Abstract:

"Humanities Collaborations and Research Practices: Exploring Scholarship in the Global Midwest" (HCRP) is an 18-month project that will be led by Harriett Green (University of Illinois) and Angela Courtney (Indiana University). This project will explore the community of practice engaged in the Humanities Without Walls initiative through qualitative interviews with Global Midwest awardees and a quantitative visualization of the community's sphere of influence through network analysis. The project team will also convene a one-day summit with key stakeholders to ensure that study results are shared with the researchers responsible for developing infrastructures, tools, and services to support humanities scholarship.

Proposal Narrative:

Overview

"Humanities Collaborations and Research Practices: Exploring Scholarship in the Global Midwest" (HCRP) is an 18-month project that will be led by Harriett Green, English and Digital Humanities Librarian at the University of Illinois, in collaboration with Angela Courtney, Director of the Scholars' Commons at Indiana University. The project is affiliated with the HathiTrust Research Center (HTRC),[1] which was launched jointly by Indiana University and the University of Illinois in 2011. At the University of Illinois, the HTRC is affiliated with the University Library Scholarly Commons and the Center for Informatics Research in Science and Scholarship (CIRSS) at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, both of which have established strengths in social scientific studies of scholarly information use and research practices in the humanities (Muñoz et al. 2011; Varvel & Thomer 2011; Fenlon et al. 2014; Hensley, Shreeves, & Davis-Kahl 2014). At Indiana University, the HTRC and the Libraries' Scholars' Commons collaborate to support research through workshops and individual consultations on data mining tools and digital humanities resources. With support from other IU campus units, such as the Data to Insight Center and Wells Library Reference Services, the IU partnership is strongly positioned to facilitate digital scholarship.

Project Significance

This project aims to explore the community of practice engaged in the Humanities Without Walls (HWW) initiative through two forms of empirical study: qualitative interviews with Global Midwest awardees and a quantitative visualization of the extended community's sphere of influence through network analysis. Qualitative analysis will expand upon prior studies by Brockman et al. (2001), Palmer & Neumann (2002), and Palmer (2005). This study will examine how traditional humanities research practices and requirements are shifting to accommodate projects emphasizing values that were articulated initially by the digital humanities (DH) community and now serve as core components of the Global Midwest initiative.

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[1] http://www.hathitrust.org/htrc

Northwestern University's *Guide to Digital Humanities* proposes a common set of core values for DH research that is: critical and theoretical, iterative and experimental, collaborative and distributed, multimodal and performative, and open and accessible.[2] The Global Midwest project awardees will comprise a cohort of humanists well situated to reflect upon how more collaborative and experimental research initiatives affect research practices and requirements, scholarly communication throughout the research process, and final research outcomes. According to the HWW call for proposals, "studies must be conducted through cross-institutional collaboration and successful proposals will advance innovative and experimental research and new pedagogical practices."[3] As such, we anticipate that this call will attract a range of humanists, including established scholars engaging in collaborative or experimental projects for the first time.

Our project seeks to examine how humanities scholars share data, build self-generated research environment infrastructures for supporting data sharing and research dialogues, and frame their collaborations in the context of broader research aims and project goals. Through a series of semi-structured interviews with HWW awardees, we will gather critical information on the process of humanities research from a cross-disciplinary and multi-institutional array of research initiatives. Understanding how research happens at the level of practice, process, and collaboration directly aligns with the theme of the Global Midwest as it investigates the open and distributed aspects of active, innovative scholarship at CIC institutions and shares scholars' feedback with the developers and professionals who provide scaffolding to foster broader, more global scholarly collaborations in the humanities. Using information gathered during the interviews, we will also create a visualization of the HWW community through analysis of the Global Midwest partnerships and their wider sphere of influence. This map will provide a benchmark for continued evaluation of how collaborative initiatives, like the Global Midwest, expand the global impact of humanities scholarship.

Project Description

Interviews and Network Analysis

Beginning in spring 2015, the HCRP project team will design a semi-structured interview instrument in consultation with the HWW project team and a team of advisors from the HTRC. Consulting with the HWW team will ensure that interview questions align with overarching project evaluation, assist with planning for follow-on HWW initiatives, and provide feedback about the research experiences of the project awardees. Expanding our consultation to a wider range of stakeholders will create a broader feedback framework in which scholarly research requirements inform the ongoing development of infrastructure, tools, and services targeted to support scholarship in the humanities.

