

# Chapter 104

## Shaping the Roles of Academic Librarians to Meet Emerging Demands of DH Scholarship

**Nancy Aarsvold**  
*St. Olaf College, USA*

**Kasia Gonnerman**  
*St. Olaf College, USA*

**Jason N. Paul**  
*St. Olaf College, USA*

### **ABSTRACT**

*As digital technologies permeate research, teaching, and learning on academic campuses, librarians are increasingly expected to be conversant in the tools and resources used in digital humanities (DH) scholarship. They are also expected to play a role in managing DH projects and promoting them to their campus communities and beyond. This growing niche of support calls not only for expanding librarians' DH toolkits and knowledge, but also for novel and energetic collaborations with other college staff, particularly information technologists. This chapter considers ways to create and sustain partnerships between faculty, instructional technologists, and librarians in support of DH activities at a liberal arts college. By focusing on collaborative approaches to DH training, events, and project planning and management, the chapter provides a blueprint for creating a DH Team that capitalizes on the existing skills of librarians and instructional technologists and for fostering a culture in which librarians can acquire new skills to support DH scholarship.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As digital technologies permeate teaching and learning on academic campuses, research and instruction (R&I) librarians are increasingly expected to be conversant in current digital humanities projects, new developments in scholarship and publishing, and the tools and resources used in digital scholarship. More and more frequently, they are expected to play a role in managing DH projects and promoting

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them to the campus community. This growing niche of support calls not only for expanding librarians' DH toolkits and knowledge, but also for novel and energetic networks of collaboration with other entities on campus, and particularly with information technologists.

This chapter discusses the unique opportunities to support and engage faculty in DH projects that emerge when academic librarians establish partnerships with instructional technologists. This type of IT/library symbiosis, where librarians' subject expertise complements IT professionals' deep knowledge of technological tools and systems, builds a culture in which librarians may productively cultivate their roles as effective supporters of DH scholarship.

The authors focus on the successful collaboration between R&I librarians, IT professionals, faculty, and students to develop and sustain thriving DH projects at St. Olaf College, a four-year, residential liberal arts college serving a population of 3,125 students and 253 faculty. We demonstrate in concrete and pragmatic terms how this model of collaboration can be structured to produce active and sustainable partnerships for a rich variety of DH activities. Growing out of a learning community on digital scholarship organized by librarians and IT staff, our new collaborative model hinges on a centralized but flexible framework that emphasizes cross-training, complementary specializations, and team-based consultations.

The authors provide examples of successful events and programs organized by a team of librarians and IT professionals. These events demonstrate the necessity and effectiveness of collaboration in DH, particularly for campuses embarking on DH initiatives or those lacking standalone DH centers. We also discuss DH projects underway at St. Olaf and highlight the contributions the DH Team provides to these ongoing projects.

Our goal is to demonstrate how to create a functional team of academic librarians and instructional technologists that draws from the strengths of both partners and is sufficiently robust to stimulate and support DH initiatives at a small liberal-arts college. It is our hope that sharing this model will provide a useful frame of reference for other institutions, especially those that newly embark on DH projects or do not offer other forms of centralized DH support on their campuses. Concurrently, sharing our experience with team-based support will help others avoid many pitfalls associated with launching DH programs via this type of "grassroots" support system. We also equip the reader with a plethora of successful collaborative activities they can replicate or adapt locally to facilitate DH scholarship at their own institutions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A survey of current library literature indicates that the majority of relevant texts focus on library-DH relationships occurring at large academic or research institutions (Gustafson-Sundell, 2013; Vinopal, and McCormick 2013). In "On Remembering There Are Librarians in the Library," Gustafson-Sundell (2013) made a valuable observation that the majority of literature dedicated to DH and libraries – including the special issue of *Journal of Library Administration*, "DH in Libraries," which was meant to "put libraries and librarians in the center of the discussion of the DH" (Rockenbach, 2013, p. 1) – focuses on what Gustafson-Sundell aptly calls "Big DH," that is, large-scale DH projects typically supported by designated DH centers at large institutions. Such focus on "Big DH" may evoke a misleading impression that DH is mostly suitable for large academic institutions or research universities and is less likely to thrive at smaller academic institutions, such as undergraduate colleges. The "Big DH" approach in the pertinent literature may also inadvertently discourage librarians at smaller institutions from pursuing

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