

UC San Diego

UC San Diego Previously Published Works

Title

Engaging the knowledge commons: setting up virtual participatory spaces for academic collaboration and community

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6zp934sm>

ISBN

9780081020234

Author

Glass, Erin Rose

Publication Date

2018-03-01

Peer reviewed

Engaging the knowledge commons: setting up virtual participatory spaces for academic collaboration and community¹

By Erin Rose Glass

...the library, in a world that is growing increasingly raucous and cacophonous, is almost the last outpost of silence and the quiet stir of thought...There is nothing wrong with the library as a 'quiet storage place'; indeed it has been exactly that from its beginnings...

Jesse Shera (qtd. In "Sweet Library Lips")

And don't you know, sisters and brothers, it is as a storage place that the library is going to die.

Art Plotnik, "Sweet Library Lips"

Introduction

For at least the past decade and a half, library scholarship has paid critical attention to the foundational role of institutional repositories in preserving and disseminating scholarship and research. Often referred to as "digital commons," these institutional repositories are discussed within the context of the broader paradigm of "knowledge as a commons," which posits that knowledge is a "shared resource that is vulnerable to social dilemmas" (Hess & Ostrom 13). While institutional repositories play a critical role in sustaining knowledge as a shared resource, difficulties in attracting faculty submission suggest that there is need to further develop social and technical forms of support that encourage engagement. Furthermore, these institutional repositories are

¹ This is a pre-print version of a chapter included in *Digital Humanities, Libraries, and Partnerships: A Critical Examination of Labor, Networks, and Community* edited by Robin Kear and Kate Joranson. The book is available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/book/9780081020234>.

not designed to support informal, collaborative, and non-hierarchical methods of making and sharing knowledge that have become increasingly important in today's information landscape.

While these informal, collaborative, and non-hierarchical practices often run against the grain of longstanding academic and library conventions, I argue that they are as important as preservation and dissemination in the cultivation of a 21st century knowledge commons. I will introduce a different type of digital commons that supports these practices and explore their value for the library and its campus community. There is success in these practices in research and teaching to show how the library might leverage them to further develop engaged communities around their collections and initiatives. The library is uniquely positioned to help steward these exciting modes of knowledge production within research and higher education, as well as provide its practitioners important guidance in matters concerning information literacy and ethics.

Participatory Culture and the Digital Commons

I call digital commons that facilitate networked, informal modes of communication and knowledge production “participatory” to distinguish them from digital commons dedicated to preserving and disseminating scholarly knowledge. My notion of participatory digital commons is based on the concept of participatory culture, which refers to a culture that is produced by all of its members rather than a select few. Media scholar Henry Jenkins et al. defines participatory culture as one that lowers barriers to

participation, has strong support for sharing creations with others, provides informal mentorship where knowledge is passed to new members, instills in its members the belief that their contributions matter, and fosters social connection among its members (3). While participatory culture need not necessarily require networked technologies, Jenkins et al. point to the way networked modes of communication such as blogs, games, podcasts, and online forums have enabled participatory culture to become an important mode in which knowledge is made and shared today.

Inspired by the potential of these practices, many scholars and educators have experimented with them in their research and teaching through the use of digital publishing platforms, collaborative writing tools, social media, online forums, virtual gaming, and multimedia production and publishing (Davidson & Goldberg 2010; Jenkins et al. 2009; Veletsianos & Navarrete 2012). Though these practices often push against longstanding models that privilege the exclusive transmission of authoritative knowledge, advocates have praised these practices as a way of making knowledge production more democratic and inclusive, more visible and accessible in the public sphere, and more socially and practically meaningful to the everyday lives of the participants. For example, Jenkins et al. observe that “a growing body of scholarship suggests potential benefits of these forms of participatory culture, including opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, a changed attitude toward intellectual property, the diversification of cultural expression, the development of skills valued in the modern workplace, and a more empowered conception of citizenship” (3). Likewise, John Unsworth points out that these practices are also important to academic career

development. He writes, "...network discussion groups—which are really communities of interest—make it possible for people to break out of their underfunded, undercapitalized, under-recognized institutional contexts, and become recognized for their own contributions to the community" (4). Furthermore, the academic adoption of these practices has been argued as a timely and pragmatic response to the changing nature of popular practices of learning and sharing information in the digital age.

