Chapter 2
Collaborations in Liberal Arts Colleges in Support of Digital Humanities

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ABSTRACT

The field of digital humanities has been rapidly expanding over the course of the last decade. As such, academic institutions have been working to identify ways of supporting these new endeavors in a time of economic struggles. The Digital Humanities Initiative (DHi) at Hamilton College was conceived as one possible model of supporting digital humanities scholarship at a liberal arts institution. The DHi model relies heavily on collaboration among different teams in the Library and Information Technology Services across campus, and with institutions across the United States. DHi also has international partnerships that promote its goals in research, learning, and public humanities. This chapter will describe the various collaborations of DHi and offer suggestions for how others can implement similar support models at their institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration, both across various teams within a single institution and across several institutions, is important for supporting and building innovative and sustainable projects. This is especially true in emerging fields such as digital humanities where researchers are pioneers in their fields, and structural support models and technological infrastructure are constantly evolving. Smaller institutions, such as liberal arts colleges, often rely on external collaboration to support such endeavors because they do not have the same resources that are available at larger institutions that may have more funding and more personnel on staff to tackle such projects. The Digital Humanities Initiative (DHi) was formed in 2009 and has received two Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grants, one in 2010 (Barrie, 2010) and one in 2013 (Foster, 2013), to develop digital humanities projects from the liberal arts perspective.

Digital Humanities and/or Humanities Computing have been in existence for some time now (see *Debates in the Humanities*, edited by Gold, 2012), but the technological advances of the past ten years have led to broader and deeper strategies in both research and digital publishing (Spiro, 2011). The potential of this digital scholarship remains untapped (Ayers, 2013) and the models and processes for developing and maintaining faculty research as both context and data/objects of study are constantly evolving (Barry, Knudson, Sprenkle, & Youngman, 2014. The goals of digital humanities (DH) practitioners generate challenges for institutions as they attempt to develop frameworks and support structures for digital humanities (Posner, 2013).

This changing landscape has generated activities that range across disciplines and practices (Roy, 2014) so it is not surprising that five years into the work of DHi, those involved with it are still asked, "What is digital humanities?" The Digital Humanities Initiative at Hamilton College has adopted the definition of digital humanities posed by *Digital Humanities Quarterly (DHQ):* "Digital humanities is a diverse and still emerging field that encompasses the practice of humanities research in and through information technology, and the [approaches or] exploration of how the humanities may evolve through their engagement with technology, media, and computational methods" (Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations). The digital research "approaches" and methods in DHi activities are emphasized as the unifying theme across the interdisciplinary work that is done in DHi. Accepted research projects in DHi range across humanities and social sciences disciplines, but they all use digital research approaches in answering humanities based questions.

Collaboration across faculty, information technology, and library units is essential to DHi. Fay and Nyhan (2015) describe the breadth of current DH work in libraries and museums and make a powerful argument for the role of collaborations around best practices in library science and information technologies in digital humanities

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