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Digital Humanities Project Management as Scholarly Exchange

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In this paper I take somewhat of a polemical approach in my argument that, along with more recognisable scholarly practices such as researching, writing, making, and publishing, project management is a key scholarly practice in the digital humanities and in the humanities more broadly. I hope this polemical approach will force humanists (digital and not) out of their lack of self-awareness about—or perhaps it might be better described as their deliberate disinterest in reflecting on—the crucial place of management in ensuring the maintenance and continuance of scholarly exchange, particularly in the digital humanities (DH).¹ This paper calls for a recognition of the digital humanities project manager as a research collaborator rather than a service worker.² I begin my discussion by defining the term “scholarly exchange” and describing the negative view of management in the humanities before arguing that scholarly exchange has always required managed collaboration, but that the managers are unfairly devalued as mere service workers. I then argue that collaborative digital humanities projects can offer a rich and invigorating opportunity for scholarly exchange that stands in stark contrast to the impoverished forms currently dominating academia. The DH project manager’s key role, I argue, is to model how the project’s scholarly exchange will take advantage of this opportunity, which involves four key foci: defining the bargain with team members; translating between team members; facilitating perpetual peer review; and researching scholarly exchange. Far from being an interloper into the digital humanities, project management and the project manager can be a key practice and role in realising a more fulfilling ecosystem of scholarly exchange.

Scholarly Exchange and the Problem with “Management”

I want to begin by defining and explaining the significance of the term “scholarly exchange.” I use this term instead of “scholarly communication,” “scholarship,” or “research,” for two reasons: One, it is capacious enough to incorporate and represent *all* of the activities (not just publishing) that are a part of the scholarly research process and that make up what I call the life-cycle of scholarly projects, including but not limited to ideation, planning, discovery, analysis, creation, review, and dissemination. Two, the term “scholarly exchange” foregrounds something that is often obscured or forgotten about scholarship: it is fundamentally reciprocal in nature. The people who are engaged in scholarship operate with a tacit understanding that it is imperative to share their ideas, feedback, projects, and time because they exist in a scholarly ecosystem where this results in things being shared *with them* (knowledge, skills, credit, mentorship, assessment, etc.) and that this is the necessary condition for

their professional development, for the ongoing functioning of their professional communities, and for the viability of academia itself. There tends to be an unacknowledged conflation in academia between “scholarly activity” and “publishing”—one need only look at the structure of the conventional academic CV, which typically has a section specifically designated, not “scholarship,” but “publications”—with subsections for various types of publication such as books, edited volumes, refereed journal articles, and book chapters.³ However, it has to be pointed out, because an individual scholar is not simultaneously researcher, writer, peer reviewer, and editor, publication is not something that an individual scholar accomplishes on their own: such scholarly activity depends on other scholarly activities performed by other scholars. When it is accepted that *all* activities (including such things as journal editing and peer reviewing) that represent the necessary conditions for the production of scholarship take place within a system of exchange, this enables an understanding of project management as a scholarly activity that is a part of that exchange system.⁴

When discussing project management in the digital humanities, it is helpful to observe at the outset that “management” is not a particularly valorized term in the humanities. “Management” is what the business school teaches, not what the humanities practices or values, the thinking goes. Regarded as a cold, profit-driven business mechanism rather than a key aspect of scholarly practice, humanities faculty typically bristle at the idea that their research (individual or even collaborative) should be subject to managerial protocols and oversight—an attitude only exacerbated by the pervasive administrative control exercised over their professional lives as a result of the neoliberal corporatisation of the university.⁵ This linking of managerialism with neoliberalism explains why the digital humanities have been accused (along with many other transgressions against the humanities) of really being, according to Daniel Allington, the “managerial humanities.”⁶ Building on accusations of DH being an unholy alliance of the humanities and Silicon Valley startup hype, Allington argues that because DH projects often require substantial grants (usually to employ research assistants and technicians) and because these grants require strict administration and reporting, this turns researchers into project managers (which, Allington presumes, is a bad thing).⁷ However, in response to Allington, I argue that in the humanities we always have necessarily been engaged in a process of managed collaboration, and that in project-based digital humanities, that managed collaboration becomes not only more legible through a necessary focus on determining or modeling the process of research (as well as monitoring, modifying and documenting that process)—a focus, in other

words, on a project's scholarly exchange—but it becomes one of the key benefits, indeed one of the pleasures, of DH scholarship, in contrast to the impoverished forms of managed collaboration that characterize the traditional practices of scholarly exchange in the humanities.

