

The Arrival Fallacy: Collaborative Research Relationships in the Digital Humanities

Alix Keener <alixkee_at_umich_dot_edu>, University of Michigan

Abstract

As discussion and debates on the digital humanities continue among scholars, so too does discussion about how academic libraries can and should support this scholarship. Through interviews with digital humanities scholars and academic librarians within the Center for Institutional Cooperation, this study aims to explore some points of common perspective and underlying tensions in research relationships. Qualitative interviews revealed that, while both groups are enthusiastic about the future of faculty-librarian collaboration on digital scholarship, there remain certain tensions about the role of the library and the librarian. Scholars appreciate the specialized expertise of librarians, especially in metadata and special collections, but they can take a more active stance in utilizing current library resources or vocalizing their needs for other resources. This expertise and these services can be leveraged to make the library an active and equal partner in research. Additionally, libraries should address internal issues, such as training and re-skilling librarians as necessary; better-coordinated outreach to academic departments is also needed.

Introduction

In February 2014, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) published a report titled *Does Every Research Library Need a Digital Humanities Center?* [Schaffner and Erway 2014], meant to guide library deans and directors in deciding whether or not to “sink resources” into a digital humanities center. The report immediately generated intense discussion and even backlash and controversy among bloggers and users of Twitter (consisting mostly of academic librarians or academic staff). Criticisms of the report included that it strips agency from librarians, assumes incorrectly that digital humanities scholars always know for what they are looking, and misses the insight that sometimes librarians are actually the digital humanists.^[1] Other than a broad example of the current landscape of digital humanities debates, the OCLC report serves as an example of the tensions underlying collaborative research relationships between faculty and librarians (or other academic staff, including postdoctoral researchers or support staff).

1

Digital humanities (DH), as a field, has an increasing presence in institutions of higher education [Kirschenbaum 2010]. However, while its presence has grown, so have questions about the kind of infrastructure that is needed to support research in the digital humanities. In the last several years that presence has increasingly been in academic libraries. Whether it is a center, such as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, or smaller, more ambiguous spaces staffed with DH-knowledgeable librarians, academic libraries are becoming inextricably linked with digital humanities research on their respective campuses. That means that new collaborative relationships are emerging between individuals on those campuses. However, the nature of these relationships may produce tension, as the nature of being an equal collaborator may not fit into the role of “traditional” librarianship [Vandegrift and Varner 2013].

2

New digital technologies are changing the way humanist scholars do research and the way they communicate their findings through the publication of their work [Burgess and Hamming 2011]. Academic libraries are also adapting to these new modes of research: no longer are librarians simply supporting research endeavors through reference and

3

instruction services; they are partners in research collaborations [Vandegrift and Varner 2013]. The findings of a survey included in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Spec Kit 326 demonstrate that libraries need to be familiar with the types of research being pursued at their institution. What kind of expertise is needed: that of an equal partner in collaboration, or an on-call service provider? The research reported in this article builds on the ARL investigation to analyze research relationships among scholars and librarians at CIC universities.

Context

Definitions

For the purposes of developing the interview protocols, this study adopts Kathleen Fitzpatrick's [Fitzpatrick 2010] definition of digital humanities as "a nexus of fields within which scholars use computing technologies to investigate the kinds of questions that are traditional to the humanities, or...who ask traditional kinds of humanities-oriented questions about computing technologies" and Abby Smith Rumsey's definition of digital scholarship as "the use of digital evidence and method, digital authoring, digital publishing, digital curation and preservation, and digital use and reuse of scholarship" [Rumsey 2011].

4

To date, there has been little research done specifically on digital humanities research relationships between faculty and academic librarians. Lynne Siemens and her colleagues [Siemens, Cunningham, Duff, and Warwick] have done similar research on relationships in research; however, they interviewed and surveyed members of established research teams working on established projects, where the study presented here investigates more nebulous, emerging relationships between scholars and librarians. An Association of Research Libraries SPEC Kit 326: Digital Humanities (2011) surveys ARL member libraries on their successes and failures offering digital scholarship support services. The results show that, as demand for these services grows, librarians are reconsidering an ad hoc approach to digital humanities services and beginning to adopt more scalable, sustainable, and permanent programmatic approaches. However, the direction of these developments in libraries is still unclear. Many responses in the ARL study reported on the early stages of digital humanities services; libraries are still developing services, and library staff are struggling to decide on the level of service and the need for dedicated staff. The picture that emerges from the ARL study is of an evolving field; questions still remain about how already-established digital humanities services address the needs of DH initiatives on their campus, and the sorts of activities those librarians perform. The ARL survey also provides a broad overview of what the responding ARL libraries are doing, rather than an in-depth perspective on the day-to-day of faculty research lives of doing digital scholarship.

