

EDITED BY VIRGINIA KUHN AND ANKE FINGER

SHAPING THE DIGITAL DISSERTATION

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE
ARTS AND HUMANITIES





<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2021 Virginia Kuhn and Anke Finger (eds). Copyright of individual chapters is maintained by the chapters' authors.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text and to make commercial use of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Virginia Kuhn and Anke Finger, *Shaping the Digital Dissertation: Knowledge Production in the Arts and Humanities*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0239>

Copyright and permissions for the reuse of many of the images included in this publication differ from the above. This information is provided in the captions and in the list of illustrations.

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license please visit <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0239#copyright>

Further details about CC BY licenses are available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Updated digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0239#resources>

Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

ISBN Paperback: 9781800640986

ISBN Hardback: 9781800640993

ISBN Digital (PDF): 9781800641006

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 9781800641013

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 9781800641020

ISBN XML: 9781800641037

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0239

Cover image: Erda Estremera on Unsplash, <https://unsplash.com/photos/eMX1aIAp9Nw>.
Cover design by Anna Gatti.

Introduction

Shedding Light on the Process of Digital Knowledge Production

Anke Finger and Virginia Kuhn

While digital dissertations have been around for many years, the processes by which they are defined, created and defended remain something of a mystery. Is an interactive PDF significantly different from its paper-based counterpart? What specific possibilities can a digitally networked environment open up that would be impossible in print? How are dissertation committees able to gauge the quality of natively digital work? What support systems and workflows do students need to complete these types of projects? How do digital projects change the ways faculty members advise doctoral students? What are the implications of born-digital dissertations for career choices, hiring potential and work beyond the academy?

Shaping the Digital Dissertation: Knowledge Production in the Arts and Humanities addresses these questions in a book whose chapters explore the larger implications of digital scholarship across institutional, geographic and disciplinary divides. Indeed, the issues are all the more pressing as universities have moved online in response to the pandemic, revealing the need for both greater epistemological experimentation and more creative pedagogy. This raises even more questions about the future of scholarship. The book consists of two sections: the first, written by senior scholars, uses jargon-free language to tackle some conceptual concerns around directing and assessing dissertations, as well as doctoral education more broadly. The second section consists

of nine narratives written by those who have successfully created and defended a natively digital dissertation. These narratives were carefully selected for their ability to represent a diverse set of disciplinary and institutional settings. Within these specialized contexts, however, the chapters also serve as case studies that address common themes faced by doctoral students as well as their advisors.

The impetus for this collection arose at the inaugural meeting of the Digital Humanities and Videographic Criticism Scholarly Interest Group of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) in 2017. A graduate student asked whether the group might consider gathering information regarding digital doctoral dissertations. One of this collection's editors, Virginia Kuhn, defended a natively-digital, media-rich dissertation in 2005, and had supported several others in the intervening years as well as written a lead article on the topic in *Academe*, the magazine of the American Association of University Professors in 2013. Given her long-time involvement with generating digital scholarly work, she was rather surprised by this request. In the discussion that followed, however, it became clear that some sort of database was very much needed, as was a collection of more detailed essays about the trials and tribulations of creating a doctoral thesis digitally. Indeed, although digital dissertations—by which we mean those that are not just traditional, word-based texts that are archived digitally—have been around for decades, there remains confusion about the processes that go into creating and assessing them. And this confusion is perhaps most keenly felt among doctoral advisors and committees, even as some of the more experimental work, such as A.D. Carson's dissertation which took the form of a 34-track rap album, was accepted for publication in 2020 by the University of Michigan Press.¹ These cases have been too few and far between to see them as a trend.

