

PUBLICATIONS GO DIGITAL

A new partnership to offer high-tech options for distributing scholarship

UNIVERSITY PARK, PA (March 14, 2005) — From a series of meetings in recent years between Penn State Press and the University Libraries focused on making research more easily accessible, a partnership has formed to create an Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing at Penn State.

The principal mission of the Office of Digital Publishing will be to use new media technologies to advance scholarly communication—at Penn State and beyond. Through projects sponsored by the Office, the Libraries and the Press will be able to clarify the costs associated with electronic publishing and assess the long-term benefits to the scholarly communication system. The work of the Office will also directly involve the Penn State community in managing the changes to the benefit of the faculty and their research goals.

While similar initiatives are under way at other universities, few involve such extensive library-press synergy. “The Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing is ideally positioned to take full advantage of the strengths that both the Libraries and the Press bring to the challenges facing scholarly communication,” says Eva Pell, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School. The Libraries bring to the Office considerable expertise in programming, digitization, web site development, and access mechanisms such as indexing and metadata. The Press brings its own extensive expertise in editorial matters ranging from peer review to copyediting and developmental editing. The Press can draw upon its award-winning production and design staff and its experienced marketing staff.

A goal of the Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing is to make research publications available online by moving existing print journals and monographs to a digital environment. “This project is vital to universities and libraries as we explore ways to disseminate research other than through the traditional publishing channels,” says Nancy Eaton, Dean of the University Libraries. A print-on-demand feature will provide paper versions if users wish to have paper as well as electronic copies. This project will also give access to library collections that are too delicate to handle.

Leadership and planning for the Office will come from Bonnie MacEwan, Assistant Dean for Collections and Scholarly Communication at the Libraries, and Peter Potter, Associate Director and Editor-in-Chief of the Press, who will be co-directors. Their responsibilities will include assessing the time investment needed, project development, budget tracking, fundraising, and coordinating the work of the Libraries and Press staff. They will also identify and recruit an advisory board of Penn State faculty members.

One of the first tasks of the Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing will be to build the necessary technical infrastructure for moving journals and monographs to a digital environment. This task is already well under way with the announcement in August that the Libraries and the Press have joined forces with Cornell University to develop an open-source publication management system. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is funding the development of this system based on Cornell's innovative publishing software, DPubS (Digital Publishing System). DPubS will be re-engineered as a general-purpose publishing platform for scholarly literature in diverse fields. It will support peer review, have extensive administrative functionality, and will provide interoperability with open-source repository systems such as FEDORA and DSpace.

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