

2014

You Complete Me: On Building a Vertically Integrated Digital Humanities Program at the University of Georgia

Lisa Bayer

University of Georgia Press, lbayer@uga.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bayer, Lisa (2014) "You Complete Me: On Building a Vertically Integrated Digital Humanities Program at the University of Georgia," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 26: Iss. 6, Article 12.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6947>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

You Complete Me: On Building a Vertically Integrated Digital Humanities Program at the University of Georgia

by **Lisa Bayer** (Director, University of Georgia Press) <lbayer@uga.edu>

*“The means of knowledge dissemination may be different in an electronic age, but the mission remains the same.” — Robert Harington, “Reasons To Be Cheerful, Part 3,” *The Scholarly Kitchen*, October 31, 2014.*

The opportunities for collaboration between the **University of Georgia Press** and the **UGA Libraries**, to whom it has reported for over five years, have not been a question of why or how, but why not and how often. Ours is one of approximately 25 U.S. and Canadian university presses reporting to their campus libraries. Refreshingly, the relationship was not a result of financial distress, and we have found that our commonalities, for the most part, outweigh our differences. The Press and the Libraries are currently working together with campus partners on DiGA (Digital Georgia), an interconnected, vertically integrated program intended to support new forms of digital humanities (DH) scholarship through teaching, research, publication, and infrastructure.

Faculty-driven by historians **Stephen Berry** and **Claudio Saunt** (whose Center for Virtual History was recently profiled in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*), DiGA’s key achievements thus far include a DH-focused faculty hire, a planned “digi” rubric for course designation, and a Digital Humanities Lab, located in the main library next to the press, opening in the coming year. With crucial support from the **Willson Center for the Arts and Humanities at UGA**, we are working with funders both internally and externally on start-up costs for infrastructure, staffing, planning, and other needs. Focusing on comparative advantages, **Stephen Berry**, Assistant Press Director and Editor-in-Chief **Mick Gusinde-Duffy**, and University Librarian and Associate Provost **Toby Graham** consider DiGA’s promise for generating and sustaining new forms of interpretive scholarship.

The project at Georgia involves a faculty-run digital humanities lab, the UGA Press, and the UGA Libraries. Why these partners? What sets this project apart from the many other DH projects that have preceded it? How are we different?

Steve: DH is an inherently collaborative discipline, but strangely few DH centers are set up to offer “end-to-end” support for large, born-digital, scholarly projects. We see any number of collaborations that involve multiple libraries, or multiple presses, or multiple faculty members, but this kind of “horizontal integration” has some limitations. For instance, it tends to reproduce and multiply the same culture — the culture of the Library, the Press, or the Faculty — and it does not result in true “end-to-end” support. We wanted something that would join these three cultures so we could all learn from each other.

Mick: A university press supports the overarching goals and mission of its parent institution. Those goals are typically built around three overlapping activities: teaching, research, and public service or outreach. As we think about the research aspect of our mission — helping develop scholarship and making ideas accessible to as many readers as possible — it makes sense to combine these three partners in the process. In fact, we are really only supplementing established areas of strength and responsibility: faculty *do* the research; presses review, refine, promote, disseminate (and monetize) the research; libraries collect, curate, and assure longevity and presentation standards for the scholarship. Those “responsibilities” overlap and interact in interesting ways in a mostly-digital environment, leading to shifting responsibilities and shared areas of expertise. This is a process we need to refine and learn more about, but the mission remains the same.

Toby: We know from the 2014 Ithaca S+R report on sustaining the digital humanities that even on campuses with DH centers, there is rarely a comprehensive solution in place to support faculty in all stages in the project’s life cycle. Programs most often lack sustainable sources of support. Also, there is a lack of clarity about how to establish the “value” of a project or output for the academy and society. We are advancing a vertical integration concept in which the institution will provide support for digital scholarship from origination through dissemination, including determining the scholarly merit of related outputs.

What are the possibilities of the Georgia project for bringing DH scholarship in line with more traditional monographic work in the humanities, e.g., implications for peer review, tenure and promotion, and channels of dissemination?

