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Conversation as a Model to Build the Relationship among Libraries, Digital Humanities, and Campus Leadership

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Abstract:

By committing to two conversation-based concepts, David Lankes' Mission for New Librarians and the "Scholarship as Conversation" Information Literacy Frame, Bethel University's Library has established a leadership role in advocating and implementing digital humanities at a mid-sized liberal arts institution. Aligning the services and strategy of the Bethel University Digital Library (BUDL), Bethel's institutional repository, with the lessons learned and relationships built through these conversations with administration, faculty, and staff has resulted in successful outcomes for the communication and implementation of innovative digital library and digital humanities initiatives.

Keywords:

Digital humanities, digital libraries, institutional repositories, faculty engagement, innovation, conversation theory

Introduction

An English professor known for his skeptical approach towards innovation entered my office with this challenge, "You've got me into this digital humanities thing so now it is time to

deliver”. Up to this point, the author was able to comfortably engage with digital humanities through a familiar process of researching the literature, following the online conversation channels, and creating digital collections for Bethel’s teaching, research, and history using known tools like CONTENTdm. This meeting was different. The professor had heard the author and a few others present about digital humanities topics and had discussed some things with the author informally; however, he was now taking the author up on the offer to help him engage. The author and the professor met to discuss how to incorporate digital humanities tools and concepts into the literature class and developed an interactive timeline group assignment. The author had never done this before but was able to draw upon basic knowledge of HTML, spreadsheets, and a model assignment developed by a digital humanities practitioner, Brian Croxall, to create something that didn’t require the professor knowing how to implement HTML and met the learning objectives he had for his students.

This paper will discuss how the conditions for this conversation were created at Bethel and how the conversation around the innovations of digital library services and digital humanities have developed into successful outcomes and relationships. On many college campuses, digital libraries and digital humanities are considered *innovations* defined by Rogers as “an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”(2003, 36). A key component for successful diffusion, or spread of those ideas and practices involve conversations within different *communication channels*, or “means by which messages get from one individual to another” (36). Rogers explains further that different channels have different effects; “mass media channels are more effective in creating knowledge of innovations, whereas interpersonal channels are more effective in forming and changing attitudes towards a new idea” (36). By committing to two conversation-based concepts, David Lankes’ Mission for New Librarians,

which is based on Conversation Theory and is helpful to engage on the local level, and the “Scholarship as Conversation” Information Literacy Framework, which engages the larger conversations outside of one institution, Bethel University’s library has engaged both communication channels to establish a leadership role in advocating for and implementing digital humanities at a mid-sized liberal arts institution. Aligning the services and strategy of the Bethel University Digital Library (BUDL), Bethel’s institutional repository, to support digital humanities has produced the following outcomes and relationships: the creation of new collaborative collections; the use of existing collections in teaching and research; invitations to teach digital humanities tools; library involvement in campus planning discussions involving the development of a digital humanities major; the hiring of a new faculty member with digital humanities as a focus; and the design of a new makerspace.

Why Conversation? Two Conversation-based Concepts

Focusing on conversations as a new paradigm for academic librarians and libraries was proposed by Bechtel (1986):

if [libraries] are true to their original and intrinsic being, seek primarily to collect people and ideas rather than books and to facilitate conversation among people rather than merely organize, store, and deliver information...The primary task, then, of the academic library is to introduce students to the world of scholarly dialogue that spans both space and time and to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to tap into conversations on an infinite variety of topics and to participate in the critical inquiry and debate on those issues (221).

The first conversation-based concept follows this proposal. In 2011, Professor of Library and

Information Science and thought leader, R. David Lankes built upon this idea by applying a theory of learning, called Conversation Theory, to the general practice of librarianship through his Mission for Librarians in the *Atlas of New Librarianship*: “The Mission of Librarians is to Improve Society by Facilitating Knowledge Creation in their Communities” (Lankes 2011, 13).

