

ASSIGNMENT OPTION 3 IDENTIFY THE MAIN WAYS IN WHICH TRANSFORMATIONS IN PUBLISHING ARE CHANGING THE WAY PEOPLE DO RESEARCH. WHAT ARE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PUBLISHING AND DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP? AND WHAT DO THESE RELATIONSHIPS MAKE POSSIBLE? WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLISHERS AND/OR LIBRARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP?

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Publishing as Sharing:

OBSERVATIONS FROM ORAL HISTORY PRACTICES IN THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Despite the evident general feeling that we experience an information deluge in our daily lives, whether ours is an 'information society' is subject of great debate. The term implies that 'information' is the very defining aspect of today's society, rather than 'agriculture', for example (Bawden & Robinson, 2012); it also implies that at some point in the twentieth century a revolution has taken place, one that would have substituted a previous 'industrial society' for the current 'information society' as it fundamentally disrupted technologies and cultural practices related to human communication. Even though I am not convinced by the idea that we live in a 'new' kind of society, and rather prefer interpretations that identify all the continuities of modernism and capitalism developments through the last century, it is undeniable that recently, in the last decades, transformations in mediated communication have accelerated the production and dissemination of information enormously, increasing the complexity of ways people interact (Borgman et al., 2008).

The widespread use of the Internet and the World Wide Web through cheap, personal digital information computing devices is largely to blame for these profound transformations; the term 'digital', originally applied as synonymous with discrete electronic processing techniques, came to refer to anything related to computers, from electronics to social descriptors (digital divides, digital natives), to emerging fields of inquiry (digital art, digital physics) (Peters, 2016). 'Digital scholarship' fits the latter category; according to Christine Borgman, it 'encompasses the tools, services, and infrastructure that support research in any and all fields of study' (2013). Clearly this is a quite broad definition, but does express the essential idea that scholarly practices and research opportunities have been widened through many new supporting ways. As I will argue here, a leading force defining digital scholarship has been the generalisation, in the digital milieu, of publishing as *sharing*.

'Sharing' as the new rhetoric of publishing

In the book *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society & Culture*, Nicholas John scrutinises the term 'sharing' in its meanings recently acquired through use in the digital realm. Non-metaphorically, John explains, to share is to divide, and at least from the sixteenth century it refers to the distribution of scarce resources; recently, though, it has also been attributed a more abstract communicative dimension: 'a category of speech, a type of talk, characterised by the qualities of openness and honesty, and commonly associated with the values and virtues of trust, reciprocity, equality, and intimacy, among others'; it has become 'the model for a digitally based readjustment of our interactions with things (sharing instead of owning) and with others' (John, 2016). Furthermore, 'sharing' would also mean a positive attitude with regards to future society; John talks in terms of *the promise of sharing*:

The promise of sharing is at least twofold. On the one hand, there is the promise of honest and open (computer-mediated) communication between individuals; the promise of knowledge of the self and of the other based on the verbalisation of our inner thoughts and feelings. On the other hand, there is the promise of improving what many hold to be an unjust state of affairs in the realms of both production and consumption; the promise of an end to alienation, exploitation, self-centred greed, and breathtaking wastefulness. (John, 2016)

Publishing after the digital boom—and specifically after the Internet and the World Wide Web having taken over a large share of our usual communication routines—, I argue, has a meaning which is becoming more and more inter-sectioned with that of 'sharing' we are referring to here. Digital publishing and 'sharing' are intertwined as both follow a 'distributive logic' more sustainable and alternative to capitalism models of production and consumption (John, 2016); publishing has had its definition widened as well as its actors and subjects and, just as 'sharing', it 'plays heavily on interpersonal relations, promising to introduce you to your neighbours, for instance, or to reinstate the sense of community that has been driven out by, say, the alienation supposedly typical of modern urban life' (John, 2016): it is now part of everybody's daily activities, and not just a specialised profession.

This 'publishing as sharing' new notion is in accordance with the new paradigm of *openness* in digital scholarship. Publishing processes had to be readapted, some of them radically, both to developments in digital technologies and to the pervasive digital 'sharing'; when it comes to academic publishing and research practices, that means 'open scholarship', as in making your research data available in a repository for consultation and reuse; 'open access', as in publishing free from charge academic articles that would initially be charged for in digital journals; and 'open dissemination', as the idea behind institutional websites like Oxford University Research Archive (two screenshots below), a friendly, searchable repository of research outputs, including many open-access articles.



