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IDEAH

Network + Publication + Ecosystem: Curating Digital Pedagogy, Fostering Community

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Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities

We are excited to share our work on [Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#) (DPiH), which was published on the Humanities Commons in 2020 by the Modern Language Association after almost a decade of work. DPiH is a large-scale scholarly project that presents the *stuff* of teaching (syllabi, assignments, and resources) through a curated set of keywords such as “[Poetry](#),” “[Disability](#),” “[Queer](#),” and “[Annotation](#),” among [many others](#).¹ For each keyword, a curator or set of curators has selected and annotated ten pedagogical artifacts; created a curator’s selection statement; and presented a list of related resources. With a lengthy [introduction](#) to DPiH that historicizes and contextualizes the project, the edited collection, as a whole, presents a broad array of pedagogical practices that engage technology and offer concrete resources to faculty who would like to expand their existing teaching practices. In this piece, we would like to consider how the project, in its design and implementation, challenges existing ideas about scholarship, pedagogy, and our shared ecosystem of scholarly communication.

This Was a Bad Idea

Katherine D. Harris²

In retrospect, creating a massive editorial project in a new publishing format, that had yet to be created, seems like a bad idea for four Digital Humanists who came together based on our shared interests and wanted to fill a gap to help other Digital Humanists and non-Digital Humanists understand how to engage with digital pedagogy. *Why?*

The most onerous tasks involved creating the infrastructure for project management of such a far-reaching project in addition to an ever-expanding list of keywords—originally beginning at 25 and finally settling at 59 after 8 years of work. Ultimately the project consisted of:

- 590 total artifacts (573 unique artifacts)
- 6 batches of keywords
- 10 years of labour
- 4 editors
- 84 curators
- 890+ artifact creators

At first, we managed all submissions as Word documents in Google Docs and then moved to a [GitHub repository](#), where we requested curators to submit in Markdown (see [template](#)), offered editorial comments, and then amassed the peer-to-peer review comments for another round of revisions. In addition, we asked curators to refrain from first person and reflective writing in their opening statements primarily because we were keen to move away from the singular point of view of first-person narrative—we wanted this collection to

be open for anyone at any type of institution. This proved difficult for some curators who had become accustomed to that first person reflective narrative about teaching.

We originally created a different kind of peer review system for feedback on small batches of keywords which meant an overlapping and ongoing editorial workflow as we addressed gaps in the keywords list and constantly managed these overlapping curators' timelines in addition to promoting and amplifying the peer review process over six years.

Since we were creating the process for the project as we moved through the years, we had not thought to obtain permissions for the hundreds of pedagogical artifacts that curators were accumulating. That process of contacting and acquiring "wet" signatures from more than 800 artifact creators added two years to the projects' completion and required a new form of project management that taxed the editorial team who were working across three different time zones. While this project curates materials that had been primarily shared openly online, only 49% were already published under some form of license. For the remaining artifacts, editors worked with curators to secure a license via a form created by the MLA which specified a Creative Commons License requiring attribution and only noncommercial reuse. In addition, curators had to secure additional permissions from students whose work was shared. Any work that remained unlicensed but was publicly available online was included only as a screenshot and a reference with a pointer to its original location and a hope that the link would not suffer from eventual linkrot. We did this permission gathering primarily so we could deposit all artifacts into the repository, [Humanities CORE](#), to subvert potential linkrot as part of a sustainability plan that we had to develop while the project progressed to its massive scale.

All of this meant a very long 10 years to create a final manuscript with a majority of the editorial and publishing process happening in the last four years. The introduction was written in the final stages of the project among three editors after spending six months reviewing all of the keywords in order to discover patterns, create an ontology, and assign multiple tags to each artifact and keyword to allow for greater discoverability. In addition, our publishers had not yet created a digital publication platform and were working through various technical issues with infrastructure in order to create a final product that did not replicate the usual codex format.

There was no model for the infrastructure of this type of project. Along the way, we adopted tools and peer review methods that had not been available when this project was only a loose, baggy idea.³ Even Modern Language Association citation style shifted twice during this lengthy process. We were aware that there is typically no professional advancement recognition or credit for openly sharing pedagogical materials, so we had to convince a lot of people to sign on or to value the project. Finally, digital pedagogy as a field was a variety of silos in 2010, some more successful than others, but without a unified space for conversation and growth. *What were we thinking?*

Why We Wanted to Do It Anyway

Matthew K. Gold

Despite the many reasons why the project may have been a bad idea, we wanted to do it anyway. We were motivated by a number of factors. First, as practitioners of digital pedagogy in a profession that does not often value teaching on the same level as it values research and publication, we felt it was important for pedagogical scholarship to undergo peer review and to be published by a major humanities publisher. We were excited to publish with the Modern Language Association, which was already experimenting with innovative publishing models like the [Humanities Commons](#) under the leadership of Kathleen Fitzpatrick, who was then MLA Director of Scholarly Communications. Working with the MLA gave us the opportunity to foster a much broader community around pedagogy.

In doing this work, we were inspired by Fitzpatrick's work, particularly her discussions of generosity in *Generous Thinking*. As she notes in that book, and in other parts of her work, there are multiple benefits that can come from working in public on scholarship that is not sold, but rather shared. We wanted to focus on building generative communities and to help make the work of the academy more transparent by engaging in both a public peer review and public editing process, the latter of which we will describe later in this piece. As Fitzpatrick argues, there is a need for “a revolution in our thinking, one specifically focused on demanding the good that higher education can create: a good that is more public than private, a good that is focused primarily not on the production of economic value but instead on producing a more important range of social values” (*Generous Thinking* 200). By publishing this collection on the Humanities Commons, we hoped to engage and model a form of academic and intellectual generosity around the central academic practice of teaching.

