

ACLCP Continuing Education Grant – Final Report

Opportunity

Models for Digital Humanities at Liberal Arts Colleges at the 2017 Digital Humanities Summer Institute

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With the support of an [Associated College Libraries of Central Pennsylvania Continuing Education Grant](#), I was able to attend one week of the 2017 [Digital Humanities Summer Institute](#) (DHSI) and participate in the Models for Digital Humanities at Liberal Arts Colleges workshop from June 12-16. DHSI is a two-week, intensive experience that allows faculty, staff, and students from around the world a chance to be a part of a community of practice focused on Digital Humanities tools and methods. Held at the University of Victoria, DHSI participants select a workshop to attend for each week, doing a deep dive into an aspect of Digital Humanities. These workshops focus on concepts such as data visualization, coding, wearable technology, and games in Digital Humanities. Outside the workshops, there were chances for building relationships with like-minded colleagues from other institutions.

The Models for Digital Humanities at Liberal Arts Colleges workshop was led by the co-directors of the [Hamilton College Digital Humanities Initiative](#), Angel David Nieves and Janet Simon. During this workshop we looked at how different models of Digital Humanities work at various liberal arts colleges, using Hamilton College's program as one example, and also using examples of Digital Humanities initiatives at other institutions, as well as our own.

I attended DHSI with the following objectives in mind:

- Gain additional experience in digital scholarship program administration in order to provide effective leadership of digital scholarship initiatives in Musselman Library
- Return with ideas and resources to initiate conversations about creating a sustainable, unified, campus model for digital scholarship activity on the Gettysburg College campus

Activities

The workshop was primarily discussion-based, with different themes for each day that focused on Digital Humanities in a liberal arts environment. Among the topics we discussed were defining Digital Humanities, institutional models, collaboration with students and faculty, and administration of Digital Humanities centers and institutes. At the end of the workshop, we each created an elevator pitch that would give us a starting point for conversations on our campuses regarding Digital Humanities and presented it to our peers at DHSI.

Hamilton College has a much different approach to Digital Humanities work than Gettysburg and the other schools represented in the workshop. However many of the principles of identifying and planning Digital Humanities, as well as sustaining them, are applicable to any campus, regardless of the institutional approach. The workshop had librarian and faculty attendees. Everyone was in similar places – we were all trying to see how we could intentionally promote digital scholarship activity on our campuses. While we were all in different places, our discussion had several common threads—among them how to best organize digital scholarship on our campuses to encourage student and faculty involvement and getting them excited about doing scholarship in new ways. Three models relevant to our institutions emerged throughout the week: centralized, hub-and-spoke, and a mesh network¹:

- Centralized: These tend to be faculty/academic-division led models, with a Digital Humanities center that provides for a comprehensive, cohesive, full-time support of digital scholarship projects. Hamilton College is an example of a faculty-led centralized model. Of our local peer institutions, Bucknell University has a library-led centralized model, as does Lafayette College.
- Hub and spoke: Like the centralized model, there is a central hub for DH coordination, but it connects several independent partners together who are not necessarily all under the same organizational structure. This allows for an ever-evolving model that attempts to meet the needs of students and faculty and often involves faculty, librarians, educational technologists, and others collaborating together on projects, distributing the work based on skills and interests.
- Mesh network: There is no central base of operations for digital scholarship activity, everyone who is doing the work bands together to provide support for projects (or just works on their own). This is largely an *ad hoc* method of doing digital scholarship and often works well for campuses that don't have a natural hub for coordinating digital projects. Gettysburg has mostly been part of the mesh network model, with Musselman Library, Educational Technology, and the Johnson Center for Creative Teaching and Learning taking on various responsibilities and coordinating on projects as needed.

I was initially was skeptical of the mesh network, but quickly recognized its value insofar that it allows for relationships to organically form to create support for digital projects. At the same time, I also sensed the value of a common starting point to coordinate activities. Since there is no central point of digital scholarship coordination on Gettysburg's campus, there's often one individual in the Library or Educational Technology who becomes the point person for classroom support of digital projects. Right now, this is manageable; however, if we hope to grow, greater coordination will help to make the work sustainable.

