ARL Digital Scholarship Institute

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Introduction

2014 & 2015 Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) hosts large-scale workshops on establishing and supporting digital scholarship centers; articulates a need for academic librarians to incorporate digital skills and methodologies into practice.

2015 University of Rochester hosts a Mellon Foundation-funded Institute for Mid-Career Librarians in Digital Humanities with a residential and online format; cohort model and basic methodologies were highly valued by participants.

Fall 2016 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) convenes a working meeting with three-member teams from University of Rochester, Indiana University, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Boston College, and University of California, San Diego that includes DH and DS librarians, outreach and liaison librarians, and library directors. The team develops a model for a Digital Scholarship Institute to provide a week-long, immersive experience to introduce librarians and staff who had no prior experience in digital scholarship to the methodologies and practices of DS. The Planning Team becomes the DSI Steering Committee, Admissions Committee, Curriculum Committee, and the Pedagogy Team.

June 2017 Inaugural Digital Scholarship Institute is held at Boston College under the sponsorship of the ARL Academy and the five ARL partners.

DSI Boston Participants: Attendees & Instructors

Participants were required to submit a short application in which they detailed their experience and interest in digital scholarship. A total of 28 participants attended. Instructors were drawn from the ARL DSI advisory group as well as from the Library at Boston College, which hosted the inaugural Institute.

Assessment: Methodology & Findings

The ARL Advisory Group recognized the importance of assessment, and considered ways to make it as unintrusive as possible.

- A private journal for daily reflection with the goal to facilitate completion of three, brief surveys that corresponded to the workshop days (Tuesday-Thursday) and a comprehensive survey issued on the last day. We asked attendees to reflect upon:
  - What they learned today?
  - What they would have liked to learn?
  - What worked?
  - What didn’t work?
  - Two flip-charts (parking lot) that were setup in a semi-private nook for attendees to note, anonymously, feedback that would be more time-sensitive.

- Three short workshop surveys that were disseminated post-workshops each day (Tuesday-Thursday):
  - What is an example(s) of something that you learned in this workshop?
  - Share one specific way that you might apply what you learned in your library.
  - What do you wish you learned today or did you expect to learn?
  - Any additional feedback about that day: logistics, meals, breaks, workshops.

- A closing 8-question comprehensive survey that was distributed at the end of the 5th and final day of the Institute.

In addition to gathering feedback from attendees, we gathered feedback from instructors at the end of their workshop sessions.

Revising the Institute

Responses revealed participants valued the DSI program and found it useful for their future work, and especially valued the ability to build a cohort of distributed colleagues. Many said they would recommend it to a colleague, and in many cases already had.

What worked best?

[ARL] Cohort of colleagues who were on the same DS exposure level as that fostered a safe and enjoyable learning environment. 52 day basic introductory workshops on DS tools (as opposed to many tools at one time or discussions without tools), a nice remote location that helped create a “DS Camp” feel and focus, and excursions that enabled time to strengthen ties and create a genuine sharing experience.

[DSI Participant]

What didn’t work?

[ARL] There was already too much; there is also a continued discussion about ways to further cultivate community among the cohorts after the duration of the Institute.

[DSI Participant]