Digital Humanities and the Evolving Roles of Librarians: Overview of UQ Library's Digital Librarian in Residence Program

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Towards the end of 2016 we were invited to participate in a pilot project known as the Digital Librarian in Residence (DLiR). This project was designed to embed liaison librarians within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) with Marco Fahmi, the Project Manager and Research Fellow in Digital Humanities for the HASS MEI (Major Equipment and Infrastructure) project. This project gave us the opportunity to engage with an emergent aspect of a liaison librarian's role at The University of Queensland, supporting Digital Scholarship projects. In this article, we would like to share our experiences with the DLiR program and provide some guidance to those librarians interested in entering into this area of support in their own institutions. While the information here may provide some guidance to those new to ideas of Digital Scholarship and Digital Humanities, it should not be considered a template for implementation, as each individual situation is going to dictate how libraries decide to engage with these types of services.
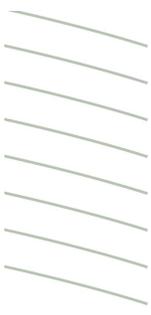
UQ Library Organisational Structure

The current service model for UQ Library is a "triangle" service model (Figure 1).[1] This tiered service model developed as a result of growing expectations of what librarian roles and library services should support in areas of research support and digital scholarship. However, "the demand for traditional library services in the areas of curriculum support and information literacy has not decreased,"[2] which resulted in a reconsideration of how our service structure could meet the growing demands of researchers while maintaining high-quality core business services.
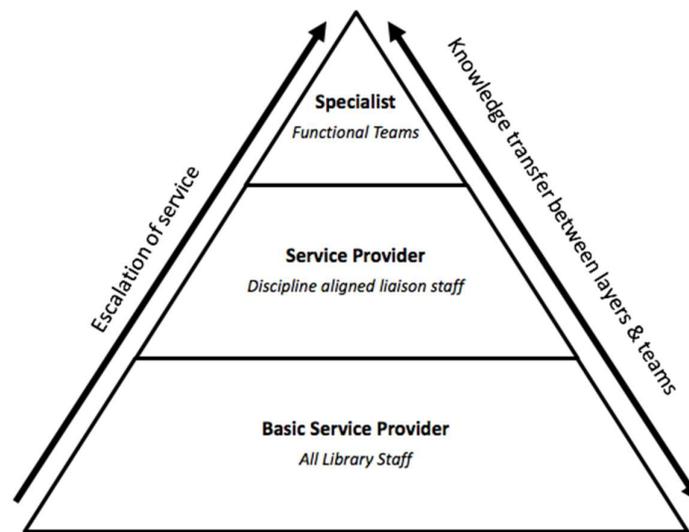

Figure 1. The University of Queensland Library triangle model - Levels of service provision[3]

In 2015, a restructure of UQ Library led to the establishment of functional teams, whose role was to upskill in specialist areas to provide expert level research support, and work collaboratively with liaison librarians in delivering these services. One of the functional teams that developed as part of this process was the Centre for Digital Scholarship, a space designed for teaching, research and presentations related to the use of digital research methods and digital object outputs.[4]

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[1] Sarah Brown et al., "Evolution of Research Support Services at an Academic Library: Specialist Knowledge Linked by Core Infrastructure," *New Review of Academic Librarianship* (2018): 3, https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2018.1473259.

[2] Brown et al., "Evolution of Research Support Services at an Academic Library," 3.

[3] Adapted from Brown et al., "Evolution of Research Support Services at an Academic Library," 3.

[4] "Centre for Digital Scholarship," The University of Queensland Library, 2018, https://web.library.uq.edu.au/locations-hours/centre-digital-scholarship.

What is Digital Humanities?

In a talk about institutionalising Digital Scholarship at Northwestern University, Dan Cohen commented that an attempt to clearly define what Digital Scholarship was would only lead to a "capricious definition" and that there was too much time spent trying to define Digital Scholarship and not enough time engaging in the practice of it.[5] But how do you "do" it when you or your institution are new to these concepts?

When attempting to define what constitutes Digital Humanities, most authors acknowledge that this can be difficult.[6] Some scholars take a very broad interpretation of Digital Humanities, which focus upon the use of digital tools and means in relation to all aspects of a researcher's workflow[7], while other scholars find these generalist definitions are inadequate, as what can be classified as 'digital tools' has almost become ubiquitous with the norm in day-to-day activities of academics, meaning that "digitally supported activity cannot, of itself, be considered digital scholarship."[8] Possibly in reaction to this, some scholars like Angela Dresselhaus try to create a definition focused on the types of activities engaged in and what type of research is being undertaken rather than focusing on the idea of the digital tools being used.[9] For the purposes of our projects, we decided to use a general definition of Digital Humanities as the "use of digital tools and methods to gather, create and disseminate scholarly knowledge."