5

The digital humanities, as a field, holds interest for scholars because it is still in the process of defining itself as a technologically oriented discipline (and is even currently in the process of being questioned about whether it is a field, or a methodology, or a passing fad). Marija Dalbello outlines the chronological development of the field of digital humanities, taking as evidence the facts that it has its own journals (*Journal of Digital Humanities*, *Digital Humanities Quarterly*), conference (called simply Digital Humanities), and body of literature [Dalbello 2011]. Dalbello emphasizes the relevance of digital library development to DH scholarship, by focusing on text analysis and digitization as digital humanities practice as opposed to non-text-based activities like geospatial analysis.

6

Librarians have been interested in digital humanities research since its emergence from humanities computing in the early part of the century, particularly within the context of the universities that are part of the Center for Institutional Cooperation (CIC) collaborative. CIC is home to three major DH centers: MATRIX at Michigan State University, CDRH at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the Institute for Computing in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (I-CHASS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as more grassroots DH initiatives at other CIC schools (which could include lab spaces within humanities departments and libraries, seminar series, etc.). Blossoming activity in CIC universities has foreshadowed more explicit collaboration that now seems to be emerging.

7

CIC held its first Digital Humanities Summit at University of Nebraska-Lincoln in spring 2012, when sixty faculty, librarians, and administrators as participants gathered to compare the status of digital humanities activities in member universities. One major recommendation of the 2012 summit was to recruit the highest quality faculty and graduate

8

students to CIC institutions for digital research. In order to do this, the committee recommends that non-traditional, digital scholarship should be weighted as equal when making tenure decisions, as they found that many faculty did not engage in digital humanities work until after they achieved tenure. The important roles that libraries play in supporting DH scholarship are mentioned in the report numerous times. Besides becoming increasingly responsible for disseminating open access scholarship, the CIC notes that “we also need to acknowledge the importance of interdisciplinary and collaborative work — a norm in digital scholarship. Some of the best digital work is conducted in team of scholars, librarians, technologists, and students (both graduate and undergraduate)” [CIC 2012, 7].

The CIC report also states that “scholars, librarians, archivists, and technologists should be partners in digital initiatives current accessibility and future sustainability” [CIC 2012, 1]. In digital scholarship literature, libraries are often mentioned in the context of preserving or facilitating access to digital scholarship, but not taking part in the scholarship itself. Andrew W. Mellon Foundation program officer Donald Waters identifies universities, their libraries, and academic presses as should-be supporters of digital humanities work: “Going forward — as centers of humanistic research and teaching-universities, their libraries, and academic presses must support the digital humanities, but where should they place their emphasis? I would suggest, first, that it is critically important that they be alert to the particular strands of research being pursued” [Waters 2013, 8]. This issue of being “alert” to the types of research being pursued on campuses indeed came up in the findings of this study.

Libraries have indeed taken up the pursuit of being hubs for digital humanities research and collaboration. Jennifer Vinopal and Monica McCormick have addressed the main challenges in developing infrastructure for digital scholarship support, including defining priorities, staffing, ongoing organizational change, and beyond [Vinopal and McCormick 2013]. They propose a four-tiered model, ranging from academic and administrative tool support, the most widely used, to grant-funded research, with institutional repositories, copyright consultation, and bulk data loads sitting in between. Based on these different levels of support, they note that librarians must engage with the entire research process more than ever before.

Miriam Posner has written extensively (on Twitter, her blog, and in scholarly journals) on the challenges of supporting digital humanities in the library [Posner 2013]. As with Vinopal and McCormick, Posner points out that often the support for digital scholarship must be built out of and around the library’s core mission, be part of a strategic vision, and have support from library leadership. If supporting that type of work is a “distraction” from a particular library’s core values, then perhaps it is not in the best interest of the library. Posner also notes tensions about service vs. servitude and the tension around whether librarians have equal status with faculty in fostering digital humanities scholarship. Building on Vinopal and McCormick’s thoughts on infrastructure, and Waters’ urging that institutional bodies be aware of particular research strands, Posner contends that librarians must be knowledgeable as humanists: “Many of the problems we have faced ‘supporting’ digital humanities work may stem from the fact that digital humanities projects in general do not need supporters — they need collaborators. Libraries need to provide infrastructure (access to digitization tools and servers, for example) to support digital humanities work, but they need thoughtful, skilled, knowledgeable humanists to actually work on it” [Posner 2013, 45].

Previous research has been done on faculty-librarian coordination. After surveying the literature on faculty and instructional librarians, Kate Manuel, Susan E. Beck, and Molly Molloy found that faculty consider librarians to be more service providers than teachers [Manuel, Beck, and Molloy 2005]. Reasons ranged from faculty not considering librarians to be their academic equals to disbelief that librarians had enough subject expertise in their area, particularly the sciences. In a stark contrast to the literature the authors cited, the professors they interviewed were enthusiastic about and had deep respect for their institution’s librarians. In fact, one of the reasons they asked librarians to do instruction in their classroom was because of the idea of librarian as “expert witness.” Librarians served as outside influence for students, emphasizing and giving more credibility to the professors; they also show another part of the research universe of which the students are a part. Work has also been done on collaboration of research teams doing digital research. Siemens found that, through individual interviews with members of research teams and surveys to digital humanities listservs, humanities research is growing more complex and technologically sophisticated, so it often requires a team approach — sometimes between scholars and librarians [Siemens, Cunningham, Duff, and Warwick]. Librarians have information management skills that are useful to DH researchers; however, librarians do not want their

values of public service to be confused with servitude.

