

Research, Collaboration, Experimentation: Creating a Digital Scholarship Unit in an Academic Library Setting

Abstract: Changes in traditional approaches to scholarship prompt new possibilities for the convergence of digital collections and scholarly communication. To meet the changing needs of its users, the University of Toronto Scarborough Library began a Digital Scholarship unit. The poster will describe both the rationale and practical considerations for establishing this unit.

Résumé : Des changements dans l'approche traditionnelle à l'enseignement donne lieu à de nouvelles occasions pour la convergence des collections numériques et la communication savante. Pour répondre aux besoins changeants de ses usagers, la bibliothèque du campus de Scarborough de l'Université de Toronto a mis sur pied une unité d'enseignement numérique. L'affiche présente les raisons et les considérations pratiques ayant mené à la création de l'unité.

1. Purpose/Objective

As part of its commitment to stay relevant to the needs of its scholars and students, the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) Library conducted an environmental scan that resulted in an extensive proposal for and implementation of a Digital Scholarship Unit (DSU). The DSU is a joint effort between numerous campus departments and committees, including IT, faculty, and educational technology departments. This unit focuses not only on the creation of digital research collections using established standards that allow for the interaction between people, places be they virtual or physical, and information, but also seeks to allow new forms of analysis and study of objects through the creation of online tools, in the hopes of creating new intellectual products, and when possible, integrating content into the curriculum for the purposes of teaching and learning. This poster will present three distinct topics including the research and proposal process, approval and implementation, and the development, creation, and promotion of an interactive pilot collection.

2. Method

The development of the proposal was a result of an intensive environmental scan which included an extensive review of the literature, as well as an examination of digital programs in North America with an evaluation of practices and policies for top collections. Site visits were conducted to top collections with data gathering using a data collection tool based on a survey used by the National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH) for their publication, *A Guide to Good Practice in the Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials*. Additionally, an internal scan of digital collection/digital humanities activities at the University of Toronto was conducted, complemented by consultation with designated faculty members at UTSC. This environmental scan resulted in a proposal detailing mission and goals, workflows and costs, possible staffing and reporting structures, and equipment and technical infrastructure.

3. Findings

Collaboration between faculty, staff members from technical and teaching units on campus, and the staff members of the DSU has enriched the pilot project by bringing new perspectives and opportunities to learn from one another. The challenges of collaboration were found in delays for major decision-making, continuing momentum and scope creep of the pilot.

4. Implications

Optimal organizational structure for the DSU and documented policies and procedures are keys to the future success of the unit as is effective communication between stakeholders. This poster itself will showcase the research and proposal process, policy and framework development, staffing, physical and workflow planning, standards and legal issues, and will include screen shots of the unit's initial collection. This poster is useful for those who will be involved in the development of such a unit within an academic library setting, or for those who have gone through the process and are interested in an individual perspective.