

SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE CREATION IN ACTION: ACTIVITIES IN THE ELECTRONIC TEXTUAL CULTURES LAB

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Alyssa Arbuckle (alyssaa@uvic.ca), University of Victoria, Canada and Randa El Khatib (khatib@uvic.ca), University of Victoria, Canada and Ray Siemens (siemens@uvic.ca), University of Victoria, Canada

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Digital environments now serve as the primary network for academic and non-academic modes of communication, research practices, and knowledge dissemination. This shift has resulted in greater ease of pursuing collaborative modes of engagement. Social knowledge creation, citizen scholarship, interdisciplinary collaborations, and university-community partnerships have become more common and more visible. Engaging with such transformations in



knowledge creation has been a significant research focus for the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab (ETCL) at the University of Victoria. This presentation will detail the intellectual foundations of social knowledge creation, as well as the major initiatives undertaken by the ETCL to pursue and enact this research. The ETCL explores these topics via on-campus activities as well as three substantial environmental scans: *Social Knowledge Creation: Three Annotated Bibliographies* (Arbuckle, Belojevic, Hiebert, Siemens, et al., 2014), “An Annotated Bibliography on Social Knowledge Creation” (Arbuckle, Belojevic, El Hajj, El Khatib, Seatter, Siemens, et al., 2018), and “Open Social Scholarship Annotated Bibliography” (El-Hajj, El Khatib, Leibel, Seatter, et al., under development). The annotated bibliographies bring together myriad perspectives on how collaborative knowledge creation and engagement practices have been carried out, historically as well as currently. This work suggests how elements of academia might be reimagined in order to effectively integrate collaborative, interdisciplinary, public-minded praxis. Building on field touchstones like Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s *Planned Obsolescence* (2011) and John Willinsky’s *The Access Principle* (2006), this work proposes that collaboration-driven academic practices in a new media context can create a more critical work environment that integrates creative options for publishing and disseminating research.

“An Annotated Bibliography on Social Knowledge Creation” updates the previously published “Social Knowledge Creation: Three Annotated Bibliographies.” The former version was developed in the ETCL in collaboration with the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) Research Group, and formulated a snapshot of social knowledge creation scholarship and initiatives up to 2013. The revised document draws on more recent scholarship published in this evolving area of inquiry, and expands the scope to include notable subject additions, including public humanities, crowdsourcing, digital publishing, and open access. In both the 2014 and forthcoming instances, resources are chosen according to their relation to our definition of social knowledge creation: “acts of collaboration in order to engage in or produce shared cultural data and/or knowledge products” (1). Many stress the importance of involving citizen scholars to revitalize research and as a way to respond to a crisis that public humanities draws attention to, namely the ever-expanding gap between the university and the community. The subject additions of the latter document encapsulate the pressing need to create and strengthen community outreach in academic environments.



In 2016, the ETCL team began compiling the “Open Social Scholarship Annotated Bibliography.” According to INKE, open social scholarship involves the creation, dissemination, and engagement of research and research technologies that are accessible and significant to a broad audience. The bibliography draws on research that adopts and propagates these knowledge production ideals that have branched out across movements, including open access, open source, public humanities, citizen scholarship, citizen science, and community outreach, among others. The main trends that are explored include: developing and disseminating research in accessible ways; research that draws on university and community interests and needs; active engagement of community members in academic research practices; and the development of research tools that bring these two communities into productive dialogue and serve their needs. Resources range from traditional, foundational forms of open knowledge and resources to highly praxis-oriented projects. Historical publications, starting with *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, exemplify how knowledge was discussed and debated through publication. Advocacy for open access to information is a recurring theme across many of the included works, with a position that publicly funded research should be accessible to the wider public. In addition to the aforementioned discourses, the bibliography addresses the impact of open knowledge on social justice movements through new mediums, and how Internet tools and social networks have been used to mobilize action in activist movements.