More recently, there have been more voices speaking against the idea of librarians as service providers from the library side. Trevor Muñoz has written specifically on the problem of calling digital humanities a “service” in academic libraries, along with the problems of identifying academic labor and power balances in the academy [Muñoz 2012]. Micah Vandegrift and Stewart Varner have made bolder claims, including that librarians “need to proudly identify themselves as DHers, and fully expect to be regarded as such by peers, colleagues, faculty and administrators, and let the broad work they do engage with that community” [Vandegrift and Varner 2013, 76]. The aim of this research project is to test the real-world implications of that claim.

13

Methodology

This research project aims to build on, and further refine, the work done in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) SPEC Kit 326: Digital Humanities (2011). The participants are from the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) libraries, for several reasons: first, to build on and to sample a different population from the ARL SPEC Kit 326 survey population, and second, because there are major digital humanities centers within the CIC (e.g. MATRIX at Michigan State University, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at University of Nebraska Lincoln, University of Maryland’s Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities), as well as the fact that the CIC itself has declared their desire to be known for DH [CIC 2012]. The population for this project is academic librarians (and/or academic support staff, postdoctoral researchers, etc. who work in an academic library setting) and faculty members who identify as doing some type of digital scholarship, digital humanities, or humanities computing type of research in the United States. Because of this rather specific population, and the exploratory nature of this project, the researcher used purposive sampling to individually identify suitable participants [2].

14

It must also be noted that the relationship between faculty and librarians at CIC schools may not be representative of the relationship between faculty and librarians at all academic institutions. The CIC is made up of large, public research institutions that have different resources from, for example, a small private liberal arts college. The course loads and teaching expectations may be different for both faculty and librarians at these different types of institutions and may influence the relationship between these groups.

15

Research Questions

This project was designed to identify points of convergence and tease out any tensions that exist in faculty-librarian relationships in digital humanities research projects. The following questions guided the research, to that end:

16

1. What are the unique needs of digital humanities scholars in terms of research support?
2. What do faculty and academic librarians expect of each other in the realm of digital scholarship?
 1. in terms of physical space, technology, and collections, and the ways in which each are used?
3. For librarians whose work is related to digital scholarship, is collaborating on research with scholars, faculty, or students more important, or is providing “service(s)” — the more traditional support role of librarians?
 1. Are there common underlying tensions in librarian-scholar relationships, such as that of service vs. servitude?

Data Gathering Methods

In order to get the nuanced, individual perspectives of both faculty and librarians, this research study utilized semi-structured telephone, Google Hangout, or Skype interviews to explore the collaborative relationship between faculty and academic librarians when doing digital humanities research, including attitudes toward collaborating with or supporting others. Similar but distinctive interview protocols were developed for a librarian/academic staff group and a faculty group.

17

Given the emergent nature of the discipline, there are limited numbers of librarians in the United States who are

18

explicitly charged with digital humanities liaison responsibility, not to mention a limited number of higher education institutions engaging in digital humanities activities. To identify interview subjects, the researcher performed targeted research via directories on institutional websites, scholarly blogs, Twitter, DH listservs, and so on to identify individuals with digital humanities or digital scholarships titles, as well as welcome references from participants. After identifying participants, the researcher sent individual email requests for interviews. The interviews were recorded for audio for later transcription.

The researcher developed, tested, and used two different interview protocols: one for the faculty participants and one for the librarian/staff participants. Separate interview protocols were necessary in order to obtain the best data from the two different groups — while some questions were similar, such as the questions about preferred terms for digital humanities, others were different in order to get a representation of each person's individual outlook, experiences, and opinions. Questions included preferred terms and definitions, faculty expectations of their institution and their library, how librarians expected DH scholars to use the library, library outreach and planning for DH activities, and the needed expertise on the parts of both faculty and librarians/staff. The interviews were conducted in March 2014.

19

The goal in recruiting participants for this project was to have one faculty-librarian pair from as many of the CIC institutions as possible. Gathering data from faculty-librarian pairs from several different schools would give even more nuanced insight into these collaborative relationships, and the perspectives each group holds, because they are on the same campus and are participating in the same activities. The interviews were conducted individually, allowing for open-ended questions, the opportunity for spontaneous follow-up questions tailored to each participant, and for different topics to come up that the researcher may not have been aware of as being important. Qualitative interviews are useful for revealing emotional information — such as questions about working relationships between faculty scholars and librarians, tensions, and the desire to be a collaborator or a service provider.