How Do We Find Each Other?

Rebecca Frost Davis

In “Building a Toolkit for Digital Pedagogy,” Alex Christie describes how “Digital pedagogy promises connection and collaboration across contiguous communities equally as it risks entrenching the separations and partitions that divide them” (par. 31). When we started this project, the digital pedagogy ecosystem was already flourishing in a variety of locations on the open web, like community sites, open access journals, personal blogs, *GitHub* sites, and social media like Twitter and Tumblr. The material was there, but the lack of connection prevented what Christie calls “interconnected structures for intellectual sharing and advancement” (par. 30).

To use a different metaphor, the digital pedagogy conversation was being repeated in many different and sometimes overlapping communities, such as those around connected learning, digital classics, digital history, digital humanities, digital rhetoric, humanities computing, language learning, media studies, online teaching and learning, open education, and public history. While these communities sometimes intersect, members did

not regularly talk to each other, so they were not necessarily finding all openly shared pedagogical content. This situation illustrates Mark S. Granovetter's explanation of how information flows across networks: In networks connected by strong ties (indicated by solid lines in Figure 1), information is held within communities. Weak ties (indicated by dotted lines) act as bridges that facilitate the flow of information between discrete networks defined by strong ties ("The Strength of Weak Ties"). We sought to amplify the digital pedagogy conversation across all networks by making or strengthening connections between these discrete communities.

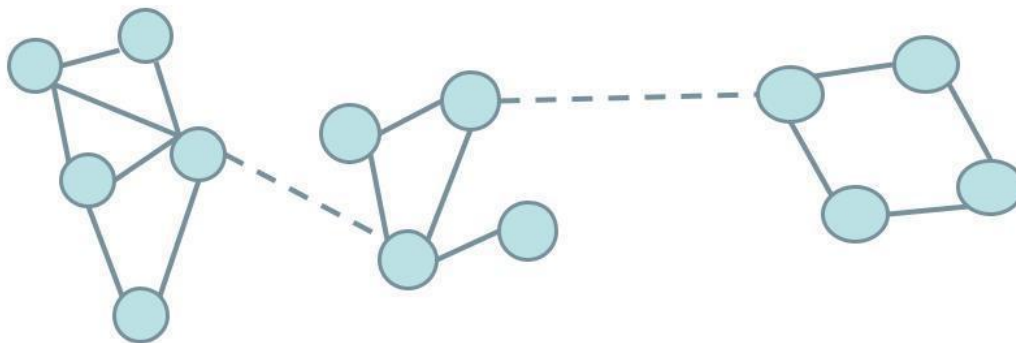


Figure 1: Curators as bridging ties

From our work with the digital humanities community we were familiar with the generosity with which practitioners were sharing their pedagogy openly online. We wanted to amplify the effect of that sharing by creating bridging ties that brought this material to networks beyond digital humanities. Our 84 curators, as well as an Advisory Board, became bridging ties to a wealth of material because we invited them to not only share their own pedagogical artifacts but, more importantly, to share the artifacts that had influenced their own teaching—the models created by others that they found to be important—so that rather than drawing on the editors' primary network, we leveraged the connections of 84 different individuals to bridge us into conversations centered around 59 different keywords.⁴

We use the term keyword in two senses—the common usage as a form of metadata for information retrieval and a more specialized understanding of the term, which draws on the work of the cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams and his seminal book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. For Williams, a

keyword is an important word in common use with contested meanings that drive debate in society. By choosing terms that carry different meanings for different communities we hope they can be keys for the spread of digital pedagogy across and between networks. To advance this idea, during the final editorial review we asked curators to point to other keywords in the collection that were related to their own and then used the open source network visualization tool [Gephi](#) to visualize this network, with each keyword being a node and inclusion on its related keyword list being a reciprocal edge between the two nodes (Figure 2). Text size shows which nodes are most influential (more paths have to go through them to connect other nodes), and using its community detection algorithm, Gephi automatically generated coloured areas of the network group to indicate clusters of keywords.⁵ For example, one cluster around the keywords [Social Justice](#) and [Race](#) includes keywords one might expect, like [Intersectionality](#), [Gender](#), [Digital Divides](#), and [Indigenous](#), but also the keywords [Archive](#), [Community College](#), and [Code](#) ultimately because their curators felt they address similar concerns.

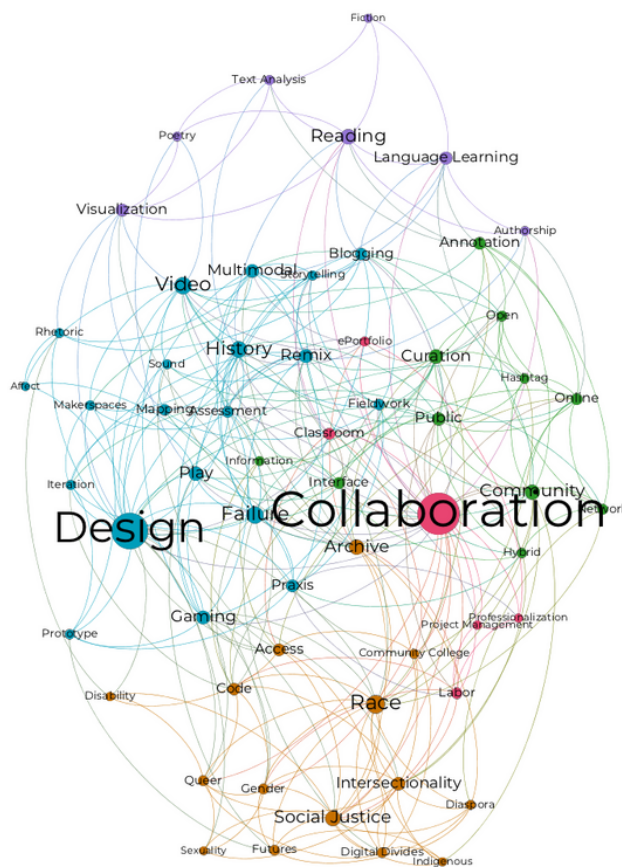


Figure 2: Keyword cross references from “[Keywords](#)” in the Introduction to *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* by Davis et al., licensed under [CC BY NC](#).

