Supporting Digital Humanities for Knowledge Acquisition in Modern Libraries

Kathleen L. Sacco, Scott S. Richmond, Sara M. Parme, and Kerrie Fergen Wilkes, eds. *Supporting Digital Humanities for Knowledge Acquisition in Modern Libraries*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2015. 367 pp. $159.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 466684445. Ebook. ISBN: 9781466684454.

Issued as part of the *Advances in Library and Information Sciences* (*ALIS*) series, this hefty volume is a compilation of essays produced by thirty-three writers and four editors. All but three of the chapters are written collaboratively, and two chapters represent an international perspective (India and Hong Kong). A mix of practical and theoretical, definition and redefinition, historical schema and projected application, models and experiences, this book is not a how-to manual. However, it does touch upon every aspect of digital humanities (DH) and its relationship with the library. The content is organized into four sections: "The Nuts and Bolts of DH Scholarship: Creating and Sustaining Digital Humanities Initiatives in the Library"; "Partnerships: Developing and Maintaining Relationships for Successful DH Projects"; "International Scope: Beyond Borders — Digital Humanities from an International Perspective"; and "Examples in Practice: Practical Applications of DH Projects."

Each of the twelve chapters covers a discrete facet of DH and includes an abstract, historical overviews, and extensive bibliographies. Some chapters also contain useful appendixes including models for proposals, lists of definitions, and additional resources such as software and digital tools. While a plethora of topics from an army of writers could appear at first glance to offer a mishmash of information with a highly predictable unevenness of writing style, that is not the case here. There is some overlap in several of the chapters, especially in the history and (ever expanding) definition of the field of DH, but the chapters themselves are focused and well edited. They cover such topics as the role of metadata and catalogers, the roles and future skill sets for academic librarians working with DH, models of collaboration, how to partner with faculty, and how DH challenges and changes learning and the library's role in it. (A complete list of chapter titles and abstracts of their content can be found on the publisher's website at http://www.igi-global.com/book/supporting-digital-humanities-knowledge-acquisition/123845.)

Because many aspects of DH are covered, some familiarity with the subject would be helpful. However, by persevering through the book, even novices should come away with an expansive overview and lots of useful information, though not always systematically presented. (For a current guidebook to DH, I recommend *The Digital Humanities, a Primer for Students and Scholars*, by Eileen Gardiner and Ronald G. Musto [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015].)

The pressing issues facing DH and the library are varied, and while the authors do not focus on these, they do seep into the narrative. Most deal with sustainability, and most are predictable. These issues include finding time and energy for a project amidst all the other library duties and obligations; finding, training, and keeping staff (inside and outside the library) with the skills and subject specialties to collaborate to build and maintain a project; finding steady streams of financial resources to pay for it all; and maintaining (or challenging) the long-range vision of the project. The energy and excitement that comes with a new venture tends to wane with age, especially when the grants end, interest in the subject dwindles, and/or staff move on.

Another sustainability concern, and one less predictable at the moment, is the ability (or lack of it) to ensure that data and processes remain useable over time. As obsolescence sets in and new digital formats and new "containers" for digital data replace old ones, the library will face added expense and the need for new levels of technical expertise to keep digital projects useful. This issue emerges frequently throughout the book, and the authors name it without much illumination except to note that digital data preservation is generally not high on the priority list right now.

There were two digital projects presented that made this book well worth exploring. The first was an overview of St. Olaf College's *Locating Lutheranism*, detailed in Chapter 3. An excellent example of the usefulness of digital creativity, the project began by plotting the location of hundreds of Norwegian American Lutheran congregations and adding founding dates, addresses, synod affiliations, etc. For a subset of churches, the data was then expanded by adding historical documents, photographs, and narrative using student researchers as part of their course work. The project plan then broadened to include tethering resources from other institutions, including state archives, seminaries, and denominational archives. The brilliance of this project rests in its integration. That is, it sets out a fully cohesive plan of concept, design, and execution, from the initial vision of a faculty member, to the collaboration and coordination of a digital humanities team that included librarians, technologists, and faculty, to the population of the database using student research and then moving outside the institution to incorporate other resources. For more information on the project, see http://pages.stolaf.edu/locluth/.

Another project presentation that proved inspirational was on the Gothic Archive, the flagship digital initiative of Marquette University (Chapter 10). Built around an English professor's collection of digital images of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century gothic chapbooks, the project was initially proposed as a straightforward digital collection. When the possibilities for other uses of the collection, such as the study of book art and typeface, or of the influences of chapbooks on popular culture, were broached, the vision arose of expanding the somewhat static digital collection to a fuller digital archive. Making the chapbooks searchable and including more detailed metadata, including the production of a glossary of terms, enabled text-mining. Adding secondary literature about the context enhanced the usage. Future expansion of the project depends, as it inevitably does, upon finances and personnel. For the project website, see http://epublications. marquette.edu/english_gothic/.

Supporting Digital Humanities is available in both print and digital formats. If ordered directly from the publisher, the purchaser will receive free lifetime access to the digital edition when the hardback is purchased (or vice versa) (http:// www.igi-global.com/book/supporting-digital-humanities-knowledge-acquisition/123845). Abstracts for each chapter can also be found on the website by clicking on the individual chapter titles. Individual digital chapters can be purchased for $30 through the publisher's webpage. This volume is large format and relatively expensive. Prices for the hardback edition through online vendors are lower, though the print version may not come with the free digital options that the publisher offers. Check with the vendor if this is a concern.

While the price and subject matter may not make this an essential purchase for theological libraries, I recommend it as a valuable resource for those just wading into the waters of DH. For librarians in small institutions whose portfolio includes a dozen other things besides "digital," the experiences of those who forged ahead to produce something of use to a potential worldwide audience are meant to encourage — and not discourage. The book will inform you, maybe tantalize you, and, just perhaps, inspire you to see visions of a different future for libraries and librarians.

<div align="right">

Sharon A. Taylor
Independent Scholar, Pittsburgh, PA

</div>