Publishing Makerspace: An introduction

A “Publishing Makerspace” is a physical and virtual place where scholars can come together with other professionals who operate in different parts of the publication process to collaboratively work through challenges encountered in multi-modal publishing. It is a boundary space and zone in which we redefine publishing to include that which makes information public, and in which we conduct collaborative practices that re-make the publishing process. The Publishing Makerspace is also intended to be an aspirational space in which we design and co-create with publics who actually do the making, both separately and in collaboration with scholars.

Redefining publishing: the problem broadly defined

Digital scholarly communication is still in a formative stage. The ways in which audiences encounter published works, the processes of production, and the modes of collaboration among the people who contribute to published works are still very much in flux.

More and more, scholars are producing multimodal and multimedia projects that include archives, online and digital projects, as well as traditional journal and book publications. But they are operating without the infrastructure and specialized knowledge that will help them to fully realize their goals and draw from the expertise of potential collaborative partners.

A deep critique of the type we have explored in this visioning workshop gives each of us the freedom to wrangle some of the problems that we often have little opportunity to address when establishing, collaborative relationships with publishers and libraries, such as how to collectively pursue best practices in rights management and the use of metadata. Typically, libraries and publishers often work in parallel rather than collaboratively, approaching similar problems with different arrays of solutions. Our intent in this collaboration is to actively engage these problems by taking into account both of these perspectives and the advantages that can be gained by creating synergy between them. Such specificity of critique and problem-solving cannot be achieved without a meta-dialogue on the goals and principles of our experimentation process in which we discuss what scholars and reading communities really want and need as new publishing formats, and consider with which publics we should engage when we consider the potential of scholarship to serve the public good.

In short, there are a host of scholarly communication experts including librarians, publishers, designers, programmers, and technologists, all of whom have expertise and experience that could be of use to scholars. However, the potential to develop such collaborative relationships is either left unexplored or is only partially realized.

We realize that there needs to be a space, both physical and virtual, where all of these groups can come together to share knowledge and to forge new ways of producing and sharing with the public the fruits of their intellectual work.
What is the Publishing Makerspace?

The Publishing Makerspace offers an opportunity for this kind of collaborative work, where scholars can benefit from the guidance of a range of experts and where publishers, librarians, and others can work with scholars to imagine new forms, tools, and methods for creating scholarly work.

Such workshops would be buttressed in virtual space by guidelines and best practices that are developed and shared by Publishing Makerspace groups over time. Following the successful THATCamp model, other Publishing Makerspaces can create their own websites which fork easily from the central Publishing Makerspace workshop. We hope that Publishing Makerspace will be a mode of working that encourages collaborative authoring and attribution and spreads across the US and around the world.

What does it do?

We started with the kinds of traditional manuscript workshops that happen across universities to help scholars refine their book publications. Those workshops are aimed toward a single end product, typically a finished book by a single author. The Publishing Makerspace workshop is envisioned as a different space, a more collaborative endeavor where scholars and others can gather to design a project. Because of that, our intent in designing these workshops is to start each workshop without predetermined results or output. Scholars contribute their initial ideas of what they would like to produce. Through conversation with key collaborative research partners they have the opportunity to shape the scholarly project and decide what tools, platforms, and outputs would best suit their project and allow them to reach their target audiences.

The group assembled, which might include a book editor, a librarian, a designer, a programmer, and mentors and scholars in related fields, would work collaboratively to imagine new solutions. This collaborative model would mean that the work was not uni-directional. While the group would be helping the scholar to realize his/her goals, it would also feed back into the work of these various groups, possibly reshaping the workflows and forms of communication that they create.

What are the outcomes of a Publishing Makerspace workshop?

Out of the workshop, we would expect the scholar to develop a detailed proposal for their project that would outline technical requirements, intended audiences, desired outputs. From that proposal the scholar would be prepared to move forward. It may help them to seek funding, to approach a library or publisher, to form a collaborative team, to gain support from scholarly societies, etc.
Next steps

What are some next steps you can pursue to establish your own Publishing Makerspace? Here are some suggestions and questions to consider as participants in today’s visioning exercise:

1. Consider how you would like to expand on your research content to include additional digital sources. What would be some innovative approaches to display data, findings, text, oral interviews, oral histories, images, and/or media? What formats would enhance your material and work with your manuscript/text in exciting ways?

