Innovation Through Colaboration in Humanities Research

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Abstract

"Humanities Collaboration and Research Practices: Exploring Scholarship in the Global Midwest" was funded by a Humanities Without Walls (HWW) Global Midwest award to explore the community of practice engaged in the HWW Global Midwest initiative. Led by Harriett Green, then at the University of Illinois of Urbana-Champaign and Angela Courtney from Indiana University Bloomington, the "Humanities Collaboration and Research Practices" project (hereafter referred to as HCRP) examined the collaborative research practices of HWW Global Midwest awardees to understand how humanities research happens at the level of practice, process, and collaboration. The project team conducted semi-structured interviews between fall 2015 through spring 2016 with twenty-eight researchers who participated in projects funded by the first round of HWW Global Midwest awards. Participants were asked about the aims of their collaborative projects, the processes for developing their collaborations, the types of resources used to support collaboration and project management (and whether additional resources are required), the challenges they encountered, data sharing practices, and how their research approaches and methodologies were influenced by engaging in collaborative research. What emerges from these interviews is a rich portrait of the ongoing evolution of collaborative humanities research and its social and intellectual benefits, both actual and still potential, as well as indications of the institutional and cross-institutional support and development needed to realize that potential.

Humanities Without Walls (HWW) is a consortium that links the humanities centers at fifteen research universities throughout the Midwest. Informed in part by the decade-long work of the Central New York Humanities Corridor, HWW was first conceived in 2012, and in 2014 the consortium was awarded $3,000,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon foundation to launch "a set of innovative and experimental initiatives enabling them to advance education and research in the humanities." The two core HWW initiatives were a series of pre-doctoral workshops for scholars in the humanities interested in exploring alternative academic (alt-ac) career paths and a competitive RFP to fund multi-institutional collaborative teams to conduct projects that explore grand research challenges. The first grand research challenge invited scholars to submit proposals for research projects related to the theme of the "Global Midwest." The first round of funding awarded $727,000 to fourteen projects to be completed by the end of 2016.

[1]

At the time of the first call for proposals, a team of librarians and LIS educators at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign and Indiana University had been considering questions of how humanities research happens at the level of practice, process, and collaboration and were pursuing research in this area under the mantle of a project entitled "Humanities Collaboration and Research Practices." All members of the team had both humanities and LIS backgrounds. They were intent on discovering how libraries and librarians might better support humanities collaborations and scholars in the digital humanities and keenly aware that these were intersecting areas of inquiry. The goal of this inquiry was to help humanities scholars to understand what sociotechnical questions should be addressed in formulating and executing collaborative projects and to increase institutional awareness about what kinds of supporting infrastructure enables such collaborations.

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With its emphasis on multi-institutional, interdisciplinary collaboration, its focus on innovative, applied research, and its inclusive approach to recruiting tenure-line scholars with varying degrees of experience with digital humanities and with collaborative research, the HWW Global Midwest program presented the potential for a rich and highly refined set of research cases for the HCRP project to explore the evolving nature of humanities research.[1]

"Humanities Collaboration and Research Practices: Exploring Scholarship in the Global Midwest" was funded by a Humanities Without Walls (HWW) Global Midwest award with the aim of exploring the community of practice engaged in the HWW Global Midwest initiative. Led by Harriett Green, then at the University of Illinois of Urbana-Champaign and Angela Courtney from Indiana University Bloomington, the "Humanities Collaboration and Research Practices" project (hereafter referred to as HCRP) examined the collaborative research practices of HWW Global Midwest awardees. The project team conducted semi-structured interviews between fall 2015 and spring 2016 with twenty-eight researchers who participated in projects funded by the first round of HWW Global Midwest awards. Participants were asked about the aims of their collaborative projects, the processes for developing their collaborations, the types of resources used to support collaboration and project management (and whether additional resources are required), the challenges that they encountered, data sharing practices, and how their research approaches and methodologies were influenced by engaging in collaborative research. Those who participated in the interviews were an intriguing mix of scholars who were new to collaboration and often new to the technologies that enabled that collaboration and self-identified digital humanists seasoned in thinking about scholarship in terms of team-driven projects.

