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People Profile: Patrick Alexander

Editor

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Dedicated Staff

In addition to myself as project director, reporting directly to the director of the press, a number of project staff were funded by the Mellon grant and the university. The digital production specialist is a position shared by the press and the library. The director of oral history digital initiatives works at the SOHP, and the project's programmer works at the library. Graduate students to conduct research and support the project were funded at the SOHP and CCR, and there is a full-time project assistant. In addition, thirty percent of the time of an experienced acquisitions editor at the press is officially dedicated to the project. The press committed to making its new positions permanent, even though the grant covers only three years (2008–2010).

The challenge is to bring everyone together to work toward common goals; the advantage is the built-in reach that the project has. For example, the library team has already provided valuable technical advice and helped us to work with the library's IT and Web services departments. Another example is the work of the acquisitions editor, Mark Simpson-Vos, to analyze the press's backlist and identify current or potential authors who are interested in participating.

Mechanics of Collaboration

A year or two from now, it will be interesting to analyze how ideas were expressed, recorded, concretized, and brought to fruition in a project with many players. The project listserv keeps growing; there are twenty-three people on it now, and they are all invited to our monthly meeting. For now, I will simply point out what is probably already obvious: we proceed via meetings, meetings, and more meetings. Some meetings go exactly according to plan, and others veer away from their purported agenda and end up somewhere else. Meetings set up with a core group around a particular topic are open to all, so that ten or fifteen people might show up where only five

were expressly required. I find it important to give time to questions and brainstorming, take detailed notes, and follow up with collective emails, schematic drawings, charts, or any written form of summarization. A "next steps" conclusion to each meeting is essential. It ought to be a strong advantage for the project that so many people are interested in it; surely open, clear communication will be the key to successfully harnessing the enthusiasm.

Our Ideas So Far

We have quickly recognized that our ideas are larger and more ambitious than our budget will allow us to fulfill during the three-year

grant period. However, we hope that thinking big first and then prioritizing the pieces of our plan will allow us to create an architecture that is poised to grow over time. At this point it is possible to articulate four overlapping pieces to the plan: (1) a searchable resource of unique content; (2) online communities/forums; (3) online publishing services; (4) interrelated online and print publications, possibly prioritizing a new journal and set of monographs.

The project is a pilot project that can be extended to other topic areas and replicated at other institutions. You are invited to check on our progress and participate at <http://lcrm.unc.edu>.

against the grain people profile

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Patrick Alexander

BORN & LIVED: A ton of places.

EARLY LIFE: Military brat.

FAMILY: A 27-year-old, wonderful daughter, Courtney, and my partner Stephanie, a professor at Hofstra University. Two cats and two dogs between us.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE: Blues harmonica, all kinds of music, kayak fishing, and cooking.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *A River Runs Through It*.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Whiners and drivers on cell phones.

PHILOSOPHY: Never trust a philosophy.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Haven't had one yet.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Getting my exwife remarried.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Unlike anything we think it will be, but basically digital, digital, digital. An overhaul of the peer-review system will be essential; commercial publishers in humanities and social sciences will retrench.

Publisher-Library Relations: What Assets Does a University Press Bring to the Partnership?

by Patrick H. Alexander (Associate Director/Editor-in-Chief, and Co-director, Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing, The Pennsylvania State University Press and Libraries) <pha@psu.edu>

You've heard the question: How can you say that the future is so hard to predict when all of my worst fears are coming true? Given slippery and evolving nature of scholarly communication, that question hits a little too close to home. University presses stand by helplessly as monograph sales evaporate, while, ironically, the pressure on scholars to publish increases. Print collection budgets drain toward electronic resources especially as storage space diminishes and user behavior

changes. And new trends in scholarly communication have everyone scrambling for new business models, new delivery models, new models that respond to the new user behavior. Our worst fears seem to be coming true. In one bright corner in this otherwise dark room shines the potential for university presses and libraries to work together to address these issues. As libraries seek inroads into publishing services, partnerships between presses and libraries have emerged as one accepted — yet

inchoate — model for the future. Successful library-publisher cooperation depends in part on each bringing assets to the union and on appreciating that each possesses strengths and weaknesses. This piece asks: What assets do university presses bring to the library-publisher partnership, and how might these interface with a university library's strategic vision?

I won't argue that university presses and university libraries need to cooperate; implic-

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