Connecting Digital Scholarship: Building Communities of Support at University of Michigan

Joe Bauer (Digital Scholarship Research Consultant, University of Michigan)
Anne Cong-Huyen (Digital Scholarship Strategist, U-M Library)
Follow along:
Agenda

● Context and background at University of Michigan
  ○ Research
  ○ Examples
● Our approach
  ○ Community, Consulting, Platforms

University of Michigan

19 Schools and Colleges
  + Library
  + Hospital

36+ IT Shops

Very decentralized, interdisciplinary culture
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA)

One of the 19 Schools and Colleges

- 17,150 Undergraduate Students
- 2,520 Graduate Students
- 41 Academic Departments
U-M Library

4th largest research library in the U.S.
- Over 20 libraries across 12 buildings
- Over 500 staff
- Roughly 170 librarians

Holdings: Between 14 - 15.6 million volumes
LSA Technology Services (LSA TS)

- Academic Technology Services
- Research, Computing, and Infrastructure Services
  - Research Team (16 People)
    - High Performance Computing
    - GIS
    - Programming
    - Digital Scholarship Support <--Joe is here
- Web and Application Development Services
- Operational Effectiveness
- Support Services
Lots of terms...

Digital Scholarship

Digital Humanities

Digital Studies
DS Projects

A Sampling
Stories from Chez Baldwin

Discover stories exploring Baldwin’s time in St. Paul de Vence, his early life in Harlem, world travels, and impact as a writer and activist.
Lisa Nakamura - American Culture 358: Special Topics in Digital Studies: Virtual Reality and Empathy
Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans from all across the country used scrapbooks as a tool to tell the stories of their lives. They clipped ticket stubs for shows they enjoyed, portraits and photos of loved ones or pressed flowers from the garden. Often created in groups at scrapping 'crops' (similar to quilting bees), scrapbooking was also a social event that allowed people to come together. Interestingly, scrapbooking is again becoming a popular pastime. In History 260 students have been studying American History and they have compiled this scrapbook that begins to describe
Recap of U-M Context
Digital Scholarship at U-M

- Alix Keener (formerly of U-M Library), surveyed 95 faculty
- Tony Gillum and Júlia Martins (UMOR), interviews and report on “Digital Humanities at Michigan”
- Lisa Nakamura, et al. (Digital Studies Institute), surveys and interviews at U-M and other institutions
- Joe Bauer, Carla Stellrecht, Jan Stewart, and Sean Green (LSA TS), interviews at U-M, reviewed syllabi, and interviewed external institutions
Silos & lack of community
An embarrassment of riches
Lack of infrastructure & support for specific digital platforms
Misunderstandings about the nature of doing DS
Digital “orphans”
Equitable labor practices
Institutional Value for Promotion and Tenure
Defining our approach at U-M

Networked
Community-centered
Grassroots
Human centered
Emergent Strategy
Equitable and ethical
Community | Consulting | Platforms
Mesh Network Model

- All units can pool resources
- Deep knowledge and expertise in each unit
- Opportunities for enhanced collaboration
- Resilience - nodes can come and go
- Cohesion issues
  - Confusion on which units provide which services
  - Harder for newcomers to navigate
- More difficult to start

(Anne, et al., 2017)
Our Capacity

Early Stage
- Grassroots
- Ad-hoc
- Catch-as-catch-can
- Siloed
- Focus is on individual project leads

Established Stage
- Processes emerge
- Institutional champions emerge
- More collaboration
- Formal commitments of resources
- Attempts at forming advisory committees
- Recognition that decisions and priorities would benefit from coordination

High-Capacity Stage
- Full support
- Grant application support
- Infrastructure in place
- Physical spaces available
- Highest-level administration support
- Institution holds events
- Formal support and governance for projects at institutional level

We are here

(Anne, et al., 2017)
Emergent Strategy Leaders

“All organizing is science fictional behavior.” - amb

Emergent Strategy Leaders:

● are adaptive;
● they shape change;
● they ride change.

(brown, 2017)
Principles of Emergent Strategy (brown, 2017)

- **Small is good, small is all.** (The large is a reflection of the small)
- **Change is constant.** (Be like water.)
- There is always enough time for the right work.
- **There is a conversation in the room that only these people can have.** Find it.
- Never a failure, always a lesson.

- **Trust the People.** (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy... or the boundaries become clear.)
- Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass -- build the resilience by building the relationships.
- Less prep, more presence.
- What you pay attention to grows.
The Connecting Digital Scholarship Group

Our network so far...

- LSA Technology Services
- U-M Library (and U-M Press)
- LSA Dean’s Office
- ITS (Information and Technology Services)
- CSCAR (Consulting for Statistics, Computing and Analytics Research)
- Humanities Collaboratory
- Digital Studies Institute
- Duderstadt Center
Exploring Ways to Coordinate Work (Transparency)

Website | Email groups | Trello boards | Slack channels | GitLab | OSF.io
Investigating Platforms

Conversations with peers and partners to determine next steps for infrastructure and support for digital tools.
References


Demystifying Digital Scholarship

Heather Froehlich (Penn State) Corpus Linguistics

Jasmine Clark (Temple University) Accessible Digital Projects