“Embedded, if Dormant”: Managed Collaboration in the Humanities

The image of the self-sufficient lone genius is one of the most pernicious and pathetic idealisations of ivory-tower academicism, especially in the humanities. It is also utterly false. In her chapter on “Authorship,” from her book *Planned Obsolescence*, Kathleen Fitzpatrick proposes to examine authorship from a different perspective. She examines it from “within the framework of an ongoing conversation, a process of communication among peers that can be promoted and supported by the technologies of the internet,” a framework which she notes has “always been embedded, if dormant, in many of our authorship practices” (56). She argues that “the key issue is interaction. The author is not operating—and has never operated—in a vacuum, but has always been a participant in an ongoing conversation” (56).⁸ The fact is that single-authored journal articles and monographs, the so-called “gold standard” of research output in the humanities, would be impossible without collaboration and management with and by others. All scholarship involves engaging in collaboration with other scholars, even if that is conducted solely through the medium of the published work of these other scholars. Like many of the practices in the humanities, there is a tacit understanding operating here that is generally overlooked and, as I argue later, one of the most valuable aspects of DH project management is its ability to make open to scrutiny many tacitly understood practices. Why do scholars in the humanities produce and disseminate scholarship? To respond to previous scholarship by extending it, problematizing it, critiquing it, repurposing it, and informing the subsequent scholarship of other researchers: in essence scholars expect that, through various means of dissemination, their scholarship will be used to facilitate the research of others, in the same way that their own scholarship was facilitated. The entire practice of citation is predicated on an understanding that humanities disciplines are engaged in large-scale dialogue and collaboration through the various systems that enable scholarly exchange. If there was no expectation that we would have to engage in a conversation with existing scholarship, we would be doing little more than personal journaling about our subject.

These systems of scholarly exchange are not spontaneously or naturally occurring. They are, in fact, purposefully constructed systems in which scholarly projects are deliberately managed to enable their successful completion. A conference paper, a journal article, and a monograph are projects—a project being defined as a focused set of activities with a clearly articulated goal and set of conditions that must be met to fulfil that goal. Even individual scholarly projects are managed: Academic work that is not managed (and therefore is not collaborative) does not end up entering the system of scholarly exchange at all.

To make this evident, consider the traditional conference paper, journal article, and monograph, the modes in which collaborations currently occur. Conferences are collaborations between program committee members who assemble a program and put out a call for papers and the authors who shape abstracts in response. Conferences also include the collaboration of peer reviewers (as respondents and discussants) and the editors of proceedings and journal special issues. Similarly, journal articles and submissions to edited book collections are projects that involve collaboration between the author, journal editors, peer reviewers, and editorial staff. Even the scholarly monograph, the most traditional form of individual academic achievement, is necessarily a managed collaborative project. Although typically seen as a product of the lone scholar, this only applies, if at all, to an early stage of development. When it comes to the prospectus, submission and publication stage, the writer (at least ideally) works with an editor, who I would argue, acts in many ways as a project manager does. Both editors and project managers consider the feasibility of a project and suggest modifications to its overall structure, provide feedback on organisation and content, facilitate peer review, oversee revisions, and assist with logistical details such as apparatus creation (e.g., indexes), book design, and timelines. If in doubt, one only needs to turn to the acknowledgements section of a monograph, book, or essay. Here the author showers members of the team and others with effusive praise and openly admits that the project would not have been possible without collaboration.⁹

Humanities scholars often forget that without the people, practices, and systems I have detailed above, no scholarship as we currently know it would ever be produced. And when it is pointed out that all our scholarship is enabled by this managed collaboration, the tendency is to either delegitimize managers and collaborators (many of whom are junior scholars or peers working towards or holding advanced degrees) through dishonest and self-serving appeals to hierarchies—that is, by saying that the collaborator was “only” a graduate research assistant, “only” a librarian, “only” an editor, or by designating collaboration as “service” or contractual employment.

