

This is a summary of responses to the pre-Institute questionnaire prepared for SCI 8, "Experimental Approaches to New-Model Scholarly Communication." All direct quotes are *in italics*.

EMERGING GENRES:

Curated sources and databases. Web-based resources that aggregate digitized primary content from multiple archives or institutions. Additional content may include narratives, interpretive text, annotations, timelines, and so forth. Increasingly, many are GIS-based. Some are very deep, highly sophisticated databases that allow users to change parameters of search, and to download and re-use data. Most such sites are multi-institutional, with an editorial board of scholars that operates with different degrees of formality. Many have grown over time from smaller projects that had far fewer functionalities. Over time, division of labor has evolved among institutional and individual participants, along with institutional commitment to support the data for periods of time.

Blogs and Web sites. Both single-authored and group-authored, these are sites for sharing work, initiating and carrying on conversations, testing new ideas, "*publishing shorter, often experimental or investigational prose and for consciously informal conversation between scholars.*" These are reported to be far more common among younger scholars than senior scholars. Libraries are seeing an increased demand to "preserve" faculty's web-based projects. There is little reported relationship between these informal modes of communication and scholarly publishers per se, though there are some learned societies that host blogs among their members, and some publishers who encourage their authors to create blogs to accompany a publication.

Multimedia journals. In some cases these are online extensions or versions of long-standing titles published by learned societies. In other cases they are very informal, at times ephemeral journals that an ad hoc editorial group has put together. The content is often similar to print journals—primarily articles and occasionally reviews—but with embedded audio, video, images, interactive maps, hypertext, and so forth fully integrated into the argument.

Publishing on commercial platforms. Particularly for those scholars working with new media and cartography, YouTube, iTunes, Google Maps and Google Earth are important sites for publication. "*As materials on the sites are understood to become more and more stable and dependable, their uses within the academy are becoming more firmly entrenched.*" In addition, there are a significant number of scholars who are using Facebook for discussions with students and posting small essays or think-pieces aimed at fellow scholars.

NOTABLE TRENDS:

Experiments in open review and/or open access. Such trials are found both in monographs and in journals. These are self-conscious activities designed to test new approaches to validating scholarship and "*assess the costs/benefits of an open review process.*" One author put her work online when her book was

recommended by reviewers for publication but was rejected for marketing purposes because, she was informed, her book "*would present too much financial risk in the current economy.*"

Multimedia and interactive authoring. Libraries are seeing an increasing demand by scholars to support video, audio, geospatial and GIS databases, annotation and commenting tools to use in textual and audiovisual databases, and so forth.

Additional insights from questionnaire responses

Getting started

Some projects began 15 or more years ago, and have lived through multiple technical changes and reconfigurations of purpose, audience, and administration. They were often initially motivated by a research question, or to test a hypothesis: "*I wanted to see if [the social roots of creativity] was something that could be studied in a quantitative format. There were (and still are) no existing models.*"

For others, it was an opportunity to experiment in using media and thus appealed to those whose primary research subject is three-dimensional objects, images, sound, or new media. The impetus was the desire for a better representation of the object of their investigation. But a project can quickly grow into a way of exploring multiple opportunities. For example, an online encyclopedia becomes a chance to explore crowd-sourcing content development, federated archive searching, editorial oversight issues, and new business models that include some content freely available, some licensed, and integration of multimedia in multiple languages.

Other starting points:

...my aim was to create an interactive analysis of image and sound relations that the new generation of digitally conversant students and scholars could use as a model for electronic publication. My teaching philosophy has always focused on bridging the gap between history, theory and practice, and this was that philosophy in practice.

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...though the toolkits involved in these projects were sometimes digital, my models of reference have always been institutions like galleries and museums: institutions where multiple forms of knowledge production find themselves intertwined with one another, as well as constrained by the need to speak to heterogeneous audiences. To make arguments in the form of critical or historical narratives that inform and are informed, in turn, by arguments made with objects in physical space, gives rise to a productive friction that I often found lacking in my solely print-based scholarly work.

