

ARL Fall Forum 2014

“Wanted Dead or Alive—The Scholarly Monograph”

Wrap-Up by Brian E. C. Schottlaender

KEYNOTE: LAURA MANDELL

- Discussed the desirability and advantages of the monograph as a “collaborative workspace, drawing a distinction between “monograph thinking” and “VRE [virtual research environment] thinking
- “Imminent Demise or Potential Rejuvenation?” => if not the latter, then the former => i.e., if the monograph is not atomized [or “chunked” as Frits put it later] and aggregated w the cloud of scholarship and discourse that surrounds it, it’s going to suffer
- In fact, Laura told us that “any format that will not allow a scholar to show errors or other issues in the text itself, does not, of today, adequately serve the needs of scholarship.”

PANEL 1: THE MONOGRAPH AND CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP

- Laura’s remarks dovetailed nicely with Stefan Tanaka’s, who characterized digital as a process, not a product and who observed that, to his disappointment, the monograph forecloses discussion, rather than opening it up. He wondered whether the day mightn’t come when data/primary resources point to interpretive resources [and in my opinion, vice versa].
- Tim Burke and David Shulenburger described how standards/framework for evaluating alternative monograph formats need to be driven by the disciplines themselves, as they are being driven by the MLA and the AHA.
- Tim underscored Laura’s earlier point that scholars doing alternative scholarship need to “bake into their scholarship” what they’re doing and why.

PANEL 2: THE MONOGRAPH IN THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

- All three panelists described efforts to elevate monograph publishing to the network level: Roger Tritton and Roxanne Missingham described efforts in the UK and Australia, respectively, to do so at the national level; Frits Pannekoek, at the university level.
- I think the best way to summarize this panel’s message is in terms Clintonian, “It’s about the economy, stupid.”
- While Roxanne talked about the Australian government’s explicitly tying OA publishing to funding, Frits shared with us his so-called 1% solution, a solution we’d all be very happy with. Or, as Stefan Tanaka said to me during the last break, “I’d be happy with .1%!”

PANEL 3: AT-SCALE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE MONOGRAPH

ELLIOTT SHORE

- 3 concerns ARL/AAU proposal tries to address:
 - Work of young scholars at risk of finding no outlet;
 - Public wants electronic access;
 - Increasing need for humanities to be a greater part of the worldwide convo taking place on the Web.

- It's not necessarily about the monograph, but about integrating the humanities into the Web.
- How can the long-form manuscript become a more integral part of the Web?
- The ARL/AAU proposal calls for a subvention model in which humanist's start-up package would include funding to issue first monograph as an OA publication.
- "Valorizing" the librarian in this context is all well and good and a challenge we can and need to step up to, but can't do it alone => the disciplines and departments need to collaborate with us [and, I would suggest, as did our colleague from Florida this morning, that the University Presses need to as well].

DON WATERS

- Yes, University Presses do need to be part of the solution, because indeed, they are the primary publishers of humanities scholarship.
- Mellon's goal: Incorporate modern digital practices into the publication of humanities scholarship.
- How: put the money into the institutions where the authors work.
- Mellon concept is of a co-invest model wherein Mellon's investment is front-loaded.
- Q: Why this can't be done immediately?
A: Because it's a broad, complex system and all the parts are moving simultaneously.
- Parts: standards, tools, presses, faculty, institutions.

CHAD GAFFIELD

- Too much attention has gone into funding research and not nearly enough into publishing its results.
- The problem is someone ... else.
- Leadership counts (echoing and expanding on Elliott's comment about valorizing).
- Journals and monographs are means to ends => need to focus less on the means and more on the ends. So, what is the end? To get beyond your own specialized audience.
- If scholars aren't on the Web, they don't exist.
- There is enough money in the system. That's why it's not about money, but, as I said earlier, about the economy. I.e., it's about the distribution of money.

BARBARA KLINE POPE

- Need to think more broadly about how monographs reach their intended audiences.
- Full editorial functions of University Presses—i.e., not just peer review—need to be taken into account as the collaborations necessary to advance initiatives in this space take shape.
- These functions include:
 - The "acquisitions" function that gives rise to and shapes disciplines and sub-disciplines.
 - Connections to other parts of the ecosystem: media, wholesalers, retailers.
 - Discovery.