

Developing digital scholarship: emerging practices in academic libraries

edited by Alison Mackenzie, Lindsey Martin

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In 1990, Ernest Boyer¹, troubled by the emphasis on research rather than on actual teaching, proposed that higher education should eschew the old “teaching versus research” debate. Scholarship, he argued should have four separate yet overlapping meanings: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. Supported by a survey of 5000 US academics, his definition has gained great currency.

The intervening years have witnessed the rise of e-infrastructure - to borrow Research Councils UK definition²: “digitally-based technology (hardware and software), resources (data, services, digital libraries), communications (protocols, access rights and networks), and the people and organisational structures needed to support modern research, be it in the arts and humanities or the sciences”.

This expanded, increasingly digital world of scholarship is the soup in which modern academic librarians swim. Here, new practices are emerging across the board, in discovery, integration, application and teaching. Readers seeking a ‘teach yourself how-to-swim’ book, should probably look elsewhere. Rather, this volume is where to look for examples of libraries demonstrating ‘flexibility and stretch through the remodelling of services and through innovation in forging new partnerships and carving out new roles or applying existing expertise to new situations.’

That *scholarship is scholarship*, be it digital or otherwise, is acknowledged. Through ten well-researched articles, it aims to offer readers, using “a collection of contrasting perspectives, contexts, insights and case studies, an exploration of the relationships between digital scholarship, contemporary academic libraries and professional practice.”

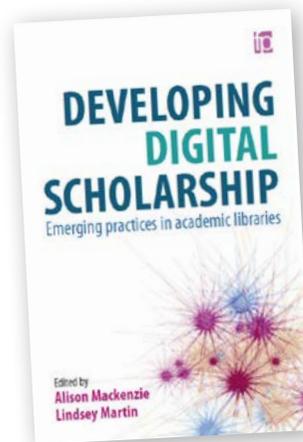
The perspectives are international, mostly UK, US and Australian, and include an Irish case study on the Abbey Theatre digitisation at NUI, Galway. Divided into four sections, the volume starts with a landscape review, proceeds to a section on staffing, followed by a section on spaces and services and finishes on communications and engagement via social networks. A final sum-up chapter by the editors neatly rounds off the work.

The opening chapter is by far the most revealing, with an incisive, thorough and really useful review of the literature by Lindsey Martin. She notes that the existing literature on digital scholarship is ‘neither broad nor deep’. However, what is there is sliced, diced and delicately presented in a series of extended paragraphs dealing with the nature of scholarship itself, digital and associated scholarly practices, digital scholarship as an ideology, its extent and potential. Martin further dissects the literature to offer ‘tantalizing glimpses’ of what we have

learned about digital scholars and their practices, how libraries have repositioned to respond to digital scholarship especially with digital scholarship centres, how we are dealing with new roles and the skills gap, the types of services being offered and the partnerships, strategy and leadership that makes it all possible.

Coherent, well-edited, referenced and indexed, this collection hangs together, with little or no duplication. It is a very welcome addition to the sparse literature on digital scholarship. It offers a lifeline to librarians struggling to develop a coherent response to the challenges posed by the profound changes in scholarship found in modern academia. Anyone seeking to understand why, how and where libraries enable and enrich modern digital scholarship will find it useful.

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1 <https://depts.washington.edu/gs630/Spring/Boyer.pdf>

2 <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/xrcprogrammes/otherprogs/einfrastructure/>