¹ As outlined in "Building Capacity for Digital Humanities: A Framework for Institutional Planning," by Kirk Anne, et al. <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2017/5/building-capacity-for-digital-humanities-a-framework-for-institutional-planning>

Outcomes

Blog Posts

While at DHSI, I composed a series of blog posts that were posted to the Digital Scholarship Summer Fellowship 2017 website: <http://dssf.musselmanlibrary.org/2017/category/dhsi/>. These posts were immediate takeaways from the DHSI experience and are available for anyone to view and comment on.

Professional Activities

My attendance at DHSI has informed several professional activities in Fall 2017:

Lucadamo, Amy, Miessler, R.C., White, Lauren. "Thinking Digitally, Together: Models for Digital Scholarship at Gettysburg College." Friday Faculty Lunch, 29 September 2017, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA. Lecture.

Abstract: Systems Librarian R.C. Miessler, College Archivist Amy Lucadamo, and senior Lauren White discuss how Musselman Library has been involved in digital scholarship conversations and activities at Gettysburg, and invite discussion on how a campus-wide model for digital scholarship could emerge.

Miessler, R.C. "Successes and Challenges in Growing and Sustaining an Undergraduate Digital Scholarship Program." Bucknell University Digital Scholarship Conference, 7 October 2017, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA. Conference Presentation.
<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/73/>

Abstract: In July of 2017, Gettysburg College's Musselman Library completed the second iteration of the Digital Scholarship Summer Fellowship, a library-led, student-focused program that introduces students to digital scholarship tools and methodology. Librarian R.C. Miessler discusses the successes and challenges of supporting a growing digital scholarship program, with a focus on its future sustainability and a vision of its expansion into a campus-wide initiative.

Miessler, R.C., Morris, Sarah, Paddick, Courtney, Pirmann, Carrie. "Digital Scholarship, with Undergraduates, in the Library." Digital Library Federation Forum, 23 October 2017, Westin Convention Center, Pittsburgh, PA. Conference Presentation.
<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/74/>

Abstract: Three different Pennsylvania liberal arts colleges, Lafayette, Gettysburg, and Bucknell, have adopted library-led summer internship models as part of the effort to teach students about research using digital methods. Panelists from these colleges discuss perspectives on designing, leading, and adapting such programs, and on collaborating within and between institutions.

Institutional and Consortial Conversations

In addition to professional activities related to this grant, I have brought back ideas that I have shared with the Library's Digital Scholarship Committee, as well as the college's Educational Technology Committee.

Defining Digital Humanities

An important takeaway from DHSI was that each of us in the workshop needed to define what Digital Humanities are at our institutions. Digital Humanities is about the process as much as the product of doing the work, and it cannot exist simply as a service model. Instead, it needs to be developed as a collaborative model, where all who work on a Digital Humanities project are considered partners, collapsing hierarchies and allowing each team member to contribute in their own way. To support this approach, having a strong definition of Digital Humanities provides appropriate boundaries for the nature of the work that will be done and the roles collaborators play. In Fall 2017, the Digital Scholarship Committee spent several sessions crafting a definition of Digital Humanities that will inform the work the Library does with digital scholarship and Digital Humanities projects, as well as provide groundwork for future iterations of the Digital Scholarship Summer Fellowship.

Competencies

The Educational Technology Committee has worked on creating a list of digital competencies that librarians and educational technologists can support; this list will be posted on the Gettysburg College website and accessible via the JCCTL, Library, and Educational Technology webpages. A [web form](#) to request digital scholarship support is also in place and serves as a central point of contact for students and faculty to request support for digital projects.

Future Activities and Next Steps

In addition to the presentations at disciplinary conferences and at Gettysburg College, I expect to share what I have learned at a meeting of the ACLCP Digital Scholarship Special Interest Group or as a lightning round presentation at an ACLCP meeting. By sharing knowledge in this way, individual institutions may be able to adapt ideas that have worked well at Gettysburg at their own institutions, and perhaps even a consortial model for supporting Digital Humanities within ACLCP can emerge, where we act as a community of practice to support students and faculty doing digital projects.

DHSI was an immersive and rewarding experience. I came away with new colleagues, reconnections with old friends, and ideas for the future. With each experience I have with fellow Digital Humanities practitioners, I am reminded that there is no one way to do Digital Humanities; the work is tailored to the needs of the institution and community, and what works for one campus will not necessarily work for another, but we can always learn from what the others are doing and adapt them to our own instances. I am grateful to ACLCP for funding this opportunity and appreciate their continued support for professional development activities.