Collection Development Policy Recommendations for
Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center's Digital Humanities Collection

INFO 665: Collection Development

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July 21, 2013

Abstract

        The following collection development policy was written in July 2013 for Drexel University's INFO 665 Collection Management course. As the second of a three-part collection development project, this paper includes a community analysis of Van Pelt Library users for a hypothetical Digital Humanities ("DH") collection. The mission and objectives of the DH collection is developed, in addition to specific selection criteria and formats, especially e-resources, media, and Open Access materials. Lastly, the plan provides details for collection evaluation, maintenance, and gift policies.

Introduction: Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center

Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center ("Van Pelt Library") serves as the University of

Pennsylvania's ("Penn") Humanities and Social Sciences Library and is one of fifteen libraries

on its University City, Philadelphia campus. Van Pelt Library's mission, in accordance with the

Penn Libraries system, includes empowering teaching and learning, disseminating knowledge,

and enabling innovation and creativity (Penn Libraries, 2010). Graduate students comprise Van

Pelt Library's largest user group, followed closely by undergraduates and faculty members, in

addition to Penn's entire staff community (Penn Libraries, 2007).

A Digital Humanities ("DH") collection at Van Pelt Library will provide print and digital

resources that will enable users to explore the intersection of "humanities ideas and digital

methods" (Perrault, 2013b, p. 18). The collection will largely support graduate students, faculty,

and undergraduates in Arts & Sciences departments working in DH. As the largest supporter of

the Penn Humanities Forum (Penn, 2012), English Department graduate students and faculty

members will constitute the primary user community for the DH collection; English DH interests

range from Modernist poetics to text mining and topic modeling (Penn, 2010).

The recommended mission of Van Pelt Library's DH collection is to support innovation,

creativity, and collaboration in applying digital methods to humanities topics. Goals for the

collection include fostering collaboration among users and promoting DH scholarship at the

larger community level. Objectives involve strengthening and encouraging the practice of digital

scholarship in humanities fields and supporting interdisciplinary research at Penn. These

recommendations are in accordance both with recognized definitions of "digital humanities"

(Perrault, 2013b; Little, 2011), and Penn Libraries' and Penn's missions and goals to encourage

innovation and disseminate knowledge (Penn Libraries, 2010; Penn, 2002).

Digital Humanities Collection: Selection Criteria

Developing selection criteria for any collection ensures that content occupies the main focus of the selector's attention. While resource format proves significant in some collections, ultimately, it is content that users will receive from a library's materials (Evans & Saponaro, 2012). Having specific factors in mind when selecting materials reinforces the purpose of the new collection, keeps librarians aware of resources' costs, and enables them to focus on quality materials that fit within the collection budget (Evans & Saponaro, 2012). Lastly, it is important to take patrons' points of view into consideration when selecting materials (Evans & Saponaro, 2012; Rowlinson, 1981). However, specific selection criteria ultimately ensure that a range of materials and viewpoints are expressed in library resources (Bob, 1982).

The following selection criteria have been developed for Van Pelt Library's Digital Humanities Collection and have been evaluated as significant for this collection as follows:[1]

- Authority (qualifications and abilities of creators): Because DH is still a developing field (Little, 2011), it is important that any works collected come from reputable authors. Particular attention will be paid to works by those affiliated with academic institutions and/or supported by humanities or technology organizations (Perrault, 2013b).

- Scope (purpose for the work; breadth and depth of coverage): In DH, it is important to select works that are relatable to both academic and general audiences (Perrault, 2013b), and that thoroughly pursue DH's mission to examine humanities materials anew using digital technologies (Little, 2011).

- Accuracy (currency, correctness, and point of view): DH works selected should espouse principles of open source/resource and collaborative knowledge that the field values and

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[1] Selection criteria adapted from Collins (2013b) and ACRL (2013).

should represent field standards, such as construction of text collections and metadata

schemes (UCLA, 2009; Perrault, 2013b).

- Physical quality (clarity of images, layout, font, etc.): Since DH is a very visual field, it

  is important that materials selected provide layouts that can be scanned and manipulated

  easily and that meet the library's digital access and preservation policies (Little, 2011).

- Comparison with other works (on the same topic): DH resources collected should be

  recognized widely in the field and should pertain to Van Pelt Library's DH community,

  namely the English Department. Selection will focus on a wide variety of topics

  including text mining, cultural analytics, and visual/spatial media (Perrault, 2013b).