In July 2015 the team will begin scheduling individual or small-group interviews to be conducted during the fall semester, at which point Global Midwest projects will be well underway. The interviewers anticipate that a mid-project assessment will be particularly valuable in evaluating the research process and will supplement any potential evaluation of final research outcomes.

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[2] http://sites.library.northwestern.edu/dh/values-methods/
[3] http://www.humanitieswithoutwalls.illinois.edu/global-midwest-form.html

Transcription of recorded interviews will begin immediately with graduate student assistance. In spring 2016 the entire project team will participate in coding and analyzing the interviews using qualitative content analysis, and graduate students at Indiana will conduct quantitative network analysis in consultation with the Cyberinfrastructure for Network Science Center. [4]

Summit on Humanities Collaboration and Research Practices

Critical to the success of this project is ensuring that results from our study are directly shared with the broader, interdisciplinary community of researchers. To facilitate deeper engagement around these topics, the project team will plan a one-day summit on "Collaboration and Research Practices in the Humanities: Supporting Scholars through Infrastructure, Tools, and Services" for summer 2016. [5] Key stakeholders engaged in scholarly communication, research support infrastructures, humanities data curation, and scholarly publishing will be invited to participate.

Through a combination of short presentations, breakout sessions, and discussion, the group will reflect collectively on the match between scholarly requirements and current practices as well as recommendations for ongoing development to support research in collaborative, experimental, and multimodal contexts. Prior to the event, the HCRP team will distribute a preliminary white paper outlining their findings to set the context for the meeting and promote fruitful discussion. Following the event, the team will integrate outcomes of interviews with project awardees and stakeholder discussions in a final, publicly available project report on the current state of collaboration and research practices in the humanities.

Roles

The core project team consists of five faculty and staff members from the University of Illinois and Indiana University:

- Harriett Green, English and Digital Humanities Librarian, University of Illinois
- Angela Courtney, Director of the Scholars' Commons, Indiana University
- Maria Bonn, Research Faculty, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
- Megan Senseney, Senior Project Coordinator, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
- Nicholae Cline, Digital Research Librarian, Indiana University

Green will serve as Principal Investigator, lead overall project activities, and oversee the Illinois component, including its budget. Courtney will serve as Co-Principal Investigator, leading Indiana activities and overseeing its budget. Both Green and Courtney are tenure-line faculty in their respective university library systems, hold master's degrees in humanities disciplines, and specialize in providing research services to -- and collaborating with -- humanities scholars.

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[4] http://cns.iu.edu/

[5] The project team is eager to co-locate the summit with the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC) annual conference, which fosters an interdisciplinary community for sharing tools, research, and projects to promote engaged learning for a global society.

Each member of the five-person team contributes complementary expertise in areas such as scholarly communication and information behavior. The team will work together to design, conduct, and analyze interviews; plan the summit; and oversee graduate student activities.

A cohort of four graduate students will be hired to assist with project activities. At Illinois, students will focus on qualitative research, including transcription, coding and interview analysis. Students at Illinois will also assist event coordination, project documentation, and other duties as assigned. Using documentation from the interviews, two graduate students at Indiana will focus on network analysis.

Outcomes

Empirical study of the Global Midwest awardees will lead to better understanding of the HWW community of practice, which will, in turn, provide new insights on how the HWW initiative can best foster interdisciplinary humanities cooperation across the Midwest and beyond. Engagement with the first Global Midwest cohort will assist the HWW consortium in meeting member needs, understanding the initiative's impact on individual and group research outcomes, and identifying how satisfaction rates among HWW researchers can be leveraged for advanced interdisciplinary collaboration within the HWW consortium. We anticipate that interest in the results will also extend beyond HWW, and we intend to share the project's scholarly products with national stakeholders, including the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; CIC Provosts, CIOs and Librarians Groups; American Council of Learned Societies; Council on Library and Information Resources; and DH CenterNet.

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