In this essay, I use the debates on Oral History in the Digital Humanities to support the presentation of some of the relationships between publishing and digital scholarship and their implications, as well as challenges and opportunities that should concern those involved in both publishing and library & information science.

NEW STANDARDS IN ORAL HISTORY widening scholarship practices through digital publishing

The transformations in scholarship brought about by the universe of digital possibilities and the World Wide Web abound, but not many fields have been impacted as much as oral history. In the introduction to *Oral history in the digital humanities: voice, access, and engagement* (Boyd & Larson, 2014), the authors provide an overview of the developments in oral history and highlights how they were heavily influenced by the changing recording technologies of the last decades; if affordable and accessible new analogue technologies helped establish oral

history as a compelling methodology for historical research in the 1960s, the transcript of the audio recordings still posed a great challenge from the library/archival perspective: as text, they were considered a more efficient communication than the recording, easier to go through looking for specific bits of information; 'without the transcript, the archive might have no more information about an oral history interview on its shelves beyond a name, a date, and the association with a particular project', and oral history collections (of cassettes) were always under the threat of obscurity, with no perspective of use or discovery (Boyd & Larson, 2014). Digital technologies, however, came to solve not only these problems but, with the World Wide Web, also give new and widened meanings for *access*; as the authors pointed out, 'Digital technologies posed numerous opportunities to explore new models for automating access and providing contextual frameworks to encourage more meaningful interactions with researchers as well as with community members represented by a particular oral history project'. In this essay, I present four main changes in publishing after the 'digital shift' (publishing = sharing) as we can identify from oral history's new practices in research and dissemination:

1 • the 'democratic spirit' Boyd & Larson talk about a 'democratic spirit' found in both oral history and the digital humanities as 'the sense that the materials created, shared, generated, or parsed belong to everyone—not just to the educated or the well-to-do, but to those outside the university walls as well as those within'. Indeed, oral historians are obviously interested in history from 'bottom-up', the one that can be found and captured in common people's voices, and are then characterised by adopting a more 'democratic' approach to historical inquiry, one that assumes collective participation in the creation of materials; in combination with the digital humanities, this inclusion of people in the *creation* process extends also to people's *access* to these materials (Boyd & Larson, 2014); oral history's 'democratic' values and preconditions are enhanced and find fertile ground in digital publishing. As we can read from the Founding Statement of *The Journal for MultiMedia History* of the University at Albany, a website that used to publish oral history collections:

[it is] *because* so much of what we were doing as professional historians seemed so isolating that we wanted to "get out on the Web", to reach not only academicians, but an entire universe of interested readers. We wanted to bring serious historical scholarship and pedagogy under the scrutiny of amateurs and professionals alike, to utilise the promise of digital technologies to expand history's boundaries, merge its forms, and promote and legitimate innovations in teaching and research that we saw emerging all around us (Zahavi & Zelizer, 1998)