2. Are there digital and/or digital humanities specialists who can work collaboratively with you to explore options for digital presentation, visualization techniques, data mining, and other digital and visual approaches to display and analysis of text and data? Are there ways in which the digital/media specialist could become a credited team member of your project, helping you to co-create innovative approaches to research presentation?

3. Consider how you would like to reach non-academic audiences, as well as a broader range of audiences. Would you like to have a complementary e-text or e-pub? Would a website enhance your publication project? What are some ways you can think to expand the project?

4. Are there editors and publishers with whom you would like to collaboratively work to consider these options and strategically think about what would be the best options and combinations of options for your particular research project? Are there ways in which the editor could become a credited team member of your project, helping you to co-create innovative approaches to research presentation?

5. Are there library faculty with whom you would like to collaborate in considering new ways to work with your research material and data, including innovative forms of digital analysis, curation, and presentation? Are there ways in which the library faculty member could become a credited team member of your project, helping you to co-create innovative approaches to research presentation?

6. In what ways would it be beneficial to assemble a collaborative team including your editor, library faculty member, and digital/media specialist to conduct your own visioning exercise and consider roles for actualizing the objectives you identify?
For the Publishing Makerspace team, some of our next steps are:

1. Assemble an advisory board to bring in more expert views and advice

2. Seek opportunities to offer pilot workshops in which we test and refine collaborative techniques

3. Conduct a critique of a variety of existing tools, focusing on gaps in interoperability

4. Experiment with tools, stemming from our critique, that can both creatively transform scholarly and publicly sourced content into multi-modal online resources of durable utility and encourage interactive community-building

5. Plan a stage of post-experimentation critique in which we critically examine the ways in which these newly envisioned transformational tools and content have the capacity to both facilitate and constrain our aims.

Feedback

Please provide us with feedback on your Publishing Makerspace experience and your next steps. Go to the “Feedback” section at the top of our blog to post your comments:

https://publishingmakerspace.wordpress.com
Resources & Reference Materials

These are just some of the many projects to explore in considering Publishing Makerspace formats, features, and best practices.

1. **Publishing Makerspace Website**  
   https://publishingmakerspace.wordpress.com

2. **CommentPress**  
   http://futureofthebook.org/commentpress
   a. *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (a CommentPress text)  
      http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates

3. **Digital Humanities Online Scholarship**
   a. Guantanamo Public Memory Project homepage  
      http://gitmomemory.org
   b. Digital History Projects, Princeton Center for Collaborative History  
   c. Spatial History Project, Stanford University  
      http://spatialhistory.stanford.edu
   d. Virginia Center for Digital History  
   e. The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War  
      http://valley.lib.virginia.edu
   f. The Long Civil Rights Movement  
      https://lcrm.lib.unc.edu/voice/works  
      http://sohp.org/research/the-long-civil-rights-movement-initiative
   g. Digital Portobelo  
      http://digitalportobelo.org/multimedia

4. **Scalar**  
   http://scalar.usc.edu
   a. *Endless Question* (Dwayne Dixon Dissertation)  
      http://scalar.usc.edu/students/endlessquestion/index
   b. HÄSTAC conversation "Writing and Defending Your Digital Dissertation"  
      http://tinyurl.com/okwr9fn
   c. "Ecology of Networks: A Duke FHI Digital Humanities Project"  
      http://sites.fhi.duke.edu/ecologyofnetworks

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d. "We Are All Children of Algeria" Digital Project  
http://tinyurl.com/ms2lvht

e. Scalar Project  
http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/mirzoeff/index

5. Multimedia E-books with Archival Dimensions

a. Talkin’ Tar Heel  
http://www.talkintarheel.com/index.php

b. Speculate This!  
http://speculatethis.pressbooks.com

c. Freedom’s Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTXmqn8VasU

d. Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vVscq11q5s

6. Open Access  
http://www.sparc.arl.org/issues/open-access

http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ925497