The phrase, “Facilitating Knowledge Creation” is based on the specific premise of Conversation Theory which is that knowledge is created through conversation (Lankes 2011, 2). This concept provides a powerful focal point for library efforts at Bethel and is also a source of encouragement and engagement with many different campus partners.

Explaining Conversation Theory

While the concept of learning through conversation in Western civilization goes back at least as far as the Greek philosophers, the specific understanding of a conversation used here is based on Conversation Theory developed in the context of applied education and epistemology (Pask 1976). A conversation in this context is specifically “an act of communication and agreement between a set of agents [or *conversants*]...who can be individuals, organizations, societies, and even different aspects of oneself (i.e. metacognition)” (Lankes, Silverstein, Nicholson, and Marshall 2007, para. 2). As these *agreements*, or learned concepts, emerge from conversation, some of them are documented as artifacts in the form of books, articles, movies, images, websites, and other containers of information and serve as a vehicle of accessing memory. The whole network of these interrelated, documented agreements and their relationships is called an *entailment mesh* and is a model of how knowledge is created (Lankes 2011, 31-49). The *Atlas for*

Another important aspect of Conversation Theory is the concept of two levels of language as it is understood in the process of learning. L_0 represents the level of language needed to simply navigate a conversation particularly when one conversant is not familiar with a particular domain of knowledge. L_1 represents a level of language that goes beyond basic navigation and furthers the conversation. This level is characterized by conversants who share a deeper level of knowledge of the domain. Lankes uses the example of a reference interview where the librarian doesn't know the domain of the patron and must ask the patron to go from L_1 to L_0 to form an understanding, or the opposite situation in which a librarian seeks to move a patron from L_0 in using the library catalog to a more sophisticated search strategy using L_1 (Lankes 2011, 33-35). This is an extremely important concept because so much of the conversation regarding digital humanities terms and concepts on campus involves the reciprocal process of learning the L_1 of your stakeholders in order to move them from L_0 to L_1 to develop the entailment mesh of agreements across many disciplines and cultural groups.

Scholarship as Conversation

A similar impact on language is discussed with *threshold concepts* - the core concept in the second conversation-based concept, the "Scholarship as Conversation" Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education. A threshold concept according to Meyer and Land is "considered akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress" (2003, 1). With this kind of transformation, Meyer and Land further explain the importance of language in 2005, "it is hard

to imagine any shift in perspective that is not simultaneously accompanied by ... an extension of the student's use of language. Through this elaboration of discourse new thinking is brought into being, expressed, reflected upon and communicated" (374).

Approaching conversation from this perspective is helpful because, while some information literacy needs can be addressed in the context of instructional design, threshold concepts outside of this context are needed when planning and implementing digital humanities projects that will change based on their focus on innovation (*emphasis added by author*):

"Librarians could also work with disciplinary faculty to identify threshold concepts in the disciplines, then seek opportunities to work together to teach those disciplinary threshold concepts, especially when they merge with information literacy, research, and critical thinking concepts. Essentially, ***librarians can use the Framework as inspiration to focus on concepts, rather than exclusively on tools and techniques***, and those concepts can be added or subtracted as student and faculty needs change" (Oakleaf 2014, 511).

The "Scholarship as Conversation" frame is particularly appropriate for a context outside of instructional design and is defined as "Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals [who] engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations." Facilitating conversations by forming agreements and moving from L_0 to L_1 in the context of scholarship and practice of digital humanities requires librarians to develop all of the dispositions in this frame including:

- recognize they are often entering into an ongoing scholarly conversation and not a finished conversation;

- seek out conversations taking place in their research area;
- see themselves as contributors to scholarship rather than only consumers of it;
- recognize that scholarly conversations take place in various venues;
- suspend judgment on the value of a particular piece of scholarship until the larger context for the scholarly conversation is better understood;
- understand the responsibility that comes with entering the conversation through participatory channels;
- value user-generated content and evaluate contributions made by others;
- recognize that systems privilege authorities and that not having a fluency in the language and process of a discipline disempowers their ability to participate and engage.