What emerges from these interviews is a rich portrait of the ongoing evolution of collaborative humanities research and its social and intellectual benefits, both actual and still potential, as well as indications of the institutional and cross-institutional support and development needed to realize that potential. The study also suggests a number of questions that might be best addressed in the formative stage of collaborative projects. Humanities scholars new to collaboration need to be aware of issues of assigning credit, of project and budget management and communication of forms and formats for sharing both work in progress and results, as well as navigating the cultures of different disciplines and disciplinary perspectives. Those working in the digital humanities are often accustomed to collaborative work and team dynamics, but may not have fully-articulated the challenges posed by that work. Self-consciously engaging in these questions when embarking upon collaborative projects will help ensure both the success of those projects and the continuing functioning of project teams.

The literature of humanities collaboration

Tracking shifts in humanities scholars' information seeking and other research practices has been a recurring topic of study among social scientists. In the twenty-first century, most studies have placed particular emphasis on how information behavior changes in digital environments [Brockman et al. 2001] [Palmer & Neumann 2002] [Palmer 2005] [Bernardou et al 2010] [Bulger et al. 2011]. In 2006, the American Council for Learned Societies' Commission on Cyberinfrastructure released a groundbreaking report on cyberinfrastructure for the social sciences and humanities that made key recommendations for treating cyberinfrastructure as a strategic priority but also encouraged digital scholarship more generally with an emphasis on collaborative research projects. A few years later, Christine Borgman explored the possibility of "digital scholarship [as] a leading force in humanities research," and explicitly called upon the humanities community to "invite more social scientists as research partners" and "make themselves available as objects of study" [Borgman 2009]. Harley et all (2010) conducted intensive investigation into "Assessing the Future Landscape of Scholarly Communication: An Exploration of Faculty Values and Needs in Seven Disciplines," including humanistic disciplines (history and archaeology). Concurrently, studies of collaboration among scholars engaged in the digital humanities and its impact on humanities scholarship began to proliferate [Siemens 2009] [Siemens 2011] [Deegan & McCarty 2012].

With increased attention to scholarly collaboration in the digital humanities, further themes emerged in community discussion around credit and authorship [Nowviskie 2011] [Nowviskie 2012], the relationship between collaboration and infrastructure [Edmond 2015], and the role of project management for alternative academics and other scholars in the humanities [Leon 2011]. While the majority of these social scientific studies e employ qualitative methods, quantitative methods have also been employed to study collaboration networks in terms of project membership and co-authorship

[Ossenblok et al. 2014]. In the vein of these previous studies, the aim of the HCRP project was to explore the evolving nature of humanities research.

Methods and demographics

In support of that exploration, the HCRP project examined the HWW community through qualitative interviews with Global Midwest awardees. The HWW Global Midwest project awardees comprise a cohort of humanists well situated to reflect upon how collaborative and experimental research initiatives affect their research practices and requirements, scholarly communication throughout the research process, and final research outcomes.

The project team[2] conducted semi-structured interviews between fall 2015 through spring 2016 primarily by telephone and Skype with twenty-eight researchers who participated in projects funded by the first round of HWW Global Midwest awards. The interview protocol was reviewed and approved by IRB at UIUC. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and that quotations would not be attributed without explicit permission.

The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and an hour, and participants were asked about the aims of their collaborative projects, the processes for developing their collaborations, the types of resources used to support collaboration and project management (and whether additional resources are required), the challenges they encountered, data sharing practices, and how their research approaches and methodologies were influenced by engaging in collaborative research. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then coded in ATLAS.ti 7. Preliminary codes were developed inductively based on themes identified in the raw transcripts, and each transcription was coded multiple times to ensure inter-coder reliability. This study applies a qualitative analysis method that expands upon prior studies by [Brockman et al. 2001] [Palmer & Neumann 2002] [Palmer 2005], along with a theoretical grounding in qualitative content analysis [Corbin & Strauss 2008].