[5] Dan Cohen, *Institutionalizing digital scholarship*, closing plenary of the CNI-ARL Digital Scholarship Planning Workshop at Brown University Library, 28 November, 2017, 1:00:22.
https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english.
[6] Matthew K. Gold, ed., *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).
[7] Jane A. Burns, "Role of the Information Professional in the Development and Promotion of Digital Humanities Content for Research, Teaching, and Learning in the Modern Academic Library: An Irish Case Study," *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 22, no. 2-3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2016.1191520; Angela Courtney and Diane Dallis, "Models for Partnering with Faculty and Supporting Digital Scholarship," in *Supporting Digital Humanities for Knowledge Acquisition in Modern Libraries*, ed. Kathleen L Sacco et al. (Hershey, PA, USA: IGI Global, 2015).
[8] Lindsey Martin, "The university library and digital scholarship: a review of the literature," in *Developing digital scholarship: Emerging practices in academic libraries*, ed. Alison Mackenzie and Lindsey Martin (London: Facet Publishing, 2016), 6.
[9] Angela Dresselhaus, "Opportunities beyond Electronic Resource Management: An Extension of the Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians to Digital Scholarship and Scholarly Communications," *The Serials Librarian* 68, no. 1-4 (2015): 362, https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2015.1017716.

With no shared definition of what Digital Humanities is then, it is unsurprising that the role of libraries and librarians in relation to these topics are also unclear and undefined within the literature, too.[10] While Digital Humanities and library services are regarded as a "natural fit"[11] there is not "one answer fits all"[12] template for libraries to follow in establishing a support service model. How libraries choose to engage with Digital Humanities is dependent on a number of factors including (1) the needs of the researchers, (2) availability of resources, and (3) library and/or university politics, contexts and structures.[13]

Digital Humanities and Social Sciences (DHSS) at UQ

Marco Fahmi was hired in 2016 as a Project Manager and Research Fellow in Digital Humanities for the HASS MEI (Major Equipment and Infrastructure) project, "Enhancing Digital and Data Analytics Capabilities for Research in the Humanies and Social Sciences". As part of his project, Marco investigated where collaborations were happening between (1) HASS researchers, (2) Computer scientists, and (3) Library staff. Marco also looked across the University to determine where researchers could go to receive (1) digital research training, (2) digital literacy support, and (3) research software advice.

The HASS Faculty at UQ comprises of some 50 disciplines with hundreds of researchers and thousands of students. Marco quickly determined that trying to support Digital Humanities could not be a solo act – it was not sustainable or scalable. Collaboration was the only feasible way to progress any type of program in this area, so he started reviewing and promoting connections between the various organisations within the UQ structure. As part of this, he approached UQ Library and discussions let to the Digital Librarian in Residence (DLiR) program.

[10] Martin, "The university library and digital scholarship," 4.

[11] Burns, "Role of the Information Professional," 239.

[12] Ying Zhang, Shu Liu, and Emilee Mathews, "Convergence of digital humanities and digital libraries," *Library Management* 36, no. 4/5 (2015): 373, https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-09-2014-0116.

[13] Miriam Posner, "No half measures: Overcoming common challenges to doing digital humanities in the library," *Journal of Library Administration* 53, no. 1 (2013); Jennifer Vinopal and Monica McCormick, "Supporting Digital Scholarship in Research Libraries: Scalability and Sustainability," *Journal of Library Administration* 53, no. 1 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2013.756689; Zhang, Liu, and Mathews, "Convergence of digital humanities and digital libraries."

Digital Librarian in Residence Program

The Digital Librarian in Residence (DLiR) program began towards the end of 2016, when our manager invited us to participate in a project where we would be embedded within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for three months at 2.5 days per week to work alongside and learn from Marco. For the Library, the objective of the DLiR project was to provide librarians with the opportunity to "gain practical experience learning about and engage (sic) with researchers in DHSS as well as carrying out a project in the area of digital literacy".[14]

As part of our residencies, we engaged in a number of activities to help us increase our knowledge and skills in dealing with questions related to Digital Humanities research. This included:
- **Shadowing**: Accompanying Marco to meetings and consultations to see what types of projects were happening within Schools, the HASS Faculty and across the University.
- **Engagement with researchers**: After the first few weeks of shadowing, Marco would assign us tasks subsequent to consultations to help assist researchers with their questions. For example, investigating tools that might be useful for their particular research question.
- **Assisting with experiential events**: During the DLiR program two events ran that we were assisted in organising – Research Bazaar Brisbane (ResBaz) 2017 and Telling Digital Stories.
- **Individual projects**: We were to develop and manage a self-directed, individual project based on some aspect of digital research support.