Performance assessments are supposedly based on a scholar's professional activities in the areas of research, teaching and service (often 40/40/20). This issue was a major focus for the 1996 study by the MLA Commission on Professional Service. It is exacerbated by the neoliberal university, which insists, in terms of research, on overvaluing sole creation and undervaluing co-creation (which can be difficult to numerically quantify) and of measuring research productivity solely in quantitative terms, based on tangible end-products or "deliverables" such as number of publications, amount of grant dollars, or journal prestige/impact factor. This results in everything that contributed to the *production* of a scholarly "deliverable" being counted (if it is counted at all) as "service," which often seems equivalent to "things that academics would rather not have (but need) to do." These things are, in the overall scheme, largely unvalued by tenure and promotion committees, leading to problems such as a chronic deficit in peer review pools, labour which is often disproportionately taken on by marginalised academics.

In response to this devaluation, I argue that the "service" label should only apply to work associated with administering academic units like departments and degree programs and other aspects of academic governance, be that intramural (e.g., acting as a member of a University Senate) or extramural (e.g., acting as an officer of, say, a professional advocacy organisation like the Canadian Association of University Teachers). All activities associated with the facilitation of scholarly exchange should be categorised as "research" and not as "service," and should be properly evaluated as scholarly work. In arguing this, I am in broad agreement with the MLA Commission on Professional Service report, "Making Faculty Work Visible: Reinterpreting Professional Service, Teaching, and Research in the Fields of Language and Literature," which includes reviewing manuscripts, editing, and "collecting and distributing information through electronic forums" as components of academic citizenship in the area of research and scholarship (178; see also 181).¹⁰ Such a move would enable project management, along with other forms of scholarly collaboration, to be recognised and evaluated as scholarly activity, which itself would hopefully mainstream formal mechanisms for crediting the work of collaborators who are essential for all scholarly exchange. This hope is tempered somewhat by the recognition that it has been twenty-five years since the MLA's report was released: a report which insisted that intellectual work "is not restricted to research and scholarship [i.e., publishing] but is also a component of teaching and service" and called for all intellectual work in academia to be fairly evaluated and credited (162).

The Impoverishment of Traditional Scholarly Exchange

Why are these systems of managed collaboration, which are essential to the production and exchange of scholarship, so downplayed and so devalued in the humanities? This is in large part due to the traditional forms and processes through which scholarship circulates, a highly imbalanced, constrained, and thus impoverished form of scholarly exchange that only begins at a late stage of the research lifecycle. Typically, with journal articles and monographs, substantive scholarly exchange only commences at the peer review stage—that is, after the project has already been reified in what the author considers to be a penultimate (but more or less final) state. Here the exchange is (usually) anonymized and indirect, conducted through a third party (an editor), who largely acts as a delivery mechanism by sending the manuscript to reviewers and the reviewers' reports to the author, rather than a facilitator of dialogue. This is not a criticism of blind peer review; rather, it is a criticism of blind peer review being the first and most direct point of (and standing in for) scholarly exchange in the lifecycle of a research project.¹¹ Additionally, the scholarly exchange that ensues upon publication is highly attenuated and fragmented: the author's response to the peer review is reflected in any revisions made in the final version submitted for publication, and subsequent "dialogue" comes via citations and responses in reviews and other scholarly works, responses which come too late to be addressed in the work itself.

Even the ostensibly most open, dynamic and immediate form of traditional scholarly exchange, the conference presentation, is focussed on showcasing completed work or reporting findings (even when the projects are in development). This makes it little more than publication through oral delivery. This, to my mind, goes against the spirit of a scholarly conference, which is meant to bring together people to talk over issues and ideas that are in formation. Instead of featuring scholarly exchange at the reporting stage of the research cycle, conferences should be about sharing work at the ideation stage of a project and getting broad and substantive feedback. A model I like to point to here are the "brainstorming" sessions we occasionally convene at the Centre for Digital Humanities (CDH) at Ryerson University. A scholar brings a digital project proposal and a probing, speculative, and lively discussion ensues on ways in which the project could be focused and developed. The ultimate goal for the CDH in sponsoring these sessions is a concrete project design, a grant application and an affiliation with the Centre, with constant dialogue taking place with the Centre's research community as the project develops. This substantive scholarly exchange is a kind of a "perpetual peer review," which I will later argue is one of the components that

make DH projects and their management a more fulfilling instantiation of scholarly exchange.