The research team interviewed twenty-eight project awardees, including nine principal investigators and eighteen team members, from twelve projects funded in the first round of HWW Global Midwest grant awards. In addition to the HWW Global Midwest project awardees, the team also interviewed one staff member of the overarching Humanities Without Walls administrative team. The initial goal was to interview the principal investigators for each project and at least one project researcher from each collaborating institution. Ultimately, the HCRP team reached one third of the total pool of potential interviewees, falling slightly short of the initial goal. But the team succeeded in ensuring that respondents adequately represented the wide range of disciplinary and institutional affiliations associated with awarded projects, in addition to reaching team members from all but one of the awarded projects (excluding the HCRP project, n = 13). The majority (79 %) of interviewees were tenured faculty, having achieved the rank of associate or full professor at the time of the interview. Only 11 % of interviewees were assistant professors, and the remaining interviewees were in non-tenure-line positions. Compared to the broader pool of HWW Global Midwest awardees, the demographic group most underrepresented among our respondents are non-tenure-line project participants. Tenured professors are slightly overrepresented, due primarily to our emphasis on prioritizing interviews with project PIs (86 % of whom are tenured faculty). While the gender identification among participants is nearly evenly split between male and female (49 and 51 % respectively) across all HWW Global Midwest awardees, interview respondents were slightly skewed. Among respondents, 57 % identified as male and 43 % identified as female.

Crossing disciplinary and institutional boundaries

The interviews revealed that the HWW Global Midwest researchers often encountered situations that required them to step outside their own research practices, to investigate their methods, and to be open to the unfamiliar techniques of their collaborators. Respondents frequently found themselves working with partners who had widely different research practices, while sharing common topical interests. The researchers coalesced into groups that engaged in sometimes uncomfortable experimentation in order to pursue in-depth research explorations that ranged from movement and dance to water quality in Midwestern communities. The funded projects were diverse in both their areas of investigation and in the people undertaking that investigation. Research topics ranged from Midwest heritage German language speakers to African Immigration and the Production of the Global Futures: Detroit & Berlin, as well as Aggregating Great Lakes

Environmental History: Exploring the Value of Distributed Digital Archives for Research and Teaching and incubating collaborative research through dance performance, to name just a few.[3]

Broad inter- and cross-disciplinary work characterized the research foci as well as the make-up of the teams of HWW Global Midwest projects. Projects included those that evolved beyond their initial concepts. For example, research that originally focused on waterways came to include "ethnic leisure and labor in the Great Lakes." Shared interests, rather than common methodologies, frequently brought the groups together. Scholars and performers learnt from each other and sometimes found themselves in unfamiliar territory, such as improvisational dance for one scholar. Teams comprised filmmakers, historians, oral historians, independent scholars, teachers, museum personnel, librarians, and more.

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Interdisciplinary approaches brought surprising discoveries as well as complex disagreements that linger beyond the projects. They used new and unfamiliar tools, as well as more traditional and familiar methods and approaches. Other teams creatively pushed themselves to experiment with approaches beyond their established academic milieu. One respondent suggested that the value of this initiative was "almost more about the process … what we would call project-based learning has afforded individual faculty members to do work in the humanities, but stretching it even further, to do collaboration with non-university experts."

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Changing approaches and changing practices; new research skills for new research opportunities

Collaborative scholarship as an opportunity and a challenge to move out of one's scholarly comfort zone, was a quality often noted and usually celebrated by the interviewees. When reflecting on the nature of collaboration, respondents described their engagement as "a form of collective learning," "a virtual program," an effort to "bring people together in a common intellectual space"; and a process that "involves determining shared goals, finding a diversity of resources in the room, figuring out when to work collegially."

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Methodologies varied greatly within HWW Global Midwest projects, both those in the study under discussion and those in the ongoing work. Project leaders often mediated group differences. Some projects allocated finding to hire graduate research assistants to provide project management support and found those assistants also mediated the cross-disciplinary encounters, as in one project where the students, in the course of project work, asked "focused questions... to help figure out how their areas of expertise would come together." Many groups worked very carefully to develop a method of analysis. One respondent noted, "We've really been in constant dialogue with a lot of different groups about what the shape of the project should in fact be and what sort of questions we should focus on." Another respondent characterized a group's work as having "a lot of cross-fertilization of methodologies … not so much about content" suggesting that disciplinary foci may be less malleable than methodological approaches. An historian explained that s/he started to understand "how a performer uses historical research ...to produce 'amazing things.'" The same respondent's project planned to employ several methods of analysis, including producing a short film, conducting a series of interviews, investigating precise research questions, and participating in a performance of dancers and scholars rolling around on the floor. This type of development of collaborative methods was described by one group as a process that:

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> unfolds in an uncertain and, in that sense, an egalitarian manner because no one knows yet what the thing will be. It makes some people anxious. It makes members uncomfortable sometimes, but it has been very productive. You go on an inkling. You go on a hunch and you see where it takes you. That is typical of ethnography, but also, I think, of collaboration, as well.