Some models:

*Curation as a critical mode: galleries such as Bardbox:
<http://bardbox.wordpress.com/>*

And

*Long argument in multimedia formats: video essays such as Lessig, “Openness” on venues such as TedX:
<http://teachingwithted.pbworks.com/TEDxNYED#LawrenceLessigOpeness>*

Workflow

Workflows entail collaborative tasks. Therefore, early on there is a sorting out of roles and responsibilities. Partnerships are called out as key to success. Scholarly societies have partnered with publishers that have journal publishing capabilities. Publishers partner with technology companies. Scholars sustain global networks and contributors. Libraries bring reference expertise and IT professionals together with faculty and students.

Activities include community building, technology development, aggregation of content (from data to blog posts and feedback), creating labor-saving automated features when possible. Invariably there is “*a lot of scholar-wrangling*” and reliance on individual efforts on the part of scholars.

Audience

The primary audience in nearly all cases was fellow scholars, particularly for journals that are distributed through licenses or books published with university presses. At the same time, many expressed a strong desire to reach a much larger audience. Most respondents think the mechanism for extending their audience is to have some version or elements of the work available for free to nonacademic audiences—architects or theater professionals, tourists, K-12 teachers and students, fans, and the general public.

There is a conflation of creator and audience in many emerging genres. The growth of communities of creation, communities of review, and communities of users is intimately intertwined. Learned societies are experimenting with platforms that integrate “*blogs, newsletters, and postings into one dynamic web platform. The goal... is to allow for [a] virtual community to develop through crowd-sourcing (or more perhaps accurately, ‘our crowd’-sourcing), while also preserving a corpus with acknowledged scholarly authority.*”

Among the audiences mentioned:

Our audience is broad—scholars, students, researchers of various kinds and simple travelers.

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Our audience is all those in all fields with an interest in China's past.

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Our audience is primarily composed of scholars and students of media studies, though we also hope to attract media fans, media practitioners, and other interested members of the more general public. We use email, Facebook, and Twitter to draw attention to our most recent posts, and of course make our posts available through RSS feeds. The process of building audience/site members has been arduous, and I'm not sure we've really found the right formula yet, but we're continuing to work on it.

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I am interested in multiple audiences (academic, non-academic, etc.), so the models I tend to gravitate towards are models that embrace what might be described as the multichanneling of scholarship: knowledge that is freed up to live multiple lives—in the stacks, in the gallery, on the screen, in the classroom, in the street. I see design—information design, graphic design, interface design, installation design—as key components of this expanded publication model: a model in which the book remains a standard unit of scholarly communication but:

as one iteration with a before, during, and after (i.e. it is embedded in a process);

as a print-plus artifact: as a hybrid with porous print/electronic boundaries that can now encompass an entire database or a network of repositories or digital assets;

as a natively digital object (with its media attributes accordingly reconfigured); [and]

as a support for projects whose native medium is non-narrative (geospatial, artifactual, spatial, etc.)

Publishers have particular concern about readers and the need to meet their high expectations and new demands. Readers deserve choices, publishers aver, and as they go to press (so to speak) they are keenly aware of variations among reading preferences. One publisher noted that the reading experience is increasingly “*fragmented, yet scholars are still writing book-length arguments.*”

We are thinking a lot about what our new Internet-powered direct relationships with our readers might mean to us as a publisher.

We are focusing on the concept of “attention” and the challenges of how to capture any multi-tasker’s split screen/scrolling/searching attention for long enough to display even the titles or headlines about our books and journals. We know that we need to be part of the scholarly conversation in our selected fields; but how?

Sustainability

Long-term sustainability of these resources is a concern, even in those cases where a university has committed to hosting the database or resource. The concern is over how to sustain an entity that needs to be dynamic to continue to create value—a new benchmark for success in digital publishing, though not explicitly stated as such in our responses. As a rule, digital resources are expected to be something that will grow and change over time, demanding a certain amount of attention from somebody. Where is the business model for ensuring a sustainable resource stream?

Many scholar-created projects are facing the transition from soft money to long-term sustainable funding. A common strategy is trying to reduce costs and allocate labor among participants. People anticipate that there will: be ongoing need for the labor of an editorial board; the need to develop robust and reliable, replicable templates for vetting and adding content; and devising business models to secure revenue streams.