It is due to the impoverishment of the scholarly exchange within traditional modes of scholarly communication that the management of the projects that circulate within them is seen more often than not as an uncongenial service obligation that “somebody has to do.” It is impossible in the current system to regard such management as the fostering of, and participation in, a rich exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Project Management in Digital Humanities: Modelling Scholarly Exchange

As I have argued, traditional humanities scholarship necessarily consists of managed collaborative projects. The collaborative projects common to digital humanities become, in this context, less of an outlier or novelty and it is easier to see project management as a research activity rather than a corporate import from the private sector. To return to Daniel Allington’s accusation of DH being the “managerial humanities,” not only does it reveal his (albeit not atypical) narrowmindedness regarding the existing role of management in humanities scholarship, it is also, implicitly, a denigration of the kind of team-based collaboration that characterises DH projects.

So how does project management in the digital humanities differ from the project management of academic conferences and publications? In terms of scholarly communication (conference papers, journal article or monograph projects), these undergo development within a permanent (or persisting) infrastructure designed to accommodate the production of many individual projects and changes in personnel. Often project management in this context consists of an individual (say, a journal editor) coordinating a number of other individuals who have no direct or only fleeting contact with each other. Besides the dissemination of quality scholarship, there is not really a shared goal: the journal editor wants to get an issue put together and out, the author wants to get their article published, and the peer reviewers want to get the assessment finished. Timelines and deadlines are not inherent to the projects but determined by other factors (e.g., conference dates, journal issue release dates, publishers’ seasonal lists).

In “Project Management Theory and the Management of Research Projects,” Erik Ernø-Kjølhede examines the extent to which the literature and other resources on project management apply to research project management and concludes that research

project management is perhaps best understood as a form of leadership because leadership is “more associated with concepts such as commitment, teambuilding, vision, treating people as peers and personal charisma/knowledge” whereas management is associated with “authority, subordination and issuing orders... [The research project leader] should focus on people and on getting the right things done, not so much on controlling how and when they are done”—and thus should delegate and participate rather than direct (Ernø-Kjølhede 14).

He finds the existing literature lacking because it “devote[s] little attention to the human and behavioural aspects of project management[...],” which he himself considers of crucial importance (7). Ernø-Kjølhede says that research project management is, in an important way, the managing of false paradoxes arising from the management of research. This includes balancing researcher autonomy and team consensus against project control, team against individual goals, the need for predictability against the unpredictability of research (and the new opportunities to which unpredictability gives rise), the need to act with certainty despite the uncertainty of the research process and end product, the asymmetries of knowledge between the project manager and the other researchers, and the need to take managed risks (5). In dealing with these paradoxes, Ernø-Kjølhede argues encouraging and facilitating open communication is key, as it reinforces and enables “participative management.” He says that research project management “is a task, which works best when carried out by everybody involved in the project” (24). This observation does not mean that a research project shouldn’t have or can function without a project manager, but rather that a research project manager should also be considered as part of the research team, as a collaborator and not as a “boss” (see final section) because “participants in a research project may be both self-motivated and highly skilled [but] the project leader still has a significant role to play in terms of creating a project environment capable of making the most of these skills” (25).

The applicability of Ernø-Kjølhede’s claims about research teams and research project management to DH projects and project management, is confirmed by the work of Lynne Siemens and her co-authors Ray Siemens, Richard Cunningham, Stan Ruecker, Wendy Duff, and Claire Warwick.¹² Many (though not all) DH projects have a shared common goal (and envisioned product), a defined team, a finite timeline, and a finish. Often, a research grant enables the rapid development of a digital scholarly output by enabling the assemblage of a team with a range of skills that are rarely possessed by a single individual, and who can develop this output according to specified timelines and deadlines. Interpersonal communication and cohesion, these studies have determined,

is a key factor to success and to fostering an interest in working on similar projects in the future, with former or new collaborators. It is in facilitating this communication and cohesion where a project manager can make the most of the potential scholarly exchange of the project.

In terms of DH project management related to scholarly exchange, I want to focus on four aspects that I think are key foci for a DH project manager: defining the bargain with team members; translating between team members; facilitating perpetual peer review; and researching scholarly exchange.

Defining the Bargain

In “‘It’s a team’” Siemens discusses expectation management as a common challenge that DH project teams can be faced with. The “Challenges of Collaboration” section of the paper quotes survey results related to this discussion. Survey respondents are designated “R” followed by a number in order to preserve anonymity.