(Association of College and Research Libraries Board 2016)

Conversations happen throughout the social environment of higher education, research, and academia, and there is a great need for facilitating learning conversations based on these dispositions because of the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. Tensions between disciplines on the appropriate methodologies, questions to ask, and evaluation procedures emerge when faculty's scholarship and teaching is exposed to the evaluation of peers from other disciplines (Lamont 2009, 9-11). Within a specific discipline there are often different emphases on theory or application including separate societies and journals surrounding those commitments. Within library and information science there are those who gravitate towards a more abstract and theoretical "Information Science" and those who gravitate towards a more applied "Library Science" (Lankes 2011, 171-172). At the organizational level, there are six different cultures within an institution of higher education that support and conflict with one another and are helpful to know when engaging campus-wide discussions: collegial, managerial, developmental,

advocacy, tangible, and virtual. These six cultures are extremely useful to understand when navigating the wider campus conversation and are briefly explained below:

Collegial: Describes the faculty within an institution who have deep knowledge of a field and deeply value the autonomous pursuit of it.

Managerial: A hierarchical system determined to produce results and influenced by Catholic or Community College structures as well as a strategy needed as institutions grow larger.

Developmental: Grew out of the need to help faculty members develop their teaching skills and collaborate with different disciplines.

Advocacy: Born out of the desire for equal treatment for all and in part as a reaction to efforts of the managerial culture to control the institution.

Tangible: Institution that values roots in history and tradition and a learning experience grounded in face-to-face contact.

Virtual: A globally concerned and connected group enabled by technology to communicate and connect.

(Bergquist and Pawlak 2008).

Recognizing where one is situated within these organizational cultures is helpful when evaluating who one collaborates with based on these affinities. Because interdisciplinary and intercultural work is already challenging, librarians and digital humanists can use these understandings as conversational tool to build connections.

Libraries and Digital Humanities in Conversation - Some Agreements

Understanding the common values and strengths of libraries and digital humanities and how

they can engage with scholarly innovation on campus is crucial. Vandegrift and Varner's perspective is a useful one with which to begin the conversation,

“the roles and responsibilities of research librarians are shifting to encompass the broadening scope of scholarship, especially involving digital archival and special collections, digital tools and progressive service models. The research community, which has moved toward technology over the past 10-15 years, is coalescing around the ideas of open access to scholarship and the benefits to the public, the library and the scholar. Pairing with the digital push in the humanities, the library can reinvent its place in the cycle and production of scholarship” (2013, 69).

A wider source of conversation and agreements between the library and digital humanities community is available on the dh+lib website, and it is a good place to start as well. To delve more deeply into the scholarship of digital humanities can be overwhelming on volume alone. The two-volume series *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (Gold 2012a; Gold and Klein 2016) are good introductions to the ongoing threads of scholarly conversation. Depending on one's discipline and institutional context, digital humanities can be seen as the latest example of the neoliberal threat to liberal arts and higher education (Allington, Brouillette, and Golumbia 2016), a visionary and invigorating force (Gold 2012b, ix; Svensson 2016), a useful model to teach humanities and employable skills in the liberal arts (Pannapacker 2013), or the latest fad that will either fade away or eventually become part of the new practice of the discipline (Fish 2011). It is important to find out what threads of conversation exist in one's institution and to prepare on multiple levels to be successful. As Svensson explains, “People in the field [digital humanities] need to be capable of talking about their work, the field, and its interrelations to other knowledge areas. It is useful to have a good sense of the digital humanities as a whole,

including both scholarly and technological layers, an awareness of the intersectional quality of the field, and a familiarity with a couple of key projects and results” (Svensson 2016, Ch 1. Para. 40).

Lisa Spiro, Executive Director of Digital Scholarship Services at Rice University, lists five goals for digital humanities that stretch traditional scholarship and bring them closer to library values:

1. Access
2. Enable manipulation of data
3. Transform scholarly communication
4. Enhance teaching and learning
5. Public Impact (Vandegrift and Varner 2013, 69)

Enduring core values of libraries according to Gorman are:

1. Stewardship
2. Service
3. Intellectual Freedom
4. Rationalism
5. Literacy and Learning
6. Equity of Access to Recorded Knowledge and Information
7. Privacy
8. Democracy
9. The Greater Good (2015, 35-37).