<div style="text-align:right">17</div>

These dynamic and educational elements of collaboration influenced how the participants' research approaches evolved as well. Evidence of shifting approaches emerged throughout the interviews, as participants described shifts in their research, publication, and even pedagogical opportunities. One interviewee described her work as "like a loop. It is not a straight line." Others placed great value on "working with other scholars," leading to "discovering different research areas." Individually, some respondents noted that they now write "stuff that is not very academic, but that is intended for

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policy makers or community leaders." Respondents also observed shifts in their pedagogical approaches, as one described: "we might try to produce like a website or something that talked about the curriculum and how we did it." One respondent shared a visionary project goal to "create a collaborative teaching and education process that would bring in folks from outside the community." Researchers also sought ways to make more immediate community impacts through shifts in their approaches to research, as scholars applied their humanistic methods "to address important political, cultural and social issues."

The importance of community engagement and impact became so apparent in this round of funded initiatives, and in projects arising from latter rounds of funding, that the most recent call for proposals form the Humanities Without Walls consortium requires explicit articulation of methods and strategies for what it terms "Reciprocity and Redistribution":

19

> Reciprocity and redistribution are methods for engaging collaborators in genuinely equal and ethical partnerships — partnerships that are not one-directional (i.e., only from campus outward) or faculty-centered (i.e., hierarchical in ways that privilege presumptively white western scholarly expertise over other forms of knowing).

20

Reciprocity and redistribution are strategies for equity-based change by design. These strategies aim to challenge the academic status quo by enabling community partners to participate on their own terms; to co-design and co-create transformative projects; and to be equitably resourced for their time and contributions.

21

Merging epistemological approaches can enhance the research process, but a difficult combination of methods can also fracture research partnerships. Respondents appreciated being able to "see how each other was thinking," yet there were also difficulties, such as a "romanticized view of history" that some historians perceived from performers in one project bringing together scholars and artists. Another respondent noted disagreement with a performance interpretation, but acknowledged it resulted from "a different leverage on the material." One participant discussed the "epistemological difference between divides... that take a long, long time to sort out and a high level of trust. The constraints were pretty real."

22

Overall, respondents had notably positive and optimistic viewpoints overall toward their experiences. One respondent noted, "I'm hoping that this project re-centers anthropology… for some sort of reclaiming of what it is and what it ought to be in the contemporary moment." Another respondent similarly observed, "to now spend a week in residence dealing with material that turned out to be very personal and emotional… I'm very grateful to the artists and the group who are used to working in these ways and kind of took me along." Several participants echoed one respondent's sentiment that the experience was "a very rich and rewarding project because we came from different disciplines. We could learn from each other."

23

Collaborative knowledge generation: technology enabling collaboration

Apparent throughout the interviews, both as a result of direct questioning and through impromptu comments offered by the interview subjects, was that this collaborative work was both technology enabled and technology dependent, from the workaday activities of managing to-do lists and task assignments to the projects' aspirations for publication and impact. One respondent observed of the changes in technological infrastructures that support collaborative work: "It's stunning that we're able to do this across these kinds of distances. It's a matter of really in-zone collaboration now. You know, ten years ago that was utterly impossible."

24

Technology for research management:

Project collaborators communicated both remotely and in person as opportunity arose. The most common tool cited for remote collaboration was email. Other frequently cited modes of engagement included conference calls (via Skype, Google Hangouts, or telephone), as well as file sharing and collaborative authoring tools (via Google Drive, Box, and Dropbox). In discussing project management, email was by far the most commonly tool. Many interviewees seemed chagrined about their project management methods or lack thereof, but one did highlight the HWW Global Midwest process as a positive learning experience: "I think that my experience with the Humanities Without Walls project and the

25

other project have sort of together kind of pushed me to be more enthusiastic and more diligent in using these online tools for collaboration and sharing work."