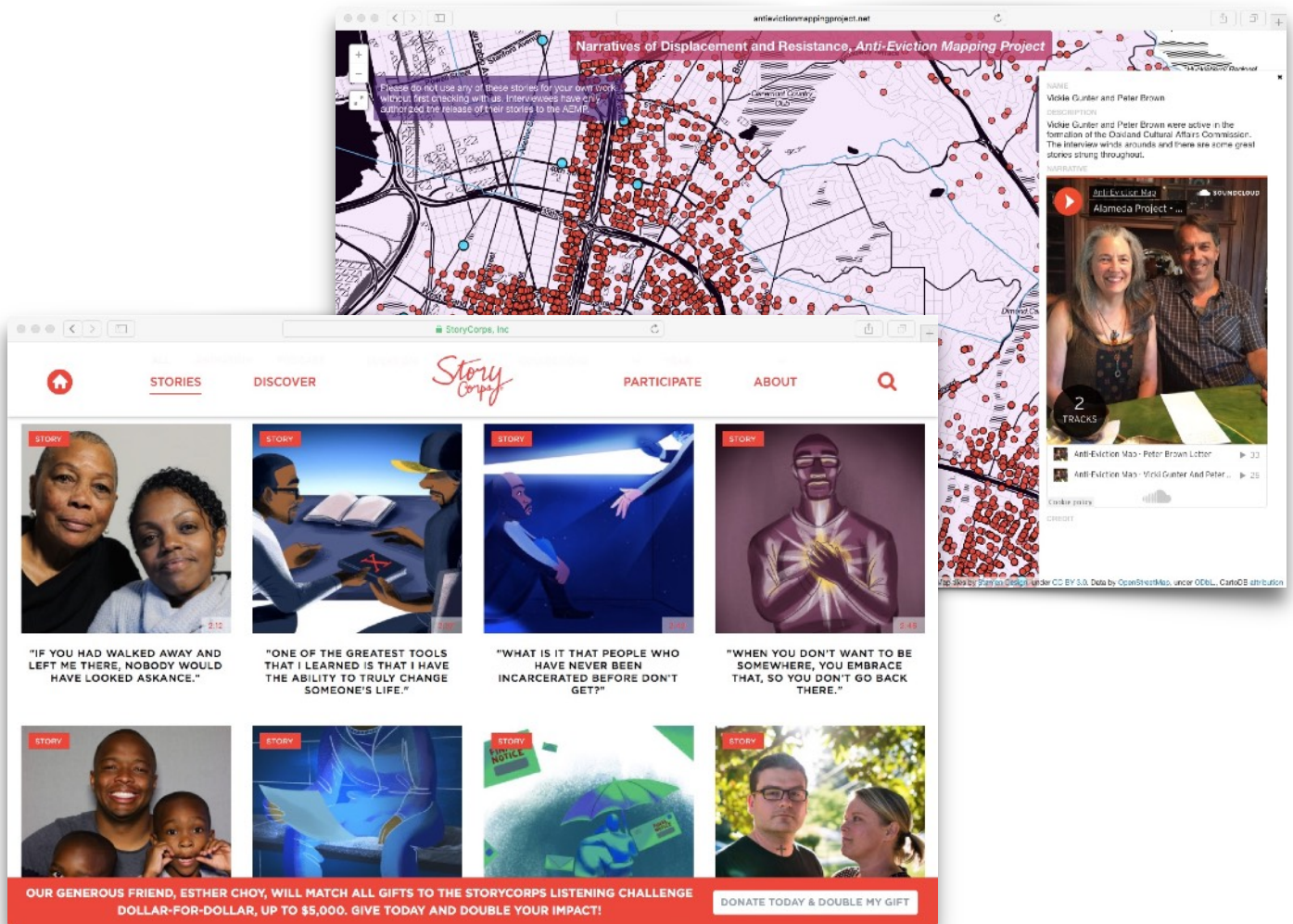
I understand this 'democratic spirit', as Boyd & Larson put it, as a manifestation of one of the transitions in authorship in the digital realm, 'From Intellectual Property to the Gift Economy', suggested by Kathleen Fitzpatrick in her book *Planned obsolescence: publishing, technology, and the future of the academy*. If academics and publishers are to restore scholarly communication's origins and work towards genuinely open practices of producing and sharing academic content, she argues, then scholars must embrace the Creative Commons licenses for their work, 'thus defining for themselves the extent to which they want future scholars to be able to

reuse and remix their texts, thereby both protecting their right to be credited as the author of their texts and contributing to a vibrant intellectual commons that will genuinely ‘promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts.’” (Fitzpatrick, 2011; citing the U.S. Constitution).

Oral history research output has always been a complicated type of material in terms of authorship, ownership, and rights; whole collections cannot be made accessible because of copyright issues, e.g. the interviewer has deceased and did not leave any documentation on the matter behind. But online, it is becoming more common to apply CC licenses to oral history interviews through the interviewees consent forms, as in the words of an oral historian, ‘it clearly keeps the copyright in the hands of the oral history interview participant, but allows us to freely share the recording and transcript on our open-access public history website and library repository, where individuals and organisations may copy and circulate it, with credit to the original source’ (Simpson, 2012). The ‘democratic’ solution seems to be already available for academics, but the challenge now is to promote the CC license as such; academic and librarian Jane Secker seems to be on the right track when she refers to ‘copyright literacy’ as closely related to information literacy, to be of concern to everyone who ‘owns a device with access to the internet’ (Secker, 2017).

2 • ‘share your story’: authorship, collaboration, crowdsourcing Co-authorship in interviewing projects is nothing new, but collaborative work tends to become the norm when we consider oral history as related to and part of the digital humanities. If oral history has always been distinct from other practices in the humanities, as it often holds certain complexity with regards to authorship—who is the author of an interview, the interviewer, the interviewee, or both? Or none?—, this complexity has been successfully embraced in the digital realm. With crowdsourced websites like StoryCorps.org and AntiEvictionMappingProject.net (below), anyone is encouraged to ‘share their story’ and take part as author of a larger narrative, comprised of the collection of stories that assemble an inconstant, growing whole.