At a higher level, from studying the project’s nearly 600 artifacts, we have surfaced six key concepts for digital pedagogy that cross all keywords and artifacts: Openness, Collaboration, Play, Practice, Student Agency, and Identity. As we explained in the project’s introduction, we created this list of concepts

by analyzing the discussion of pedagogy in curatorial statements, by conducting rhetorical analysis for themes in our curators’ introductory statements and artifact annotations, and by looking for patterns in the artifacts in the collection, aided by methods of information management, such as indexing and tagging, as well as network analysis of cross-referenced keywords. (Davis, Gold, and Harris, “Curating Digital Pedagogy” in “Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities”)

Openness indicates open sharing of pedagogical materials and student work, as well as transparency of teaching and learning practice. Collaboration means collaborative knowledge creation by instructors and students, but also points to interdisciplinarity, teamwork, and the serial collaboration of remix and reuse. Both play and practice relate to applied learning experiences. Play gets at a willingness to experiment, to try, fail, and iterate. Practice acknowledges the many digital pedagogy assignments in which students create, make, and do, building off of the hack vs. yack ethos common in the digital humanities, but also trends toward active learning, and the current push for skills along with theory in higher education. Such experiential learning encourages students to develop agency—or a sense of ownership, control, and efficacy—as learners. With control over their own learning, students are prepared to learn beyond the formal structures of higher education in the constantly changing digital ecosystem. Finally, identity emerges as a key concept in digital pedagogy because of the many opportunities digital environments offer for exploring, demonstrating, and contesting identity and the preoccupation of teens and young adults with establishing their own identity. Ultimately, learning leads to shifting self-identity. In addition, the access to others’ perspectives, the defamiliarization, and the boundary-pushing afforded by digital tools and contexts assists in identity exploration by uncovering privilege, politics, and lack of neutrality. See the sections “[Openness](#),” “[Collaboration](#),” “[Play](#),” “[Practice](#),” “[Student Agency](#),” and “[Identity](#)” in “[Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#)” for more in depth explorations of these concepts, as well as links to artifacts that illustrate them.

In developing our list of key concepts, we were also inspired by Lisa Spiro’s work on values for the digital humanities community, and Seán McCarthy and Witmer’s articulation of values for digital humanities pedagogy. Our analysis of pedagogical artifacts and curators’ commentary validates such proposed values with overlap specifically for the concepts “openness,” “collaboration,” “play,” and “practice” (Table 1). This overlap demonstrates the spread of themes in the digital pedagogy conversation. By highlighting these key concepts, we hope that they also can draw together and amplify the conversation as a whole.

Table 1: Overlap between Key Concepts and Proposed Values in Digital Humanities and Digital Humanities Pedagogy.

Key Concepts in <i>DPiH</i>	Spiro, DH Values	McCarthy & Witmer, DH Pedagogy Values
Openness	Openness	Openness
Collaboration	Collaboration	Collaboration
Play	Experimentation	
Practice		Production
Student agency		
Identity		

To see how key concepts are expressed in keywords and pedagogical artifacts and to explore bridging ties across the digital pedagogy conversation, let's take a tour through the keyword "[Social Justice](#)." In the curatorial statement, Toniesha Taylor connects conversations about social justice pedagogy and digital pedagogy to orient those new to either or both teaching approaches. She begins by asking instructors to reexamine the inequalities built into our own reading lists and learning activities, whether analog or digital, asking "Do we create assignments to engage in actions that privilege the nondisabled? Do we use texts that marginalize or erase Latinx experience? Does the focus on digital work assume knowledge, access, or experience not mentioned in the course instruction?" (Taylor, "Social Justice"). For Taylor, this interrogation surfaces opportunities to bring social justice to one's pedagogical approach.

The artifacts curated by Taylor illustrate concerns shared by both social justice and digital humanities communities. For example, the artifact titled Group Contract speaks to the issue of equity in collaborative projects and is actually an example of a contract created by Taylor's own students, with names and contact information removed. This artifact is the *stuff* of teaching that completes a picture suggested by the assignment directions. Bridging continues as instructors reuse the artifacts. For example, I share this contract as a model for my students when I have them create group contracts for their digital projects, and, as a faculty developer, have also shared it with many faculty at my own institution (St. Edward's University) who turned to digital group work as a way to engage students online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Creators of artifacts make something for themselves—a syllabus or perhaps an assignment prompt, or even a piece of student work—something which is personal, ephemeral, and invisible to a larger community. But, by curating these openly shared materials, *DPiH* generates a chain of sharing and citation that enables us to really work together as a community of scholars invested in helping each other.⁶

Curator annotations for each artifact not only describe the artifact, but also suggest how instructors can adapt it to their own practice, such as Taylor's advice in an artifact annotation for having students create privilege walk statements for privilege in digital spaces: "As part of digital pedagogy, the exercise allows for conversations about privilege and how it is experienced and replicated in digital space. Once students have an embodied notion of their privilege, they might be encouraged to craft their own statements illustrating privilege in digital spaces" (Lawrence; see also the curatorial note by Toniesha Taylor). This advice illustrates how learning activities are copied and adapted to new ends among instructors. Here, the focus on having students craft statements of privilege for digital spaces encourages them to transfer and apply social justice learning from one realm to another.