Davidson and Goldberg follow this logic when they point out, "Modes of learning have changed dramatically over the past two decades—our sources of information, the ways we exchange and interact with information, how information informs and shapes us. But our schools—how we teach, where we teach, whom we teach, who teaches, who administers, and who services—have changed mostly around the edges" (2). Thus participatory strategies should be viewed as not only useful for achieving traditional research and learning goals, but also as an important skill in and of itself for navigating today's information landscape.

Though there are numerous digital tools and platforms that can be used to facilitate participatory practices in research and education, many leading advocates have recognized the value of having a loosely-centralized, community-directed virtual space for hosting these activities, often—but not always—described as a "digital commons." For example, the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC), a national network founded in 2002 with 13,000+ members to date, has an online hub for sharing "news, tools, research, insights, pedagogy, methods, and projects" related to teaching and learning. At a more local level, scholarly institutions

and organizations have also set up digital hubs for their members, such as The CUNY Academic Commons (CAC) at The CUNY Graduate Center, the Florida Digital Humanities commons, and the Modern Language Association's Humanities Commons, all based on Commons in a Box (CBOX), an open source platform directed by Associate Professor of English and Digital Humanities Matthew K. Gold and developed by the CAC team.² These virtual spaces offer their members a range of digital communication tools such as customizable WordPress websites, group forums, messaging, profiles, shared calendars, collaborative text editors, and file sharing capabilities, as well as plugins that add further functionality to member sites such as newsletters, mapping tools, social media feeds, and so forth.

I call these digital commons participatory in that they privilege everyday communication, interaction, and experimentation among its members. While the examples above all serve slightly different purposes and audiences and are designed with different functionalities, all speak to the value of providing a loosely-centralized space for cultivating participatory culture. Furthermore, in distinction to for-profit platforms that enable academics to network or collaborate, whether popular tools such as Google, Facebook, or Twitter, or those designed specifically for academic use such as Academia.edu or ResearchGate, these community-directed commons preserve user ownership of their intellectual and personal data, as well as enable the community—at least in principle—to design and govern their space specifically for their needs and values. These particular participatory digital commons thus can be viewed not only as providing members with important networking and collaboration tools, but also as sites

² For more information, see <http://commonsinabox.org>.

of modest resistance to the increasing corporate enclosure of much academic activity happening online.

A Transformative Environment: From Student User to Student Participant

My enthusiasm for participatory digital commons stems from personal experience in working with them as a graduate student in English at The CUNY Graduate Center in New York City, which has run a digital commons known as The CUNY Academic Commons (CAC) since 2009. CAC enables all members to create as many customizable, interactive WordPress websites as they like, allowing students, staff, faculty, and campus organizations to easily set up web presences for scholarly organizations, journals, professional portfolios, courses, or digital humanities experiments, which (if made public) are all easily discoverable by being situated within the commons. In contrast to institutional repositories, learning management systems, and other institutional portals, CAC allows members to personally customize their site through themes and plugins. In addition, CAC's "group" functionality enables members to create and join groups in which they can post to a group forum, collaborate on documents, and share files. This rich suite of communication tools enabled The CUNY Graduate Center community to grow and deepen internal social ties across disciplines and institutional activities. A 2011 case study found that CAC "increased awareness of member projects and research interests; built a greater sense of community between discrete campuses; promoted an open culture of sharing; and encouraged collaborative ventures across the system" (Gold & Otte 2011).

My introduction to CAC was when one of the core courses I was taking for the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy Certificate Program required students to post weekly reflections to the course blog hosted on CAC. While I had engaged in similar collaborative and public-facing student writing activities on learning management systems, blogging platforms, and other virtual spaces, CAC was different in that it was developed and managed in house and subscribed to the values of community-driven software that were also being discussed on campus in technology-related courses and talks. And unlike other disparate online spaces, it cultivated our institution's community by providing a loosely-centralized hub for all campus members to interact and showcase their work, raising the discoverability and visibility of campus member activity.