20

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for overarching patterns and themes, which were categorized and named. The researcher analyzed the interview responses for similar patterns in faculty's and librarians' responses: are they aware of each others' expectations, or is there a disconnect in perceptions? Do librarians identify as scholars, or "customer service professionals"? What do faculty consider the most important when it comes to librarian expertise, and what do librarians identify as critical in being able to engage with DH work on campus?

21

Findings

Demographics

The study included 11 people: 5 faculty, 4 librarians, and 2 postdoctoral researchers, positioned in the library and thus included in the "library" group. The faculty members held appointments in the following academic departments: English, History, Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Classics. One faculty member also served as a curator faculty member also served as a curator in the university's museum. Of the 11 participants, there were four pairs, leaving one faculty member and the two library-affiliated postdocs as "single" participants.

22

The findings are detailed in five sections: I), the best model for engaging DH scholars, II), what domain expertise is needed, III), the areas in which faculty and librarians agree, IV), the areas in which they disagree (tensions), and finally, V), where the two groups have a perceptual disconnect. From the data analysis, two overarching themes emerged: tensions and agreement between the two groups. Within and related to those two themes, there are several sub themes: best practices for digital humanities librarians, domain expertise, and disconnects.

23

I. Best Model for Engagement of Digital Humanities Scholars

One of the questions posed to the library-affiliated group was "How are you or your team engaging with DH scholarship on your campus?" in order to explore the expectations faculty and librarians hold for themselves and each other. The most successful model for DH engagement for libraries seems to be actively going out on to campus. This is not to say that having a "center" or a lab where scholars can come in and ask questions is ineffective, but most of the schools in this research project do not have a definitive digital humanities center.

24

Of the six librarian participants, most detailed a case-by-case or consultative approach, noting that some collaborations happened organically: one librarian said that it was about “making yourself available to people. Go to colloquia, go to brownbags, go to events; invite people to events at the library, think about creating events where you can have people from different departments be on a panel...All of those things have been successful for us in outreach.” The lack of a robust workflow also played into the consultation model. Another librarian described their process as “a scholar comes to me or someone in the [office] or to someone they know who has the expertise and then we pull together the team who would be needed for that project. We’re hoping to get a better workflow together. They come to the library with help for metadata and collections, but then they go [somewhere else on campus] when they need the computing power.”

25

There were mixed statements among the librarians about either working to bring scholars back into the library or going to their departments. One participant talked about the library’s delivery service to offices and labs, which keeps scholars from having to come in; that library is looking into redeveloping or expanding library space to bring faculty back and to develop working relationships with them. Other librarian participants stated that they had the most success in going to different departmental events, “seeing what kinds of questions people had,” or hosting library events outside of the library, with one emphasizing that “my concern is that we’re involved in the research.” The concern about librarians being familiar with the scholarship will be addressed in the following sections.

26

II. Domain Expertise

Other questions on both the faculty and the librarian protocols involved needed expertise for digital humanities research and expertise for supporting DH research. Several people, both faculty and librarians, mentioned programming and coding knowledge. There was not a general consensus on whether or not one absolutely needs to be able to program: one faculty member felt strongly that everyone should know how to code, while other faculty members pushed against that. From the anecdotal evidence that the librarians provided it seems that there are varying degrees of technical expertise in the library, but that it is quite substantial. More broadly, this is connected with other domain knowledge: several faculty brought up the importance of librarians being familiar with their field, though not necessarily having secondary degrees in it.

27

Ila. Programming Expertise

One faculty participant firmly believed that “everyone” should learn programming, that it is an essential skill, that it is flexible and can be applied to many different things. However, the other four faculty interviewees spoke less strongly about the need for coding expertise — they noted that they did not have time to learn, or would rather spend that time on more humanistic research, or even that they were “builders,” in the Ramsay sense [Ramsay 2011], by doing community building rather than technical building. Another faculty participant said that “I don’t know that it’s necessary for librarians to have high-level technical coding abilities... I think some great librarians are ones that can connect people to those that have that [programming] ability,” recognizing that one of librarians’ skills is the ability to identify and refer users to a more relevant person. Other technical skills that both the scholars and librarians possessed that were not programming skills were XML, XSLT, TEI, and other markup languages. Others also stated that being open to learning new digital techniques was important, as was the ability to understand code without having to learn various programming languages.

28

Ilb. Academic Expertise

One faculty interviewee spoke particularly highly of his institution’s librarian pair, most notably because the librarian also held an advanced degree in the faculty member’s subject area; this, combined with his library science degree, made collaborating on projects more productive, easier, and more enjoyable. However, several scholar participants stressed that it is not a requirement for librarians to have additional advanced degrees in humanities disciplines. One faculty respondent noted that “you need to know the kinds of questions to ask your faculty to know what would help facilitate work in their research.”