Angela's Project

As the first participant in the DLiR program, Angela decided her individual project would review UQ Library's current capability to invest in digital scholarship activities and produce a report detailing what was found. The report was intended to investigate questions like:
- What skills and knowledge library staff members have to offer assistance to clients interested in DH/DS?
- How is the Library going to offer support and to what extent?
- Where and how will staff development be organised and implemented to ensure this service of support can be provided?
- How will the organisational structure in place be able to support a scalable and sustainable service?

Along with a literature review, an environmental scan of UQ Library established services and

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[14] Marco Fahmi and Gillian Hallam, "Report on the Digital Librarian-in-Residence trial", (unpublished report, The University of Queensland Library, 2017), 1.

services discoverable online provided by Group of Eight and Universitas 21 universities was conducted. The main part of the report focused on a review of any professional development related to digital tools by UQ librarians in the HASS liaison teams and Information and Digital Literacy teams (13 librarians) in the past two years (2015-2016). "Digital tools" was classified as "training undertaken that specifically refers to digital literacy or particular pieces of software or digital tool/skill within the title or summary information", though the decision was made not to include attendance at courses for Microsoft Office or EndNote, as UQ Library already has an established support service embedded in liaison and Information and Digital Literacy teams.

The findings of the survey demonstrated a lack in librarian Digital Humanities/Digital Scholarship development and upskilling. This appears to have been contributed to by a lack of opportunities in both internal and external training. However, it was also apparent from the results that while two librarians attend most of the sessions offered, other librarians' engagement was sporadic. This highlighted that without a planned approach as to how the library would support the training and upskilling of all library staff members, establishing a service for this area of research may become dependent on a few dedicated individuals, a model that is neither sustainable or scalable.[15] From the evidence gathered in this project, recommendations were made related to issues of governance, education and training for librarians, and education and training for researchers.

Felicity's Project

Following up from Angela's project, discussions with the Manager of the Centre for Digital Scholarship and the Manager of the Digital and Information Literacy team identified the need for information resources as part of our digital literacy framework to support digital research activities. In March 2017, the Centre for Digital Scholarship hosted an event that brought together UQ researchers interested in text mining and text analysis to discuss the creation of a text analytics community of practice. At the event, researchers identified the need for information resources that could guide them when learning about how to use text analysis in their research. Librarians within the HASS liaison teams agreed that an information resource would also be a useful tool for librarians to use when speaking with researchers coming to the Library with questions about this type of research.

As a result of these discussions and experiences, Felicity's project aimed to develop a comprehensive text analysis/mining information resource for UQ researchers, or for librarians to assist researchers with questions about using text analysis in their research. She decided to use the Springshare LibGuides content management system, as it was one she was very familiar with, meaning less time learning another tool, and one already used in the UQ Library website structure for information resources.

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[15] Posner, "No half measures," 44.
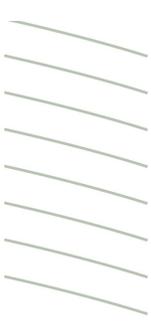
While developing the content for the Text analysis and text mining guide, Felicity went through the exercise of identifying all the questions she wanted the guide to be able to answer. The number of questions ended up being quite extensive (50+), so decisions had to be made regarding the scope of the guide and what was essential. Questions considered ranged from the very basic (What is text mining?) to technical (What is lemmatisation?) to practice led (What software should I use?).

In creating the [Text mining and text analysis guide](#), Felicity consulted extensively with researchers, from Higher Degree by Research students to academics. The guide offers an overview of text mining and analysis (including what types of activities researchers might engage with), sources of text data, preparing text for analysis, text mining/analysis tools and further considerations (copyright, privacy and licences). Consultation with researchers indicated that the inclusion of practical examples was heavily desired, so this was also incorporated into the guide. The guide has been very successful with over 11, 000 views from 1 January 2018 (data gathered from Springshare LibGuide statistics, 31 August 2018) and other university websites linking through to the page.

Advice for Interested Librarians

While a program like the DLiR may not be appropriate or available for other library situations, there are some key take-away learnings for anyone interested in entering into this space. Our advice to librarians include:

- Find your partnerships and communities,
- Look for free online training, tools and guidance,
- Find out if there are any workshops/sessions in your area that you can attend for free, and
- Look both within and outside of your immediate communities – you may be the only librarian in your institute, so you may need to seek external communities for support and guidance.

Some may find the idea of supporting Digital Humanities a challenging prospect due to lack of knowledge and experience, but with emerging fields of research requiring increased digital knowledge and skills, there are benefits for librarians and researchers alike if you choose to do so. And if you are struggling to know where to start, we invite you to contact us and become part of our community of librarians supporting Digital Humanities.

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