Though there is not enough space here to recount the ways in which CAC transformed my relationship towards both software and academic community, I began to realize that CAC offered—in principle, if not yet in practice—the rare technical possibility for students to take part in its development and governance given that it was built by academics on campus using open source software. I saw this as an opportunity to improve academic digital environments to more successfully cultivate a collaborative student public, as I found digital tools for collaboration often didn't account for the sensitivities and particularities of student research and writing. The form of the term paper, for example, with its format and file specificity, seemed particularly resistant to “socializing” among one's peers for feedback. I also grew increasingly interested in the potential for community-driven virtual spaces like CAC to provide a living lab for students to explore the ways in which software mediates their intellectual, academic,

and social activities. These explorations, I thought, could be carried out through analysis of user activity, and perhaps even lead to the modification of the software to better shape it users' needs and interests. This type of student participation in the refinement of open source academic software would arguably impart students with a more critical and engaged relationship towards software while potentially leading to software developments useful for the broader academic community.

These thoughts led Urban Education graduate student Jennifer Stoops and myself to develop an idea for an addition to CAC that would allow students to easily network their papers and feedback across courses, disciplines, terms, and even institutions as a means for creating a more collaborative, discoverable, and public-facing student public. Through a 2014 National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Start Up Grant and a CUNY Advancement Grant, we worked with the CAC development team to create a beta version of Social Paper, which currently hosts 89 public papers to date. Though this modest uptake cannot be said to represent a transformation of student culture, Social Paper nonetheless embodies a radically novel approach to educational and academic software that with further institutional, financial, and social support, could have the potential to flourish into a new paradigm for open source software production. Given our limited resources, we were only able to achieve a small portion of the original design for Social Paper, and were unable to implement features such as document integration and flexible formatting that might make the tool more convenient and attractive to use for academic writing. While the growing popularity of sophisticated proprietary platforms for sharing academic writing such as Academia and Authorea may

seem to solve the problem Social Paper was attempting to address, they do not offer students a chance to participate in the governance and development of the tool itself. Thus, while it is still unclear whether we will be able to find resources to further develop Social Paper and involve more students in the process, I view it as an important step towards cultivating community-driven software in academics and higher education.

As a whole, I credit CAC and its culture with providing an environment that transformed my relationship towards software in academic settings, and by the same token, in everyday life. This transformation did not happen over night, but through the continuous exposure to the diverse ways my institutional community used CAC to showcase their academic activities and interact with one another. As I became more comfortable and engaged with the community, I began to experiment with these practices myself, experience a stronger sense of ownership and investment in the tools which allowed for those practices, and take a more proactive role in promoting them to scholars, students, and others working along the lines of knowledge production. Before I had been introduced to CAC, I was aware that academics used blogs and social media to collaborate or engage the public, and had experimented to a small degree with these practices myself. However, CAC felt different in that it wasn't simply a set of tools, but a shared space in which my academic community could grow together. Additionally, the fact that it was developed by people within the community that it served arguably made it more sensitive to user interests and needs, as well as made student participation such as my own possible. The fact that today CAC has almost 1,700 blogs, 800 groups, and

8,000 members speaks to the ongoing value of CAC to The Graduate Center community.

Participatory Culture and the Library

New forms of knowledge production

While the activities supported by participatory digital commons such as CAC may appear outside the scope of the library's mission, the changing information landscape of the 21st century should encourage libraries to consider expanding its notion of what it means to preserve and disseminate knowledge today. New publishing, networking, mapping, and multimedia tools are lowering the barriers for more individuals within and beyond the library to engage and disseminate library materials in new ways, and generate new forms of knowledge and knowledge-making communities in the process. These activities arguably broaden and enrich the library's dissemination practices and contribute—even if indirectly—to preservation by elevating the library's public visibility and value.

Digital humanities projects in partnership with libraries provide one particularly rich set of examples illustrating the value of participatory practices in the library. For example, the increased ease of digitally producing and publishing multimedia content has lowered the barriers for libraries to co-produce new collections and exhibitions with students or community members, such as the Women Who Rock Oral History archive at the

University of Washington, The Gail Project at the University of Santa Cruz, California, and The Black Liberation 1969 Archive at Swarthmore College. Another exciting example is the Cleveland Historical mobile app, whose collaborative partners include The Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University and the Cleveland Public Library, and which uses archival materials to create publicly-accessible, multimedia-rich local tours.