This artifact also illustrates how the digital pedagogy conversation spreads far beyond the higher education classroom. The privilege walk, as an exercise, went viral as shown by a number of YouTube videos that featured privilege walks, such as the video "What is Privilege?" by the group As/Is, which gained 4.2 million views and 83,000 likes on YouTube. A video presented on BuzzFeed with more than 4 million views leads the search results, which include many videos from educational institutions and other groups completing similar walks, such as one from Vanier College that points back to the BuzzFeed video uploaded by As/Is. In addition to the original artifact curated by Taylor, which came from a grant-funded child welfare training curriculum, Taylor also points to versions from a high school lesson plan and the National Youth Council of Ireland (Lawrence, "Privilege Walk Activity," curatorial note). At the same time, its popularity has led to uncritical use, in response to which many educators have critiqued the activity because it reinforces privilege by using the identity of the marginalized to create learning experiences for the privileged (Bolger; Erenhalt; Thomas; Torres). Torres suggests one alternative would be rewriting privilege statements to emphasize forms of power possessed by minority groups. Or the reception of the activity itself could also become an object of study. Rather than engaging students in the activity to surface their privilege or lack thereof, students could view such videos and engage in the debate over the activity's effectiveness and potential harms. In this way, students could join the ongoing pedagogical conversation.

We see the act of curation which consists of assembling pedagogical artifacts, annotating them, and contextualizing them with a curatorial statement, to be an act of scholarship that is modelled on acts of pedagogy. When we curate a set of course materials and assignments, we likewise connect our students to a conversation, but in a way that is often limited to our classrooms. By openly sharing digital pedagogy online we expand that conversation. Isn't the value of scholarship to make it visible for sharing, remixing, and discussion? As critiques of the privilege walk activity demonstrate, that ongoing conversation is all the more valuable to guide instructors as thinking about learning activities evolves over time.

The dissemination of the privilege walk assignment also illustrates a challenge in the digital pedagogy conversation. Although this activity is a subject of conversation in multiple communities through open sharing, we ran into limitations when we wanted to add it to *DPiH*. Taylor knew of this artifact from another college

instructor, but that original source could not grant permission for reuse because she knew she was not the original creator. This development exemplifies the hidden sharing or borrowing that happens all the time with teaching materials; imagine the networked path with weak ties indicated by dotted lines in Figure 3, where the actual path of transmission and original source is hidden. Sharing, even openly online, is not enough.

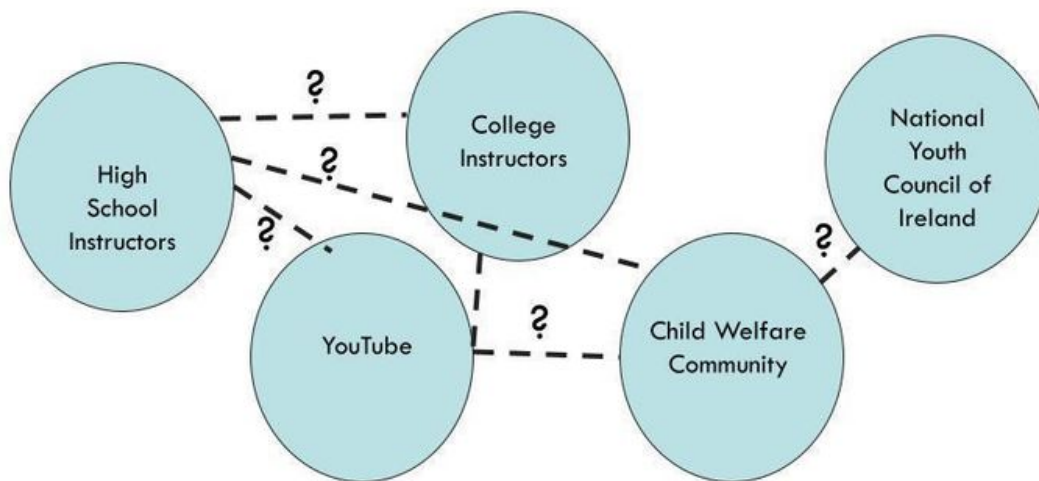


Figure 3: Hidden networked path of sharing across weak ties

By contrast, the “Commonplace Book Assignment” found in the keywords [Authorship](#), [Reading](#), and [Archive](#), shows an ideal type of sharing to sustain the digital pedagogy ecosystem. Vimala Pasupathi shared this assignment first in the open access *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy*—under an open license. Later, Joseph Adelman adapted it and shared that version on his personal blog with a citation of Pasupathi and also under a Creative Commons license. This model instantiates what we see as an infrastructure for the digital pedagogy ecosystem—chains of sharing articulated through citations and open licenses. This dichotomy between the unattributed “Privilege Walk” and the “Commonplace Book Assignment” illustrates the needs for scholarly infrastructure for sharing digital pedagogy.

Unfortunately, although many artifacts were openly available online, only 31% of artifacts shared in our collection were already openly licensed; we made progress in labelling another 41% through an MLA permission form with a CC BY NC license (Creative Commons attribution non-commercial license) (see Table 2). Having a closed license or no license could restrict reuse and discounts the value of developing innovative teaching materials in our profession. We encourage instructors to cite the sources for their teaching practice, to

openly share their own pedagogy, and to label it with an open license, all of which will allow others to reuse pedagogical materials.

Table 2: Frequency of Artifacts by License Type in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*

License Type	Artifacts	Percent
MLA form	244	41%
Creative Commons	163	28%
Copyright	85	14%
None specified	78	13%
Other open	17	3%
Permission (other)	3	1%
Total	590	100%

How Should We Value Teaching?

