

New Technology and the Future of Publishing



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"Access, Interaction, and Collaboration: Reflections on the Colloquium on New Technology and the Future of Publishing"

By Donna Reiss

In the age of the Internet and digital publishing, research universities no longer are the exclusive producers, developers, and disseminators of knowledge; university scholars are no longer the exclusive beneficiaries of the knowledge produced and archived there. Librarians no longer just select and collect primary and secondary sources; they also produce, reproduce, and disseminate significant repositories. Formerly available only to advanced researchers able to travel great distances to examine papers and sketches in the handwriting of their composers, many primary resources are being digitized. As a result, copies of these archives are increasingly accessible to undergraduates and beginning graduate students, who once were limited to secondary and tertiary descriptions of manuscripts and visual artworks. Such important changes in the development and dissemination of knowledge were demonstrated at the first Colloquium on New Technology & the Future of Publishing at the Clemson University Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing (CEDP), April 5, 2001. From President Barker's welcome through Caroline Eisner's descriptions of digital primary resources for teaching, the Colloquium offered both novice and professional scholars insight into the evolution and importance of publications in new media. My summary and reflections on the Colloquium come from the particular perspective of a faculty member at Tidewater Community College in Virginia, an open admissions institution where I teach English and humanities, and a consultant on computer communication in higher education. My own students are undergraduates with limited personal access to scholarly books and periodicals much less to primary source materials-but with increasing access to the World Wide Web. Of special interest to me, therefore, was the Colloquium's emphasis on access to resources and on opportunities for interaction and collaboration among novice and professional scholars as well as new ways to express and share in the composition and distribution of knowledge.

Almost every week, The Chronicle of Higher Education and other periodicals that focus on trends in the academy report on issues related to electronic publication of primary source archives, online courses, Webtextbooks, digitized journals, and e-books. Projects for digitizing primary source materials at universities, museums, libraries, and a variety of public and private repositories means that children in developing nations as well as professors and students at universities can benefit from Web-distributed collections like the University of Michigan's nineteenth century collections online at the Humanities Text Initiative <http://www.hti.umich.edu/>, described at the CEDP Colloquium by John Price-Wilkin, Head of Digital Library Production Service. Similarly, manuscripts and critical articles at Romantic Circles <http://www.rc.umd.edu/>, presented by that Website's co-director, Steven Jones, give readers Internet access to out-of-print texts, hard-to-find authors, and scholarly articles from specialized journals not found at small colleges or most public and school libraries.

Some challenges to access were considered at the Colloquium as well. Mark Herring, Dean of the Dacus Library at Winthrop University (South Carolina), described "vendor madness": changeable components of commercial packages mean that a library cannot depend on continued availability of any particular digital

periodical. Scholarly research may well be undermined rather than enhanced by such control of electronic publication, Herring said. And what will happen to print originals as books are digitized? What about deterioration of the media and unreliability of servers and connections? This concern was dramatized when Steven Jones was unable to connect to some of the Internet sites for Romantic Circles.

Students at Clemson University like students at my own Tidewater Community College in Virginia have fast connections and plenty of computers at the college and at public libraries to access resources previously unavailable. Some schools, however, have limited or no Internet connections. Families with computers provide their children access to a wealth of online resources less available to families without Internet connections-victims of the Digital Divide. Nonetheless, at the National Council of Teachers of English Global Conversations on Language and Literacy, a conference of international English teachers held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, August 2000, teachers from Africa and the Middle East reported that in villages lacking school buildings and books, even one Internet connection provided an invaluable link to the world beyond, with e-publications like those featured at the Colloquium their students' only access to much of the world's knowledge. The efforts of archivists like Price-Wilkins and Jones support that access and establish models for other scholars.

Because the Internet is a communications medium, electronic publications are characterized by the potential for collaboration and interaction. All of the Colloquium's presenters identified collaborative projects. The complexity of representation and annotation in the Ulysses Hypermedia Project, presented by Michael Groden, for example, highlighted the difficulties facing more than 100 collaborators choosing what, how, and how much to annotate. They confronted the distinctions between informing and editorializing. They wondered how readers might interact with the text and annotations, not just through link choices but also with their own commentaries. As one student at the Colloquium pointed out, audio files such as "Love's Old Sweet Song" invite readers to interact with the cultural context of James Joyce's work. Reflecting on my own introduction to Ulysses in a master's level course, assisted by several guidebooks and a knowledgeable professor, I thought how much a hypermedia accompaniment would have enhanced my understanding as I read the printed text on paper pages. Audio files would have provided the rhythms of the novel's music, and pictures of the places Leopold Bloom visited would have helped an armchair traveler visualize the streets of Dublin. The ability to select among hypertext annotations would have provided context-specific guidance less cumbersome than turning the pages of two books.

