

**Date:** 25 October 2011

**Committee:** Committee on Information Technology

**Committee charge; staff liaisons**

The Committee on Information Technology will advise on ways the MLA can encourage activities in technology useful to the membership and the association. It will identify projects from time to time that might be undertaken by the committee or the association. These projects will vary according to needs and new developments in the field; projects may deal with different aspects of technology, such as computer-assisted instruction, text-based research, electronic publication, and electronic communication. The committee will advise the staff and the council on proposals and requests relating to technology that come from members or other organizations.

The ongoing activities of the committee will include disseminating information through the *MLA Newsletter*, organizing convention sessions, and helping the staff maintain contacts with other associations and organizations involved with the humanistic applications of technology.

Staff liaisons for 2011: Terry Callaghan and Steve Olsen

Staff liaisons for 2012: Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Steve Olsen

**Committee members (2010–11)**

Michael Eberle-Sinatra, Université de Montréal  
Carolyn Guertin, University of Texas, Arlington  
Barbara A. Lafford, Arizona State University, Phoenix  
Laura Mandell, Miami University, Oxford (chair)  
Timothy Murray, Cornell University  
Bethany Nowviskie, University of Virginia  
William A. Thompson, Western Illinois University

New members starting in 2011:

Brian Croxall, Emory University  
Victoria Szabo, Duke University  
Steven L. Thorne, Portland State University

**MLA Convention**

2011 Convention Sessions: The CIT was involved with organizing four sessions for the convention in Los Angeles, including two collaborations, one with the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities and one with the Committee on Scholarly Editions.

**Labor in the Digital Humanities** (in collaboration with CAFPRR)

*Presiding:* William Thompson, Western Illinois Univ.

*Speakers:* Mark Childs, Coventry Univ.; Tanya E. Clement, Univ. of Maryland, College Park; Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Pomona Coll.; Amanda L. French, George Mason Univ.; Carl Stahmer, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara.

Members of this roundtable addressed the professional and ethical issues raised by labor in and of the digital humanities. Questions for discussion: the problem of authorship; the levels and kinds of recognition for contributions made to a project; issues regarding rights holding; problems raised by the differing institutional status of persons working on the same project; potential problems raised around

distance education; and the complex questions raised by compensation, in the form of pay and in the form of accumulated symbolic capital.

### **Social Networking: Web 2.0 Applications for the Teaching of Languages and Literatures**

*Presiding:* Barbara Lafford, Arizona State Univ. West

1. "Writing for Nonprofits in Social-Media Environments," Sean McCarthy, Univ. of Texas, Austin
2. "The Macaulay Eportfolio Collection: A Case Study in the Uses of Social Networking for Learning," Lauren Klein, Graduate Center, City Univ. of New York
3. "Social Media, Digital Vernaculars, and Language Education," Steven Thorne, Portland State Univ.

### **What the Digital Does to Reading**

*Presiding:* Laura C. Mandell, Miami Univ., Oxford

1. "What Would Jesus Google? Plural Reading in the Digital Archive," Daniel Allen Shore, Grinnell Coll.
2. "Social Book Catalogs and Reading: Shifting Paradigms, Humanizing Databases," Renee Hudson, Univ. of California, Los Angeles; Kimberly Knight, Univ. of Texas, Dallas
3. "Illuminating Hidden Paths: Reading and Annotating Texts in Many Dimensions," Julie Meloni, Washington State Univ., Pullman

### **Textual Scholarship and New Media** (in collaboration with the CSE)

*Presiding:* Michael Eberle-Sinatra, Université de Montréal

1. "Comic Book Markup Language: An Introduction and Rationale," John A. Walsh, Indiana Univ., Bloomington
2. "Crowdspeak: Mobile Telephony and TXTual Practice," Rita Raley, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara
3. "Alternate Reality Games and TransmediaTextuality: Interpretive Play and the Immaterial Archive," Zach Whalen, Univ. of Mary Washington

2012Convention Sessions: The CIT was involved with organizing five sessions for the convention in Seattle, including a collaboration with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and two service sessions.