Most interviewed HWW Global Midwest research groups used popular file sharing and communications software and tools (See table A). A few teams described how they used unique platforms, including one group that made use of the digital humanities software built for the NINES and 18thConnect projects. But whether they used popular or specialized tools, the prevailing ethos in the choice and use of research tools is captured in one respondent's declaration that "we're using an existing infrastructure and we're applying it in a quite different way." 26

Another important piece of collaborative research infrastructure is storage for backing up and storing recorded data. Several respondents mentioned storage needs for data from interviews and video recordings, especially in regards to archiving and research protocol policies. One participant explained that in order to "protect what we had agreed to for IRB was much, much more complicated than when you're doing it on your own." Research policies per the IRB also factored into technical project workflows: Another team became so frustrated with the varying IRB processes among schools that they are trying to create a "kind of gentle IRB" process that would facilitate research and data sharing via "a protocol that could be approved at all of our universities." 27

File Sharing and Communication	Software
Box	Final Cut 10
Dropbox	YouTube
Google Drive	Omeka
Project Websites	Zotero
Email	Garage Band
Video and cameras	NINES Platform
Telephone/Skype	GIS and mapping software

Table 1. Tools cited for supporting and enabling collaboration[4]

Technology for research communication:

Respondents also cited a host of different formats for expressing and sharing their project work: performances, films, websites were among the formats they used, as well as traditional written texts and academic presentations. A number of respondents envisioned using a hybrid of formats to fully express their research products. One respondent described that they intended "to create some kind of interactive map [and] ideally a repository of sounds." Another discussed their strategies for sharing interview data as a format of dissemination, noting that "we're still processing the data [and] deciding how to feature it… we're not tweeting the results or something like that. We made a clear decision, because of the vulnerability of the population, to really wait for the dissemination of the results until we're able to ensure that we can protect our subjects in how we present the information." This response also highlights the complex characteristics of humanities data, and the multiplicity of factors that must be considered as part of the processes of data sharing and archiving. The variety of data formats utilized by the interviewed researchers suggests that scholars increasingly may break away from traditional journal articles and monographs to explore the multitude of other ways that their scholarship can be shared. 28

Collaborative knowledge generation: Humanists need humans

In addition to seeking to understand the nature of the technological and research infrastructure that can best support humanities collaboration, the interviews were designed to deepen our collective understanding of the human dimension of such collaboration. In reviewing the interviews in aggregate, the emphasis on the human element of these research partnerships is striking. While those interviewed frequently remarked upon both the challenges and the opportunities of technologically enabled research and communication, they almost inevitably circle back to the role of human actors in 29

the collaborative process. Human action is often called out as an essential component of successful collaborative projects; some member of the team needs to step up and act, whether that's calling a meeting or writing an important document or any of the myriad actions that advance project work.

The roles of enabling human actors can be broadly defined as grease and glue. Some project team members performed as a sort of social and bureaucratic lubricant, reducing friction between researchers, methods and institutions. Others were connective tissue, creating and sustaining relationships by means as diverse as email, phone calls, budget updates and putting food on dinner tables shared by all project members.

30

Projects selected for HWW Global Midwest awards represent a mixture of pre-existing and newly developed collaborative teams. Responses among interviewees suggest a difference in motivation for formation of collaborations: Some awardees desired to work with a particular set of colleagues, while others sought to find colleagues as a means of securing funding. The nature of the collaboration varied considerably across the projects of the interviewed respondents. Respondents who were not the principal investigators described collaboration processes in a variety of ways, ranging from full engagement (e.g., a "democracy of participation" and a "real partnership") to language that suggests removal or distancing (e.g., "I was invited to join into a collaboration which someone else had designed"). Another respondent remarked that different collaborators assumed leadership positions at different times. As discussed above, several respondents also emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of their projects.

31

Once these very human humanists had coalesced into collaborative teams, they needed to devise strategies for managing themselves and their work. The initial round of funding provided a preliminary workshop on forming collaborations and creating proposals. Arising from the findings of the current study as well as the observations and labor of the administrative staff at the Humanities Research Institute at UIUC, later projects have been supported by research workshops, the development of an experts database and explicit guidelines for managing both projects and collaboration.