Four of the five goals for digital humanities are directly related to core values for libraries. The

goals of “access” and “transform scholarly communication” relate directly with the core value of “equity of access to recorded knowledge and information”, the goal to “enhance teaching and learning” is directly related to the core value of “literacy and learning”, and the goal of “public impact” is directly related to “privacy”, “democracy”, and “the greater good” (2015). The remaining goal, “enabling manipulation of data” is less directly related to library core values but is still a focus for some librarians who are developing, and in some cases leading, the efforts to learn the skills of data literacy and learning at their institutions. For instance, Mattern writes how librarians provide this necessary perspective on open data in the civic realm with a specific example of how librarians can inform the use and archiving of public data from government that quickly becomes unreadable or unusable because of a lack of infrastructure and processes (2016).

In light of the similarities between the above goals and core values, the author proposes two additional goals that libraries and digital humanities share in an academic setting: 1. stewardship of the information ecology on campus; and 2. support for interdisciplinary/liminal scholarship. Librarians and archivists shape and curate the information ecology of their communities. An *information ecology* is “a system of people, practices, values, and technologies in a particular local environment. In information ecologies, the spotlight is not on technology, but on human activities that are served by technology” (Nardi and O’day 1999, 49). The information ecology of libraries is humanistic, diverse, complex, and embedded in a community which counters the uncritical use of technology as a means of efficiency and control only. Libraries and digital humanities help to shape the information ecology in their institutions with a set of shared values that include providing wide access to cultural information, enhancing teaching and learning, making a public impact. They also share the need for the invigorating

(not salvific) effect of digital humanities to address the undervaluing of both libraries and humanities as a whole from administration or the wider community (Vandegrift and Varner 2013, 69-70).

Another quality that brings together librarians and digital humanities scholars/practitioners is their liminality, or quality of being in-between. Oakleaf (2014) explains that the foundational threshold concepts for the Frameworks of Information Literacy are involved in moving through the “liminal space” of the learning process and learning to think more like someone in a particular discipline. Liminal Space and Threshold Concepts are very useful in libraries and digital humanities because they are interdisciplinary in physical and intellectual terms. “One of the advantages of seeing the digital humanities as a liminal space or contact zone is that it can accommodate many different interests and perspectives...The digital humanities is never about only one field or tradition changing or being challenged; rather, it is about allowing curiosity, exchange, and sharpness to drive intellectual and material development.” (Svensson 2016, Chap 1 para. 12) Using the concept of thresholds and liminality is a way to navigate common agreements that span many disciplines (Rhem 2013, para. 2-3). Liminality/Thresholds is also a great way to engage with faculty because it appeals to them by delving into their own discipline and is helpful for them to begin building the connection points rather than starting with broader concepts such as information literacy or pedagogy or librarianship (Rhem 2013, para. 6). As one seeks to understand thresholds within one’s partners in different disciplines, one is better able to converse and make other connections when working with others.

Preparing for the Conversation - Understanding the Entailment

Mesh

Being effective in conversations about digital humanities in a local context requires a firm foundation in the larger conversations within the digital humanities community in the frame of Scholarship as Conversation and a thorough knowledge of one's own community with a relationship built on trust in the interpersonal communication channel. Lankes quotes Jessamyn West in the *Atlas of New Librarianship* on the importance of building relationship for librarians: "One of the things I learned in library school is that when people have an information need, they'll always ask people they know before they ask a librarian. The trick is making sure that librarians are some of the people they know" (West 2006, 88).

Some of that building of trust involves having the skills necessary to engage in digital library and digital humanities conversations and projects. As manager of the institutional repository, the author had been evaluating the skill sets and qualifications that were necessary to best fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the position. This process surfaced a significant overlap involving digital libraries and digital humanities. The skills required in both of these domains include project management; basic computer science competencies in hardware, software, and programming (particularly HTML and CSS); metadata; and the ability to be flexible and work with different kinds of people.