Survey respondents highlighted the importance of “making clear what the expectations are for each member” (R9) as well as “finding common goals” (R22). Teams also recognised that “some members may contribute or participate more than others” (R34) and exhibited “varying levels of commitment, among undergraduate students in particular” (R27) (Siemens).

Expectation management I understand as encompassing not only what a team member is expected to provide to the project according to their role, but also what the team member expects that the project will provide *them* in exchange for their participation, and defining and managing expectations (and rewards) is the key to project success. This is because team members may be from different units, institutions, or even countries (and have different systems of evaluation), may be at different stages in their careers, and may have differing motivations for participating. As Siemens notes in “It’s a team”, “[p]roject success appears more likely when every member of the team has a stake in the project. However, this stake does not necessarily have to be equal among team members, as stressed by several respondents.”

Because stakes will differ depending on the team members, one of the tasks of a DH project manager is to obtain a clear view of what stake each team member has in the project (beyond stipulated financial compensation)—including their own, and to help team members articulate their stake. I call this “the bargain”. Just because they are being paid does not mean team members cannot bargain for additional stakes in how their work will contribute to their professional development. In regard to students,

many granting agencies—such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)—have made the bargain a funding requirement: These agencies require projects to state explicitly the skills and expertise students will develop by working on a project and how this will be of permanent value to them professionally; no longer can students be treated as low-level grunts that do the menial work that is “beneath” faculty.

A variety of questions can be asked in order to shape a student’s bargain: Are they doing work that will be understood by other scholars and employers? Are they developing a transferable skill? Will they earn a co-authorship credit? Will they be given a performance evaluation? A letter of recommendation?

By defining each team member’s bargain beyond simple monetary considerations, the project becomes the common goal of the team, achievable through the achievement of member goals. This enables the team to understand the benefits to each member. For a project manager, it can also be a powerful means of persuasion if a team member is not meeting expectations, reminding them of what is at stake for them personally in addition to what is at stake for the project. Making sure that all team members are aware of what the stakes of the other members are can also foster cohesion and a sense of equity, a realisation that what they have in common is they all have a stake, but that these stakes are particular to each person. It can also eliminate the tensions that arise when team members wrongly assume that others have the same investment in the project or, on the contrary, assume that others have no (or less) stake in the project.

Project Management as Translation

In “‘It’s a Team’” Siemens observes that the diversity common in DH project teams is both a strength and a potential weakness because the “inherent diversity of perspectives, skills, vocabulary and methodology in DH projects [can create] tensions that may not be present to the same extent in other types of teams where there is more homogeneity.” This requires managing communication between team members to ensure all team members understand both their own role and the roles of their fellow team members.

This can be one of the most serious challenges to the viability of a team and a project, and in “More Minds” Siemens et al. rightly stress such understanding should not be expected to spontaneously or naturally occur, but that ideally there should be an assigned translator “who can help navigate the language and culture gap between the

various perspectives.” The “translator” role is appropriate for a project manager who is interested in developing a literacy in multiple domains sufficient to be able to act as an intermediary between specialists.¹³ For me, one of the most rewarding experiences was developing a familiarity with the larger paradigms that spanned the multiple domains constituting a project. This knowledge allowed me to overcome issues which team members, limited to a single domain, could not solve. In one situation, I was working with a technician who did not believe a certain issue could be corrected. Because I understood both the technical issue and the specifics of the scholarly content, I was able to propose a solution by thinking *across* domains. In another situation, I was able to diffuse an argument between a technician and another expert by pointing out that the team members had different specialist understandings of a common term.

Experience as a “translator” has shown me how integral that work is in the research process, that it is part of the research. I would certainly like to see more published work that documents the cycle by which the digital and the humanistic come together to form finished projects. Essays on completed DH projects generally describe what an envisioned user of the project can do with it, but to me the most interesting, the most intellectual component of a project itself is the process by which that project was iterated from proposal to prototype to publication, a process which involves intense scrutiny of scholarly knowledge, technical paradigms and possibilities, and designing workable solutions. It is this process that a project manager is best equipped to study and write about, especially if they are “translators.”