32

Consideration of tools aside, the need most consistently identified by interviewees was for project managers — people with responsibilities dedicated to keeping the projects moving forward. In general, there seems to have been a dawning awareness of this need. One participant who had budgeted for a project manager did not immediately find her collaborators to be sympathetic to this budget allocation: "When we were planning this project, that was the big budget item and some of my collaborators were like 'this is too much for the project manager' and I was like 'I think this is a big complicated project and we need somebody who really can deal with logistics'." The growing sense of need for assistance and dedicated project management engenders a parallel sense of the potential value of and for graduate students participating in the projects. Interviewed respondents repeatedly attested to the value of graduate assistants who shouldered the management burden of the projects or about the (unfulfilled) need for such students.

33

It should be noted that the roles for graduate students identified in the present study quickly presented both challenges and opportunities. The HWW initiative clearly presented opportunities for graduate student training and engagement as collaborators, but those opportunities bore with them the possibility of exploiting graduate student labor. Subsequent calls for proposals, including one now open, required formal statements of "plans for graduate partnership and collaboration." The supporting materials on the HWW website now include a section on "Graduate Students as Collaborative Partners – Do's and Don'ts." Amongst the "do's" are "include them as equal partners at every step of the planning and execution process — including as co-authors, co-presenters, and/or co-curators." Don't: "limit their participation to only tasks that have no intellectual or substantive links to the project work; i.e., do not treat them as go-fers."

34

Questions about project management methods inevitably brought forth voluble explanations, complaints and sometimes confessions. Descriptions of project management strategies were often rueful, even apologetic, in tone: "it's absolutely [the] Wild West . . . It's all very loose." Some scholars had very strong opinions about how project management should work, and argued for "a timeline that's very clear, weekly updates and regular project meetings." One participant very self-consciously modeled good project management behavior, as they worked with a research assistant to distribute weekly updates to team members across a number of projects.

35

The project teams increasingly recognized the need for human connection to ensure and accelerate success. Along with email and (graduate student) assistance, another common element of successful projects is in-person meetings between remote collaborators. On the negative side, interviewers heard, "One of the challenges is that our project team has not been able to get together and that's a challenge on many levels," and, from one team, "nobody has met." Positive experiences were cited, such as getting together at the coffee shop, and for dinner and going on a field trip. "I really think that the in-person meetings are the most effective. That's when we're focused. That's when we're engaged. I mean the technology helps, but the in-person interaction is very important to the life of the project."

Respondents noted that several groups felt it was important to be in the same place in order to talk about the project, and preferred face to face conversation. One group had a week-long residency that included dinner meetings, at which they would review what they discovered that day and how it affected their perception of the Global Midwest. The importance such connection plays in promoting project success echoes that explored in a recent book, *Sustaining Interdisciplinary Collaboration: A Guide for the Academy*, whose authors call out the importance of both actual and metaphorical coffee machines: Researchers "talk to each other during chance encounters in the search for caffeine and this chitchat can reveal a common interest or excite curiosity. The discovery of affinities fosters personal relationships, which in turn can be helpful if one gets stuck in one's work or needs technical assistance. These reliable relationships are a stock of social capital" [Bendix, Bizer, and Notes 2017, 66] .

With the increased human connection promoted by the projects and their shared funding came an increased sense of accountability and responsibility towards partners in research. As respondents discussed collaborative initiatives, many were mindful of the importance of providing appropriate credit and recognition for project partners. One respondent noted that "for us, the notion of collaboration was built around the idea that both parties would be equally acknowledged."

Ensuring that contributions are appropriately acknowledged also appears to give rise to moments of tension within projects. Another respondent observed that "there was a little bit of misunderstanding, and some disagreements […] had to do with who is being acknowledged for what." These comments and others like them indicate some collective wariness about the readiness of humanities disciplines to acknowledge the legitimacy of co-authored publication. Respondents differed on whether they planned for their collaboration to culminate in co-authored publications. One respondent noted, "I didn't expect a lot of co-authoring, more of a co-design of the platform." Another viewed co-authorship as an important "end product collaboration." While discussion of evaluation for tenure and promotion were present within the interviews, they were not as prevalent as might be expected. One respondent noted that "Humanities have sort of a hard time understanding how to evaluate joint publications." In an anecdote about a colleague, another respondent described how co-authored publications in a tenure portfolio made the process of evaluation more difficult, but did not ultimately impede the scholar's promotion.

Engaging collaborators with questions about humanities collaboration.