Learning what is important to your faculty

As librarians navigate the digital humanities terrain within their institutions and seek to lead these efforts, it is important to be well-informed about the macro-level of the digital humanities conversation among multiple organizations and disciplines and the micro-level of an institution's local context and practitioners in order to be effective. It is likely that most faculty will be aware of things happening within the bounds of their disciplines but not within the larger digital humanities community, particularly on the undergraduate level.

Attending campus-wide discussions on ways to encourage strategic innovation in a time of institutional stress were crucial to develop later ideas and conversations with other faculty. There were events such as innovation summits related to a College of the Future Task Force, professional learning communities, book discussions related to the state of the humanities, and faculty email list discussions in which participants could learn the key issues but also provided an opportunity to involve the library and bring its expertise to the attention of faculty colleagues. The author invited them to attend some regional gatherings of the digital humanities community, DH Sparkfest, organized and sponsored by the University of Minnesota, Macalester College, and Cooperating Libraries in Consortium and later DASHCamp, organized by the University of Minnesota, to expose them to the digital humanities conversation. They were encouraged and inspired and this built the groundwork for later conversations. It is also helpful to consider that innovation can be applied to different aspects of scholarly practice including research questions, argument paths, methodology, and infrastructure, which provides an

opening for librarians and digital humanities practitioners to contribute and lead (Svensson 2016, ch. 1, para. 63)

Engaging the Conversation - Building Your Community's

Entailment Mesh

Knowing the disciplinary conversation as well as the institutional landscape will aid one's advocacy and allow one to communicate effectively to different audiences including administrators, faculty, and library colleagues. Administrators want to know the realities of interdisciplinary collaboration and how the library can help facilitate the sharing of resources, while faculty want to know how librarians and libraries can help them with their teaching and research.

Seeking conversations with faculty helped develop the library's understanding of the landscape. It also led to invitations to collaborative teaching with history and English faculty and to create a new collection for the institutional repository based on an archive of a signature general education class. Conversations with a computer science colleague led to the use of metadata sets from the digital collections as projects for a data mining class. Further conversations led to a collaboration on a proposal for a digital humanities major and invitation to be on the search committee for a new faculty position in history and digital humanities. Discussing the concept of digital humanities and makerspaces with a chemistry professor led to the development of a relationship and an opportunity to purchase a 3D printer at a discounted group rate when the chemistry department was seeking to purchase one.