This collection then, is written as much for that constituency—advisors, administrators, graduate school representatives—as it is for

1 Carson created and defended his dissertation at Clemson University in 2017 under the direction of Victor Vitanza, the pioneering rhetorician who was also on Virginia Kuhn's 2005 dissertation committee. The University of Michigan published it in 2020 (A.D. Carson, *I Used to Love to Dream* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11738372>). See Colleen Flaherty, 'Scholarly Rap', *Inside Higher Ed* (October 5, 2020), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/10/05/university-michigan-press-releases-first-rap-album-academic-publisher>

current graduate students contemplating the form that their thesis may take. As such, we felt that the format must be accessible to this group via a printed book, one which also carries the gravitas of a prominent press, if it were to be taken seriously, shared widely, and become useful. To this end, the collection of essays we have assembled represents several disciplines and institutions, showcasing multiple approaches to doctoral research and scholarship. These differing approaches force us to consider what we mean when we speak of the 'digital dissertation': is it word-based but disseminated online? Is it multimodal? Is it a thesis that takes various (media) forms? One with a digital companion? These are vital considerations if doctoral education is to retain its standards of excellence while also remaining relevant to the larger world and if it is to embrace the affordances and communicative advantages of different media for the dissemination of new scholarship. This collection frames digital dissertations as those that could not be accomplished if done on paper; it means they use digital modalities beyond just words (multimodal), or they take advantage of the capabilities of a digitally networked world.

The Current State of Digital Scholarship

In 2006, the Modern Language Association issued a report on 'Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion' listing twenty recommendations to address a perceived crisis in producing scholarship, with monographs maintained as the gold standard for tenure along with pressure for an increased volume of publications. While identifying types of scholarship that should be recognized, the report emphasizes as particularly 'troubling the state of evaluation of digital scholarship [...]: 40.8% of departments in doctorate-granting institutions report no experience evaluating refereed articles in electronic format, and 65.7% report no experience evaluating monographs in electronic format'.² Clearly, the definition of digital scholarship encompassed written work in digital form, not multimodal work or quantitative digital humanities. In fact, right around this time, 2005, Anke was advised against starting an open

2 Modern Language Association, *Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion* (New York: MLA, 2007), p. 11, <https://www.mla.org/content/download/3362/81802/taskforcereport0608.pdf>

access, peer-reviewed, online journal—*Flusser Studies*—for fear of such work not counting for tenure. The journal is in its second decade, and it did count towards tenure, although not significantly. As Anke was up for promotion to full professor in 2016, she wondered whether evaluative measures at her institution had changed. Not much, as it turns out—her video essay on Vilém Flusser and multimodal thinking featured only marginally in her review letters, despite it garnering over 12,000 views on Vimeo, a readership many of us can only dream of for our written academic work.

Clearly, we have come a long way with many professional associations, including the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, the College Art Association and the Association for Computers and the Humanities now including digital scholarship worth counting towards PhD degrees and tenure and promotion. Contributions such as Jennifer Edmond's edited volume on *Digital Technology and the Practices of Humanities Research* help to broaden both the discussion of technology's impact on research and changing practices in the various humanities disciplines.³ However, while there are guidelines for general evaluative measures issued by all, there are few if any specific parameters for advisors as intellectual chaperones or co-conspirators in the process of supporting a graduate student doing work that differs significantly from traditional dissertating structures and approaches. Certainly, institutions of higher learning should not abandon standards, but they must also acknowledge the fact that these standards are not immutable, nor ideologically neutral. Indeed, Yale University's first doctoral dissertation, created in 1861, was hand written on six sheets of paper. Dissertations quickly grew longer as inexpensive paper, typewriters and carbon paper became available.⁴ This is a good reminder of the ways that academic outputs shift in light of the technologies of their production: the typewriter, the mainframe computer, the personal computer and, finally, the networked computer or mobile device.