These environmental scans lay the foundation for our ETCL-based Open Knowledge Practicum fellowship, launched in January 2017 with two completed rounds, a third one currently running, and more to follow. This initiative puts open social scholarship into action by inviting faculty, staff, students, and members of the community to pursue their own research projects for an academic term in the ETCL. We provide participants with access to resources, library materials, and archives; consultation and guidance from specialists in the field; and other project-specific assistance. The Open Knowledge Practicum is a step toward more publicly engaged scholarship, ranging from discipline-specific foci to research on local public history or the broader community. Practicum findings are published in online, public venues and made discoverable to both general and targeted communities. As a connecting thread, all fellows create, enrich, or revise Wikipedia pages that relate to their topic. This presentation will showcase a number of projects that came out of the Open Knowledge Practicum, available for review at http://etcl.uvic.ca/?page_id=1919.



The ETCL also launched Digital Scholarship Fellowships for the 2017-2018 academic year. Digital Scholarship Fellowships support graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, new and visiting scholars, as well as staff, faculty, and librarians making substantial use of digital and/or social knowledge creation methods to carry out humanities or interdisciplinary research. Individuals across disciplines are able to join the ETCL community in this way, and to work alongside the team in the ETCL on relevant projects within their area of research.

We consider Wikipedia to be a prime example of social knowledge creation, as it is an online encyclopedia comprised, maintained, and expanded by thousands of citizen scholars. In partnership with the U Victoria Libraries, the ETCL appointed two Honorary Resident Wikipedians: Dr. Christian Vandendorpe (2014–16) and Dr. Constance Crompton (2017). So far, Wikipedia edit-a-thons have oriented toward social justice themes.

Moreover, the ETCL runs campus-based digital skills training initiatives. DHSI takes place annually at U Victoria and will run for the 18th consecutive year in June 2018. Participants from different fields and locations attend DHSI for two weeks of workshops, seminars, and other conference activities. In 2017 DHSI launched a course stream that brings the various open knowledge oriented research foundations discussed here into a pedagogical setting. Courses include: “Open Access and Open Social Scholarship,” by Arbuckle (U Victoria), “Digital Public Humanities” by Mia Toothill (Cornell U), “Accessibility and Digital Environments,” by Erin E. Templeton (Converse C) and George H. Williams (U South Carolina Upstate), “Ethical Collaboration in the Digital Humanities,” by Daniel Powell (King’s C London), and “Feminist Digital Humanities: Theoretical, Social, and Material Engagements,” by Elizabeth Losh (C William and Mary) and Jessica M. Johnson (John Hopkins U). In DHSI 2018, two new courses will join this stream: “Race, Social Justice, and DH: Applied Theories and Methods” by Dorothy Kim (Vassar C) and David Nieves (Hamilton C), and “Queer Digital Humanities: Intersections, Interrogations, Iterations” by Jason Boyd (Ryerson U) and James Howe (Rutgers U). This course stream addresses the theory, methods, and challenges related to open social scholarship in various settings. The ETCL also hosts training throughout the year, the “Digital Humanities Workshop Series,” launched in partnership with DHSI and U Victoria Libraries and affiliated with Simon Fraser U (DHIL, SFU Library Research Commons) and U British Columbia (UBC Library, UBC Advanced Research Computing), which provides students, faculty, and staff, and members of the community with a wide range of technical skills and relevant theoretical basis in various digital humanities



subfields. The ETCL activities and research directions we outline in our paper share a commitment to address and practice scholarship that is responsive to the evolving needs of the university and the larger community.

The ETCL strives to produce relevant and accessible scholarship, while simultaneously thinking about ways of harnessing the digital medium to benefit all. ETCL initiatives also address the potential for creating and fostering university-community partnerships. We seek to highlight the ever-expanding social nature of knowledge production and how scholarship has expanded beyond the academic context, as evident in the vast amount of research produced by citizen scholars and citizen scientists.

APPENDIX A

Bibliography

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