Katherine D. Harris

As both Matt and Rebecca have discussed, one of the most important goals behind [Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#) was revealing pedagogical labour and valuing the *stuff* of teaching—which you can see from Rebecca’s examples, we accomplished. We started with some basic questions about pedagogical materials:

- How do we find that *stuff* of teaching?
- What does that *stuff* represent?
- Does it matter where it is made public?
- Does it matter how it is organized?
- Does it matter who promotes it?
- How do we know when someone else has used that *stuff* and in what ways?

Rebecca has sketched the contents and structure of [Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#) as well as the importance of students’ voices on the impact of pedagogical materials, but I would also like to take a moment to discuss what that *stuff* of teaching represents.

The classroom has become a decentralized stage for engaging political and intellectual debates that has the potential for recording both the intention for a course (through a syllabus, assignment prompt, or reading list)

as well as the ensuing conversations (through collaborative syllabi, hashtag assignments that rely on current social media attention, and resulting student-generated projects). Often, the reflective essays instructors publish about a particular course, project, or assignment are from that subject position only and describe the perceived learning objectives as being accomplished, often based on the student learning goals that we are all beholden to these days for opaque institutional assessment purposes.

What Pedagogical Labour Can We Reveal when We Publish the Stuff of Teaching instead of those Reflective Articles?

Sharing the actual, raw pedagogical materials via social media and then through particular journals makes some forms of pedagogical labour visible. But these pedagogical materials or artifacts often float out there without being curated, annotated, or contextualized. And this causes pedagogical materials to then become somewhat ephemeral even if they are memorialized in blog posts, distributed on Twitter, or archived in institutional repositories.

More sustainable repositories and projects like *DPiH* have cropped up since 2015 with variant levels of contributions and peer review for some pedagogical materials, such as the syllabus. But what is being preserved by depositing pedagogical materials like the syllabus? Who's voices? Instructor voices? Student voices? Community voices?

Let us focus on this particular kind of pedagogical artifact. As we were in the final throes of completing the digital structure for *DPiH* right at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we asked the question about how particular pedagogical materials shift and change according to a moment, primarily because projects like [The Open Syllabus Project](#) provided such a wealth of information about reading lists and historical syllabi (see Table 3). But, with the civil and social unrest of 2020–2021 and conversations about the canons exploding with some movement to make changes in US higher education, what are we preserving in *DPiH* for this kind of governing document? Are we preserving pedagogical materials within their context of the keywords? Are we documenting how the syllabus has and will change over time?

Table 3: Inclusion of Syllabi in *The Open Syllabus Project*, Humanities CORE, and *DPiH*.

Repository	Available Syllabi
Open Syllabus Project	7,292,573
MLA Humanities CORE	364
<i>Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities</i>	77

Since *DPiH* hosts 77 syllabi with another 40 artifacts linking to syllabi spread across multiple keywords, we were curious about how to articulate the importance of this document and the voices that are now being inserted into it—and I do not just mean revising the reading list. How are students’ voices coming into this document? And how has it been revised, re-used, and remixed to accommodate the shifts in higher education?

To answer this set of questions, we invited several perspectives to discuss “The State of the Syllabus” at the 2020 Modern Language Association Annual Convention to be published in a special edition of *Syllabus Journal* on “[The State of the Syllabus](#).” We were emboldened by the seven flash essays that propose opening out the syllabus to variant voices. That made us question the representation of voices in *DPiH* and query what *DPiH* offers other than simply an open access, curated collection of peer-reviewed pedagogical materials that models how to value these kinds of materials. What if *DPiH* represents a *new form of scholarship*? One that is not what we currently churn out in order to gain professional advancement? What is revelatory about the labour of teaching in this new form of scholarship?

Matt, Rebecca, and I have often articulated that pedagogy should be valued equally with scholarship and scholarly products, but what if we shifted that conversation? Instead of equating a syllabus with an 8000-word article or book chapter, what if we instead value those pedagogical materials for fostering collaboration and dialogue out in the open in a similar vein to what Kathleen Fitzpatrick has proposed in her June 11, 2021 blog post:

That rethinking [about scholarship] includes moving away from treating scholarly work as a production line, turning out an endless supply of new products, and instead understanding scholarly work as an ongoing process of discovery and exchange and conversation that benefits from openness in fostering greater collaboration and dialogue. (“[Opening up Peer Review](#)”)

Since Matt, Rebecca, and I finished writing the *DPiH* introduction in late 2019, we have discovered that we’re not really advocating that pedagogical materials be valued as an equivalent to the current academic production line of required scholarship. We write: “If those teaching materials could somehow be recognized as a form of scholarship, faculty members might be more open to sharing their own pedagogical materials without having to create an online presence or maintain a Web site” (“[History of the Development](#)” in “Curating”). The key here is sharing, openness, and faculty buy-in for this new type of system for valuing pedagogical materials. We hope that *DPiH* breaks free from this framework or model of scholarship because that model still puts pedagogy into the flawed system of scholarly publication—which is primarily based on research-intensive universities and what we all learned in graduate school was considered valid scholarship.

We have mentioned already that the curators were asked to shift away from first person reflections. With this request, we were attempting to signal that pedagogy is generated by more than one individual. That it is a cacophony of voices. But the only model we have for valuing pedagogy and its itinerant materials is the current academic scholarly production line—and citations.

Instead of recording citations, how do we shift to recording reuse and remixing? That very dialogue and collaboration that Kathleen Fitzpatrick refers to? Perhaps it lies in assessing our own attempts to diversify *DPiH* with curators from a variety of institutional affiliations. If we intended to include a variety of voices stemming from a variety of institutions that serve a wide population of US higher education students, were we successful? We had to ask ourselves after publishing the collection: Just how inclusive is *DPiH*? Does our open infrastructure allow for more disparate voices?