Given the centrality of media affordances for knowledge production in general, one of the most important roles for those in humanities disciplines,

3 Jennifer Edmond, ed., *Digital Technology and the Practices of Humanities Research* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0192>

4 Richard Andrews et al., *The Sage Handbook of Digital Dissertations and Theses* (London: SAGE Publications, 2012), p. 7.

we believe, is the cultural critique they can offer. Few other disciplines are able to comment on structural imbalances, institutional inequities, and outdated policies. By extension, few disciplines can offer deep readings of changes in knowledge production and their facilitating, accompanying or adjacent technologies. Perhaps more than the social sciences, which tend to focus on researching current structures and institutions, humanists can be activists and weigh in on cultural issues, suggesting changes for remedying the types of inequities and shortcomings we see. We should also be weighing in on matters of public interest, including career diversity for PhDs in the arts and humanities. Thus, this critique includes the culture of technological innovation and adoption. While technologists imagine things that *could* be, we imagine what *should* be.

We have done a good job of sequestering ourselves in our ivory towers, leaving ourselves vulnerable to misrepresentation by anti-intellectual forces. Indeed, if Pew research polls are to be believed, there has never been a moment when higher education, at least in the US, has been so little supported by the public. Academics can bridge this divide via their teaching since we reach so many students, who are, after all, future members of the general public. A text that has been hugely influential on Virginia's own pedagogy is bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress*,⁵ a book that includes an extended conversation with Paolo Freire, best known for his championing of critical pedagogy. Henry Giroux is also a continual source of inspiration regarding critical pedagogy but new voices are emerging: in *Radical Hope*, Kevin Gannon calls for a far more focused attention to teaching.⁶ As we both have long argued, our relationship to students should not be adversarial but one of advocacy, advocacy in the spirit of 'generous thinking', as presented by Kathleen Fitzpatrick in a recent book,⁷ but also by noting Jessie Daniels's and Polly Thistlethwaite's explication of what it means to be 'a scholar in the digital era'—namely by impacting and communicating with the public.⁸

5 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

6 Kevin Gannon, *Radical Hope: A Teaching Manifesto* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11840.003.0001>

7 Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University* (Baltimore: The University of Johns Hopkins Press, 2019).

8 Jessie Daniels, and Polly Thistlethwaite, *Being a Scholar in the Digital Era. Transforming Scholarly Practice for the Public Good* (Chicago: Policy Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447329251.001.0001>

One long-held apprehension about the public nature of digital technologies concerns both copyright and intellectual property. In the latter case, people worry that if they put their ideas online, they will be robbed of them; in the former case, people are nervous about using any type of sound or video fearing they will be accused of copyright infringement. These issues are actually two sides of the same coin and, in both cases, the answer hinges on citation practices. The best way to establish your authorship of an expression of an idea is to have a record of it—in other words, to put it online. Likewise, the best way to demonstrate your awareness of others' intellectual property (IP)—whether that IP resides in words, images or sounds—is to cite your sources.

Another ongoing concern has to do with the conflation of the words 'public' and 'published' and the prevailing idea that simply putting something online is the same as publishing it. The corollary notion is that if something is online, it is no longer of interest to publishers since it has already been 'published'. However, the jurying function that a publisher fulfills is key to any publication and, in fact, in several experiments with online peer review before the publication of a book, publishers found that the online version did not limit book sales.⁹ Much of the bias against online publishing likely stems from these misguided notions that were rampant in the early days of the internet and will certainly persist if they are not examined by the academic community. Such bias, we hold, not only impedes the sharing of new ideas and innovative scholarship because it is deemed a hazard, it also blocks vital dialogue between two cultures that have artificially distanced themselves over time, academia and the public commons.