As a whole, these projects have capitalized on participatory technologies so that library collections are more accessible in reach and format, put to use in new engaging and interactive ways, and involve participation and co-production from a broader group of participants. Though it remains to be seen how this emerging practice and its products will be sustained and preserved, they speak to ways the library might harness participatory practices for its internal goals, as well as help cultivate a more collaborative and publicly-engaged scholarly community.

New Concepts of Knowledge Production

Participatory culture however has not only become important for expanding the particular methods in which libraries engage in the production, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge, but also in reconceiving the role of libraries in an increasingly complex and fraught information landscape. As former American Library Association president Nancy Kranich notes, the promises of the information age have gone largely unfulfilled as “large portions of online content have come under government-imposed restrictions or corporate controls like technological protection

measures, licensing and other digital-rights management techniques, all of which impede access to information and limit its use” (86), thereby directly obstructing the ability of libraries to disseminate knowledge. Though technology could enable “unfettered access” to scholarly knowledge, Kranich point out that it has instead been harnessed by economic and political forces to “enclose these commonly shared resources, thereby restricting information choices and the free flow of ideas” (85). Such enclosure makes it impossible for participatory cultures to thrive, given that resources for co-producing and sharing knowledge are strictly controlled.

In the face of these challenges, some scholars have turned to the emerging paradigm of “knowledge as a commons” as a means to reimagine and retool the ways in which knowledge is produced and disseminated (Hess & Ostrom 2011). In particular, scholars concerned with the intersection of libraries and scholarly communication have found this paradigm useful for describing the traditional role of libraries, and have thus argued that libraries need to take more proactive steps to defend knowledge as a commonly shared good, especially as the challenges and opportunities of the information landscape evolve. At the heart of these conversations is the assertion that a knowledge commons depends on the free accessibility of knowledge. As Kranich writes, “For centuries, scholars, students, and the general public have relied on libraries to serve as their knowledge commons—a commons where they could share ideas and ‘promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts’” (85). Thus, making knowledge freely-available online need not be seen as a radical act, but rather as the manifestation of one of scholarship’s core values of freely exchanging ideas.

The sentiment expressed by Kranich is representative of a wide range of scholarly communication initiatives that seek to reform the culture, tools, and policies of knowledge production and dissemination carried out either directly from within university libraries or in close partnership with them. Many of these initiatives are related directly to the open access movement, which seeks to make scholarly research more accessible (including less costly) to the academic and general public by creating legal, technical, and institutional frameworks that enable scholars to freely share their research despite restrictive licensing policies of many scholarly publishers. In the last two decades, many universities have lent their support to these efforts by implementing open access mandates that require university members to make their work openly accessible, and developing institutional repositories to make their research openly available.³

Given that these open access initiatives are closely tied to the paradigm of knowledge as a commons, the rhetoric of the commons is broadly distributed in their naming conventions and discourse. For example, many universities refer directly to the “commons” in the names of their institutional repositories, such as in The Scholarly Commons at Georgetown Law, the Scholarly Commons at the University of Pennsylvania, the Digital Commons @Brockport at the State University of New York, and the Portland Public Library Digital Commons. Likewise, some popular software projects that support these institutional repositories also refer directly to the concept of

³For example, The Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies currently lists 632 research institutions that require faculty to submit their research to an open access repository or journal.

the commons, such as Digital Commons, a hosted service licensed by the academic software firm bepress that serves 500 institutions, and the Fedora Commons, a digital asset management software system used by 300 organizations and institutions.

Like the participatory digital commons I described earlier, these repository digital commons are dedicated to lowering the barriers to knowledge production and transmission, but through the specific activity of enhancing the accessibility of scholarly knowledge. For example, one early and influential definition defines institutional repositories as "a set of services ... for the *management* and *dissemination* of digital materials created by the institution and its community members" (Lynch, p. 2, emphasis mine). While management and dissemination of knowledge provides critical support to participatory forms of knowledge production, they are insufficient for creating engaged communities. As scholars have noted, repository digital commons have faced ongoing challenges in engaging faculty support and interest (Callicott, Scherer, & Wesolek 2015; Davis & Connolly 2007), suggesting that repository digital commons may benefit from adopting strategies from participatory culture that emphasize social connection and community building.