Table 4: Institutional Affiliation of Curators and Creators from *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*

Classification	Curator Affiliations	Creator Affiliations	Total Affiliations
Doctoral	66.67%	75.76%	74.93%
Masters	16.67%	12.58%	12.95%
Baccalaureate	13.64%	8.94%	9.37%
Associates	3.03%	2.27%	2.34%
Special focus	–	0.30%	0.28%
Tribal colleges	–	0.15%	0.14%

We made a start with *DPiH* on implementing a diversity of voices, but after looking at our own numbers in terms of the diversity of institutions, we see that there is room for growth, as Table 4 illustrates. On average, 49% of creators of pedagogical artifacts are from the same classification as the keyword curator, but for individual keywords this ranged from a high of 93% alike to a low of 6%. As the high proportion of affiliations to doctoral institutions might indicate, it is predominantly those curators from doctoral institutions choosing like creators, and curators from baccalaureate and associates institutions choosing creators from different institutional affiliations.

This pattern does not mean that those curators and artifact creators do not value undergraduate teaching at a non-research-intensive university. But consider this: perhaps faculty and instructors from research institutions are more comfortable sharing online. And who has time and resources to openly share *stuff* online? Typically, not those teaching four courses (or more) each semester or quarter.

What I propose is that we break free from the scholarly production line—make the dialogue, collaboration, and community visible alongside the pedagogical labour. We created a community within *DPiH* by building *DPiH*, and in response to curators' work, Matt, Rebecca, and I created an ontology to connect and understand digital pedagogy in general through these key concepts that Rebecca described earlier. We hope that these key

concepts can also draw together and amplify this conversation around valuing pedagogical materials as some form of scholarship. *DPiH* is a model to promote pedagogical artifacts, keywords, and key concepts that foster dialogue, community, and collaboration by offering an infrastructure:

- 0. Taxonomy
- 0. Curation
- 0. Annotation
- 0. Keywords
- 0. New publication genre
- 0. Open licensing
- 0. Forking and citation

DPiH focuses on the end-user—instructors—in an attempt to put tools in their hands to create something they can use and then measure within their own communities of the classroom and students. Then, this becomes less about the scholarly output machine and more about a metric that foregrounds improving student learning—students become part of the process as well as the recipients.

DPiH is openly shared, but it is not meant to wait out in the ether of the Internet hoping for a citation of its voluminous materials. The sharing of pedagogical materials, the curatorial communities, the sustainable infrastructure, the valuing of the pedagogical artifacts, the invitation to continue evolving those artifacts through use and conversation—all offer an opportunity for a culture of revising, remixing, reusing in such a way that moves beyond the value of open sharing and situates teaching materials in a larger dialogue.

How (do) we Work in Public?

Matthew K. Gold

The kind of open sharing described above is made possible by working within open, community-owned infrastructure. In her book *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University*, Kathleen Fitzpatrick argues that open scholarship is key to re-building support for the mission of higher education. Fitzpatrick argues that working in public, and publishing in public, are key steps in this process. As Alyssa Arbuckle points out in her recently defended dissertation, “[Opening Up Scholarship in the Humanities: Digital Publishing, Knowledge Translation, and Public Engagement](#),” however, open access is just the start, and it needs to be followed up with a focus on public engagement and concern for equity.

DPiH embodied many aspects of these approaches, which is perhaps not surprising considering that Kathleen brought the project under contract with the Modern Language Association with the goal of publishing it on the Humanities Commons. And, indeed, the editorial team chose to publish with the MLA precisely because we identified it as a publisher that was (and is) experimenting with public scholarship in exciting ways.

Open processes were key to *DPiH*, and in this section, I am going to discuss how those processes worked, why we chose them, and what effect they had on the final publication. Our work in the open began with our use of [GitHub](#), the popular code sharing website and service, as an editorial home for the project in 2014 with the goal of creating more transparent public scholarship. Our co-editor Jentery Sayers pushed us to explore this model; our adoption of it as an editorial interface produced real benefits for our project, making public parts of the editorial process that are often kept private.

This decision to use *GitHub* came with consequences, however; we had to ask our contributors to write in the [Markdown](#) format, which was unfamiliar to many. In some cases, we had to create Markdown for them. In others, contributors began exploring *GitHub* and markdown for the first time. In all, the repository shows 38 contributors, which counts only contributors who actually submitted pull requests—as opposed to sending us Markdown files that we uploaded for them. Participating in the collection thus became not just an exercise in scholarly publishing, but also an opportunity to learn and experiment with new skills.

As scholars such as Fitzpatrick, Arbuckle, and many others have noted, openness is not an unalloyed good in and of itself, and we acknowledge that those most privileged, most insulated from public attacks on their identities or physical bodies are able to work in public most easily without fear. Certainly, in recent years especially, examples from the Trump administration’s attacks on undocumented students to recent attacks on those teaching issues of race and social justice show how openness is not an unmitigated good, and how care must be taken in public, open work. Still, we believe that by working in public, and by creating work that demonstrates the strength of the academy—particularly the thoughtfulness and care that goes into our pedagogy—we can bring a degree of openness to many aspects of university life that are often closed, and can thereby build transparency and solidarity with the public around our educational goals.

