Many pieces on libraries and digital humanities focus on the library as a space, an organization, and an institution, with the roles of librarians typically understood as functioning primarily within that space. While librarianship is, obviously, most often practiced in the library, the perspectives, skills, ethics, and approaches librarians bring to digital humanities research and pedagogy may operate outside of the contexts of the library as an institutional unit. Librarians—MLS holders and academics with work experience in the library—may work as digital humanities specialists in departments and colleges, as faculty members in departments, in DH centers not located within the library, in campus IT units, as instructional designers, in writing centers, or in any number of other contexts. Based on our experiences working as DH specialists “on-site” within academic units, we will examine the nature of work when digital humanities librarianship is practiced and embedded outside of the institutional contexts of the library (Carlson & Kneale, 2011).

In 2014, two units at Michigan State University independently sought to bolster digital humanities pedagogy and research by hiring digital humanities specialists to work within disciplinary units. In these positions, we have been practicing digital humanities in the disciplines in a manner that is heavily imbued with the values of librarianship. We bring to our positions a focus on digital and information literacy, scholarly communication, sustainability, information ethics, and access and serve as advocates for libraries and librarianship in both pedagogical and research contexts (Smiley, 2016).

Library-influenced Pedagogy in the Classroom

Like librarians in the library, we provide modular or session-based classes for disciplinary faculty on a range of topics. Additionally, we both teach semester-long courses on digital humanities and digital history. In any of these pedagogical contexts—the one-shot session or the semester long course—we advocate for information literacy sessions, special collections and archives visits, and librarian sessions as crucial components of digital humanities education. Through our placement directly in the disciplines, we are able to advocate for library involvement from within, and provide another voice and level of support for the value of librarian-student interaction.

In our own classes, we actively involve librarians through classroom visits or class trips to the library. When availability allows, we have included an embedded librarian in the course. For example, one of
the MSU Libraries’ Digital Scholarship Librarians was the embedded librarian in “Introduction to Digital Humanities,” in which he led two class sessions, answered questions as a librarian resource on the course Slack, and attended four final project working class sessions to assist in providing one on one support with student projects. Students in the class were able to connect with librarians on a more substantive and sustained level through this continued face-to-face and virtual interaction. This model of embedded librarianship was greatly beneficial to the students, and shows the opportunity that comes from deep involvement of librarians in course design and teaching, and can serve as a model for other instructors to implement. Through our direct contact with disciplinary faculty, we use our own collaborations with librarians in the classroom to provide models for disciplinary faculty to follow and for librarians to encourage. From librarian class visits to information and digital literacy focused projects and assignments, there is a productive continuum of embeddedness to encourage.

Beyond the enhanced opportunities for librarian instruction and interaction with our classes and students, our own training leads us to imbue our syllabi and pedagogical style with the values of librarianship. Courses in the Digital Humanities curriculum strongly reflect key aspects of digital humanities in libraries, including open access, sustainable formats and tools, archives and archival theory, data sharing, information ethics, metadata, openness, and digital publication. In addition to leading or co-leading courses in our Digital Humanities curriculum, we also have the opportunity to integrate smaller digital components into a substantial number of courses and reach a larger proportion of the student body. Instruction and exercises led by us blend disciplinary concepts and course content with critical lessons on multimodal composition and publication, data evaluation and usage, and archival theory to produce digital projects in courses of all levels.

**Research Collaboration through Relationship Building**

We often serve as partners or advisors on digital humanities research projects, alongside others in the libraries and in Matrix. Because of our affiliations within departments, disciplinary faculty members are in close contact with us, are organizationally bonded, and develop personal relationships that fuel our work with them on research projects. The on-site embedded librarianship that we practice seeks to address some of the challenges that can occur in research relationships between disciplinary faculty and librarians. At times, faculty may not think to consult librarians until they are far along in their research, and many see librarians as service providers, not as skilled experts with whom to collaborate. Assumptions and historical professional divisions between the work of librarians and the work of disciplinary faculty are well known (Keener, 2015). Studies on faculty-librarian collaboration have shown mixed experiences—some faculty tend to view librarians as collaborators and partners, while others see them as service providers (Manuel, Beck, and Molloy, 2005).

As Andrews discussed anecdotally, “resistance is a common issue” (2015). Despite these challenges, there are great opportunities from collaboration, and success in bringing together librarians with faculty is essential to the larger project of digital humanities. Our experiences echo findings in Keener (2015) that the collaborative model can succeed if librarians and disciplinary faculty can engage with each other and recognize what each brings to the table.

Our close working relationships with faculty have shown to be beneficial to digital research in two ways. First, they foster an environment where disciplinary faculty think of us first when embarking upon a project, and they don’t hesitate to consult with us about their work. In turn, they gain the perspectives and advice of librarians (us), and receive contact information for librarians—wherever they are located—and other specialists immediately. This early contact helps to move crucial conversations about digital humanities scholarship production, metadata, digital curation, or other topics upstream in the research cycle. The second benefit of this contact is in fostering working relationships that view digital humanities work as a partnership between librarians and specialists and disciplinary...
We have integrated topics like information ethics, archival theory, and scholarly communication into close to fifty courses where it did not exist previously; we have connected at least a dozen faculty with librarians to provide course sessions on information literacy, user experience, and special collections; and, we have provided early research consultation with dozens more faculty and graduate students.

Our position of embedded librarianship is also bolstered by our participation in library digital humanities initiatives. We work alongside other librarians to coordinate, promote, and create programming, serve on the MSU Libraries’ Digital Scholarship Committee, meet with job candidates, and serve on hiring committees. By functioning in multiple spaces and building strong relationships with individuals in multiple units, we are able to bridge disciplinary experts and library experts, connecting people based on their needs.

We believe the benefits from working closely with disciplinary faculty have been crucial to the successes we have encountered thus far. We have integrated topics like information ethics, archival theory, and scholarly communication into close to fifty courses where it did not exist previously; we have connected at least a dozen faculty with librarians to provide course sessions on information literacy, user experience, and special collections; and, we have provided early research consultation with dozens more faculty and graduate students. We also recognize that this process of relationship-building and collaboration takes time and are fortunate to have been given the time from day one within our daily work to organically grow these rapportts. Our unique positions have enabled us to see that digital humanities librarianship can succeed in any unit through active participation in courses, community-building activities, and individual research consultations, throughout the process promoting the central values of librarianship and the intellectual contributions of librarians. We hope these lessons can be applied more broadly to digital humanities and digital scholarship librarians, subject specialists and liaisons, and others to focus on relationship building, to have discussions with faculty about joining research groups, to meet with faculty often, to play larger roles in classes, or to have more embedded librarians in digital humanities courses.

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