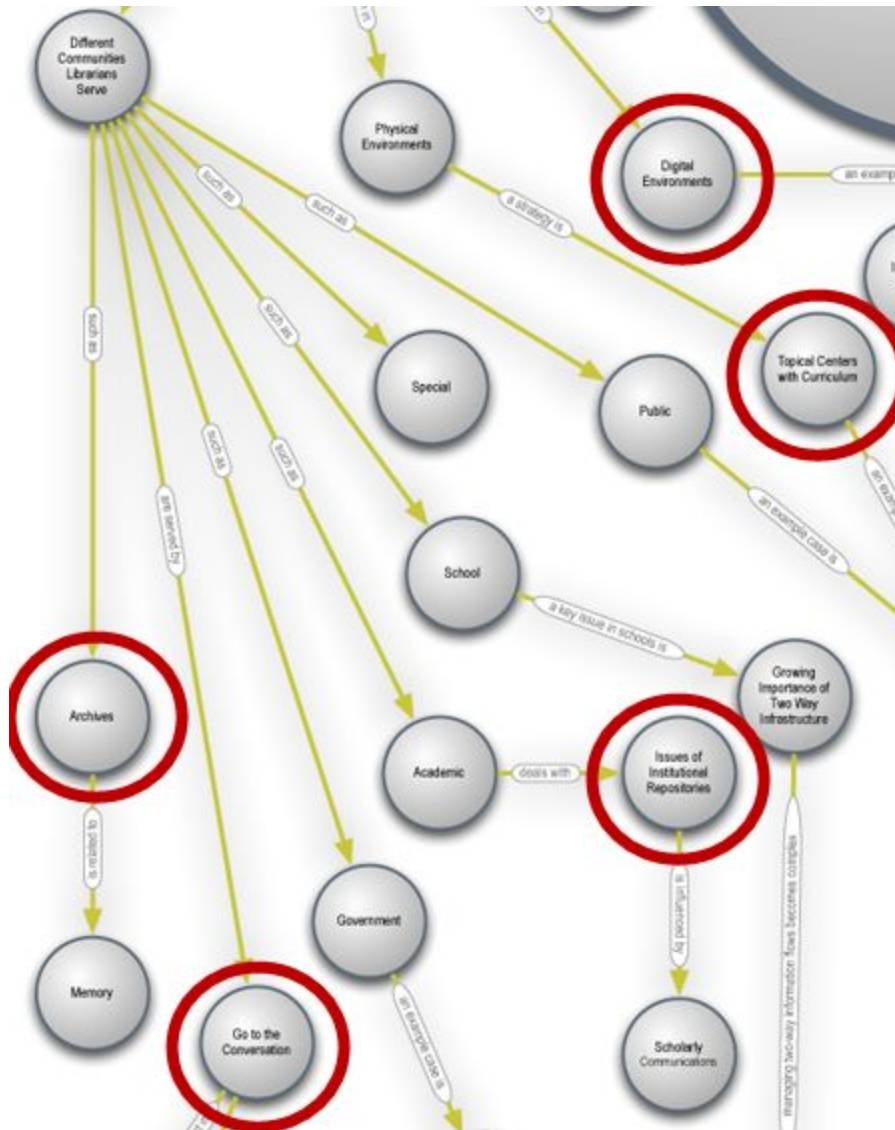
In order to advocate and support digital humanities across the institution, it is helpful to look for colleagues who are already doing work that could be considered digital humanities. Seek out forums for conversation such as book discussions, innovation summits, and summer workshops. The librarian was an important common factor when discussing the issues of digital humanities at Bethel with computer science, education, history, English, and communication faculty.

Seeking conversations with administrators, such as the arts and humanities dean and the faculty development coordinator, helped to gain access to conversations with departments seeking new ways to collaborate with technology and joining a group discussing the design of a Makerspace/Digital Scholarship Center. This also provided an opportunity to inform and influence the administrator's understanding and perceptions about digital humanities and its scope, particularly involving the library. Inviting the above parties and other interested groups to digital humanities gatherings (similar to THATCamps) in the local community helped to inform and inspire them. All of these efforts took active engagement and would not have happened if the author had waited for them to ask. The librarian service ethic does not require subservience as Lankes explains, "Service is not invisibility...to be of service in building knowledge means to be part of a conversation. To be part of a conversation means to have a voice and be active in shaping that conversation. To be active is not to be invisible" (2011, 33). Montelongo, Gamble, Brar, and Hernandez point out that engaging in faculty research and conversations will help them see what you do in a new light when they understand you are a part of "their" process (2010).

Conversation Outcomes / Agreements

The final portion of this paper will review the aspects of engagement identified in the entailment mesh of the Atlas of New Librarianship's Community thread. The domains of the digital library that were impacted by the commitment to conversation-based concepts to engage the digital humanities were archives, institutional repositories, go to the conversation, embedded librarians, and physically-located topical centers (Digital Scholarship) as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

[Figure 2 - Caption: Entailment Mesh for Areas of Community Engagement - Image excerpted and modified from David Lankes thread on [Communities](#) in the Atlas of New Librarianship. Permission granted through a Creative Commons License Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0]



Archives and Institutional Repositories: Creation of new collaborative collections

One key practice of the digital humanities that is the closest to the traditional practice in digital libraries is the creation of digital archives. Each collection in the digital library is an artifact of a conversation with another stakeholder on campus, and it provides these partners a platform for

organizing, discovering, and disseminating digital artifacts in order to engage further in digital scholarship or humanities work. The collections have emerged to cover five major themes that reflect the variety of scholarly and cultural heritage materials: 1. Bethel's history, 2. art and creative works, 3. faculty and student scholarship, 4. natural history, and 5. the student experience.