Our open editorial work for *DPiH* began by uploading initial drafts to the Git repository. From the markdown version of the keyword Poetry committed to the repository (Figure 4), you can see that the chapters began with metadata and then included a draft.

```

---
title: Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities
subtitle: Concepts, Models, and Experiments
chapter: Poetry
URL: keywords/poetryn.md
authors:
- family: Rybak
  given: Chuck
editor:
- family: Gold
  given: Matthew K.
publisher: Modern Language Association
type: book
---

## Update April 1, 2020 - WE'RE LIVE!
*Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* has emerged on its Modern Language Association platform in a beta form and being corrected live through June 2020. In light of the widespread move to online education at most universities, both the MLA staff and editors Davis, Gold, and Harris agreed that opening up the project in its post-peer review, copyedited state would be beneficial for everyone. Please join us in welcoming this long-standing project in its final platform into the world: [*Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*](https://digitalpedagogy.hcommons.org/)

*****

# Poetry

### Chuck Rybak
Associate Professor, UW-Green Bay | http://chuckrybak.com

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#### Publication Status:
* unreviewed draft
* draft version undergoing editorial review
* draft version undergoing peer-to-peer review
* draft version undergoing MLA copyediting
* **published** see [*Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* MLA 2020](https://digitalpedagogy.hcommons.org/)

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## CURATORIAL STATEMENT

To talk about poetry and pedagogy is a task fraught with complication from the start. Do we mean to explore how we read, construct, and teach interpretations of poetry? Or are we interested in the pedagogy of the creative process: the writing and composition itself? Do we mean both? In the academy's recent history, these concerns are usually separated into "literature" versus "creative writing" curriculum and programs. Yet, digital pedagogy in the humanities presents us with fresh opportunities to reexamine our boundaries, and this collection of artifacts should be considered the result of such reflection.

```

Figure 4: The keyword Poetry, Markdown version with metadata and publication status

From a very early point in the writing and publishing of the project, drafts were public, and we were essentially working in a space where others could follow along with the process (Figure 5).

```

19 21  ## CURATORIAL STATEMENT (roughly 750-800 words, MLA Format)
20 22
21 23  To talk about poetry and pedagogy is a task fraught with complication from the start. Do we mean to explore how we read, construct, and teach interpretations of
poetry? Or are we interested in the pedagogy of the creative process: the writing and composition itself? Do we mean both? In the academy's recent history, these
concerns are usually separated into "literature" versus "creative writing" curriculum and programs. Yet, digital pedagogy in the humanities presents us with fresh
opportunities to reexamine our boundaries, and this collection of artifacts should be considered the result of such reflection. If, for example, coding is a form of
writing, what is created by work, or programs, specifically written to advance interpretation? If we want students to engage such concerns, our pedagogy must actively
create a space for that engagement.

22 24
23  - The four categories that organize these artifacts are fluid rather than firm, and the rhetorical lens is one that highlights pedagogy rather than defines it. All of
the artifacts represent, in a sense, digital tools, and all involve coding that is either foregrounded or backgrounded. The vital question for teachers of poetry is
how to rhetorically assess digital tools so that learning and inquiry eclipse the bright lights of technology employed. Thus, the "Digital Tools" category is
constructed around the bedrock pedagogical concern of close reading, but its included artifacts sometimes cast a wide net of possibly, while others prioritize specific
teaching outcomes, such as understanding rhythm and meter. The "Creative Writing" group intersects with the traditional pedagogy of creation in ways that often prove
messy and antithetical (automated, computer-generated poetry?), but is it not now essential for students to at least examine the algorithmic as creative?

25  + **Can you clarify the meaning of this sentence through a quick revision? " If, for example, coding is a form of writing, what is created by work, or programs,
specifically written to advance interpretation?" I'm not sure what you mean by a work or program "meant to advance interpretation." Perhaps a very specific example
would help.
26  +
27  + Also, please clarify the referent of "that engagement"
28  +
29  + The four categories that organize these artifacts are fluid rather than firm, and the rhetorical lens is one that highlights pedagogy rather than defines it. All of
the artifacts represent, in a sense, digital tools, and all involve coding that is either foregrounded or backgrounded. The vital question for teachers of poetry is
how to rhetorically assess digital tools so that learning and inquiry eclipse the bright lights of technology employed. Thus, the "Digital Tools" category is
constructed around the bedrock pedagogical concern of close reading, but its included artifacts sometimes cast a wide net of possibly, while others prioritize specific
teaching outcomes, such as understanding rhythm and meter. The "Creative Writing" category intersects with the traditional pedagogy of creation in ways that often
prove messy and antithetical (automated, computer-generated poetry?), but is it not now essential for students to at least examine the algorithmic as creative?

```

Figure 5: Markdown draft of the curatorial statement for the keyword Poetry in GitHub with editorial feedback and proposed changes

Because *GitHub* shows line-by-line, and word-by-word versioning histories, it is possible to go back and trace editorial revisions from draft to draft (Figure 5). One of the most interesting aspects of this process was that the

MLA forked the project and began using *GitHub* to do its own editorial work. In this respect, *DPiH* not only made its own work public but also began to pull its publisher further into open spaces. Many aspects of book publishing are kept from public view, especially editorial conversations between scholars and the publisher. *DPiH* made those aspects of the publishing process more visible and transparent.

Indeed, in some ways, the project as a whole led us to question the role of the publisher. Typically, scholars provide content, and the publisher handles editorial, production, and marketing work. In this project, by contrast, the scholarly editors were doing much of the editorial and production work, and even some of the marketing work, especially given the way the project was public before it was officially published. The entire project was an experiment, and we were grateful to have a publisher who was willing to embrace the experimental aspects of the publication.

Among those experimental processes were a batch publication process; a publicity strategy rooted in social networks; and a public peer-to-peer review. Drafts of the keywords were released in six batches, a strategic decision arrived at in consultation with the MLA to foster interest and energy around the process of peer-to-peer review. Editors and curators used their social media connections to invite the public into that peer review process. Peer reviewers added comments in the sidebar of each text using the WordPress theme CommentPress (Figure 6), a practice that has been used often for digital humanities projects; overall, peer-to-peer reviewers and authors exchanged 435 comments. During this process we observed some unevenness in responses—some curators with very active social networks were successful at gathering many responses to their work. Others had fewer responses, especially in the later batches. A kind of collective exhaustion became apparent as the project wore on, and some of the novelty wore off. Still, reviewers seemed to be active readers and commenters upon keywords that were especially important to them.

