BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Roemer RC, Kern V, editors. **The culture of digital scholarship in academic libraries.** Chicago: ALA Editions; 2019. Softcover: 240 p. ISBN: 978-0-8389-1897-5. Price: USD$71.99. Available from: https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/culture-digital-scholarship-academic-libraries.

Like many other academic libraries, my home institution has been reflecting on what role we should play in the changing research ecosystem. The opening of our new Riddell Library and Learning Centre in 2017 changed the services and spaces our campus has come to associate with the Library. On any given day, nursing faculty may be using our new 360 Degree Immersion Studio to simulate a busy emergency room while geography faculty take advantage of our visualization wall to examine satellite imagery up close with their students. As our faculty and students take advantage of these new digital tools and platforms in their research, teaching, and learning, we as librarians wonder if we are doing enough to support this work and what we should focus on going forward.

In *The Culture of Digital Scholarship in Academic Libraries*, editors Robin Chin Roemer and Verletta Kern have drawn together a collection of case studies of how digital scholarship is being defined and operationalized within one academic institution - the University of Washington (UW). All but one of the chapter authors are currently (or were recently) employed by UW Libraries, a sprawling library system with multiple locations, hundreds of employees, and a budget of over 50 million dollars annually [1]. Each author approaches the topic through the lens of their particular role within the institution (e.g. subject librarian, scholarly communications outreach librarian, service director) and the populations they support. Although a research-intensive institution, Roemer describes the state of UW Libraries' support of digital scholarship as "growing" rather than fully developed [1]. For example, at the time of publication, the institution did not have a digital scholarship center, a service that is currently offered at a number of Canadian institutions [2]. As such, the book does not position UW Libraries as a leader in digital

scholarship, but rather an illustration of how library support of digital scholarship, even within a single institution, varies widely and is shaped by local practices, resources, and policies. This focus on culture is said to set the work apart from previous discussions of digital scholarship, although a more detailed overview of existing literature early in the work would have helped establish this.

At a slim 240 pages, the book consists of 10 authored chapters divided into the three broad sections of Values, Practices, and Environments. In Values, 3 chapters address public scholarship, digital citizenship, and scholarly communication. The section on Practices includes discussions of assessment, digital storytelling, and management and preservation of digital resources. Finally, the Environment section looks at digital scholarship in the context of learning technology, data services, media services, and the relationship between the university and the community that surrounds it.

Given the diversity of perspectives offered, the book's introduction advises the reader to view the text as a "professional 'choose your own adventure'" (p. xiv). The chapters do not reference each other, and can be read selectively rather than sequentially. However, identifying which chapters might be of most interest can be difficult. Many of the chapter titles are brief (e.g.,"Stewardship," "Learning Technologies") and do not fully convey what is covered. Garber-Pearson's chapter "Digital Citizenship: Teaching Research Identity and Accountability to Undergraduates" is a notable exception. A more detailed preview of each chapter in the introduction may have addressed this concern, but starting with the conclusion, which helpfully draws connections between the chapters, would have been useful. Readers may also wish to scan the key takeaways provided at the end of each chapter to get a sense of what is covered. What sets each section apart is also unclear, as chapters in the Values section include discussions of practice, and all reflect the particular environment in which the authors are working.

My own interest in the book was as an academic library practitioner looking for examples of how other libraries are supporting digital scholarship. Given the

size and resources of UW Libraries in comparison to my own small undergraduate institution, I was not sure how much I would relate to the case studies. The fact that digital scholarship support is not fully established at UW Libraries and that what is offered is sometimes at an individual employee level made the content more accessible to me, but might make it less interesting to those at institutions with robust services already in place.

What I found most helpful were the descriptions of how the authors navigated some of the challenges associated with identifying institutional needs in relation to digital scholarship and launching new services. For example, Verletta Kern's "Assessment at the University of Washington Libraries" provides a useful overview of the various assessment methods used to gauge interest in digital scholarship and the limitations of each. Her cautionary note about the potential for assessment strategies to raise user expectations that cannot be met undoubtedly resonates with many. Those interested in assessment may also wish to check out Chapter 1 "Public Scholarship," Chapter 3 "Scholarly Communication Education and Outreach," and Chapter 8 "Data Services" for discussions of assessment in these particular contexts. In "Stewardship," Elizabeth Bedford walks the reader through key decisions that need to be made in relation to digital preservation and how they played out at her institution. Her description of the implementation of an open source repository will be of particular interest to those unfamiliar with the staffing and other resource costs associated with such an undertaking. Beth Lytle's description of the Digital Scholarship Project Office Hours service in "Learning Technologies"

Statement of Competing Interests

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highlights common challenges encountered by users embarking on digital projects along with helpful guiding questions staff can use in such consultations.

"Digital scholarship" is a slippery term, with no commonly accepted definition, and this led to some surprises in what was (and was not) covered in this book. The broad definition of digital scholarship used by the editors was helpful in highlighting how library staff across the institution can support this work even if digital scholarship is not explicit in their job title or duties. Garber-Pearson's discussion of how the concepts of digital citizenship, researcher identity, and the ethical obligations of scholarship are integrated into their teaching of undergraduate students is one example. On the other hand, some forms of library support often associated with digital scholarship received less coverage than expected given the attention they have received in recent years, such as journal and monograph publishing, data visualization spaces and tools, makerspaces, and open education promotion and creation. This may be a function of the focus on a single institution and its offerings, differing understandings of what constitutes digital scholarship, or a reflection of who was participating in the project.

The *Culture of Digital Scholarship* provides an interesting snapshot of how digital scholarship is being supported at different levels within an institution, but this singular focus makes it less helpful to those seeking a primer on digital scholarship or a collection of best practices. However, the individual reflections of UW practitioners on their successes and failures may be of value to those planning to offer similar services at their own academic institutions.

References

1. Roemer, RC. The culture of digital scholarship in academic libraries. Chicago: ALA Editions; c2019. Introduction; ix-xv.

2. Hurrell, C. Aligning the stars: understanding digital scholarship needs to support the evolving nature of academic research. The Partnersh. 2019; 14(2):1-17.

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