Towards a more holistic knowledge commons: supporting preservation with participation

Though there are many reasons faculty may not contribute to institutional digital repositories—such as lack of time or concerns regarding intellectual property—it is worth noting that repository digital commons are built primarily to organize and preserve

scholarly knowledge, not facilitate community interaction or the production of informal, non-authoritative knowledge (such as blog posts, student or community digital exhibits, podcasts, video tutorials, and so forth). While informal community interaction and knowledge production may not be traditionally conceived as important to the production, dissemination, and preservation of scholarly knowledge, a growing body of scholarship has pointed to its importance for establishing engaged learning communities in scholarly, educational, and popular contexts (Davidson & Goldberg 2010; Lougee 2007; Jenkins 2009; Veletsianos & Navarrete 2012). Scholars have also demonstrated how informal communication plays a critical role in the process of knowledge production in diverse disciplines. As I noted earlier, John Unsworth has called attention to the important role of informal digital networking in the humanities, and Sharon Traweek, in a related vein, points to the “capacity to gossip and gain access to gossip...[as] the final and necessary stage in the training of a high energy physicist.” She observes that, “losing access to that gossip...effectively prevents the physicist from practicing physics” (122).⁴ These observations suggest that online spaces that facilitate informal modes of communication and knowledge making, especially when allowing for personal expression, can deepen the incentive to participate in learning and research activities. Thus, libraries should consider the way in which they might leverage these types of informal, networked, and collaborative modes of digital communication and knowledge production to cultivate engagement with the digital materials they steward, whether in a repository digital commons, their digital collections, or research data archives.

⁴ For a brief overview of the role of informal communication and community in the production of scholarly knowledge, see Lougee, p. 317-320.

Though there are many ways libraries might adopt—and indeed already are adopting—these types of practices, the open source CBOX software offers institutions an easy way of immediately offering its community a powerful set of digital publishing, networking, and collaboration tools. Depending on a library’s campus and resources, libraries may choose to set up CBOX on their own or in collaboration with a campus partner such as the educational technology unit. However, regardless of its technical home, CBOX-powered participatory digital commons can potentially expand the modes in which libraries can promote their resources, services, and initiatives, and the ways in which the campus community can engage with the library’s materials. For example, libraries may choose to use CBOX’s website capabilities to enable librarians to build customized digital exhibitions either on their own, with campus members, or with external public communities. While this approach need not replace the library’s conventional methods for producing digital exhibitions, it offers a supplementary mode of production that is open to the entire campus community and need not rely on web developers whose labor is often in short supply especially for low-priority projects.

Librarians could potentially also use a CBOX-powered commons to work with faculty to design student assignments on digital exhibitions, multimodal publishing, digital annotation, and offer instruction in the technics, ethics, and copyright policies that need to be considered when developing these types of projects. These assignments may also provide opportunities to address important topics related to the “fake news” phenomenon such as analyzing digital sources and responsibly sharing information on the web. Depending on the library’s internal goals, librarians might also consider pairing

up with other campus organizations to teach campus members how to build websites for their online portfolio, academic or course blogs, research groups and projects, public resources, or simply as a means to improve their digital and critical information literacy skills.

Digital humanities initiatives within the library might also be supported through a CBOX-powered commons. Getting server space to explore digital tools or showcase digital projects can be time-consuming, administratively onerous, or even impossible on some campuses, thus stalling digital innovation at the start. As CBOX provides a one-stop, self-serve environment to create limitless websites, it grants campus members an easy way to showcase their digital humanities projects, and lowers the barriers significantly to experimenting privately or publicly with digital tools. Librarians, too, may choose to maintain personal or group blogs to draw attention to their professional activities, initiatives or services, such as seen with several blogs on CAC.⁵ Librarians may also find the group functionality of CBOX useful for creating or participating in private or public discussion forums devoted to special interest topics (such as scholarly communication, GIS, digital humanities, gender studies, and so forth) with campus members outside of the library.