Formats to Collect for Digital Humanities

Although Digital Humanities entails using digital tools and technology to interpret print

and electronic texts, humanities scholars are still heavily dependent on printed monographs for

both primary and secondary literature (Perrault, 2013b). Therefore, both print and digital

monographs (e-books) will be collected for DH scholars to engage in traditional print research

and digital text searching. Serial publications, such as journals and magazines, will also be

collected mainly in digital format, since many DH serials are Open Access materials and are

included in many databases to which Van Pelt Library already subscribes.

Van Pelt Library will also collect a variety of visual and audio formats, as DH

scholarship is often multimodal. Visual materials/collections will include DVDs (Blu-ray, when

applicable), *ARTstor* (to which Van Pelt subscribes), and a range of audio books to which Van

Pelt does not currently have access. The Weigle Information Commons in Van Pelt Library has

purchased 30 iPad2 tablets to loan to faculty (Vedantham & Shanley, 2012); if demand increases

with DH studies, the library will purchase additional devices. Van Pelt Library possesses a large

number of high-quality scanners, and image capture, production, and storage technologies (Penn Libraries, 2013a). Similarly, a variety of DH software is already available at Van Pelt Library, such as Final Cut Pro, Google Earth Pro, ArcGIS, and Adobe Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator; additional software may be acquired as needed (Penn Libraries, n.d., "WIC").

Because many formats to be acquired are digital, one collection limitation includes both Van Pelt Library's and users' server spaces to store digital projects. Another restriction may involve compatibility between Mac and PC computers, as users attempt to convert files. Information on available DH formats to collect was obtained from the *DigitalPenn* site and Van Pelt Library's LibGuide on "Digital Humanities" (Penn Libraries, 2013a; Penn Libraries, 2013b). Other information was retrieved from Perrault's section on "Digital Humanities" (2013b, pp. 17-19) and Evans & Saponaro's chapter on "E-Resources and Technology Issues" (2012, pp. 211-245). If more detailed information about format is needed, it would be prudent to consult serials particularly aimed at DH scholarship, such as *Digital Humanities Quarterly* and *Journal of Digital Humanities*, organizations' websites, such as *Digital Humanities Now* and HASTAC, and other journals that detail digital projects, such as *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship* and *Computers in Libraries* (Evans & Saponaro, 2012, p. 234).

Selection Aids for Building the Digital Humanities Collection

The resources described below provide an overview of selection aids and sources available for building the DH collection at Van Pelt Library:

Ulrich's International Periodical Directory provides many useful titles to consider in collecting scholarly journals in the Digital Humanities. One such well-known Open Access journal is *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (*DHQ*), published by The Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations. *DHQ* focuses on the field of "Literary and Linguistic Computing"

(*DHQ*, 2013), which would provide a great resource for the English field. Other titles include academic journals, such as *Chicago Colloquium on Digital Humanities and Computer Science Journal* and those meant for a range of audiences, such as *D-Lib Magazine*.

As format is a large consideration in DH materials, a publisher that offers a wide variety of formats would be a valuable resource in the selection process. Open Book Publishers, based in the UK, is an academic publisher that focuses on publishing peer-reviewed, scholarly materials in the humanities and social sciences in hardback, paperback, PDF, and e-book; certain free online editions can be accessed anywhere or embedded in websites (Open Book Publishers, 2013). Open Book Publishers has a Digital Humanities Series that focuses on a range of DH topics, from basic guides to literature titles, ideal for the collection at Van Pelt Library.

A review journal such as *Choice Reviews Online* (http://www.cro2.org/) is highly valued in academic libraries for selecting subject-specific materials (Collins, 2013b; Evans & Saponaro, 2012). Academic experts review DH titles in *Choice*; reviews are nonbiased and recommend the intended audience for materials, a valuable feature for Van Pelt Library's DH collection.

Searching a bibliographic database such as *WorldCat* (http://www.worldcat.org/) offers insight into not only valuable print materials for the DH collection, but also a variety of electronic formats, including musical scores, maps, audio and visual clips. *WorldCat* also provides access to detailed item records and locations that currently hold items, which is useful information for librarians in finding, reviewing, and acquiring resources.

Resources for College Libraries (RCL) offers helpful assessments and tools for collecting core titles for specific subject areas. Subject expertise is taken into consideration when selecting titles, as is the "Bowker Book Analysis System," which provides extensive criteria for determining gaps in a collection (RCL, 2011). This type of tool would be helpful in developing

the DH collection both to avoid collecting any overlapping materials and to ensure that selection includes materials for a wide audience.

