Knowledge designers

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When you move from a universe where the rules with respect to a scholarly essay or monograph have been fully codified, to a universe of experimentation in which the rules have yet to be written, characterized by shifting toolkits and skillsets, in which genres of scholarship are undergoing constant redefinition, you become by necessity a knowledge designer.

Concept for a Folger Digital Folio of Renaissance Drama for the 21st Century

- Sustaining a grand humanities initiative
- Teaching creative scholarship
- Fostering a participant’s interest among diverse amateurs
- Modeling new modes of scholarly production and collaboration
How? Proposed components

- Digitization
  - 30,000 page images.
  - Folger, Bodleian

- Work environment
  - Text manipulation, data storage, annotation.
  - MITH, TCP

- Research and Curriculum
  - Folger lab: Research agenda, division of intellectual labor. Post-docs, faculty, students, Folger Ed emeriti. Folger Research Division.
Undergraduate workflow

Small, low-risk tasks: correct and tag one page; curriculum contextualizes these tasks in the context of interpretation; become familiar with what F21 core members do.

Intro-course curation unit

Frame a research question; develop and refine the question at the Folger; build a curation plan that supports it;

Folger boot camp

Complete curation plan, write up findings; submit for review; publish to the corpus.

UG research capstone
Proof of concept

Martin Mueller’s data-curation assignment:
18 Northwestern students
8 electronic plays from *Early English Books Online*
5000+ error corrections
reflection paper / text analysis
Making something useful and grand

“The progress that I [made], chipping away one missing letter or word at a time, was fairly substantial, and will make the reading and analysis of The Araygnement of Paris easier and more accurate from here on out.”

“I felt like a digital new-age monk or something, having contact with the original texts, or the digital copies of them, and putting them in a database that would be widely accessible and searchable. It was cool to be part of a project so grand.”

“I felt like I was contributing to the ‘greater good’.”
Connecting in a visceral way with core values of humanities work

“Another change in mindset that this task ... has led me to is that a text is built of words, and words alone. It’s not that this is a startling revelation, but it’s easy to let that fact slip from consideration, and we forget that each word has its own important place in a text, and its frequency, associations, and placement are all loaded with meaning.”

“While correcting, I ran into several cases in which my reading of the manuscript differed from the original transcriber’s. I ... had to ask myself, ‘Who’s to say that I’m right?’ ... Transcribing and correcting old, ink-blotted texts requires a certain amount of human interpretation and agency.”
Preparing myself to think critically about electronic resources

“I chose to do the data curation because I thought it would take less time than a paper. That was absolutely not true. However, it did engage my brain in a way in which it hasn't been engaged in a long time, and that is in the critical-analysis-problem-solving sort of way.”

“I’d say that the biggest thing that doing data curation with Annolex has offered me is some perspective. Ironically, it’s programs like this that lead us to feel like computers perform most tasks, when I’m now really struck by how much manpower goes into getting such an application right.”
The new interactive technologies redefine – in ways yet to be determined – what it means to know and understand, and what it means to become “literate” or an “educated citizen.

– John Seely Brown and Roy Pea
Designing an incunable app-book:

Introducing The Tempest for iPad.

The Tempest for iPad transforms Shakespeare for the 21st century, illuminating the beauty and meaning of this unforgettable play. Get the App now and read in the company of others. Much more than a digital book, The Tempest for iPad is designed for social reading, authoring, and sharing, for all readers from students to professional scholars. Learn more in this video.
With open margins...

...for social reading
Sources cited


• Slides 6-9: Martin Mueller, "Collaborative curation of Early Modern plays by undergraduates.” https://scalablereading.northwestern.edu/2012/06/05/collaborative-curation-of-early-modern-plays-by-undergraduates-2/


• Slides 11-12: Commentary stream and note-taking in Luminary Digital Media’s Shakespeare’s The Tempest for iPad. https://luminarydigitalmedia.com/