⁵ For example, Chief Librarian Maura Smale at New York City College of Technology, CUNY has blogged about her library activities on CAC since 2009 (<https://msmale.commons.gc.cuny.edu>). The Kingsborough Library of the CUNY system runs a CAC blog on technology related topics (<https://kingsboroughlibtech.commons.gc.cuny.edu>). The Systems group at The CUNY Office of Library Services runs a blog with updates and tips on products they support (<https://ols57.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>). And the CUNY Graduate Center Library also runs a CAC blog with news and events to supplement its institutional website (<https://gclibrary.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>).

While it would take considerably more resources and institutional commitment, libraries could also creatively develop their CBOX-powered commons to interact with their digital archives, institutional repositories, or other systems in ways that encourage community interaction with the materials in these different domains. Including students and faculty in conversations about this development, especially those interested in digital humanities, could infuse these technical activities into pedagogical opportunities as well as create a stronger sense of community involvement among CBOX users. If more libraries began to use CBOX in this way, software developments created by one library could be shared by all, following the model offered by the multi-institutional library software project Hydra. Tying these practical engagements with academic talks on digital topics such as open access, open source software, digital rights, and data surveillance could also help distinguish the participatory digital commons as a community-directed resource rather than purely a campus utility or service.

Transforming the Environment: Bringing a Participatory Digital Commons to Campus

Because I had seen how effectively CAC helped build institutional community and collaboration at The CUNY Graduate Center, I wanted to set up a similar digital commons for UC San Diego when I joined as Digital Humanities Coordinator and Associate Director of the Center for the Humanities in January of 2016. While the several CBOX commons I had worked with before had not been directly associated with libraries, my professional transition into the library helped me see how libraries might be

a fitting symbolic and technical home of a campus participatory digital commons. And while it was not necessarily a “digital humanities” project per se, I viewed setting up a participatory digital commons as a key strategy for cultivating a digital humanities culture at UC San Diego. This commons, I hoped, would provide campus members with an immediate set of digital tools for experimentation, showcasing digital humanities projects, and discovering and communicating with one another across different areas of campus.. But I also was optimistic that the commons value would go far beyond any digital humanities initiative, especially as I found that a wide variety of campus members were hungry for digital tools to help them create digital pedagogy projects, community-driven library exhibits, professional and organizational websites, and group forums related to various campus initiatives. Like many universities, UC San Diego does provide some options that allow campus members to build individual websites. However many are unaware of these resources or don't see them as relevant, accessible, or useful to their activities given the lack of visible community around their use or the administrative processes required to set them up.

In theory, the implementation of a CBOX commons is a simple process given that installation is fairly user friendly and requires only server space and a domain. In reality, however, setting up CBOX at UC San Diego has taken over a year, given the complexity of identifying appropriate, willing, and able campus partners, acquiring various forms of necessary administrative approval, and working out unexpected incompatibilities with CBOX's authentication process and campus technical policies and

practices.⁶ Getting support and approval for CBOX also required educating a broad range of potential campus partners about the value of offering digital publishing and networking tools to the campus community, open source community-driven software, and, especially within the context of the library, software projects whose outputs might not be conducive to the library's traditional preservation standards.

At the time of writing, we are just launching a fully-supported CBOX commons, which is called "KNIT" and collaboratively supported by Educational Technology Services, the Library, the Division of Arts and Humanities, and the Institute of Arts and Humanities. Based on conversations with campus members, and the fact that more than 500 users signed up for the pilot version without any formal outreach, we are optimistic that the campus community will find KNIT immediately useful. For example, faculty are interested in using KNIT for facilitating collaborative and multimodal forms of teaching, and librarians are looking at it as a possible way of creating community-driven digital exhibitions. Many campus members, unfamiliar with the flexibility of WordPress, are surprised by the degree to which one can customize the aesthetic and functional design of a WordPress website. Additionally, the Institute of Arts & Humanities will offer KNIT as a way for their research groups to build websites and host forums, and the Writing + Critical Expression Center may use its group functionality as a way of communicating