29

Speaking on both academic and programming expertise, another scholar interviewee stated that “I don’t think librarians have to become programmers. I think, in a way, they need to become better humanities scholars. Just in the sense of

30

asking questions... the thing I worry about is the model of the customer-service provider will dominate and replace the idea of the librarian being someone to engage in intellectual inquiry with.”

III. Faculty-Librarian Consensus

Two topics came up repeatedly about which all participants seemed to agree: scholars’ needs for metadata and special collections. There were several questions for both groups that asked how scholars make use of the library, with probes for uses of physical space, technology, and collections. One librarian mentioned that scholars are using rare materials more frequently, especially when the material is something not found in Google Books; she also predicted that rare materials will be used “more actively” in the future. A faculty interviewee responded that “we don’t use collections, but we do use expertise [of librarians]. We have a good special collections librarian that we’ve worked with over the years...for digitizing.” Every participant brought up special collections as a way they make use of the library, or, on the librarians’ side, the way they expect faculty to use the library. Special collections serve as a main entry point for both faculty and students, because they are comprised of physical items for which scholars must consult librarians, or students must in order to gain access. In terms of collaboration in digital scholarship, this is both a boon and a bane: rare physical objects that the library holds brings researchers into the physical library, to interact with library staff, but it also means that scholars whose work does not involve rare materials may never go into the physical library or work with a librarian or library collections. One librarian participant spoke about how his library is working to support scholars’ use of rare materials beyond just having them available (i.e. digitizing rare materials), though he noted that “this isn’t the most common use of the library”:

31

Special collections are different [from other library collections] because there are people interested in either literature of previous centuries, or history, or history of book, material culture around the book; those are people who find their way to special collections. There are a few people in English and History who have strong interest in having more collections in some digital form to use, manipulate, what have you... what can we do to support that? Do we have software, technology?... faculty want digitized material [including digitized letters for a historical project].

Indeed, digitization was brought up by multiple participants. Within one faculty-librarian pair, each brought up working with the other on the faculty’s digital history course. In fact, both mentioned that that particular course was what sparked an ongoing relationship between the department and the library. Special collections librarians, archivists, and digital librarians worked with students to digitize and use rare materials.

32

Digital humanities scholars’ use of metadata was another area that both interview groups agreed was a valuable asset for the library to support and provide services. One faculty participant said that “the humanities tend to use metadata...quite extensively, but they really don’t understand it, they don’t understand data modeling and best practices... One of the things that is needed to be successful in DH is to start with really solid infrastructure and really good data plans; it doesn’t matter if you’re working with media, text, what have you. Libraries have been indispensable partners.” The study participants at the other institutions tended to agree with that statement, at least to the extent that having good data is important, being able to understand your data is important, and that librarians have the expertise in that area. Several librarian interviewees brought up individuals going to the library for help with metadata; the metadata librarians assisted with that. Librarians also facilitated access to and provided training in analyzing metadata; one faculty participant stated that the librarians were, in fact, training him in how to use MARC records, which were central to his research.

33

In fact, several participants in the library group are responding to that need for metadata and metadata training by planning workshops and training sessions for the coming academic year, as well as working to promote the library’s own metadata and “making it available for humanists to do computational analysis on large parts of the collection,” as one librarian said.

34

IV. Tensions

As Geoffrey Rockwell has noted: “one of the sites of [stress] in the digital humanities has been the inclusion of those

35

alternative academics without faculty jobs” [Rockwell 2013]. He traces the inclusion of non-faculty researchers — such as librarians — to the beginnings of digital humanities and the inclusive nature of the community. While digital humanities as a community still prides itself on that inclusiveness, there remains tension around librarians participating as scholars alongside faculty. It is important to note that none of the five faculty participants espoused first-hand opinions about librarians or staff not “belonging” in the digital humanities community, or on digital scholarship research teams. However, one faculty interviewee talked at length about the phenomenon of heavy library representation at DH seminars, which causes faculty and graduate students to not show up — because they do not think it is “meant” for scholars such as themselves:

We’ve held a reading seminar and it’s been held at the humanities institute on campus. Most of the research reading seminars tend to attract almost exclusively professors and graduate students. However, the DH reading seminar has attracted many, many librarians and technologists, sometimes more so than professors and grad students. That’s been great, but I think it’s raised some unwritten hierarchies at the university. My impression is the more librarians and technologists come, the fewer faculty and graduate students come. They arrive... and see there aren’t people from their immediate circle of colleagues. The librarians... ask some different questions. There’s been a real challenge in working across the boundaries of training and perspective in one group.

Other faculty respondents noted the need for librarians to be more aware of the types of humanities questions that are going on in their fields, as stated above in section IIb on academic expertise. This seems to reinforce the earlier-quoted participant on working “across the boundaries of training and perspective.”