After the conclusion of the interviews that comprise this study, the HCRP team hosted an invitational gathering of higher education leaders, scholars (including some HWW awardees), information professionals, and funders in Chicago in October ,2016. A White Paper resulting from the preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts was shared with participants prior to the summit and seeded with discussion questions to stimulate engagement[5]. A keynote panel revisited the 2006 ACLS "Our Cultural Commonwealth" report and reflected on past efforts to support innovative humanities collaborations. In response to that panel and through a day's discussion, the questions that were raised most consistently and that engendered the most conversation were, broadly:

- How can connections between teaching and research be more strongly supported through engaging students in collaborations?
- How can we encourage a culture of sharing data and interim phase research within the humanities?
- How can institutional investments in collaborations be encouraged to ensure research sustainability?
- What forms, venues, and methods of dissemination are best suited to collaborative work?

As the summit concluded its day of work, participants broadly endorsed four recommendations for institutional investment in support of humanities collaboration:

1. Invest in cyberinfrastructure for humanities and social sciences
2. Facilitate access, use, and sharing of humanities data
3. Engage and involve graduate students in sustaining collaborations
4. Support new modes of publication and dissemination

The work ahead

While the work of this investigation results in a rich set of insights into the grounded practice, challenges and perceived benefits of collaboration in the humanities, this work also clearly reveals that such collaboration is relatively nascent, for scholars, for the institutions that support the and in which they work. Throughout the interviews, respondents were quick to comment on their past experiences with collaboration, or lack thereof. Interviewed researchers who specialized in film and performance cited an existing culture of collaboration within their fields. Others remarked on their prior collaborations as being "unusual." Still others expressed their own discomfort with the practice of collaboration. One respondent remarked, "what I recall about sitting on the panel in front of the Chicago public to talk about processes of collaboration was that [we] both said we're terrified."

In reflecting on implementing and managing collaborative work, one participant summed up the sentiments of many, saying "that was definitely a learning curve for all of us." A steep learning curve for many, but one that most deemed worth undertaking. One interviewee shared that "this HWW process, which included certain professional development and information for faculty and then the opportunity to work together in teams to develop the proposal, was just priceless." Perhaps most positively, another respondent reported among their collaborators that "we all agreed that we'd like to do this again."

Ultimately, the HWW Global Midwest activity seems to have whetted participant interest in collaborative work and spurred many researchers to pursue new interests and work with others both in and outside of their field who they otherwise never would have had met. One participant explained that until she worked on the HWW Global Midwest project, she had never previously considered the opportunity to produce alternative forms of publication outside of those traditional to academia. Another respondent reflected on a bond that formed between herself and others working to produce a public performance: "I thought it was totally unique because...leading these colleagues at different universities definitely deepened my relationship with them." Another respondent reported that her time doing research on the global Midwest expanded her research interests and led to another regional research opportunity. These reports of these experiences even more strongly underscore how research collaborations can lead to future opportunities for social bonds and deepened professional opportunities. At the same time, they underscore the need for both institutions and individuals to address the challenges posed by collaborative work.

The participants identified many such project challenges with this new model of activity and funding. Reported examples included concerns about the consistency among research group members in following project procedures (e.g., storage locations for project data, research procedures, or use online sharing tools). Many respondents also described major challenges in managing project budgets and personnel administration. Several respondents recalled feelings of frustration about the demanding administrative overhead, which drew time and energy away from been conducting valuable research, highlighting the challenge of coordinating review by multiple IRBs, and having "to coordinate financial arrangements between 3 institutions, which are not necessarily used to doing this together." They also pointed out personnel challenges such as barriers to hiring and funding graduate assistance with their research: Examples of problems and challenges included graduate students' inability to pay for costly research expenses upfront, and researchers being limited in how much student assistance they had due to students' limitations on contracted work hours. Other interviewees expressed difficulties collaborating across universities in terms of research protocols, budgets, and policies.

The participants also highlighted some positive models of institutional support for effective project planning and organization, specifically the workshops held at Michigan State "where you could prototype your proposals, you get

feedback on your proposals from peers, where you were given presentations by people from outside the university about collaborating with communities, so it's in a sense, professional development." Such support for professional development may be one of the ways in which academic institutions can respond to the needs of humanities scholars and to recommendations such as those that emerged at the summit.