The screenshot displays a web interface for 'MLA COMMONS Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities'. The main content area features a list of items, including a source URL and a paragraph of text. A sidebar on the right displays a 'COMMENTS' section for a specific paragraph, showing two comments from Katina Rogers and Chuck Rybak.

Figure 6: Peer review of the keyword Poetry in CommentPress

Once the peer review process was done, these comments were merged into larger editorial revision requests by the editors, and revised copies of the keywords were again uploaded to GitHub. The process as a whole led to a kind of participatory scholarship, a process in which a scholarly community made itself visible in the publication process. Conversation of the collection expanded across a number of platforms, including GitHub, Humanities Commons, and Twitter.

All of this work resulted in a shift of the concept of what it means for a project to be “published.” Indeed, *DPiH* was public long before it was officially a publication of the MLA. As a result, draft chapters were cited in scholarship and were included in tenure, promotion, and annual reviews. *DPiH* became part of the living tissue of the academy, and of academic conversations, precisely because the process was public throughout. And it was a good thing, too; considering how long scholarly publishing can take, the work was out and useful in the world before the final version received the final imprimatur of the MLA. This was epitomized by the moment when the COVID-19 pandemic struck and the need for instructors to have a resource like *DPiH* for online teaching became apparent, necessary, and urgent. In collaboration with the MLA, we decided to release the final platform for *DPiH* before the platform was completely done as a way to help faculty through the transition to online education (Figure 7).



Figure 7: @MLANews tweet announcing the early release of *DPiH* in response to the pandemic. Twitter, March 24, 2020, twitter.com/MLANews/status/1242505620986699778. Screenshot taken 23 Jan. 2023.

With the arrival of COVID-19, the question of how to teach with digital tools became not just something people could do if they were interested, but a vital matter of course continuity and student access. At that moment, we were well positioned to launch the formal published version of *DPiH* early, in advance of our planned launch date, and we were grateful that the MLA was able and willing to publish the final version of the project early. This kind of flexibility in publication date, and the ability to push forward publication processes on an accelerated timeline to meet a unique demand, shows the benefits of working in the space of open, public, experimental publishing. At the moment of need, the resources were already there and ready to be shared.

Conclusion: Let's Build Conversations

As we have discussed this digital pedagogy ecosystem, we have repeatedly referred to conversations. We are intentionally building on the metaphor of scholarship as a conversation as articulated in the framework for information literacy created by the Association of College and Research Libraries (“Framework”). We see all of the artifacts in *DPiH*—the assignment prompt, the student creation, the viral video—whether created by faculty, students, or members of the general public—as contributions to this conversation.

The origins of aspects of this article can be found in [“Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities,”](#) which began as an editors’ introduction to *DPiH* but evolved into a much larger piece of writing that covers the history of the project, insights gained about digital pedagogy from studying the artifacts collected, and multiple pathways into the collection for those who are new to digital pedagogy. We have also included some responses to common objections we have heard to digital pedagogy, such as concerns about FERPA, in part because our aim in this project is to reach a wide audience, not just those who are already practicing digital pedagogy. We wanted to help faculty who might be resistant to engaging in digital pedagogy to get past their concerns, or at least equip those trying to get their colleagues to engage in this conversation and practice.

As we continue the digital pedagogy conversation, we especially want to highlight the equity issues built into traditional scholarship and the hierarchy of higher education, issues articulated by Anne McGrail in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*.⁷ As long as the official scholarship of pedagogy is dominated by traditional forms of scholarship, it will exclude teaching-heavy, service-burdened practitioners. So, we invite everyone, including you, our readers, to contribute to our work of shifting this conversation by sharing digital pedagogy. And, though we have had, at the end of this ten-year process, to call this project published and final, we want to explore with you the new conversations that have emerged since we finalized our list of keywords. Among the questions we leave you with are:

- What have we left uncovered? What new pedagogical artifacts might you want to contribute to this ongoing conversation?
- How can we all further develop an infrastructure for the digital pedagogy ecosystem to support further discussions of digital pedagogy?

- How might we think together about new publication models that can support experimental scholarship in new forms of publication?

We look forward to your responses and your continued engagement with *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*, which you can expand by using the social media hashtag #curateteaching or by submitting new artifacts to the Humanities Commons repository and using “digital pedagogy” and the relevant [keyword](#) in the subject field, as well as any of the [DPIH’s tags](#) in the tag field.

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Footnotes

0. This piece originated as a keynote address at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) 2021: Open/Social/Digital Humanities Pedagogy, Training, and Mentorship Conference. We are grateful to the DHSI team for inviting us to speak, for its leadership of global conversations around open social scholarship and pedagogy, and for its invitation to publish this talk. Thank you Laura Estill, Ray Siemens, Alyssa Arbuckle, and the entire DHSI team. ↵
0. We collaboratively wrote this presentation and publication, but to preserve the individual identities of the speaker in each section of the body of this work, we have designated each person who was speaking under

the section's subtitle. [↵](#)

0. See "[Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#)" for a history of the development of this project in relation to the fervor surrounding digital humanities. [↵](#)
0. See above for a discussion of how we secured permissions for artifacts that were not already shared online under an open license. See below for a discussion of how open licenses facilitate the spread of digital pedagogy. [↵](#)
0. The graph was built following the directions in the [Gephi Quick Start Tutorial](#) to do some basic analysis and formatting, including betweenness centrality (shown by text size), Force Atlas Layout, and Community Detection. [↵](#)
0. See above for a discussion of how permission was secured for artifacts, including student work. [↵](#)
0. McGrail also curated the keyword "Community College" for our project. [↵](#)