36

V. Faculty-Librarian Disconnect

Throughout the interviews with faculty members it became clear that they were operating under the possible fallacy that digital humanities has “arrived” at the library, but not yet in the humanities departments. All were extremely enthusiastic about and spoke very highly of the librarians they have worked with on DH projects. One said that “I really prefer to think of my colleagues in the library as partners than as resources... The people I work with in the library are really smart, they usually know more about what’s current in DH than I do, because I’m set in my own research.” This reveals the potential for digital scholarship librarians to be specialists in DH support and a resource for a broad, current overview of the DH field. A librarian participant enthused that “we are much more collaborators and researchers than just the point person for “get me this book or resource.” So, it’s an exciting transition, we’re being welcomed, really, onto these research teams, and we have a lot to contribute. I think all librarians should at least dip a toe into exploring [digital humanities].”

37

This statement reflects a clearly positive attitude: faculty consider librarians research partners and colleagues, they see sustainability in librarians providing training to scholars and graduate students, and even view iSchools (schools that have evolved from programs previously centered around library and information science, informatics, and others) as hubs for DH activity and training. On the library side, however, the librarians expressed that DH is not (yet) a unified effort of the library. One librarian noted that collaboration is really just getting started at his institution; another spoke on subject librarians wanting or even needing to engage with DH work with their faculty but lacking the time for training in it. Part of the reason for this, he went on, is that there is no “top-down” initiative that would provide subject liaisons or other librarians the time and space in their job for digital scholarship training. Also, there was some disconnect in one particular pair about the “willingness” with which the library is embracing DH and its maturity: the faculty member saw the library as unified and enthusiastic about digital scholarship. He felt that “there doesn’t seem to be the backlash against DH as such, it seems that there’s a culture, they [the library] recognize that it’s a culture, they recognize that it’s its own set of disciplinary expectations. It’s a much more mature discipline to librarians that it is often to the faculty,” and that his institution’s library was already well-organized and had a well-established definition for digital scholarship work: “There seems to be reticence to fully embrace DH on the part of humanities faculty. On the library side, there’s a huge interest in and willingness to embrace DH as the moniker under which we do our work.” However, his librarian pair was much more cautious in declaring any unified efforts in digital humanities, as such, at his library.

38

Another faculty participant did realize and mention that “librarians aren’t appreciated for their expertise as real scholars,” but sees DH as a space where rank doesn’t matter — making it natural for librarians to work in that space. Notably, another librarian participant was most aligned with the faculty enthusiasm for the maturity of digital humanities support in libraries, but he specifically brought up not seeing that support as a service vs. collaboration dichotomy: his institution models it as a spectrum of collection-instruction-consultation-collaboration, rather than reducing DH support infrastructure to service provider or partner. This participant also eschewed that support vs. collaborator distinction as unproductive: “You have someone come in [to the library], they have a research question already, they might ask if you want to collaborate... it [happens organically]... We’ve found that consultation often turns into collaboration. Similarly, instruction turns into consultation for the faculty you taught the class for, which can lead to collaboration.”

39

However, it is important to recognize the issues around collaboration in humanities disciplines. One faculty participant brought up the stigma against multiple authors in humanities scholarship, saying that “[I wouldn’t want to say] that the most important thing for a librarian is to be a collaborator, then throw them into the situation where it’s hard for them to find someone to collaborate with. We need to work on the institutional side to credential effectively collaborative work... they do it in social sciences, why can’t we do it in the humanities? ...the humanities don’t do much to incentivize collaboration.”

40

Discussion

As one faculty participant noted, there seems to be a natural affinity between the digital humanities and librarians: “There’s often a sense where librarians aren’t appreciated for their expertise as real scholars, and I think that’s often true of the digital humanities. There tends not to be as much focus on rank and where you’re at [in digital humanities], it’s more the expertise you bring to the table.” The results of this study, especially the finding that faculty see DH support infrastructure in libraries as more established and mature than it realistically is, will aid academic librarians and library staff in strategic planning around the digital humanities. This could include more strategic outreach, making the strengths of digital scholarship/digital humanities/digital initiatives librarians more explicitly known, hosting more events outside of the library, and so on. Conversely, it could also take the form that one librarian participant detailed: not necessarily a “DH center”, but creating offices or residencies for faculty to bring them back into the library, beyond providing special collections services. It may also prove enlightening to digital humanities faculty in approaching their respective librarians both for support for projects (i.e. using library collections, learning to use metadata, specialized workshops) and as potential collaborators. Scholars have the space to have a more active voice in shaping their library’s digital humanities support; in fact, librarians often welcome their faculty taking an active stance in using and/or requesting library resources in the DH space.