The scholarship that accompanies the digitizing of primary sources expands the contexts in which we read and understand the evolution and various versions of an artist's work. Thanks to the Emily Dickinson Archives, students and researchers can view Emily Dickinson's letters and poems in her own hand, circumventing the limitations of typographers attempting to represent (or eliminate) those idiosyncratic dashes that are so much a part of the visual experience of her poems. Co-editor Martha Nell Smith's Colloquium paper (read by Catherine Paul) emphasized the epistolary nature of Dickinson's poems, revealed through correspondence digitized in the archive, providing a new perspective on the poems, which usually are read separate from the letters. Such projects enable students to interact with "original" manuscripts in various versions and to view artifacts of authors' lives online. Other examples include the Blake Archive with plates of his engravings in contrast with the text-only versions most textbooks offer, and online facsimiles of periodicals like Harper's Illustrated Weekly. The teaching potential of such resources was the focus of Caroline Eisner's descriptions of the Visible Knowledge Project and her examples of students' active-learning projects that utilized and developed electronic publications. In such projects, students interact with each other along with their engagement with primary sources.

Two journal editors demonstrated the communicative and collaborative possibilities of online publications. Eduard Fuhr brought Cloud-Cuckoo-Land <http://www.theo.tu-cottbus.de/Wolke/> to Clemson with his presentation of the purposes and components of the International Journal of Architectural Theory. Crossing boundaries of language (German, Russian, English) and offering access to students and professionals, this online journal occupies what Fuhr calls a "place between spheres" where architectural theory and practice meet in various media: the Web, CDROMs, and print publications. James Inman, Director of the Center for Collaboration and Communication at Furman University, described the five-year evolution of hypertext Web journal Kairos: A Journal for Teachers of Writing in Webbed Environments as a collaboration among readers and authors to simplify the design and improve access to archives and articles. The concept of a scholarly journal has been transformed by such publications, and in recognition of this change, the Modern Language Association is considering ways to credential Web publications.

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On July 17, 2001, The Institute of Museum and Library Services announced awards of nearly \$2 million to universities and colleges to recruit and educate students in library and information science and "provide advanced training, especially in digital technologies, to professional librarians." <http://www.ims.gov/whatsnew/current/071701-1.htm>. Grants from the Mellon foundation are supporting cooperative ventures between university and public libraries and scholarly journals to establish standards for digitizing and preserving scholarly and archival materials, as reported in The Chronicle of Higher Education (17 July 2001 <http://chronicle.com/free/2001/07/2001072001t.htm>). On July 12, 2001, the Library of Congress announced the first copyright registrations for e-books, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Wireless Web and The Business Week Guide to the Best Business Schools, both from McGraw-Hill and "the first . . . full-length e-books transmitted over the Internet and processed entirely in digital format through CORDS" (<http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2001/01-100.html>). Initiatives like these demonstrate the importance of digital texts and graphics to the dissemination of information. They remind us that e-books are a new and changing technology but not a passing fad.

A few days before the CEDP Colloquium, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

announced that many of their course materials would be made available online. According to their Open CourseWare Website <http://web.mit.edu/ocw/>, "the goal of MIT OCW is to provide the content that supports an MIT education," not to give away credit for courses but to make the content itself widely available. This publication makes the scholarship of teaching visible. This initiative honors the ways that faculty and students interact with each other and reminds us that content is only part of what constitutes a "course." Student publications already are being transformed by electronic publication. Instead of composing for their teachers alone, students now compose for each other through class discussion lists. Clemson's Collaborative Learning Environment emphasizes this feature in its shared Web spaces and discussion areas as well as its name. Students compose for the world if they publish on the Web through a site provided by their schools or through free advertising-based Websites like geocities.com and angelfire.com and homestead.com. Not only do students publish text and static graphics; students develop and publish sophisticated multimedia representations of their learning. And why not a trailer for a research project? A multimedia opening lures readers to a student hypertext at <http://www.bmoseley.com/arp/>. Opportunities for students to publish beyond the class and campus are expanded: An undergraduate business major at a community college in Virginia was invited to submit her online research project on hypertext to a textbook publisher's resource site and to submit her original hypertext poem to the Web journal Kairos. In the tradition of Walt Whitman and Benjamin Franklin, distinguished scholars and beginning scholars are self-publishing in digital media, potentially sharing their thinking and composing with wide audiences.

In his welcome, Clemson University President James Barker emphasized the power of ideas and a "completely new context" for a twenty-first century university press that is generated by and supports collaboration throughout and beyond the university. CEDP Director Wayne Chapman extended this concept with his characterization of libraries as laboratories where dynamic electronic publications and archives support interactive learning and his description of new technology as "part of the knowledge that research universities now produce." Electronic and digital publishing are transforming what we understand by the terms "writing" and "publishing." This first Colloquium on New Technology & the Future of Publishing through the Clemson University Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing demonstrated and critiqued the scholarly and pedagogical issues that affect literacy and education at all levels.



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