



SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE 8: EMERGING GENRES IN SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION AND MEETING SUMMARY

Since 2003, the Scholarly Communication Institute (SCI) has provided a venue for scholars, librarians, publishers, technologists, and academic administrators to design, test, and implement strategies that advance the humanities through innovative information technologies. SCI 1 assembled a group of pioneers in digital scholarly communication to review progress and lessons learned over the previous two decades, and to identify strategies for continuing advancement in the arts and humanities. The reflections of SCI 1 participants set the stage for following institutes. Over the next six institutes, SCI pursued several different approaches to developing new models, focusing on scholarly disciplines, the potential of collaborative working structures, the use of new media technologies to advance scholarship, and the institutional infrastructure essential to enable digital scholarly communication. In 2010, SCI 8 focused on new publishing models, with particular attention to how scholarly production and dissemination are transformed in a digital environment.

As the humanities move ever more quickly and irrevocably into a digital information environment, the need for new models of scholarly communication able to take advantage of these technologies grows more urgent. The familiar forms of peer-reviewed scholarship—monographs and journal articles—fail to meet the needs of many scholars to publish scholarship based on collaborative knowledge production or using dynamic data, visualizations, 3D models, and audiovisual formats. Nor are existing models able to engage a broad community of peers in the practice of ongoing inquiry and assessment. Above all, current models are neither efficient in the use of time and resources, nor economically sustainable.

Yet it is hard to discern which forms of scholarly discourse will take hold in their place. To understand more about the most promising new forms that have emerged, SCI 8 convened scholars, librarians and technologists, publishers,

and academic administrators and funders who are committed to reimagining and remodeling humanities publishing. Over two days of presentations and intensive discussions, the group assessed current trends and identified a quartet of developing genres that are quickly moving into the mainstream of scholarly production. These genres—the digital collection or curated database, the scholarly blog, the multimedia argument, and media-based sound studies—were analyzed in terms of their full range of scholarly production and use, from authoring to publication and dissemination, stewardship and preservation, and reuse. Particular attention was given to the roles that scholars, libraries, publishers, technologists, administrators, and funders play in further developing these models; integrating new genres into existing scholarly structures and processes; and, perhaps most important of all, how these genres engage the multiple audiences for whom scholarship is created—scholars, students, and the public.

NEW MODELS OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

Participants found that four elements of scholarly production—authorship, dissemination, stewardship, and use—remain core, but how they are done and by whom has shifted significantly. In the Web environment readers and users are also authors, expecting to annotate, review, and re-use content. The role of publisher is now additionally played by libraries, scholars, students, and indeed anyone who posts content directly to the Web. That said, most participants—though not all—see the role of scholarly presses remaining as great as ever, if not greater, because the need to vet and validate content, prepare a manuscript for publication and long-term sustainability, and capture a user’s scarce attention all require the skills that publishers have cultivated over the decades. The matter of where publishing occurs organizationally, whether attached to a scholarly society, a university press, a research library, or independent scholarly group, is still very much in debate.

Discussions of the authoring and review processes confirm that scholars’ direct engagement with new technologies have returned them to deep interactions with core research activities: preparation of primary data for use in a digital environment; multistage peer review of data, markup schemes, design elements, and analytical programs; initial forays into the challenges of long-term preservation and stewardship in a dynamic digital environment; aggressive assertions of fair use rights in research and teaching in the digital environment; and reinvigorated collaborations with librarians, technologists, archivists, collectors, and entrepreneurs.

The genres that have emerged will no doubt evolve over time as more people use them. There is a burgeoning cohort of scholars at all stages of their careers who are heavily invested in furthering these new models and working to normalize them within the conservative structures of higher education. Humanities scholars and their partners in libraries, presses, and higher education administration need to ensure that humanities scholarship achieves maximum impact among users through maximum access. Acceleration of the development of new publication models that reach communities of users more quickly is critical.

NEXT STEPS

Near-term actions should address the following.

- *Audience*: with the goal of ensuring that high-quality scholarship is readily accessible to peers, students, and the general public, scholarly communication should take advantage of mobile-based consumer technologies and customization, moving beyond reliance on Web-browser based desktop usage.
- *Education*: scholars should develop literacies in media that help them create multimedia scholarship, understand how to assess such scholarship, and make explicit to their audiences—fellow scholars, students, and the public—how to understand the meanings of multimedia scholarship.
- *Professional development*: new skills and "alternative academic" career paths should be developed for many scholars, librarians and publishers, all of whom are critical to collaboration in new scholarly production.
- *Reduce IP constraints*: Scholars must practice and assert their right to quote text and media in education and authorship or risk losing once and for all the right to assert fair use. Both publishers and scholarly societies should be in the vanguard of creating guidelines and implementing policies that promote access to scholarship through fair use.