Perspectives on the future

*Digital is central to the future of scholarly publishing.
We are all thinking that permanent transition is the future.*

These statements by publishers foreground the major shifts in perspective forced by the digital. Libraries and publishers noted frequently that their faculty and authors typically have not yet made that shift in their thinking. While the future (and present) is digital, typical humanist authors continue to work from deep within a print-on-paper tradition. Publishers report that the majority of people coming to them with projects have a book- or journal-based authorship model in mind. Their particular interest with respect to the digital is in having media-based illustrations, making content available through e-readers such as Kindle, and advocating for open access.

I can think of only two or three situations in which an author has approached us with an innovative idea for dissemination..... We are developing a flexible workflow to allow for the inclusion on multimedia material but have no real expectation of this coming from our authors just yet.

One scholar notes:

As I see it, librarians and CIOs are doing the heavy lifting to try to raise awareness that one of the most significant changes in the history of writing and reading technologies is occurring under our feet. Aside from budget cuts, the key obstacle is lack of faculty awareness. Historically, faculty have viewed librarians as support staff, rather than as what they are at present—professionals on the front line of these changes . So we tend to hear them as blips in background noise. They may feel (correctly) that faculty are leaving them out on their own in really crucial arenas of conflict (do we let Google own our Future Library of Alexandria?). In my institution, faculty are simultaneously freaked out by the apparently imminent collapse of the publishing industry and deeply resistant to new models (institutional repository, bepress, etc.). ... My local solution is to try to build a small community of collaborators who can cross-pollinate with other faculty, students, and administrators.

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The innovative projects that come to me as a Dept Chair [at a small liberal arts college] are undergraduate research projects and capstone projects in the form of a website or multimedia argument. Student work in this mode is important, exciting, relevant and hard to support for a host of reasons.....lack of human resources (knowledgeable people) is as critical an obstacle as lack of funding.

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MediaCommons has had a few new projects brought to us by scholars.... but we need to find ways both to interest scholars in bringing projects to us, and to allow them to do most of the work of producing those projects themselves.

In an environment in which planning for 5-10 years out can seem foolish and even self-defeating, there are many within libraries, publishing houses, and faculty scanning the horizon for new trends in technology and platforms, whether it be the use of mobile phones by young audiences, the addition of APIs, or apps that they can take advantage of. Leadership is critical.

The [learned society's] board has engaged in a strategic planning exercise, which firmed up our commitment to seeking a broader audience and greater social engagement, and to supporting this agenda with continued dedication to the development of innovative electronic media.

Those who are moving into the digital present a host of interesting challenges. Authors are looking specifically for 3-D modeling, zoomable color photographs, audio and video segments, and, on occasion, interactive, downloadable materials. Libraries that support digital scholarship must make a number of strategic choices.

We often get questions about complex mapping and visualization—either generating maps (and this could be traditional geographic maps or other kinds of visualizations) from text and other data or integrating textual data with spatial maps and timelines. These are difficult projects to support in that each of them requires its own set of solutions, software, and often dedicated programming that can be at odds with our efforts to build a general infrastructure that can support broad classes of publications.

In all cases, libraries, publishers and scholars alike who have engaged the digital grasp the importance of partnerships and collaborations, both across campus and across institutional boundaries. For publishers, this means looking carefully at technology partners in the context of economically challenging demands.

It's all about open access & digital: can the book be OA simultaneous with first print publication? Can the author keep the draft posted or post our final file on his/her website? Will the book be in the Kindle? The iPad? At this time we cannot afford as much OA as our authors want because we have no way to recover our initial investment in the title without paid print sales. We are disseminating books widely in digital form but we are selective about our e-partners during this "wild west" period of the digital marketplace.

And for libraries, it means radical shifts in job descriptions, staff skills, and organizational alignments. For a library to support faculty publishing,

this means looking at publishing from all perspectives, from supporting the authoring process to helping faculty to make informed publishing choices to acquiring and vetting quality scholarship in selected disciplines to ensuring paths to the long term preservation of the works of UM scholars. In practice, this has meant bringing the UM Press, the Scholarly Publishing Office, the IR, the Copyright Office and the Text Creation Partnership together under

one divisional umbrella and to use that alignment to look for economic and technological efficiency in the production and distribution of scholarship and, more importantly, to develop a robust set of services and venues for scholarly publishing.