### **Getting Started in Digital Humanities with DHCommons**

Workshop cosponsored by the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE) and the Texas A&M Initiative for Digital Humanities, Media, and Culture

*Presiding:* Rebecca Davis (NITLE), Laura Mandell (Texas A&M University, College Station), Ryan Cordell (Saint Norbert College)

Representatives of major digital humanities projects and initiatives will share their expertise on project design and available resources and opportunities; lead small-group training sessions on technologies and skills to help participants get started; and be available for follow-up, one-on-one consultations later in the day. Scholars must apply in advance for the workshop. For more information, please visit <http://dhcommons.org/mla2012>.

**Evaluating Digital Work for Tenure and Promotion: A Workshop for Evaluators and Candidates**  
Program arranged by the MLA Office of Programs and Office of Research

*Presiding:* Susan Schreibman, Trinity Coll. Dublin; Katherine A. Rowe, Bryn Mawr Coll.; Alison Byerly, Middlebury Coll.

The workshop will provide materials and facilitated discussion about evaluating work in digital media (e.g., scholarly editions, databases, GIS projects, born-digital creative or scholarly work). Designed for both creators of digital materials (candidates for tenure and promotion) and administrators or colleagues who evaluate those materials, the workshop will propose strategies for documenting, presenting, and evaluating such work. Preregistration required.

### **Reconfiguring Publishing**

Program arranged by the MLA Committee on Information Technology

*Presiding:* Carolyn Guertin, Univ. of Texas, Arlington; William Thompson, Western Illinois Univ.

*Speakers:* James Copeland, Ugly Duckling Presse; Gail E. Hawisher, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana; James MacGregor, Public Knowledge Project; Rita Raley, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara; Avi Santo, Old Dominion Univ.; Cynthia L. Selfe, Ohio State Univ., Columbus; Raymond G. Siemens, Univ. of Victoria

This session intends not to bury publishing but to raise awareness of its transformations and continuities as it reconfigures itself. New platforms are causing publishers to return to their roots as booksellers, while booksellers are once again becoming publishers. Open Access models of publishing are creating new models for content creation and distribution as small, print-focused presses are experiencing a renaissance. Come see!

### **Digital Narratives and Gaming for Teaching Language and Literature**

Program arranged by the MLA Committee on Information Technology and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

*Presiding:* Barbara Lafford, Arizona State Univ.

1. "Narrative Expression and Scientific Method in Online Gaming Worlds," Steven Thorne, Portland State Univ.
2. "Designing Narratives: A Framework for Digital Game-Mediated L2 Literacies Development," Jonathon Reinhardt, Univ. of Arizona; Julie Sykes, Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque
3. "Close Playing, Paired Playing: A Practicum," Edmond Chang, Univ. of Washington, Seattle; Timothy Welsh, Univ. of Washington, Seattle

*Respondent:* Dave McAlpine, Univ. of Arkansas, Little Rock

### **#alt-ac: The Future of "Alternative Academic" Careers**

Program arranged by the MLA Office of Programs

*Presiding:* Bethany Nowviskie, Univ. of Virginia

*Speakers:* Donald Brinkman, Microsoft Research; Neil Fraistat, Univ. of Maryland, College Park; Robert Gibbs, Univ. of Toronto; Charles Henry, Council on Library and Information Resources; Bethany Nowviskie; Jason C. Rhody, National Endowment for the Humanities; Elliott Shore, Bryn Mawr Coll.

In increasing numbers, scholars are pursuing careers as "alternative academics"—embracing hybrid and non-tenure-track positions in libraries, presses, humanities and cultural heritage organizations, and digital labs and centers. Speakers represent organizations helping to craft alternatives to the traditional

academic career. Related session: "#alt-ac: Alternative Paths, Pitfalls, and Jobs in the Digital Humanities."