Furthermore, as a oral history collection is published online and becomes a website, new roles which can arguably be corresponded to that of an author become essential: ‘While there are always two (and sometimes more) participants in the initial recording of an oral history, I would argue that there are three primary players in the presentation and preservation of a digital oral history once it has been recorded—the oral historian, the collection manager, and the Information Technology (IT) specialist. These three roles may, in some programs, actually be represented by the same person, but there are specific concerns and responsibilities particular to each’ (Schneider; In Boyd & Larson, 2014). In that sense, oral history is indeed in conformity with the basis of the digital humanities, understood as contrast to the essentially mono-authorial and monographic traditional processes and outputs of research in the humanities; as *The DH Manifesto 2.0* states: ‘Digital Humanities = **Co-creation**’ (The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0, 2009; In Boyd & Larson, 2014).



This is not to say that digital humanities has not been disruptive to previous practices in the humanities; on the contrary, it appears that the sciences have found continuity and enhancement of their procedures and methods in the digital realm, given that, as Gross & Harmon argue, in the sciences 'collaboration was already flourishing; the Internet greatly facilitated it, among not only networked scientists from around the globe but also armies of citizen-scientists participating through websites like GalaxyZoo' (Gross & Harmon, 2016). Knowledge in the humanities, in contrast, the authors argue, build up as 'a chain of *individual* achievements. Even in the 21st century, collaboration in the humanities, though more common than previously, is not common at all. When it does occur, only two scholars are usually involved. There is a sense that these achievements ought to be individual.' The humanities seem to be lagging behind the sciences in terms of being able to embrace the web's possibilities, as we can see from some online journals: *The Oral History Review* by Oxford Academic, for example, presents no audio recording files or any other interactive feature, just the traditional pdf, authorial, text article. Institutional digital publishing in the humanities would greatly benefit from more 'digital' explorations of content and linking, but that obviously involves difficult changes in well-established mindsets and practices with regards to the notion of the strong individual author and the acclaimed, recognition-provider, conventional text based academic journal article.

3 • ‘archive everything’ A habit that is being abandoned thanks to the possibilities of digital archiving and storage is getting rid of the audio recordings of oral history once they have been transcribed. Now, researchers are not only able to keep the audio recordings and their many versions and editions, but also house and organise the interview collections using digital depositories and content management systems like CONTENTdm, and also enhance access to the interviews with OHMS (Oral History Metadata Synchronizer), which connects search terms with the online audio or video (website screenshot below) (Boyd & Larson, 2014). Usability and discoverability issues are being sorted out by the ‘archive everything’ (Giannachi, 2016) trend that comes with publishing-as-sharing practices.

The **Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History** at the University of Kentucky Libraries has created a web-based system called OHMS (Oral History Metadata Synchronizer) to inexpensively and efficiently enhance access to oral history online. OHMS provides users word-level search capability and a time-correlated transcript or indexed interview connecting the textual search term to the corresponding moment in the recorded interview online.

The primary purpose for OHMS is to empower users to more effectively and efficiently discover information in an online oral history interview by connecting the user from a search result to the corresponding moment in an interview. OHMS is an open source, web-based application designed to improve the user experience you provide for oral history, no matter what CMS or repository you use. There are 2 main components of the OHMS system

- **OHMS Application:** The OHMS application is where the work is done. This is the back-end, web-based application where interviews are imported, and metadata is created. In the OHMS application transcripts are time-coded and/or interviews are indexed. Upon completion, the interview record (including the synchronized transcript and/or time-coded index) are exported as an XML file. When located on a web server, the OHMS XML file is what interfaces with your content management system through the OHMS Viewer.

IMPORTANT LINKS

- Request OHMS Account
- Download Latest Version
- Discussion: Google Group
- History of OHMS
- Log in to OHMS
- OHMS Workshops and Training
- Contact
- Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History

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The ‘archive everything’ new paradigm is becoming such a norm in digital scholarship that Fitzpatrick talks about a ‘database-driven scholarship’, that refers to new kinds of research questions made possible through the online availability of collections of digital objects (Fitzpatrick, 2014). Nyhan & Flinn also mention a ‘rubric’ in the present research agenda of the *digital* humanities as one that looks back at humanities questions long asked and attempt to ask them in new ways, and to identify new questions that could not be conceived of explored before (Nyhan & Flinn, 2016); academic digital datasets, databases and archives are greatly responsible and enablers of these new opportunities. Gross & Harmon use a prize-winning monograph as an example of how current possibilities help ‘historians see anew’: Pohlandt-McCormick’s research on the Soweto uprising uses