According to Marissa Parham, 'in 2018 digital work is still often an unreasonably risky pursuit for many faculty, staff and students', noting that one must also produce traditional scholarship or have a record of non-digital publication before this risk abates.¹⁰ In fact, many institutions

9 The Institute for the Future of the Book hosted many of these experiments, the first of which was done with McKenzie Wark's *G3mer Theory*, already under contract with Harvard University Press, the draft of the text was open for commentary online, and many of the comments made it into the final (printed) book. See <https://futureofthebook.org/mckenziemark/>

10 Marissa Parham, 'Ninety-Nine Problems: Assessment, Inclusion, and Other Old-New Problems', *American Quarterly*, 70.3 (2018), 677–84 (at 677–78), <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2018.0052>

issue indefinite guidelines, if any, for innovation and change that will be rewarded. Parham, for example, emphasizes that digital scholarship evaluation processes, if they are formalized, can reveal 'assessment as a site of miscommunication and unacknowledged institutional disinterest in transformation'.¹¹ If innovation and transformation are not part of the evaluative process, how can they be rewarded?

We think we can do better at communicating the value of born-digital scholarship and at merging both hermeneutic and heuristic practices in the humanities. When Anke asked the chair of her Promotion and Tenure Review committee what would help the members to evaluate digital scholarship projects, he mentioned the necessity of training workshops, and he suggested two items, followed by a question mark: 'A rubric providing a comparative basis for digital works and, perhaps, a comparative basis for digital and non-digital works?' He knows we have an intercultural communication problem because we are trying to compare apples to oranges. In Anke's mind, scholarship evaluators in the humanities are not print-centric by choice or sheer obstinacy—they/we/you are print-centric by habituation and acculturation and subscribe to scholarly value systems that seek to maintain rigorous quality control, a highly-charged value from an emic perspective. How do we change these habits to allow for innovation in both form and content? The dissertation, more so than any other academic genre, is the first step towards intellectual innovation where the new hypothesis or question receives room for experimentation: why has it been so difficult to establish this genre as the best laboratory or playground to test an innovative thinker's mettle, to provide a relatively secure ground for taking off in new directions?

I. Issues in Digital Scholarship and Doctoral Education

The first section comprises six chapters by nationally and internationally recognized scholars who have either contributed to, shaped or started the conversation about born-digital dissertations and digital scholarship in general. In this section, the authors speak to the variety of changes in scholarship, changes that include moving beyond a traditional and traditionally secluded discourse and knowledge mediation; to the changes

11 Ibid., 679.

in advising PhD candidates who are expecting a variety of knowledge designs commensurate with their everyday communicative experiences; and to a variety of infrastructural, strategic, and organizational issues universities face when pursuing educational and research goals for the twenty-first century. The audience for whom this portion of the project is intended, doctoral advisors and dissertation/thesis committees in the arts and humanities, are these authors' peers. As such, the six chapters speak directly to those in charge of initiating and navigating the aforementioned changes, for example, by applying the second section's narratives productively such that the larger discussion—for each PhD-granting department—may be tied to routinizing approaches and practices. These contributions may also inspire more broadly conceived discussions within graduate schools and upper administration units to facilitate structures supporting digital dissertations in general. The section concludes with a step-by-step guide to establishing and carrying out digital scholarship including best practices for discoverability and preservation.

II. Shaping the Digital Dissertation in Action

The second section comprises nine chapters composed by PhD students in the arts and humanities, though all are informed by different disciplinary and geographical/cultural vantage points. These narratives—examples of dissertating experiences and outcomes that speak to the variety of options in both form and content—present blueprints for doctoral advisors and dissertation/thesis committees as well as for PhD students just embarking on their dissertation and who seek peers or mentors outside of traditional scholarly support systems.

The topics addressed in these nine chapters include modes of production (impact, copyright and ethics); multimodal scholarship (adding sound, image, non-linear narrative and interactivity); dissemination (for a globally networked society, including audience engagement); and versioning (multiple versions of the same dissertation for different audiences or access to different formats). Each author reflects not only on their individual challenges with digital scholarship as a burgeoning and necessary approach to their academic work, they also present, in accessible language, the processes of production

and dissemination unique to their outcomes. All narratives raise issues pivotal to academic work in the twenty-first century: how does knowledge production (traditionally confined within the intellectual walls of peer review, strictly structured, linear communication and costly print publications) engage with media beyond print, engage the public, and engage in epistemological innovation? The chapters in the second section are strategically placed in order to show the range of possibilities for scholarship in a globally networked world. The early chapters make use of the networking potential in order to reach a wide audience beyond academia. These are largely word based. The middle chapters are more hybrid in nature, often requiring several versions of the same dissertation as appropriate to various rhetorical situations and formats. The final chapters make use of the multimodal capabilities offered by digital technologies; they incorporate the textual as well as the aural and the visual. These dissertations are especially provocative in that they challenge the primacy of verbal language as the only and best form of argument.