Steve: I think I am more sanguine about these hurdles than most. Technology makes peer review easier, not harder. Technology makes dissemination easier, not harder. Sure, evaluating a collaboratively-built, born-digital project is different than evaluating a single-author monograph, but we’re smart people, and really our standards don’t need to change: Does the project have scholarly value? Does it contribute to the scholarly conversation? What kind of contribution does it make? Those are the same questions we’d ask of a book or an article; we’re just asking them of a different

scholarly form. Already the **American Historical Association** has drafted new guidelines to aid history departments in making exactly those kinds of evaluations. So I think we need to ready ourselves for a world in which these problems are actually solved, a world in which the ideas and arguments of scholars are free to live in the world in multiple forms simultaneously, some digital, some not.

Mick: I’m not sure it *is* a question of bringing DH scholarship in line with traditional monographic work. We are proposing the “deconstructed monograph” as part of our publishing program, after all. The Press certainly expects our DiGA program to be a rigorous, trusted resource for humanities scholars and their learned societies in general, and DH scholars in particular.

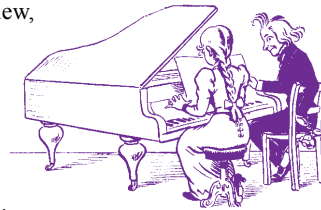
Notions of what constitutes “tenure-worthy” intellectual accomplishment, scholarly contribution, impact, and even time invested in digital scholarship are still very much in flux. This is an instance where a Kuhnian paradigm shift is truly underway. DiGA’s role (and the Press’s in particular) is first to have a seat at the table as scholars and institutions work through these questions. And second to be as transparent and open as possible about our evolving peer review and dissemination process.

Toby: A viable future for DH publishing depends on the academy’s ability to evaluate the non-traditional manifestations of digital scholarship. Scholars must determine value for the most part, but there should be structure to the process. Publishers, and university presses in particular, have a long history of organizing, synthesizing, and adding value to the academic review of scholarship. We look to the **University of Georgia Press** to help us explore ways in which digital works might be vetted and credentialed through expert review.

What are the most significant challenges to the project? What are potential pitfalls that you wish to avoid?

Steve: Cost-recovery is a problem for anything that exists on the Web. But there are other (related) problems as well. The earliest DH projects were essentially primary source archives that, while lacking in analysis, effectively democratized the process of scholarship. Teaching faculty at a far remove from archives could now get to their sources while in their bathrobes. Next-generation DH projects, however, do not merely revolutionize how we store and access information but how we collect, sift, render, layer, visualize, and analyze it. (To be sure, there has been some backlash against digital humanists who con-

continued on page 27



You Complete Me ...
from page 26

flate the coolness of their tools with the sophistication of their results. But we all know that we move toward an era in which DH will find its appropriate level — where the new tools will not replace traditional scholarship but extend and catalyze it.) This all sounds salutary, but also expensive, and therefore *undemocratic*. What we will be trying to do with this new project at Georgia is to come up with new, reproducible, extensible *forms* of DH scholarship where each iteration of the form is a little cheaper and easier to produce and where the aggregation of those iterations creates a resource that is more than the sum of its parts. This may sound a little vague, but it's easier to think of in the case of the book. Each time we publish a book we don't reinvent the book; the book as a form has rules and expectations — a table of contents, margins, an index — and it has a process and an infrastructure that once established makes it relatively easier to produce other books. But in the early days of DH a lot of the projects were expensive one-offs; they offered models for other projects, perhaps, but they didn't create new forms. We think that is today's challenge: to create the new forms and platforms that broad academic communities will agree to use.

Mick: Time, institutional commitment/support, and money, sadly. For an initiative of this scale to truly find its feet and become self-sustaining, we need the freedom to experiment (and the freedom to fail on some levels). We also need time to build momentum. A conventional publishing program typically needs five plus years to launch a new list, and this digital environment needs longer still. Take a look at some of the early instances of DH institutes and publishing collaborations related to those institutes, and you see the paradox of time in the hurry-up digital era. As for money, really the key challenge is financial sustainability. The DiGA collaboration will be trying a range of strategies to recover costs and fund future work: figuring out what we can, in good faith, sell (or license or rent); experimenting with “flipped” (producer pays) cost recovery models; focusing our home institution and external agency fundraising efforts. There are secondary challenges related to ever-changing technology and the desire to create a reproducible (open source, ideally) infrastructure.

