

GROWING DIGITAL:

Creating an environment at Kelvin Smith Library where digital scholarship can thrive.

Monitoring occurrences of child trafficking in northeast Ohio; creating a database for manuscripts of composer Gustav Mahler; transitioning the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* to a new content management system – at first glance these projects, currently active among Case Western Reserve University faculty, do not appear to have much common ground. However, the scholars responsible for these projects are all using digital tools to visualize, analyze, store and share research data with the assistance of Kelvin Smith Library's Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship.

Digital scholarship is comprised of services that support scholars using digital tools in their research. Also known as e-research, digital scholarship extends traditional methods of research by applying new technologies, such as geographic information systems data,

visualization and big data, to advance the research and educational processes.

"Going beyond a textbook definition, digital scholarship is a collaborative approach to scholarship that brings together experts across disciplines," said Roger Zender, Team Leader for Digital Learning and Scholarship at Kelvin Smith Library. "This is where the doors are opened and the virtual walls come down to produce something that is truly organic, both as a product and in concept."

Support for digital scholarship is a key example of how libraries nationally are expanding to bring technology and research resources and services together to meet a dynamic new platform in the 21st century. Digital scholarship can inspire scholars to discover new ways to transform their research while technology experts enable scholars' use of digital tools in new and powerful ways.

BUILDING A CULTURE FOR DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP

For many years, the Case Western Reserve University libraries have been campus and national leaders in the world of e-research. KSL provides education about digital scholarship [CaseLearns instructional courses] as well as project and data management services such as Digital Case, CWRU's digital repository which is managed by the library.

The Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship has been the campus multimedia-rich space for the past seven years. Located on the first floor of KSL, the Freedman Center provides the space, expertise and technology to foster investigation and experimentation in digital scholarship for researchers across all disciplines. The Freedman Center's highly functional workspace and state-of-the-art equipment offers researchers the tools necessary

to combine the power of modern technology with academic creativity.

"There are many people and departments on campus that provide vital resources to scholars, yet the researchers who would benefit most from our services simply do not know where to start," said Zender. "The Freedman Center is working with our campus partners to bridge that gap."

One way the Freedman Center is increasing awareness of its services is through programs that provide funding to support digital scholarship projects. Made possible in coordination with the College of Arts and Sciences and an endowment by Samuel B. and Marian K. Freedman, the Freedman Fellows Program is an annual award given to full-time faculty whose current research projects use digital tools and processes and involve some corpus of data that is of scholarly or instructional interest.

"The Freedman Fellows Program was CWRU's first glimpse at the potential for projects to use digital tools," said Cheryl Seme, Digital Scholarship Librarian at Kelvin Smith Library. "It opened our eyes to the desire to transform how research is performed on this campus."

The program is the Freedman Center's initial foray into directly supporting faculty's digital scholarship projects. It will serve as a microcosm for understanding the type of support all researchers will need, and provide valuable feedback to define the Freedman Center's burgeoning service model. As students and faculty generate new ideas for research, the Freedman Center's consultation services will

enable scholars to review similar existing projects, meet with others conducting related research and learn how to best communicate project outcomes, regardless of their current knowledge of digital tools.

Although engagement with the Freedman Center can never begin too early, staff is on-hand to provide direction and discuss resource options no matter what stage of the research life cycle a project is in. For example, the scholar may have already begun collecting data but later discover that the database has outgrown original expected dimensions and now requires a transition plan to a more robust solution.

“

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— ROGER ZENDER *team leader, digital learning & scholarship*



"It is personally rewarding to help someone see a project they have spent so much time and energy on reach new levels," said Seme. "To me, the vision of the Freedman Center can be described by the university's mission to *think beyond the possible.*" >>>

Above: Established in 2005 and recently renamed, the Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship is working to position itself as the hub for all of Case Western Reserve University's digital scholarship efforts.
[Photo by Optiem]

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— CHERYL SEME *digital scholarship librarian*



NURTURING VALUABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Given the many aspects of digital scholarship, support cannot be the sole purview of any one organization on campus. As a centrally located and all-campus service provider, the library is a hub to stimulate and sustain innovation, both as a direct provider of services and a facilitator for collaboration among university departments, organizations and individuals. The Freedman Center is therefore well positioned to provide a unifying structure for the university’s digital scholarship activity.

The process of promoting digital scholarship is as collaborative as the essence of digital scholarship itself. Expertise resides in many organizations on campus, and must be effectively harnessed so that researchers receive the best support possible without having to navigate through a sea of services. KSL is committed to developing campus partnerships to serve researchers’ needs and educate the campus about project opportunities and available technologies. Working together, partners can develop resources and spaces that can adjust to changing academic requirements.

In addition to collaborations within CWRU, the library also monitors best practices in digital scholarship efforts at other universities. This fall, a group of representatives from the Freedman Center, Information Technology Services

and the Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities visited four institutions in North Carolina and Virginia to gauge progress in digital scholarship and gain insight to their methods and services.

The Freedman Center staff members in attendance found it encouraging to hear that peers are asking many of the same questions that they are examining at KSL, such as: Who do we support and how? What do the scholars need most at this institution? What impact do works incorporating digital tools have for promotion and tenure?

“We talk a great deal about expert collaboration throughout a project’s life cycle,” said Seme.