The combination of a book about the complexities of digital scholarship (Section I) within which authors also speak about the process of planning, composing and defending their digital dissertations (Section II), makes this project not only unique but, we hope, generally useful to its intended readership: it offers a wide variety of evidence about the value of and need for digital scholarship at the doctoral level. Indeed, digital scholarship in the arts and humanities, we argue, mirrors the media landscapes available to researchers in the twenty-first century and broadens the variety of methodological approaches to innovative inquiry beyond traditional knowledge design.

The essays here enliven the conversation as they recount some of the historical and conceptual efforts carried out in the name of digital scholarship. Kathleen Fitzpatrick opens the collection with an analysis of the sudden isolation graduate students find themselves in during the dissertation process. In the humanities, she observes, graduate students are regularly habituated into an anxiety of intellectual independence whereby sharing ideas, collaboration and publishing work in progress is to be considered suspect and potentially diminishes its scholarly value. Digital scholarship, she argues, can eliminate or at least sideline such anxieties (and their untimeliness) by creating a participating

public, testing ideas, interesting possible publishers early and creating a community of scholarship that, together with the support of PhD-granting institutions, endorses 'new kinds of open work'. Cheryl Ball, too, emphasizes the need for open work in the form of open access facilitation. Adding a historical view towards digital scholarship formats and highlighting the library's role in archival practices, she suggests that digital dissertations play a significant role in embodying the possibility of sharing scholarship publicly and that librarians are pivotal collaborators for any digital scholarship endeavor. Significantly, Ball also emphasizes the need for openness when evaluating digital dissertation forms: why not approach digital work 'on its own terms' in order to allow for 'radical scholarship'? Fitzpatrick's call for freeing the dissertating student from isolation and Ball's underscoring openness both in approach and access to digital scholarship is echoed by Virginia Kuhn who, for years, has honed a loosely established rubric, refined in collaboration with a group of students, with which to assess digital theses. Three areas, 'Conceptual Core, Research Component, Form + Content', each feature three additional foci that leave ample room for epistemological play and space beyond a traditionally alphabetized, linear text-only dissertation. For example, digital scholarship need not be 'thesis-driven prose'; instead, it can establish a 'controlling idea' presented in media other than text. Any kind of rubric or assessment measure, Kuhn warns, also requires a rethinking of review formats, however: annotation and feedback, too, will necessitate multimodal features such that radical scholarship and deep collaboration, to use Ball's and Fitzpatrick's terms, become part of evaluative considerations and feedback formats allow for non-linear, creative interruptions.

Outlining the trials and tribulations of archiving born-digital dissertations, Kathie Gossett and Liza Potts detail a study they have conducted over more than a decade, the ultimate goal being the formation of a persistent, searchable database of these projects. The results of a National Endowment for the Humanities funded workshop conducted with stakeholders from several academic institutions, Gossett and Potts note their work on establishing a network of like minded scholars for support when working in nontraditional formats. Anke Finger shores up this focus on form with an incisive argument about the shifting nature of the book as both a 'medium and artifact',

and one which offers exciting possibilities with the affordances of the digital. However, academic institutions, Finger notes, have not kept pace with these new forms and this is due, in large part, to a lack of evaluative measures and experience in applying them, making it risky at best to embark upon a large-scale digital project. Using her experience as a PhD advisor and founding director of the Digital Humanities and Media Studies initiative at the University of Connecticut, Finger argues for support for digital literacy in humanities-based graduate education. Specifically, she argues that students need ‘access to scholarly inquiry and research innovation beyond print’, and this should come early in graduate education in order to provide the type of scaffolding needed if universities are seriously committed to digital scholarship. Rounding out this section is a collaboratively authored chapter by digital librarians, publishers and archivists, who have established a heuristic dubbed FICUS which stands for findable, impactful, citable, usable and sustainable. These will be widely applicable across disciplines, formats and topics.