Facilitating Perpetual Peer Review

Because they are intensely collaborative, DH projects can offer the opportunity for a more immediate scholarly exchange focussed on the “process” and not just the product, where the “process” may be described as a form of social knowledge creation. A project manager’s translation role comes to the fore when teams convene to report progress, garner feedback, address issues arising, and plan for next steps. Such meetings can be exciting to team members when they see evidence of concrete progress. But these meetings can also be alarming when the (not uncommon) problems are highlighted in that concrete realisation. In this situation peer review can be highly satisfying when guided by a project manager: the team can talk through issues face to face, discuss revisions, propose solutions, and debate. As Bethany Nowviskie observes in “Where Credit is Due: Preconditions for the Evaluation of Collaborative Digital Scholarship,”

Digital humanities practitioners understand that collaborative work implies perpetual peer review, such that continual assessment—often of the most pragmatic kind and stemming from diverse quarters—becomes integral to day-to-day scholarly practice. Every collaborative action in the development of a digital project asks a tacit question: Does it work? That is, does the scholarly theoretical underpinning, combined with these methods for gathering, interpreting, and designing information, result in functional and intellectually effective digital instantiations or implementations? (Nowviskie 172)

A project manager would be expected to record such milestones, problems, discussions, and decisions and thus would be able to take these as a focus of research. Project tracking functions, as Nowviskie indicates, as a record of a project reflecting on and reacting to its own development, with the unanticipated challenges and discoveries to which such development usually gives rise. Typically, project management requires the creation of reports at the interim and final stages of a project. In a DH context, these reports become a form of scholarship. One of the “bargains” I consider that DH project managers should have with projects they manage is that their reporting requirement be formalized in the form of a white paper or working paper that can be one of the deliverables of the project. Such a document undergoes a form of peer review in that it is reviewed and approved by the stakeholders in the project for completeness and accuracy, and it can be published as part of the project’s digital deliverable. It can also become a key document for more traditional journal articles authored by the project team, and, as such should earn a project manager a co-authorship credit.¹⁴

Researching Scholarly Exchange

As argued above, a DH project manager should have a defined research deliverable that is in some way informed by their work as a project manager (possibly in addition to other research contributions). No matter how rooted a DH project manager’s work is in pragmatic concerns of “getting things done,” given the academic context, and given the intellectual nature of the discussions and interventions in which they have to play a formative part, a DH project manager cannot act like a corporate director or secretary; particularly because they are often a humanities graduate student seeking professional academic experience, they must be able to fully take part in the scholarly exchange and not act as a mere go-between for the researchers and technicians.¹⁵ If a DH project has a project manager, then the team has an additional research

collaborator. As I have argued, DH projects are a (more fulfilling) form of scholarly exchange, a claim which is supported by Ernø-Kjølhede who says

Research projects are invariably learning processes and should be designed so as to facilitate as much individual and organisational learning as at all possible. Together with economies of scope and scale, *learning constitutes the prime purpose of working together*. Researchers co-operate to increase the level of knowledge and creativity among the individual researchers believing that the sum of pooled minds is greater than individual minds. (12, emphasis added)

If this argument is valid, then designing and managing research projects should focus on *how* they facilitate scholarly exchange. Besides the kinds of research foci I have already suggested, I would argue that the key research activity of a DH project manager is aligned with what Willard McCarty sees as the primary mode of DH activity: *modeling*. While McCarty has in mind here the design and implementation of models through computing technologies, I extend this to include not just what is being built using digital technologies, but the builders themselves: the project manager, in this instance, designs, iterates, implements, and modifies a model of scholarly exchange that is suited and responsive to the project team (and which often includes that form of research that university administrators love to promote, the interdisciplinary). In “Modeling: A Study in Words and Meanings,” McCarty observes that “‘model’ denotes a concrete, articulated plan...and a time-frame sufficiently brief that the emphasis falls on the process rather than its product,” and “models...are better understood as temporary states in a process of coming to know rather than fixed structures of knowledge.” The project manager, having created a model for the principles and process of a project’s scholarly exchange observes how it operates, where it breaks down (e.g., reveals aspects of the scholarly process that have been overlooked), and how it can be improved. Principal Investigators of projects are not typically focused on a project’s ecosystem of scholarly exchange (not surprisingly, given the earlier discussion of the elision of managerial process in scholarly production): they are often focused on the research questions that a project will be able to answer, either during the project or once the “deliverable” has been produced. A project manager, however, has to focus on how this ecosystem is designed and ensure it operates and is modified as developments arise and are discussed. The project manager is, in other words, the “social architect” of this ecosystem (Thamhain and Nurick, qtd in Ernø-Kjølhede 16). This ecosystem can be articulated in a “project charter” of the kind that has been outlined by Stan Ruecker and Milena Radzikowska in “The Iterative Design of a Project Charter for Interdisciplinary Research” and by R.