“When you step back and think about it, we are also collaborating with these institutions as we lead the way in supporting researchers in a brand new light.”

For the past two years, the Freedman Center has held a colloquium, co-sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences and Information Technology Services, to highlight digital scholarship projects, tools and

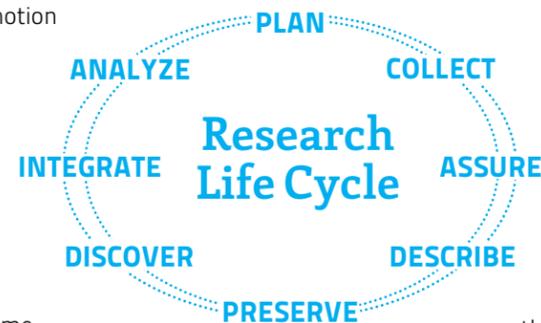
techniques happening on campus and around the world. This year’s focus was on partnerships and how the production and support of digital scholarship is a necessarily collaborative process. Speakers from THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp), Emory University, the Research Data Alliance, College of Wooster, NITEL (National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education) and the University of Cincinnati joined representatives from KSL to share their thoughts on how collaborative processes have brought a new level of discovery and understanding in support of scholarship.

TRANSITIONS: NEW ROLES & SERVICES

As digital scholarship is adopted by a wider array of disciplines to investigate research topics more deeply, the Freedman Center is examining how it will need to adapt accordingly.

In fall 2012, the library was fortunate to receive a \$1 million lead gift from Marian K. Freedman and her family to significantly expand the scope of the Freedman Center’s services. KSL will use this funding to further the Freedman Center’s transformation to a physical and virtual destination for discovery, creativity and collaboration.

Moving forward, the Freedman Center’s goal is to provide support for scholars that does not exist elsewhere on campus, guiding research projects from inception to completion. This goal however, does not come without obstacles. Even



Above: Attendees listen to a presentation during the 2013 Freedman Center Colloquium: Exploring Collaboration in Digital Scholarship.

Right: Brian Croxall (top), Digital Humanities Strategist at Emory University, and Lisa Spiro (bottom), Independent Scholar/Consultant, were among the featured presenters at this year’s colloquium.

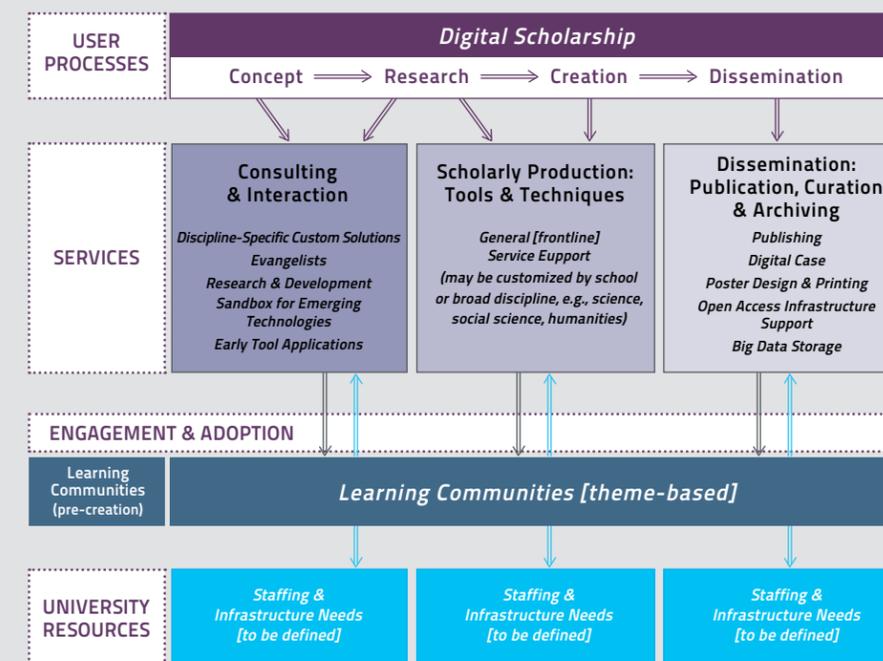
current funding only scratches the surface of what is essential for a fully realized Freedman Center. Adequately supporting digital scholarship on a larger scale will require more resources to enable the provision of a greater depth and breadth of capabilities.

Despite challenges, KSL is forging ahead with its vision for a redefined Freedman Center. Current planning committees are exploring how to embed digital scholarship support into the research life cycle in ways that are increasingly easy and transparent. By looking through the lens of the research process, the Freedman Center will continue to adapt its services seamlessly to meet the needs of a fluctuating research and technology landscape.

“Digital scholarship is easy to get excited about once you realize its extraordinary potential,” said Zender. “We’re looking at some fascinating research in ways we never have before. These tools are posing questions while answering others and there are so many new levels to what we are discovering.” ■

ENVISIONING FREEDMAN CENTER 2.0

The process of how the Freedman Center can serve as a campus hub to work with partners to support research in coordination with the potential services they can provide, is illustrated below.



DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP @ KSL:
library.case.edu/ksl/freedmancenter

VIEW THE 2013 COLLOQUIUM:
library.case.edu/ksl/colloquium/2013