The chapters in the second section provide precedents for future dissertating students, while also offering candid descriptions of the obstacles encountered. Forming a bridge between the two sections, chapter seven features a dissertation student, Katherine Walden and her advisor, Thomas Oates who describe the questions they contended with and the steps taken to create and defend Walden’s interdisciplinary digital thesis project in the field of American Studies. While there are signs of the field’s recent support for and of digital scholarship, they note, many questions remain. And since many of the obstacles to Walden’s dissertation were logistical and administrative in nature, her dissertation became a springboard to a larger conversation among faculty at the University of Iowa. Walden and Oates argue for the power of a precedent, and their chapter joins the expanding catalogue of models, offering both conceptual and instrumental advice to future doctoral students as well as their advisors.

Cécile Armand extends the call for rethinking the nature of the dissertation and academic argument in general. In chapter eight, Armand describes a digital database she created as a companion to her dissertation in Chinese history. This companion allowed her to make use of primary source materials that are not typically considered

in scholarly work; these include newspaper advertisements as well as ‘professional handbooks, business materials, municipal archives (including correspondence, regulations and technical sketches), street photographs, and to a lesser extent, original maps and videos’. Although Armand’s first concern was the creation of a permanent home for these materials, this database actually impacted the written portion of her dissertation project since it allowed her a spatial view of her subject, for instance, which opened up new insights. This is an excellent example of the ways that form impacts content and vice versa.

Sarah-Mai Dang, working from within the context of German academic parameters, questions a publication process that relies on economic structures often beyond the reach of the graduate and maintaining the ‘symbolic capital of the book’. Instead, she chose to publish her research in four different formats, trying to undo a staid and costly convention that not only prevented affordable (for both author and reader) public dissemination, but also a speedy delivery of scholarship and access to an international audience. Simultaneously, as a media studies scholar, she turned this process into a research project, taking stock of data to measure impact.

The desire for and influence of a larger audience for academic work is extended by Erin Rose Glass as she describes the background and process of #SocialDiss, a project in which she posted drafts of her dissertation to a variety of online platforms for public review. Gauging the reviews and the many types of public and community engagement produced, Glass argues that academic writing, especially at the student level, would benefit from digital infrastructure, practices and incentives that emphasize collaboration and community building.

Lisa Tagliafari reinforces the need for academic work to reach a wider audience using her own dissertation as a case study. Not only does Tagliafari advocate for open source, hers was also the first chapter offered as a preprint to this collection, via the MIT’s database. Her essay describes open source, open access and Creative Commons before offering suggestions for stakeholders to consider when navigating various levels of access. Anthony Masure’s approach, while similar to Dang’s in that he, too, sought to burst the limitations of print-only parameters common and expected in France, seeks to deepen the notion of his dissertation work’s readability. Noting the technical hurdles of

constantly updating a webpage, for example, he designs his PhD-thesis website by cleaning HTML code and without using a CMS, thus aiming for a 'true' version of his dissertation that, in fact, supersedes the version he submitted to obtain his degree. Ultimately, Masure leads us back to Tim Berners-Lee by advocating for sharing knowledge without borders and critically engaging with the potentially limiting affordances of specific media prescribed for knowledge production. Similarly dismissing the epistemological confines of traditional thesis composition software such as Word, Lena Redman (aka Elena Petrov) devises her own theory of multimodal creativity by analyzing what she calls 'deep remixability' and its interdependence with 'cinematic bricolage' as a research methodology. Her thesis, composed with InDesign and the Adobe Cloud, employs mnemonic material and autobiographical information to enhance what Redman calls feedback loops. These loops deepen the researcher's individualization of knowledge as her intellectual work merges with memory-work to allow for unique meaning-making processes and what Søren Brier has called 'cybernetics of human knowing'.¹²