‘photographs and official documents as an archive that can supplement, even interrogate the traditional historical archive. Her monograph contains 743 images and reproductions of some 200 written documents in all, a trove hard to imagine in a conventional book. These images and documents are reproduced in an “Archive” in her e-book, and select ones are integrated into the text and hyperlinked to supplementary information.’ (Gross & Harmon, 2016). Of course, database and archival academic websites are not just *product* of research, but increasingly made available as opportunity for other researchers to come up with *new inquiries* from them. That is one of the ideas behind making research data accessible as requirement in journal publications; Gross & Harmon cite *Science’s* stated policy as now typical: ‘As a condition of publication, authors must agree to make available all data necessary to understand and assess the conclusions of the manuscript to any reader of *Science*’.

With the ‘archive everything’ practices and the emergence of digital collections of data and documents, comes the increasing significance of the activity of *curation*, meaning ‘making arguments through objects as well as words, images, and sounds’ (Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0, 2009). For Fitzpatrick, curation relates to another shift in authorship that she identifies as ‘from originality to remix’:

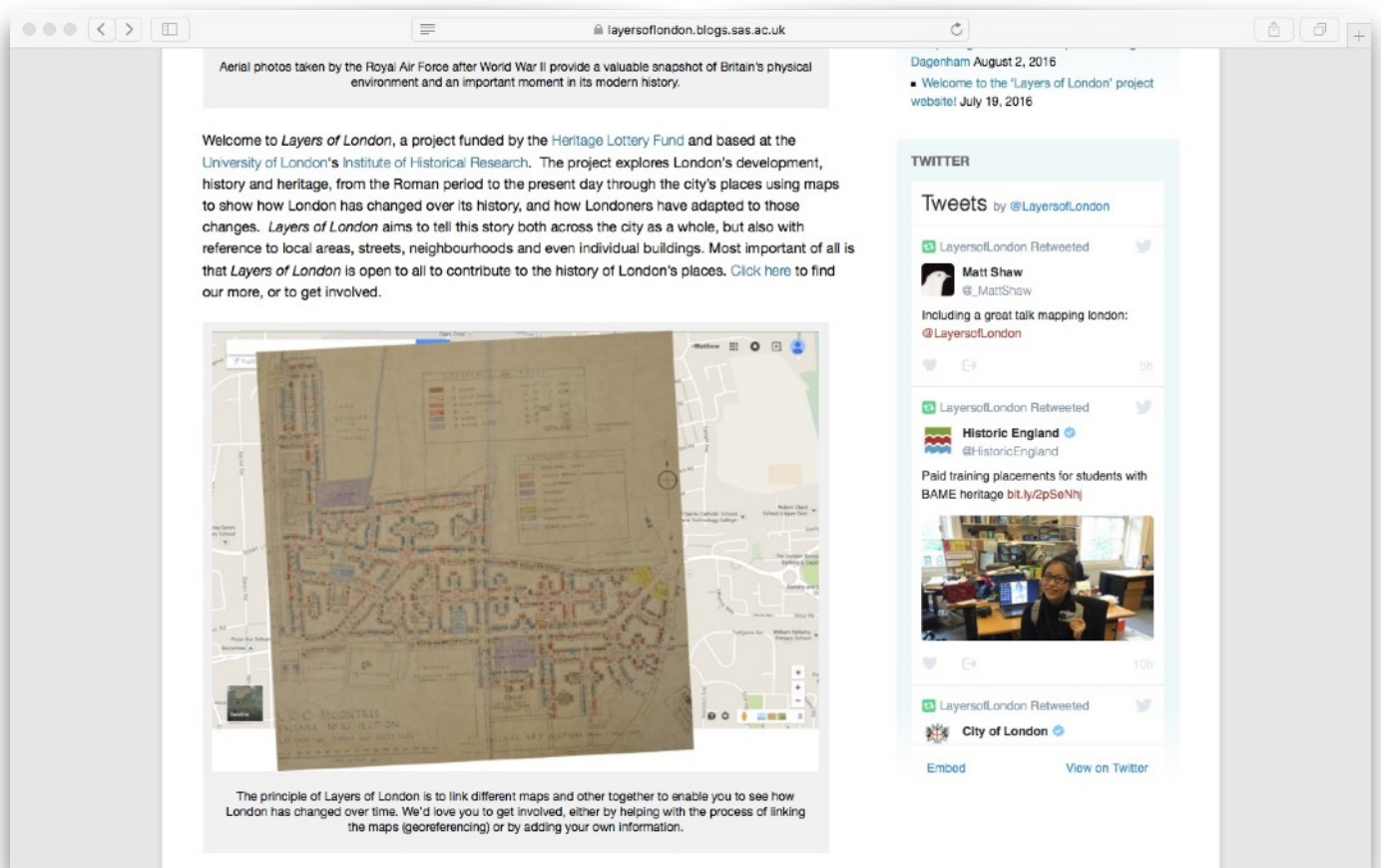
We might, for instance, find our values shifting away from a sole focus on the production of unique, original new arguments and texts to consider instead curation as a valid form of scholarly activity, in which the work of authorship lies in the imaginative bringing together of multiple threads of discourse that originate elsewhere, a potentially energising form of argument via juxtaposition. (Fitzpatrick, 2011)