⁶ For those interested in setting up CBOX at their own institution, it is worth researching your institution's policy on digital services. UC San Diego's campus policy, for example, mandates that all campus digital services requiring user accounts use the campus Active Directory account system, rather than allowing users to create new accounts unaffiliated with their campus identity. This was problematic for the implementation of CBOX, as CBOX uses WordPress's system for creating user accounts (rather than providing an easy means of syncing up with an institution's Active Directory). Thus, our set up required the time and expertise of the Educational Technology Services department to facilitate this connection.

with its extensive tutoring staff. Perhaps most excitingly of all, and as a testament to the potential of community-driven, open source academic technology, KNIT is being expanded to the neighboring San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) as a shared digital pedagogy and networking resource between UC San Diego and SDCCD as part of the Mellon-funded project “Activating the Humanities in the 21st Century: A Collaborative Path for Transfer Students from Community College to Research University and Beyond.”

Conclusion

Though it remains to be seen whether KNIT will transform UC San Diego’s academic culture as much as CAC transformed my experience at The CUNY Graduate Center, I am hopeful that it will enable our campus to better harness digital forms of publishing, networking, collaborating, and socializing for new models of engaging and promoting all levels of intellectual work produced on our campus. CBOX however is only one of many tools that can help foster these sorts of practices on campus. When thinking about implementing or engaging with participatory tools, libraries should consider not only their practical features, but their potential social effects. For example, how might the tool’s accessibility further divide or bring together different campus communities and external publics? Does it reinforce hierarchy among campus members by granting unequal permissions to different campus members (such as the student versus the teacher)? Does the tool enable campus members to easily share information with campus groups or the broader public, and allow them to easily network across

institutional boundaries? Does the tool allow users to own and easily export their data? Does it grant the campus community, at least in principle, the ability to further modify the tool to meet their specific needs and values? Is the virtual space made more inviting by enabling social activity and personal expression rather than simply the purely practical transaction of information?

These are only suggested questions for evaluating a tool's participatory affordances, and those working in libraries will likely have further questions that are more attuned to the needs and interests of their institutional community. They may also have new ideas about how to more directly adopt participatory tools and culture for supporting efforts in scholarly communication, open access, and public engagement. Though the library itself may not always be the right technical host for a participatory tool, its core commitment to the responsible dissemination of knowledge makes it a key partner in this sort of enterprise. If stimulating engagement with knowledge is as important as producing and preserving it in the 21st century, university libraries should consider participatory practices as a critical part of their mission.

Works cited

- Callicott, B. B. & Scherer, D. & Wesolek, A. *Making Institutional Repositories Work*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2015.
- Davidson, Cathy N., David Theo Goldberg, and Zoë Marie Jones. *The Future of Thinking: Learning Institutions in a Digital Age*. MIT Press, 2010.

- Davis, Philip M., and Matthew JL Connolly. "Institutional repositories: evaluating the reasons for non-use of Cornell University's installation of DSpace." 2007.
- Gold, Matthew & George Otte. "The CUNY Academic Commons: fostering faculty use of the social web", *On the Horizon*, Vol. 19 Iss: 1, pp. 24 – 32. 2011.
- Hess, Charlotte, and Elinor Ostrom, eds. *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2011.
- Jenkins, Henry et al. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. MIT Press, 2009.
- Lynch, Clifford A. "Institutional Repositories: Essential Infrastructure For Scholarship In The Digital Age." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 3.2 (2003): 327–336. *Project MUSE*. Web.
- Pradt Lougee, W. *Scholarly Communication and Libraries Unbound: The Opportunity of the Commons. Understanding knowledge as a Commons*. Boston: the MIT Press, 2007.
- Unsworth, John. "The Humanist: 'Dances with Wolves' or 'Bowls Alone'?" *Scholarly Tribes and Tribulations: How Tradition and Technology are Driving Disciplinary Change*. Association of Research Libraries, Washington, D.C. October 17, 2003.
- Veletsianos, George, & Cesar Navarrete. "Online social networks as formal learning environments: Learner experiences and activities." *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* [Online], 13.1 (2012): 144-166.
- Plotnik, Art. "Sweet Library Lips. Eds. West, Celeste, and Elizabeth Katz. *Revolting Librarians*. San Francisco: Booklegger Press, 1972.