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Mackenzie, A. & Martin, L., (Eds.). (2016). **Developing Digital Scholarship: Emerging Practices in Academic Libraries**. Chicago: Neal Schuman.

So what is digital scholarship? Answer: “Digital scholarship is an incredibly awkward term that people have come up with to describe a complex group of developments. The phrase is really, at some basic level, nonsensical. After all, scholarship is scholarship” (Lynch, 2014).

Not exactly a great start. This book consists of nine essays mostly written by practitioners and is arranged in four parts: Part 1, A Review of the Landscape; Part 2: The Agile Librarian; Part 3: Digital Spaces and Services; Part 4: Communications and Social Networking.

In the first essay, “The university library and digital scholarship: A review of the literature,” Lindsey Martin, Assistant Head of Learning Services at Edgehill University (Ormskirk, England), reinforces Lynch’s point.

[A review of the literature reveals that] there is little in the way of a shared understanding of what digital scholarship is, that there is a range of terminology and variety of definitions depending upon discipline and values, and that there is little that provides an insight into what it might mean to be a digital scholar in practice. Unsurprisingly, then, the role of librarians in responding to the emergence of digital scholarship practices offers a similarly slender literature of differing definitions and approaches to support for and engagement with engagement with scholars. (p. 4)

So how well does this book fill the gaps Martin has identified? For example, does the book advance a clear definition of “digital scholarship?” Unfortunately, the answer is no—and so one must look elsewhere for help. As a start, have a look at Wikipedia, which defines the concept as follows:

Digital scholarship is the use of digital evidence, methods of inquiry, research, publication and preservation to achieve scholarly and research goals. Digital scholarship can encompass both scholarly communication using digital media

and research on digital media. An important aspect of digital scholarship is the effort to establish digital media and social media as credible, professional and legitimate means of research and communication. Digital scholarship has a close association with digital humanities, though the relationship between these terms is unclear.

Digital scholarship may also include born-digital means of scholarly communication that are more traditional, like online journals and databases, e-mail correspondence and the digital or digitized collections of research and academic libraries. Since digital scholarship is concerned with the production and distribution of digital media, discussions about copyright, fair use and digital rights management (DRM) frequently accompany academic analysis of the topic. Combined with open access, digital scholarship is offered as a more affordable and open model for scholarly communication. ("Digital scholarship," para. 1-2)

On the topic of emerging practices in libraries, most of the essays in this book are equally unhelpful, mainly because they survey British/Irish and Australian practices rather than American, which is where the action is. As Alison Mackenzie, the Dean of Learning Services at Edgehill University, reports in her chapter "Digital scholarship: Scanning library services and spaces," which uses a survey of 20 UK and Irish university libraries to understand how they are supporting digital scholarship in practice: "The outcome from the survey ... suggests that, unlike institutions in the USA, investment in digital scholarship has not translated into a similar growth in digital scholarship centres in the UK and Ireland" (p. 40).

Really, about the only essay that addresses "emerging practices" in an informative way is that of the University of Notre Dame's Tracy C. Bergstrom, one of the two American authors in the collection. In her "Digital scholarship centres: Converging space and expertise" (pp. 105-120) Bergstrom describes the creation of the University of Notre Dame's Digital Scholarship Center (DSC), which she acknowledges is one of several in the US, each offering different services depending on "the capabilities of librarians who support services, the availability of space and resources, the library technology infrastructure and the existing technology support landscape of the university" (p. 106).

Bergstrom arrives at a list of "frequently supported activities of digital scholarship centres. These include planning digital projects; utilizing specialized software and tools; developing metadata and helping patrons to understand standards; answering intellectual property questions; planning for preservation; digitizing collections; and understanding scholarly publishing opportunities" (p. 106). She also reports on a quick survey of digital scholarship centre websites demonstrating that the support areas... "are highly variant and may include GIS (Geographical Information Systems), text mining, digital exhibit design, data visualization, usability studies and makerspace or media production environments" (p. 106). Makerspaces, she explains, "potentially provide creative, design-related or engineering tools and applications such as 3D printers or modelling applications, robotics or computer kits" (p. 106). From here, she discusses considerations when forming a DSC; librarian skills; use of space and

resources; technical infrastructure; and alignment to institutional needs. Bergstrom then looks at Notre Dame's DSC as a case study.

In sum, if you are interested in "developing digital scholarship" and "emerging practices in academic libraries" check out what Wikipedia has to say about Digital Scholarship and then order Bergstrom's chapter on interlibrary loan. Just don't buy this book.

References

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