Siemens, Cunningham, Ruecker, and L. Siemens in the “INKE Administrative Structure, Omnibus Document”. Such a research undertaking makes visible the value of the scholarly exchange process and reveals it as an essential part of the research undertaking, rather than mere “service.” Ultimately, such research has the potential to reveal to the broader humanities community the profit and pleasure (and avoidable pitfalls) of thoughtfully managed collaborative humanities scholarship and throw into relief the impoverished scholarly exchange that is currently dominant. In doing so, the DH project manager becomes a key contributor to a conversation about how scholarly exchange can be made more present, more fulfilling, and more profitable to everyone involved in digital humanities (including themselves) and to humanities research in general.

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Footnotes

1. The 1996 Modern Languages Association (MLA) Commission on Professional Service report notes that “the managerial element in scholarship (e.g., grant management, some kinds of editing)...has long been underappreciated” (210)—and, I would add, continues to be underappreciated twenty-five years later. [↵](#)
2. The DH project manager I consider in this paper is one who is either engaged in graduate/post-graduate study in the humanities, or who has a graduate degree in the humanities, and who is interested in academic professionalization through the role of project manager. To my knowledge, this is the type of person who typically ends up in this role, rather than people who may have worked as project managers in non-academic sectors. [↵](#)
3. The MLA Commission on Professional Service report notes in relation to academics’ “tacit assumptions and value judgments,” “the equation that makes publication (in certain venues} synonymous with scholarship and makes research a metonym for intellectual work” (171). [↵](#)
4. The MLA Commission on Professional Service report terms the activities that I describe as part of the scholarly exchange system as a form of “academic and professional *citizenship*” (178). [↵](#)
5. For discussions of the neoliberal corporatisation of the university, see Brownlee; Musselin; Readings; Rhoades; Slaughter and Rhoades. [↵](#)
6. See, e.g., the *Differences* special issue “In the Shadows of the Digital Humanities” (volume 25, number 1, Spring 2014). [↵](#)
7. See Kirschenbaum for a discussion of the “bad things” said about DH. [↵](#)
8. Fitzpatrick’s observations, of course, draw upon a rich body of scholarship on the sociology of knowledge making, including work such as Peter Burke’s *A Social History of Knowledge* (Polity, 2000). [↵](#)
9. This is even more evident in bibliographical and textual scholarship, which typically involves a project team. Based on my own professional experience, I would point to the collections published by the Records of Early English Drama (REED) project. Although the title pages only list an editor or editors, the REED project page and Acknowledgments reveal the extent to which collections are extensively

collaborative projects, as do sections of the Apparatus like the Glossaries and Indexes, for which authorship is indicated. [↵](#)

10. Although the MLA report focuses on faculty, its observations and recommendations can be usefully applied to non-faculty involved in scholarly exchange, particularly in rethinking their work as a scholarly activity rather than service. [↵](#)

11. See Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence* chapter on "Peer Review" for an interesting discussion of the development and possible transformation of that practice. [↵](#)

12. Siemens, "It's a team"; Siemens, "More Hands"; Siemens et al., "INKE Administrative Structure"; Siemens et al., "More Minds." [↵](#)

13. Ernø-Kjølhede, in discussing international research teams, observes that, "[u]nder such circumstances the manager becomes a kind of 'knowledge translator' with the responsibility of facilitating processes that make it possible for project participants to discuss and communicate about research created outside their own academic and institutional fields" (5). [↵](#)

14. See Siemens et al., "INKE Administrative Structure", for an example of how the INKE project specifies how team members are to be recognized in INKE-related publications. [↵](#)

15. "An important special feature of many research projects is that research project managers are often not the superiors of the team members (e.g. in universities) and thus have no official authority. Formally, project participants therefore owe them no loyalty, meaning that the research project manager has to rely on the researchers' inherent motivation or [their] own ability to motivate, negotiate and persuade" (Ernø-Kjølhede 30). [↵](#)