41

A compelling point that arose from one interview was one librarian’s 4-tier model for supporting digital scholarship, while simultaneously moving away from the arguably unproductive dichotomy of librarians as collaborators versus supporters. As described earlier, the four tiers include collection, instruction, consultation, and collaboration. Professors might approach librarians to use collections, to use collections for teaching, or they might ask for consultation on using collections or tools for their own research. Any of these paths might lead organically to collaboration between faculty and non-faculty scholars, based on individual research interests and expertise. This is a useful model to think about digital scholarship support without the equally unproductive polarization of whether or not a library needs a DH center. There are also implications for librarian training and re-skilling. Multiple librarians brought up the time it takes to learn enough about digital scholarship to be able to answer scholars’ questions, especially in regard to subject librarians. One participant mentioned the development of “demystifying DH” sessions for librarians. However, that is beyond the scope of this project; gathering the thoughts, anxieties, and successes of subject liaisons in supporting their departments’ needs in digital scholarship would be helpful to librarians’ understanding of how to position themselves to support DH work.

42

Several faculty participants commented on the tensions around interdisciplinary collaboration. As one participant said, “there’s a lot of distrust between different disciplines and schools...the payoff is not that much to do interdisciplinary work if you’re embedded in different departments. The way it’s set up is to not encourage collaboration across boundaries.” This In regards to the comments of one faculty participant on the problems of working across departments

43

and different schools within his institution, and that collaboration is not encouraged: this problem could be tempered by his librarian pair's success in engaging DH scholars by going out on to campus, his opinion that events should be hosted more library events happening outside of the library, and librarians going directly to the scholars, etc. In cases where there are problems of disciplinary "silos," there could be potential for the library and librarians to foster some cross-departmental work in the same way that this participant has. In fact, that particular faculty interviewee expressed excitement over the library as a place for engagement with the digital, and not a "customer service model." He said that librarians have a different perspective in creating an environment for scholarly work, and that his library has "been a good neutral space for sidestepping some of the turf battles and get down to the research they're interested in."

Conclusion

As Schaffner and Erway have suggested, there is currently much to be figured out in how research libraries should position themselves to support digital scholarship and digital humanities [Schaffner and Erway 2014]. Several approaches are utilized at the moment: the ad hoc, consultative approach — which the majority of participants in this study advocated — or a one-size-fits-all suite of services. One of the original driving questions behind this project was whether faculty need and want individuals who are research partners and co-investigators on projects, or whether they prefer ad hoc services. The answer is not on either side of that line, but rather on both sides: librarians and library staff can provide ad hoc DH services while also being research partners; in fact, several participants reported that their partnerships were the result of an initial consultation with a librarian that grew into lengthier collaborations.

For future research, it may be worthwhile to do paired faculty/librarian interviews both at universities that have an "official" digital humanities center and at universities that do not, and measure whether there is correlation between an institution having a DH center and the ways the faculty think of librarians and the library's potential for support. If a school has no digital humanities center, then often the humanities departments are unaware of the digitally-related services that their library offers. The nature of the school — public or private, large or small, research- or teaching-oriented — would be another interesting factor to include. As noted in the Methodology section, these findings may not be applicable to all faculty-librarian relationships outside of the CIC. Several CIC schools have well-established DH centers, and accordingly those schools have had more time to negotiate partnerships and collaboration styles. Another theme that emerged from this project was the need to study curriculum around digital humanities. Surprisingly, though there were no interview questions specifically about teaching, many participants talked about changing or "overhauling" the curriculum, or about using the library in their digital humanities courses. However, it was unclear whether course content was tied to faculty's research. There is more work to be done in this area.

Much of these anxieties about the role of librarians in digital research could very well be tied to conversations about the future of libraries themselves. Indeed, a scholar participant brought this up independently, shining a light on why libraries are prime locations not just for digital humanities research, but for new media studies and digital scholarship — a broad umbrella: "The library seems like this amazing place, this building with people in it, a central location on campus, it has lots of books in it... what an amazing place to situate the exploration of what's good about the digital, what does the digital not do?"

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the generous participation from the librarians, faculty, and postdoctoral researchers who graciously took the time to be interviewed for this study. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Paul Conway at the University of Michigan School of Information for his thoughtful comments, guidance, assistance, and advice in shaping this study.

Appendix: Interview Protocols

FACULTY

1. What is your title? What department are you a part of?

2. Do you have any other appointments in other departments? 49
3. From the reading I've done in DH, I've come across many different terms and definitions. At the U-M School of Information we use "digital humanities." How do you define DH and what terms do you use at your institution? 50
4. What do you expect of your institution in terms of support for DH research? 51
- What do you expect of the library?
 - What about library space, technology, and collections?
 - Do you have a DH center?
 - Based on your answer, do you see this as an extension of things already happening, or something new?
5. Have you been involved in DH planning at your institution, in the last year or so? 52
6. From my understanding, it takes a lot of expertise to do DH research. What expertise is needed for your work? 53
- What do you see as the library's role?
7. My reading suggests that libraries could support DH in a number of ways... 54
- What expertise do librarians need? Is it more DIY or just dividing up the labor?
 - Which role is most important for librarians when it comes to digital humanities in the library: collaborator or service provider?
8. Anything else you'd like to add? 55

