolving Anthology* (New York: Modern Language Association), https://dlsanthology.mla.hcommons.org/

Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Knowledge Design* (Hannover: VolkswagenStiftung, 2014), http://jeffreyschnapp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/HH_lectures_Schnapp_01.pdf

Spence, Paul, 'The Academic Book and Its Digital Dilemmas', *Convergence*, 24.5 (2018), 458–76, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856518772029

Townsend, Robert B., 'Are Historians Still Ambivalent about Getting Published Online?', *History News Network* (2018), https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/168871