One Ring or Many?
Sustaining Long-form Digital Scholarship in the Humanities in the United States

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Director, University of Michigan Press
“digital sovereignty”

“lots of copies keep us safe”
Three themes driving change from the “monograph” to “long-form digital object”

- Economic sustainability
- Low public engagement
- Static formats and limited experimentation
Key interventions in the US

- **Government**, especially National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)
- **Provosts and Presidents**, especially Association of American Universities (AAU)
- **Private Foundations**, especially Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- **Coalitions of Libraries**, especially via Knowledge Unlatched and Lever Press
NEH - Humanities Open Book Program

• Strong focus on engagement - part of “Humanities in the Public Square” initiative
• Strong emphasis on marketing as well as production

• Focused on backlist titles
• Around 1,200 books made available OA as EPUBs
• Development and sharing of best practices required

• In collaboration with the Mellon Foundation

National Endowment for the Humanities and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Announce Grants to Make Books Available to Public Audiences

SECOND ROUND OF HUMANITIES OPEN BOOK GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON (April 5, 2017) — Today the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the largest funders of the humanities in the United States, announced eight grants totaling nearly $600,000 that will transform important humanities texts into freely available ebooks.

The second round of funding for the Humanities Open Book program, offered jointly by NEH and Mellon, will make awards to publishers that have identified more than 400 significant books that enhance public knowledge of topics such as American philosophy, Hawaiian and Pacific languages, and women’s history. With NEH and Mellon support, publishers will digitize these books, secure permissions from copyright holders, and release them online for access by public audiences. (See list of projects below.)

Since the first Humanities Open Book grants were announced in December 2015, publishers and libraries across the United States have launched programs to release scholarly books that are largely out-of-print or unavailable to readers who lack access to research libraries. In 2016, Cornell University Press unveiled Cornell Open, a website with a growing collection of free ebooks that are ready for download by teachers, students, and the general public.

The Humanities Open Book program is part of the NEH’s agency-wide initiative The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square, which seeks to demonstrate and enhance the role and significance of the humanities and humanities scholarship in public life.

“Too many out-of-print books are gathering dust instead of being put to use,” said NEH Chairman William D. Adams. “The National Endowment for the Humanities is proud to partner with the Mellon Foundation to help digitize these valuable resources and bring them to computers, phones, and e-readers everywhere.”

“Academic and non-academic researchers increasingly use the Internet as a source of information and a vehicle for disseminating the results of their work,” said Earl Lewis, President of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. “Today, more than ever, scholars, teachers, students, and members of the public need access on the Internet to reliable and authoritative works that were previously published but are now out-of-print. The Humanities Open Book initiative seeks to help provide that much-needed access.”
AAU - Open Access Monograph Initiative

- Mixed focus on sustainability and incentivizing experimentation
- Concentrated on front list books
- 12 founding universities, more to come
- 5 years x $45,000 per year commitment from each institution
- ca. 3 new OA books per year per institution expected
- In collaboration with ARL and AAUP
Mellon Foundation

- Focus on experimentation
- Support for new publishing platforms in presses and libraries
- Studies of costs of publishing, both across the system and individually
- Investigations of specific parts of the publishing process, e.g., peer review, contracts, supply chain
- Development of new tools
- Emphasis on shared infrastructure
Coalitions of Libraries

- Knowledge Unlatched focused on **sustainability**: In KU Select 2016 343 already-commissioned books from 55 publishers. < 300 libraries paying around $10,000 a year

- Lever Press focused on **experimentation**: > 50 liberal arts college libraries paying between $2,000 and $8,000 a year, 60 front list titles by 2020 with emphasis on digital scholarship

- As well as various small membership schemes supporting Open Library of the Humanities, Luminos, Open Book Publishers, etc.
Early Effects of Interventions

1. Are these programs creating sustainability for monograph publishers?

2. Are these programs increasing public engagement with long form scholarly publications?

3. Are these programs incentivizing more experimentation in publishing formats?
1. Creating **sustainability**?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Short Title</th>
<th>TOTAL COST</th>
<th>LTD Net Sales (All Formats)</th>
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<td>Usher</td>
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<td>$43,508.97</td>
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<td>Identity, Place, and Subversion in Contemporary Mizrahi Cinema</td>
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<td>Muy Pop</td>
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<td>Kraus</td>
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<td>Morrison</td>
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<td>Williams</td>
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<td>Eaverly</td>
<td>Tan Men / Pale Women: Color and Gender in Archaic Greece</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$23,505.84</td>
<td>$15,773.04</td>
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2. Increasing public engagement?

"The Open Access mission is f***ing awesome. Thank you for providing this in a downloadable PDF. You guys are doing it right. Delighted to have this resource."
3. Incentivizing experimentation in formats?
Next steps?

- **Funding:** We particularly need to address the free-rider problem. More universities need to be supporting the costs of publishing their own scholars’ long-form works. Aligning benefits with costs.

- **Finding and getting:** Open access books and new formats need to pass more easily through the information supply chain – affects reputation, preservation, as well as discoverability.

- **Return on investment:** Indicators of engagement need to be aggregated, analyzed, and presented to authors, funders, publishers.

- **Author buy-in:** Some scholars/certain fields are enthusiastic about “digital scholarship”, some on “open access” but there is much confusion. Identify the key adopters and respond to their motivations.

- **Collaboration:** We need to ensure sharing of technology, tools, best practices across experimental projects, while acknowledging the varying needs of different disciplines and fields.
Thank You

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