The *MLA International Bibliography* (MLAIB) is an ultimate resource for literature and language scholars and provides an extensive tool from which to select scholarly books and journals for a DH collection (Perrault, 2013a). Searching the term "digital humanities" in MLAIB pulls more than 500 results from journals, books, dissertation abstracts, and websites, which provides a vast range of materials for Van Pelt Library's user community. Dissertations will also prove useful for the DH collection, as graduate students review these sources in preparation for creating their own work.

As a book vendor, Alibris (http://www.alibris.com/) offers many useful options for selecting DH materials, such as hard-to-find sources and tools to manage "wish" and "want" lists. Alibris also includes music and movies in addition to books and contains both general and specific DH titles that would appeal to undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty alike. Titles of interest can also be found on Alibris using the "more books like this" feature.

Penn is home to many DH experts, particularly those who work with the Digital Humanities Forum; such colleagues can be called upon to acquire more information about selecting for the DH collection. For example, Mitch Fraas, the interim director of the DH Forum, contributes to blogs such as "Unique at Penn" and "Apps on Tap," which showcase rare materials at Penn and suggest digital tools for scholarly work with these resources (Penn Libraries, n.d., "Fraas"). Organizations' websites and Twitter feeds also provide useful resources for selecting DH materials. For example, *Digital Humanities Now* (*DHNow*) showcases current scholarship from academic and pubic humanists alike; the @dhnow Twitter feed is valuable in keeping track of new tools, such as the recently formed "DHDebates Platform" (DHNow, 2013).

While examining all of these selection aids has been valuable for obtaining specific DH resources for Van Pelt Library's collection, particularly helpful sources included MLAIB, RCL, and Alibris. MLAIB proved useful for collecting a wide variety of books, serials, reviews, and dissertation abstracts that cover a range of DH topics, which would be helpful for both specific users (English scholars) and more general public humanities scholars. RCL and Alibris offer powerful tools from a librarian's perspective, in terms of recognizing collections gaps and selecting for a wide audience.

Selection Responsibility for the Digital Humanities Collection

Because Digital Humanities values scholarly collaboration, (Perrault, 2013b), selection responsibility for Van Pelt Library's DH collection will espouse a collaborative approach (Collins, 2013a). Selection will involve faculty and graduate students in Penn's English and History Departments, those in the DH Forum, Van Pelt Library subject librarians, and those in the PhillyDH group. While having many different voices may prove challenging when selection decisions must be made, it is significant to include such a large group to represent different vantage points. For example, faculty and graduate students will bring knowledge of particular projects and methods to the table, while subject librarians will know how the works chosen will best fit into and supplement the current collections. Such an approach ensures that long-established selection principles, such as impartiality, will be achieved in creating the DH collection (Evans & Saponaro, 2012).

Miscellaneous Policies for Collection Evaluation and Maintenance

Although Digital Humanities resources have been largely produced in the past ten to fifteen years (Perrault, 2013b), it would be prudent for Van Pelt Library to create and maintain certain policies and principles to allow the DH collection to evolve into the future. Similarly,

since the DH field is still developing, it is important to write an evaluation policy that includes a

variety of users (Evans & Saponaro, 2012), such as undergraduates, graduate students, faculty,

librarians, and scholars with whom resources will be shared. Evaluating the collection annually,

for example, will ensure that out-of-date materials are updated, that digital materials retain

maximum functionality, and that further collection gaps are recognized as DH scholarship

evolves. It would be wise to develop a method (i.e. an online form linked to *Franklin*, Van Pelt

Library's OPAC) for users to provide feedback to the selectors, whether comments or

complaints.

A gift policy for Van Pelt Library's DH collection will ensure that the collection has

room to grow and expand into the future. Having a gift policy that is accessible to patrons on the

Van Pelt Library website will provide parameters for the types of materials the library will

accept as gifts and policies for dealing with unwanted items that may fit better in another

collection area (Evans & Saponaro, 2012). Van Pelt Library will also espouse a discarding and

deselecting policy, as DH materials that support a particular topic or project may be sent to

storage when the project is finished. With such evaluation methods and collection policies in

place, Van Pelt Library will ensure that the DH collection remains relevant and sustainable for

current and future scholars.

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