But just as difficult as establishing this kind of curation as legitimate academic work is enhancing the reusability of these valuable datasets and digital archives; just requiring data sharing seems to be not enough. If we want to ‘archive everything’, discoverability and dissemination are essential, but cannot happen without solid institutional base and support: storage must be big, URLs must always work, metadata and indexing must be precise and efficient.

CONCLUSION

academic publishing *should* be about sharing

Layers of London is a project being undertaken in the University of London’s Institute of Historical Research, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund; It ‘will bring together, for the first time, digitised heritage assets provided by key partners across London including: the British Library, London Metropolitan Archives, Historic England, The National Archives, MOLA. These will be linked in an innovative new website which will allow you to create and interact with many different *layers* of London’s history from the Romans to the present day. The layers include historic maps, images of buildings, films as well as information about people who have lived and worked in London over the centuries.’ (screenshot below) (Layers of London, 2017). It is still being developed at this moment, but it is working hard on its dissemination, as ‘a major element of the project will be work with the



public at borough level and city-wide, through crowd-sourcing, volunteer, schools and internship programmes. Everyone is invited to contribute material to the project by uploading materials relating to the history of any place in London. This may be an old photograph, a collection of transcribed letters, or the results of local research project' (Layers of London, 2017). So, instead of an individual historical research on London mapping that would traditionally be published as textual product, Layers of London is an open, funded website being built in an academic institution as platform for voluntary contributions; it has a blog, a twitter account, and instead of an 'author', a team of director, development officer, administrator, and digital mapping advisor. It represents all shifts in authorship as proposed by Fitzpatrick: 'from product to process'; 'from individual to collaborative'; 'from originality to remix'; 'from intellectual property to the gift economy'; and 'from text to... something more' (Fitzpatrick, 2011); and just like contemporary oral history projects, its success will be 'measured by metrics pertaining to accessibility, discovery, engagement, usability, reuse, and ... impact on both community and scholarship.' (Boyd & Larson, 2014).

As an open digital humanities work that fully embraces the possibilities of the web, however, it faces all the challenges that this kind of academic digital publication today usually does, including the recognition that it might even *count* as academic research. Fitzpatrick points out: 'The key, as usual, will be convincing ourselves that this mode of work counts as work—that in the age of the network, the editorial or curatorial labor of bringing together texts and ideas might be worth as much as, perhaps even more than that, production of new

texts.’ (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This ‘convincing ourselves’ effort involves the difficult task of rethinking university practices and the academic career, which simply cannot afford to shy away from the disruptive impact of digital publishing as sharing. The humanities in special has been trying to work itself out with the *digital* humanities; according to Nyhan & Flinn, another ‘rubric’ of the DH ‘has a distinct activist mission in that it looks at structures, relationships and processes that are typical of the modern university (for example, publication practices, knowledge creation and divisions between certain categories of staff and faculty) and questions how they may be reformed, re-explored or re-conceptualised.’ (Nyhan & Flinn, 2016).

It must be a concern and responsibility of the university to establish and guarantee academic publishing as sharing, addressing today’s unsustainable models of publishing and embracing the shifting, more open forms of scholarly communication and research; I agree with Fitzpatrick: ‘Publishing the work of its faculty must be reconceived as a central element of the university’s mission.’ (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Librarians have significant roles to perform on this mission; the web is not a library, but librarians can help ensure it is used in its full potential: as a world wide networked communication system. And can help to let publishing be about sharing.

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