LIBRARIAN

1. What is your job title? 56
2. What do the reporting lines look like for your position? Do you hold any other appointments? 57
3. From the reading I've done in DH, I've come across many different terms and definitions. At the U-M School of Information we use "digital humanities." How do you define DH and what terms do you use at your institution? 58
4. How do you expect faculty to make use of your physical space, technology, and collections? 59
- Do you have a DH center?
 - Based on your answer, do you see this as an extension of things already happening, or something new?
5. Is digital humanities part of your library's strategic plan? 60
6. What, if any, activities are planned in the next fiscal year for DH at your library? 61
7. How is your library thinking about digital humanities? What activities, training, new hires, or outreach are you planning, if any? 62
8. How are you or your team engaging with DH scholarship on your campus? 63
- Have you hosted a meeting for DH scholars at the library?
 - Have there been any staff workshops or any DH conferences attended?
9. Anything else you'd like to add? 64

Notes

[1] See <http://twitter.com/nowviskie/status/432357552501047296>.

[2] The researcher acknowledges, as a potentially limiting factor, that interviewees may have felt the need to give responses that the interviewer wanted to hear as a graduate student researcher, especially because they were, to some degree, familiar with the researcher's positive interest in the digital humanities and her background in libraries.

Works Cited

- Bryson, Posner, St. Pierre, and Varner 2011** Association of Research Libraries. SPEC Kit 326: Digital Humanities. Tim Bryson, Miriam Posner, Alain St. Pierre, and Stewart Varner (2011).
- Burgess and Hamming 2011** Burgess, H. J. and Hamming, J. "New Media in the Academy: Labor and the Production of Knowledge in Scholarly Multimedia." *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 5.3 (2011).
<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/3/000102/000102.html>
- CIC 2012** CIC DIGITAL HUMANITIES SUMMIT REPORT: Executive Summary (2012).
<https://u.osu.edu/ulman.1/files/2012/10/CIC-DH-Report-Sept-2012-Final.pdf>
- Dalbello 2011** Dalbello, M. "A genealogy of digital humanities." *Journal of Documentation* 67.3 (2011): 480. doi 10.1108/00220411111124550
- Fitzpatrick 2010** Fitzpatrick, K. "Reporting from the Digital Humanities 2010 Conference." ProfHacker (2010).
<http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/reporting-from-the-digital-humanities-2010-conference/25473>
- Kirschenbaum 2010** Kirschenbaum, M. G. "What is Digital Humanities and What's it Doing in English Departments?" ADE Bulletin 150 (2010): 55-61.
- Manuel, Beck, and Molloy 2005** Manuel, K., Beck, S.E., and Molloy, M. "An ethnographic study of attitudes influencing faculty collaboration in library instruction." *The Reference Librarian* 43.89-90 (2005): 139. doi:10.1300/J120v43n89_10
- Muñoz 2012** Muñoz, T. "Digital humanities in the library isn't a service" (2012).
<http://trevormunoz.com/notebook/2012/08/19/doing-dh-in-the-library.html>
- Posner 2013** Posner, M. "No half measures: Overcoming common challenges to doing digital humanities in the library." *Journal of Library Administration* 53.1 (2013): 43-52.
- Ramsay 2011** Ramsay, S. "On Building" (2011). <http://stephenramsay.us/text/2011/01/11/on-building/>
- Rockwell 2013** Rockwell, G. "Inclusion in the Digital Humanities." In *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader*, ed. Melissa M. Terras, Julianne Nyhan, and Edward Vanhoutte. 249-253. Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT (2013).
- Rumsey 2011** Rumsey, A. S. "New-Model Scholarly Communication: Road Map for Change." Scholarly Communication Institute 9 (2011). <http://www.uvasci.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/SCI9-report.pdf>
- Schaffner and Erway 2014** Schaffner, J., and Erway, R. Does Every Research Library Need a Digital Humanities Center? Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research (2014). <http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2014/oclcresearch-digital-humanities-center-2014.pdf> (Accessed April 11th, 2014).
- Siemens, Cunningham, Duff, and Warwick** Siemens, L., Cunningham, R., Duff, W. and Warwick, C. "A tale of two cities: Implications of the similarities and differences in collaborative approaches within the digital libraries and digital humanities communities." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 26.3 (2011): 335. doi:10.1093/lc/fqr028
- Vandegrift and Varner 2013** Vandegrift, M., and Varner, S. "Evolving in common: Creating mutually supportive relationships between libraries and the digital humanities." *Journal of Library Administration* 53.1 (2013): 67.
- Vinopal and McCormick 2013** Vinopal, J., and McCormick, M. "Supporting digital scholarship in research libraries: Scalability and sustainability." *Journal of Library Administration* 53.1 (2013): 27.
- Waters 2013** Waters, D. J. "An Overview of the Digital Humanities." *Research Library Issues* no. 284 (2013).



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.