Toby: As with most new efforts, sustainability is a key challenge. We want to generate excellent short-term results, but more importantly to create the longer-term organizational changes that will integrate digital scholarship support into the mainstream of our operations.

What benefits will the project bring to the institution, its faculty, its students, and other stakeholders? How will the project contribute to the scholarly record and to the missions of university presses and research libraries?

Steve: Well, I am perhaps most excited about the project's potential to transform my teaching and the student experience here at Georgia. As professors, we are always talking about how our teaching and research should be integrated, and my whole career I worked hard to ensure they were — I was always teaching courses on whatever my next book project was, I always brought documents I had found at the archive into class — but the truth was I always felt like I was leading two lives. Since we have begun building our classes *around* our digital projects, however, I have that true sense of integration. Bringing students into the process of building digital projects — treating them as true collaborators — is enormously satisfying; you are finally modeling your passion not merely for a subject but for an investigative process, and you're sharing the twists and turns and ups and downs of that process together. I think ultimately this will also help students better understand the value of the humanities because they will actually have participated in creating humanistic knowledge they cared about in a process that they loved.

Mick: The *scholarship* has already brought visibility to the institution, with the two directors of the DH initiative being named as ACLS digital fellows. As the DiGA project takes shape, the scholarship will be more broadly accessed and disseminated. There will be learning opportunities for faculty and students, working at various stages of the workflow from born-digital scholarship, through coding and technological skills, to opportunities further along the path from idea to fully-realized publication. Much of the research we want to cultivate and publish will have global impact, as it relates to Atlantic World Slavery, the Civil War Era, contemporary histories, and capitalism. As

continued on page 28

A purple graphic advertisement for ProQuest Research Companion. At the top right, there are social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, and the text 'PROQUEST.COM'. The main text reads 'CREATE AWESOME RESEARCH MOMENTS' in large, white, sans-serif capital letters. Below this, it says 'With ProQuest® Research Companion.' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

Designed to enhance student research and critical thinking skills, this information literacy product effortlessly guides students through the research process by combining:

- More than 100 embeddable short instructional videos
- Assessment capabilities
- Customization features
- Interactive research evaluation tools

This easy-to-use resource supports library and faculty information literacy instruction to create a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

TO REQUEST A TRIAL AND PRICING, VISIT
http://go.proquest.com/research_companion.



noted above, a project like this aligns very well with the missions of university presses and research libraries. By constructing a sustainable publishing and archiving workflow, we expect to support the research, teaching, and outreach of our parent institution while providing an example and expertise to the broader academic publishing community.

Toby: I am particularly excited about the prospects for undergraduate and graduate research and creative activity at our university. Through teaching and research services, academic libraries contribute significantly to students' success in finding, evaluating, and using recorded knowledge. Our support of digital scholarship as a teaching method, however, allows us to go beyond this by expanding the opportunities for our students to contribute to the creation of new knowledge rather than just to consume it.

Potential funders like Mellon are increasingly looking to sustainability in terms of both infrastructure and institutional or other support when evaluating fundable projects. What are your thoughts on sustainability for the Georgia project, both short- and long-term?

Steve: The whole point of our new project is to weave it into broad, established infrastructures — the Lab, the Press, the Library—and into every aspect of university life — research, teaching, and service. This helps ensure long-term sustainability because it means our constituencies and audiences are truly broad, including university administrators, an interdisciplinary faculty, librarians and Press personnel, and a diverse range of students from both the humanities and STEM disciplines. Once something is stitched into the fabric of university life and into the university's mission, sustainability becomes a little easier.