Collaboration with the Gallery Director in the Art Department has led to the creation of the Permanent Art Collection and a special collection of the Pictorialist photographer, George C. Poundstone. The relationship built upon these joint projects has led to other collaborations including one where the author and the gallery director mentored a sophomore student who worked on a joint research project to curate two exhibits, one physical and one digital, and presented her results to the community. The student developed a deeper sense of curating in both contexts and learned the skills needed to curate digital objects while developing a lens for critique of the current technological environment for the purpose of her exhibit.

Collections also serve to highlight the innovations and transformational experiences of the community. One collection includes recordings of the whole series of presentations in the library that feature prominent student and faculty scholarship as well as students sharing their experiences from studying abroad. This series of presentations and collection in particular, in collaboration with Faculty Development and Academic Affairs, is identified across campus as a key place in which innovative activity and ideas are featured and shared. One collection that emerged from conversations with an innovator on campus is the archive of Bethel's signature course, Christianity and Western Civilization. It includes recorded audio, video, and course materials stretching across thirty years and may also include artifacts of a virtual museum

created for the course. Many faculty have taught the course and the changes in curriculum are an interesting study in how the community has changed or remained the same based on a relatively stable curricular scope.

The collaboration with Bethel's archives, the History Center: Archives of Bethel University and Converge--BGC, and the director of the archives is one of the oldest and most fruitful. The platform for Bethel, and its founding denomination, has served as a more widely accessible and discoverable place for institutional memory and traditional materials such as student and institutional publications, photographs, and documents. It has also resulted in a deeper engagement with these materials through digital humanities methodologies and practices.

The most difficult domain for obtaining participation is the collection of faculty scholarship as it is traditionally understood in scholarly communication - faculty papers and publications. Collecting their work through the presentations in the library has been successful but not for obtaining actual copies of their published work for the institutional repository.

Go to the Conversation and Embedded Librarians: Use of existing collections in teaching and research

The first product of digital humanities scholarship that was based on digital library materials but not a library-created digital archive was the Bethel At War Digital History project, completed in 2014. The collaboration between a history undergraduate, who was also a digital library student worker, and a history faculty member documented Bethel's engagement with the two

World Wars, Vietnam, and the War on Terror, and it drew upon the hundreds of items in the collections to tell this story.

The metadata in several collections became an item of study itself for a data mining class as a result of a conversation with a new computer science professor. The author was able to discuss text mining in digital humanities with her, and mentioned the HathiTrust as well as Bethel's digital collections as potential datasets. As a result, one of her honors students used the HathiTrust dataset for her project and asked the author to be a reader for her paper. This led to a later use of Bethel's local repository metadata datasets for group projects in that class.

Embedded - Invitations to teach digital humanities tools

Two digital tools that the author has been invited to teach in classes are Interactive Timelines and the more complex online exhibit software, Omeka. Regarding digital tools it is important to remember that any one tool is likely to be replaced but the threshold that one crosses when learning how to use a certain genre of a tool is worth the investment.

One of the first challenges began with the exchange with the English professor mentioned at the beginning of this paper. After a few presentations and conversations, he was willing to collaboratively develop a timeline assignment based on the SIMILE timeline tool. This later resulted in co-presenting the assignment at an informal, internal mini-conference on innovative teaching called West by Midwest.

This experience equipped the author to share this learning at DASHCamp, a THATCamp type of event at the University of Minnesota. The author proposed the timeline assignment, which was of interest to others. A colleague at another institution also proposed his work with a different timeline tool called TimelineJS, resulting in a joint session that led to a few more joint sessions at other venues. This experience, in turn, prepared the author to share this new tool with some collaborators at Bethel and demonstrate its use in a history class.