Multiple respondents discussed the goal of sustaining collaborative relationships in their project beyond the grant period. The most common approach that respondents pursued was to develop follow-on proposals for financial support from other granting agencies. Where sustaining the outcomes of the project supersedes the continuing collaborative relationship, an alternate approach frequently cited by respondents was to embed project materials in courses. Perhaps the most exciting form of sustainability is respondents' openness to future collaboration, often stemming from the original HWW Global Midwest projects.

47

If we are to encourage and support such continuing collaboration, it is clear that there is work to do in developing institutional and, perhaps more importantly, interinstitutional structures of policy, managed relationships and technical support that will maximize the scholarly outcomes of humanities collaboration. There is also a need for a broad swath of research to identify the most effective practices and strategic investments to enable those outcomes and to exploit them most fully. Bendix, Bizer and Noyes assert that "the social framework of interdisciplinary research can be described, planned for and cultivated" [Bendix, Bizer, and Notes 2017, ix], and there are many questions to ask of those interdisciplinary researchers and many they should ask of themselves.

48

The work of understanding and building a culture of humanities collaboration has already progressed beyond its state at the time of this study. HWW awarded a second round of funding for ten projects addressing the theme of the global Midwest in 2016. These projects are the work of scholars from eight academic institutions and several of the projects also engage non-academic collaborators such as journalists and artists. In March of 2016, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a $4.2 million grant to the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to support the work of the Humanities Without Walls consortium to "leverage the strengths of multiple distinctive campuses and create new avenues for collaborative research, teaching, and the production of scholarship in the humanities, forging and sustaining areas of inquiry that cannot be created or maintained without cross-institutional cooperation." This second award from the foundation has funded fourteen research projects addressing a grand challenge: "what is the work of the humanities in a changing climate?" The 2016 award also includes funding for an extension and expansion of the work discussed in this article. That work is currently in its early stages, and its investigators can anecdotally report than many of the challenges to collaboration remain, but that there also seems to be an increasing ease with collaboration amongst the humanities scholars concerned and an increasing eagerness to engage in such work. If the perception of such an ease is substantiated by continuing data collection, it marks a considerable evolution from the "terrified" scholars of 2015.

49

In the time that this article was under review and revision, interest in collaboration in the humanities had become so well-established that the National Endowment for the Humanities announced funding opportunities specifically "to support groups of two or more scholars seeking to increase humanistic knowledge through convenings, research, manuscript preparation for collaborative publications, and the creation of scholarly digital projects." Of course, in this time, there has been another significant development in scholarly collaboration of all kinds and disciplines. The global pandemic of 2020-2021 prompted perforce remote collaboration, leading many who had formerly been disinclined to engage with collaborative tools and technologies to embrace and sometimes master those tools and technologies. This has a great deal of impact upon the work ahead. Future research upon humanities collaboration will need to investigate and assess how collaborative work has been changed and shaped by the lessons of Covid and to ask whether the findings of the present study are relevant in the post-pandemic period

50

Acknowledgements:

Indiana University Bloomington Libraries, the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Center for Informatics Research in Science and Scholarship (CIRSS) in the School of Information Sciences, and the HathiTrust Research Center. Most of all, a huge thanks to all of the project team members for all of their hard work: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Harriett Green (PI), Maria Bonn, Megan Senseney, Justin Williams Indiana University - Bloomington: Angela Courtney (co-PI), Nicholae Cline, Robert McDonald, Jaimie Murdock, Leanne Nay

Notes

[1] "About Humanities WIthout Walls," http://www.humanitieswithoutwalls.illinois.edu/about/history.html

[2] Harriett Green, PI, Angela Courtney, Maria Bonn, Megan Senseney, Nicholae Cline

[3] For a complete list of funded projects see http://www.humanitieswithoutwalls.illinois.edu/initiatives/global-midwest/projects2015.html

[4] It is striking that at the time of the final edits on this manuscript, in 2021, we cannot help but notice that Zoom, the pandemic-induced dominant remote communication and collaboration tool is not included in the inventory of tools. At the time of this study, Zoom was only emergent (it was mentioned by one respondent as looking promising). Clearly, there is new work ahead investigating the impact of Zoom on humanities collaboration and research practices.

[5] This whitepaper also contains documentation of ongoing network analysis of the HWW global Midwest awards and contains the full interview protocol used to conduct this study.

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