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ENGL 877

Reading Response 1

This week's reading and discussion raised a lot of interesting perspectives and questions (and ideas).  As stated near the end of class, I am interested in exploring possibilities regarding the article's questions raised near the end.  Those questions are:  Should a lab be created?  What kind of lab should be created?  Who will have access to the lab, and how is this communicated?  What is the structure of labor?  How is work by members of the lab credited?  How are resources allocated?  If necessary, how will projects be sustained?  And What does success look like?  So here it goes...

I think a lab should be created when there is a need and/or interest in a specific topic.  As for what kind, I think that really depends on the interest level and scope of a specific project, but I think it would be important to gauge and measure this out before asking for money and/or assistance from various potential institutions or workers.  Lab access is a key component to its success, so I think there should be a collaborative approach with credit being given to all who work but a final check process that allows for a senior member (or members) to make sure all the i's are dotted and the t's crossed, so to speak.  The structure of the labor should be largely based on the skillset of its members (for example, fast typists might want to do a large chunk of transcribing, handwriting experts might want to work with microfilm and/or original manuscripts, historians might want to do a lot of the annotating and research, tenured professors might want to do grant proposal work, etc.).  Work should always be credited to any and all members who have contributed, perhaps even adding additional staff pages or bios when/where necessary.  Resources should be allocated as needed, decided democratically by all active members of the project.  Projects should be sustained by continued passionate workers, presenting at conferences, and availability for all who choose to search for the information presented online.  And success would look like a constantly-adapting, always-improving, and forever-functioning website that is easy to find, navigate, and use.  This can look like a massive project like the Walt Whitman Archive, with thousands of pages and hundreds of credited editors/authors/scholars or a smaller student-led site such as one created in Dr. Ken Price's Archives & Editions class last fall.  I think these are all very general answers to largely specific questions, but I think it's going to be important to always be asking and trying our best to answer these as we navigate our own projects while working in the digital humanities.  I think the authors are really onto something with the entire "What's in a Name?" chapter of this book, but I find it especially insightful that Taylor Arnold and Lauren Tilton chose to wait until almost the end of their essay to pose them in such a useful list.  I know I'll be revisiting them all semester long.

Looking forward to a greater discussion with all of you.