If the digitally networked world provides the ability to author with images as well as a more open form of academic scholarship, it also raises concomitant ethical considerations around areas such as privacy and copyright. Celeste Tường Vy Sharpe confronted these issues in her own dissertation project completed in a department of History. Sharpe's research included extensive archival research of sensitive materials in her exploration of visual culture and disability. Given the topic, Sharpe found herself weighing the need for visual evidence with the ethics of exposing images culled from the March of Dimes. Finally, Christopher A. Williams explores the deeper layers of web design to discover the communicative potential of 'sticky web galleries' for the multimodal and broad public dissemination of improvisation in music. He describes in great detail the collaborative process necessary to design his thesis in WordPress, complete with paths and multimedia files that align with musical knowledge, beyond linear text. As a team, he and his collaborator arrive at a site that 'as a whole functions as a sort of meta-score for improvisers'. At the same time, the thesis becomes not only

12 Søren Brier, ed., *Cybernetics and Human Knowing: A Journal of Second Order Cybernetics, Autopoiesis and Cyber-Semiotics* (1992-present).

a milestone within a research path, it also turns into a resource for practitioners outside of the usually closed publication loop as a ‘living meta-work.’

Together, these essays demonstrate that digital dissertations, and digital scholarship as such, not only have a rich history already, but that, as a form of knowledge production in the academy, they are established modes of inquiry. The many topics addressed, from a plethora of perspectives and knowledge-bases, speak to the timeliness of examining the dissertation as a genre or space where scholarly innovation should be permitted even more room and openness to utilize tools, approaches, and methods at the scholar’s disposal. For any ‘radical scholarship’ or transformation of scholarly practice is ultimately also tied to the technical and media parameters embedded in the scholar’s environment of production and these environments are now allowing for remarkably creative, communicative and visionary work both inside and outside of academe.

Bibliography

- Andrews, Richard, et al., *The SAGE Handbook of Digital Dissertations and Theses* (London: SAGE Publications, 2012).
- Brier, Søren, ed., *Cybernetics and Human Knowing: A Journal of Second Order Cybernetics, Autopoiesis and Cyber-Semiotics* (1992-present).
- Carson, A.D., *I Used to Love to Dream* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11738372>
- Daniels, Jessie, and Polly Thistlethwaite, *Being a Scholar in the Digital Era. Transforming Scholarly Practice for the Public Good* (Chicago: Policy Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447329251.001.0001>
- Gannon, Kevin, *Radical Hope: A Teaching Manifesto* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11840.003.0001>
- Edmond, Jennifer, ed., *Digital Technology and the Practices of Humanities Research* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0192>
- Fitzpatrick, Kathleen, *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University* (Baltimore: The University of Johns Hopkins Press, 2019).
- Flaherty, Colleen, ‘Scholarly Rap’, *Inside Higher Ed* (October 5, 2020), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/10/05/university-michigan-press-releases-first-rap-album-academic-publisher>

hooks, bell, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Kuhn, Virginia, 'Embrace and Ambivalence', *Academe*, 99.1 (2013), 8–13, <https://www.aaup.org/article/embrace-and-ambivalence#XoT2ldNKjXG>

Modern Language Association, *Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion* (New York: MLA, 2007), <https://www.mla.org/content/download/3362/81802/taskforcereport0608.pdf>

Parham, Marissa, 'Ninety-Nine Problems: Assessment, Inclusion, and Other Old-New Problems', *American Quarterly*, 70.3 (2018), 677–84, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2018.0052>

