Providers, Partners, and Collaborators: Libraries as Contributors to DH Research

Panel: Libraries as Hubs? The Role of Libraries in Building Digital Humanities

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10th November 2022
Introduction – Librarian / DHer...

Librarian:
• Senior Lecturer in Information Studies;
• Professional experience gained as a Librarian in a broadcast media environment;

DH Researcher/Educator:
• Doctorate UCL Centre for Digital Humanities 2010-2014 – studied the impact and use of Large-Scale Digitised Newspaper Collections;
• Associate Editor: *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*;
• Postdoc at University of East Anglia – founded the UEA DH Incubator;
• Co-convened several DH Winter Schools, teaching at UG and PG level.
Providers

Libraries as Providers of Content and Services
The Common Starting Point: DH as Library Service

- “A model of DH support common to many fledgling DH programs, in which a scholar (usually a faculty member) conceives an idea for a DH project and approaches the library for help in accomplishing it” (Posner 2012 in Posner 2013).

- “Digital Humanities isn’t a service and libraries will be more successful at generating engagement with digital humanities if they focus on helping librarians lead their own DH initiatives and projects” (Muñoz 2012).

- “Libraries need to provide infrastructure... to support digital humanities work, but they need thoughtful, skilled, knowledgeable humanists to actually work on it” (Posner 2013).
Where are we now?

• Move towards greater involvement of libraries in DH research (Wilms, 2021).

• Recognition of role of librarians in research – experimentation with specific funding calls:
  • **AHRC/RLUK Professional Practice Fellowship Scheme**: enable library colleagues to “set research agendas, be active participants and leaders of multidisciplinary research, and to provide intellectual leadership in their own disciplines and beyond.”

• In UK – several large DH-specific funding calls, with cultural heritage partners integral:
  • **Towards a National Collection**: aims to open up UK cultural heritage collections to researchers and public.
  • UK/US New Directions for Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions (**networks** and **research projects**).
Partners

Libraries Supporting and Influencing Research
Partners: the AHRC Definition

• “A third party person who is not employed on the grant, or a third party organisation, who provides specific contributions either in cash or in kind, to the project” (AHRC Funding Guide, 2022).

• Eligible for “minor Directly Incurred” costs – project-specific and identifiable as arising from the conduct of the research.
The Digital Library Futures Project

- Two year AHRC-funded project to investigate the impact of e-Legal Deposit on UK Academic Deposit libraries (white paper available: *Towards User-Centric Evaluation of UK Non-Print Legal Deposit*):
  - Case study partners: Bodleian Libraries & Cambridge University Library.
- Focus on academic deposit libraries:
  - Shift focus away from national libraries and towards the specific problems faced within academic libraries.
- First ever public user-centric study of the impact of e-legal deposit:
  - Normally focused on technical, preservation, and long-term aspects of these collections, not contemporary usage.
- Researcher-led – but benefited in several ways from “partner” involvement:
  - Access to staff, knowledge of user base, understanding of collections, insights into practice.
Collaborators

Libraries Collaborating in, and leading, Digital Humanities research
Research Networking: AEOLIAN Network (2021-2023)

• Designed to investigate the role that Artificial Intelligence can play to make born-digital and digitised records more accessible to users.

• Focused heavily on knowledge exchange:
  • Series of 6 workshops on varied topics;
  • Case studies and reports – co-authored by academics and library/archival practitioners;

• Ongoing! Workshop 5 on 29/30th November, hosted by HathiTrust. Workshop 6 in early 2023, hosted by University of Glasgow.
Collaborative PhD Supervision

- UKRI provides majority of PhD funding in UK.
- Information Studies at UofG - two relevant research councils:
  - Arts and Humanities Research Council = Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities;
  - Economic and Social Research Council = Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences;
- SGSAH our primary source of funding – humanistic-focused Information Studies (DH topics especially).
- Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs) and Advanced Research Collaboration Studentships (ARCS) – different model for UK PhDs.
Current UKRI-funded PhD Students

• “Collaborative Doctoral Awards”
  • Joseph Nockels (University of Edinburgh) – impact of Handwritten Text Recognition on Historians:
    • Supervisors: Prof. Melissa Terras (Edinburgh); Me (University of Glasgow); Dr. Sarah Ames (National Library of Scotland)
  • Joy Nam (University of Glasgow) – Researcher Mental Models for Digital Library Catalogues:
    • Supervisors: Me (Glasgow); Prof. Lorna Hughes (Glasgow); Dr. Frankie Wilson (Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford).

• “Advanced Research Collaborative Studentships”:
  • Rhonda Rathburn (University of Glasgow) – Models for Evaluating Neglected User Communities:
    • Supervisors: Me (Glasgow); Dr. David Brazier (Edinburgh Napier); Amina Shah (National Library of Scotland).
My Learning Outcomes: Partnership ➔ Collaboration

• Nurturing relationships is key – leads to deeper forms of collaboration over time:
  • Frankie Wilson (Bodleian) key partner in *Digital Library Futures* – now PhD co-supervisor.
  • National Library of Scotland provided access to staff during *Digital Library Futures* – relationship led to further research & two PhD studentships.

• This presentation is probably missing a “leaders” category that already exists:
  • Librarians leading research, addressing problems arising within and about libraries, with the assistance of academics.
  • (Already occurs, but...) a huge space to improve support for librarians to lead DH research – what barriers are there?
Challenges and Barriers

• Understanding of research landscape:
  • What schemes are libraries eligible for?
  • UK – problem with eligibility as “Independent Research Organisations.”
  • Many libraries ineligible to lead or act as Co-Investigators – creates an implicit research hierarchy.

• Reward Structures:
  • Academic promotions – things that lead to academic progression not necessarily so relevant to librarians.
  • Research into practice – “impact” agenda makes this relevant, but not directly part of academic work.

• Resourcing:
  • Interest among academics in e.g. collaborative PhDs:
    • Staff time / Placements / Desk Space / £500 p/a mobility allowance.
  • Limits to what researchers can write into grant bids – reliance/expectation of “contributions in kind.”
Thanks for listening!

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