Mick: Faculty, university presses, and research libraries all require institutional support (infrastructure and funding) to do their work, and that work supports the core activities and mission of the university while extending the reach and visibility of the university's accomplishments. This project is no different. University presses, as the publishing component of this venture, are unique to the extent they can cover portions of their expenses through business expertise (selling content). But there is also high interest in new digital publications being made available at little or no cost to consumers (faculty, students, a broader reading community). With that open access expectation, costs need to be recovered at other stages of the process. Variations of this "flipped" cost recovery model are part of what we hope to explore with DiGA. So, for DiGA, support will need to come from the university and outside funding agencies for the initial phase. If the project is given time to develop, the goal would be to see how much of the operating cost could be recovered through alternate funding and monetizing options. 🍄

From University Press to the University's Press: Building a One-Stop Campus Resource for Scholarly Publishing

by **Gary Dunham** (Director, Indiana University Press and Digital Publishing) <dunhamg@indiana.edu>

and **Carolyn Walters** (Executive Director, Indiana University, Office of Scholarly Publishing) <cwalters@indiana.edu>

The Office of Scholarly Publishing (OSP) was established in 2012 by **Indiana University** in order to strengthen its central missions of scholarship and teaching, and to create a model of effective, sustainable 21st-century academic publishing. Units of the OSP include **Indiana University Press (IU Press)**, its premier imprint, and **IUScholarWorks (IUSW)**, the open access publishing program of the **IU Libraries**.

The creation of the OSP is an important step in the evolution of scholarly publishing, as it shifts the engine of content dissemination on campus from the university press to the university itself. It signals the University's strong and ongoing commitment to academic publishing during a time when the sustainability and even relevance of the traditional university press are questioned frequently.

The Office of Scholarly Publishing also reflects the University's recognition of scholarly publishing in all the forms and processes emerging from rapidly changing digital communication technologies. As a centralizing publishing portal, the OSP supports a model of academic publishing that is intrinsically holistic and singular — many campus stakeholders participate in an integrated process of content development, enrichment, dissemination, curation, and knowledge transfer. **Indiana University Press** is playing a key role in bringing to fruition this new model by realigning with the mandate, goals, and areas of strength of the university; building partnerships with vital campus stakeholders to optimize efficiencies, economies, and the scalability of the publishing process; and becoming a key fulcrum in the leveraging of scholarly content in ways that both effectively disseminate and showcase faculty research and other content providers at **Indiana University**. As a showcase of campus research, the OSP helps to reinforce the brand of the University.

In addition to disseminating content, the Office of Scholarly Publishing — in effect, the University's press — provides a complementary crucial service as a one-stop resource for graduate students and faculty concerning the process of academic publishing itself. This includes programs and individual consultations

on copyright, author rights, publishing options, and marketing and social media strategies; and overall becoming a more visible presence in the scholarly life of the campus.

Origins of the OSP

The Office of Scholarly Publishing was formed at the request of **IU Bloomington** Provost and Executive Vice President **Lauren Robel**, who sought to broaden and deepen research dissemination on campus and align that process strategically with the mandate and interests of the University. At its creation, she stated, "The landscape of academic publishing is rapidly changing, and traditional presses, including university presses, continue to be impacted by new technologies and financial challenges. Within this environment, it has become increasingly vital that we continue to build upon the considerable capabilities of our press while aggressively seeking new efficiencies, maximizing our use of new technologies and increasing collaborations among presses, libraries, and other potential partners."

Robel appointed the OSP Scholarly Publishing Advisory Committee to advise the executive director, represent the faculty, and gather information on issues of importance to stakeholders. The committee, chaired by the associate vice-provost for arts and humanities in the Office of the Vice Provost for Research, included faculty from the humanities, the director of **IU Press** (ex-officio), and the library's associate dean for collection development and scholarly communication (ex-officio).

The Scholarly Publishing Advisory Committee began the process of gathering information from stakeholders with an all-campus forum, led by the Provost, which kicked-off a series of three disciplined-focused salons (arts and humanities, sciences, and social and historical sciences) attended by faculty, press staff, library staff, and graduate students. Discussions focused on the present and future state of academic publishing in the context of the campus mission "to create, disseminate, preserve, and apply knowledge."

In its report to the Provost the committee stated that based on salon discussions

continued on page 29