In the same way, the author decided to learn about Omeka for some test library exhibits. Knowing Omeka allowed the author to collaborate with a history professor in teaching students how to create an Omeka exhibit. A related conversation with a communications professor led to using Omeka as a platform for a semester-long Europe study abroad course.

Learning from this experience put the author in a position to work even more closely on a multi-part class project with the new digital humanities faculty member using photography to document ancient Roman coins and exhibit them in Omeka in conjunction with an exhibit of Neatline, a sophisticated mapping tool.

Topical Centers with Curriculum: Library involvement in campus planning discussions

As a result of these collaborations and presenting findings through research on digital libraries and digital humanities the author collaborated to develop a digital humanities major proposal initiated by a history professor, was selected for the search committee of the new faculty member to coordinate the major, and participated as a member of the design team and task

force for the development of a makerspace. The library has since taken the leading role in coordinating and implementing the makerspace with enthusiastic engagement from key stakeholders.

In the hiring of the new faculty member, a deep understanding of the larger context of digital humanities was crucial for informing administration what digital humanities is and what we need to look for in a candidate who can be successful in a liberal arts context. The inevitable question that arises is “How do you define digital humanities?” It is important not to get trapped into giving one answer and instead broaden the community’s understanding of the variety that is involved in this question. The next phase of questioning that is likely to occur is how digital humanities compares to any existing department that has interests that are similar or related to the digital humanities.

Because libraries take the shape of their community and librarians serve that community by engaging in conversation, this paper surveyed the aspects of Bethel that overlap the most with the library and digital humanities. These convergent domains pictured in the New Librarianship Community Thread above were archives, institutional repositories, going to the conversation, embedded librarianship, and physically-located topical centers based on digital scholarship. Conversation theory is useful in seeking out the network of agreements within these domains and challenges one to move from L_0 to L_1 in one’s stakeholder’s domains as well as educate the community to move toward the L_1 of librarianship and digital humanities. Combining this approach with the “Scholarship as Conversation” dispositions helped the Bethel community enter into an ongoing scholarly conversation involving digital humanities and their own disciplines on the local, regional, national, and international levels. Examples of how this was

achieved at Bethel involved actively seeking out and going to conversations taking place in the research area of librarianship and digital humanities within the geographic region such as the DASHCamp and DHSparkfest, and trying to broaden the invitation beyond any specific discipline or privileged group. Also recognizing the power dynamics of whose voice is typically heard in conversations around digital humanities helps one to choose which L_0 to L_1 conversations to pursue and to be aware of this when choosing collaborators and creating services. This is particularly applicable in the development of the physically-located topical center, called the makerspace, so that one can be intentionally inclusive through an awareness of gender and race dynamics involved in technology-infused digital scholarship spaces in addition to ones related to discipline. While attending and inviting others along was a key component, actively contributing through scholarly dialogue, presentations, and publications ultimately lead to further invitations to teach new tools, use digital library collections in teaching and research, and co-author important proposals and projects such as selecting a new faculty member and starting a digital humanities program. Recognizing that these conversations take place in various venues and engaging them including traditional publishing, campus committees and discussion groups, and social media platforms like Twitter was another important disposition that enabled the library to be in a position to lead. Asking questions of one's community and suspending one's own judgment on the value of a particular piece of scholarship involving digital humanities was vital to forming a better understanding of the larger context and setting the tone of the conversation for the larger community. Aligning digital library services as a participatory channel with other stakeholders so that digital collections communicate the value of the content generated and contributed by the community was also an opportunity to further develop agreements and more L_1 mutual understanding.

The commitment to having these conversations, developing these dispositions, and generating agreements on campus reaps rewards in support and enthusiasm for the library and for digital humanities. Conversation theory and the threshold concepts of Scholarship as Conversation have been very fruitful ways to frame engagement with the community for the library. Although progress can be slow, it is worth it for librarians to commit to facilitating knowledge creation through conversation and building relationships in their community.

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