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### **Special Section of *Profession***

CIT chair Laura Mandell, former CIT chair Susan Schreibman, and committee liaison Steve Olsen organized a special section of the 2011 issue of *Profession* on Evaluating Digital Scholarship. The six essays address issues of recognizing, evaluating, and appropriately rewarding the new types of scholarly investigation and communication made possible by digital media. Contents are:

- Introduction. Susan Schreibman (Trinity Coll., Dublin), Laura Mandell (Texas A&M Univ.), and Stephen Olsen (MLA)
- On the Evaluation of Digital Media as Scholarship. Geoffrey Rockwell (Univ. of Alberta)
- Engaging Digital Scholarship: Thoughts on Evaluating Multimedia Scholarship. Steve Anderson (Univ. of Southern California) and Tara McPherson (Univ. of Southern California)
- Where Credit is Due: Preconditions for the Evaluation of Collaborative Digital Scholarship. Bethany Nowviskie (Univ. of Virginia)
- On Creating a Usable Future. Jerome McGann (Univ. of Virginia)
- Peer Review, Judgment, and Reading. Kathleen Fitzpatrick (MLA)

### **MLA Evaluation Wiki**

The committee continued to develop and promote its wiki on the evaluation of digital work for tenure and promotion ([http://wiki.mla.org/index.php/Evaluation\\_Wiki](http://wiki.mla.org/index.php/Evaluation_Wiki)) to serve as an online open-content collaborative of individuals and groups working to develop common resources for the profession. The wiki includes an annotated list of types of digital work, a "Short Guide to the Evaluation of Digital Work," a collection of fictional and real cases with suggestions as to how these cases might be prepared and evaluated, advice on how to document and present digital work for tenure and promotion, a list of frequently asked questions about job seeking in the digital humanities, and a bibliography of additional resources. The committee plans to migrate the MLA Evaluation Wiki into a more user-friendly Web page format to allow easier navigation and nicer presentation of the resource; users will still be allowed to add information through a comments feature.

### **Alt.Careers Discussion Group**

The committee drafted a proposal to create a new MLA discussion group on alternative academic careers. Emerging professionals in language and literature often take new career paths out of graduate school, paths that do not necessarily lead to a tenure-track position and may not even imagine such a position as their destination. They may make horizontal moves in the information economy, not working in traditional academic departments but in museums and libraries and as academic administrators, instructional technologists, cultural heritage workers, grant writers, entrepreneurs, journalists, and project managers in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Nonetheless, these professionals are *our* professionals, trained by the academy, using skills given to them by the academy, and creating knowledge and practices that may be valuable to the academy.

### **Other Outreach**

CIT chair Laura Mandell, former CIT chair Susan Schreibman, and committee liaison Steve Olsen participated in the week-long 2011 NINES/NEH Summer Institute: Evaluating Digital Scholarship, held at the University of Virginia. Thirty people representing a range of institutions, ranks, and involvement with the digital humanities spent five days meeting in plenary panels, discussion groups,

and writing cohorts to address the issues surrounding the evaluation of literary scholarship in digital media in English departments. Their experience will inform the committee's future work on the evaluation of digital scholarship and teaching.

A whitepaper resulted from this meeting called "Digital Humanities Scholarship: Recommendations for Chairs in Language and Literature Departments," by Alison Booth, Pamela K. Gilbert, Steve Olsen, Brad Pasanek, and the 2011 NINES/NEH Summer Institute Group (<http://institutes.nines.org/docs/2011-documents/recommendations-for-chairs/>).

The CIT continues to advise on presentations about digital issues at the ADE and ADFL summer seminars that inform department chairs about how new media are changing the ways scholarship and teaching can be defined, conducted, published, and evaluated.

### **Statements, Guidelines, Consultations**

The committee continued its discussion of the evaluation of digital scholarship and of a revision of the committee guidelines. Proposed revisions will be submitted to the Executive Council.

### **Future Projects and Plans**

The committee plans to continue its collaboration with CAFPRR (the two committees will meet at the same time in fall 2011 to allow direct conversation) about issues of academic freedom and faculty governance raised by faculty teaching and publishing in the digital environment and also continue collaborating with the Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography* about expanding coverage of digital scholarly resources. We continue to confer and collaborate with the Committee on Scholarly Editions in formulating sessions for the annual convention.

The committee is compiling a list of programs offering Digital Humanities Certificates and will identify some other groups engaged in similar efforts to receive the information and that will be more able to provide the maintenance such a resource requires.

All the members of the CIT offer sincerest thanks to its conscientious, dedicated 2010–11 staff liaisons Steve Olsen and Terry Callaghan for their expertise, energy, and unfailing good humor. Without them, whatever successes we have achieved would not have been possible.



Laura Mandell, 2009–11 Chair  
MLA Committee on Information Technology