Project Endings Meeting Notes

30 May 2017

Present: Arneil, Carlin, Czaykowska-Higgins, Davis, Durno, Goddard, Grove-White, Holmes, Jenstad

**Survey of SSHRC-funded projects** (with initial focus on the 128 projects from the now defunct Image, Text, Sound, Technology program)

Under Elizabeth’s supervision, Jen is trying to discover the current status of these projects along with contact info.

Elizabeth reminded us that the national survey of humanities and social sciences projects done in Ireland in 2012 (*Digital Archiving in Ireland*, National University of Ireland, Maynooth) is a model that can guide us. Although it was shaped by archivists alone (leaving out questions about project planning, for example), some of the questions used will no doubt be useful. Elizabeth also observed that the ITST program was interdisciplinary and therefore not focused on digital humanities. This added perspective from outside DH could be valuable.

In order to develop a pool of 20-25 P.I.s to be interviewed for the in-depth, qualitative part of the survey, first we’ll do a broad survey that will only take about ten minutes to complete, mostly multiple choice, asking for basic information about planning for ending and archiving. Approval must be sought from the Human Research Ethics Board, so the questions need to be ready for submission by mid-June in order to assure that we can perform the survey in September. Janelle created a Google Doc to which we can all contribute questions; the three groups (librarians, programmers, faculty researchers) should meet to agree on 3-5 questions representing their areas of concern. Once we have a reasonable number of questions we’re happy with, we will consult a social scientist, probably Geri Van Gyn, in order to have input on the design of the survey before submission to HREB. Geri can also help us decide what software to use. We will propose to do a “trial balloon” survey of five or so colleagues in order to fine-tune the questions. Elizabeth agreed to take the lead in submitting the broad survey to the HREB when it’s ready.

Elizabeth observed that since SSHRC P.I.s are not normally programmers, their views will be missing. (When she chaired the ITST committee, coding questions were not even considered.) Our team considers it important to seek out those contacts. Martin noted that our survey should include all three of the perspectives represented on our team, both for the broad survey and for the later in-depth interviews. He suggested that the interviews be conducted by a team rather than by an individual. Elizabeth observed that having just one interviewer might provide more consistent results. We agreed to (when the time comes) do a pilot with four or five subjects, using each model. If we the coder can be included, s/he can be interviewed separately.

Corey noted that we need a methodology for determining who will be queried. Coders may be hard to contact; librarians and archivists may not have been in these project involved at all. He also wondered about locating “dead” projects, and whether or not the HREB will allow us to draw from projects located on line whose creators can’t be reached; those projects will often be in the public domain.

The interviews will be recorded, preferably by Skype, and then transcribed by an RA. The questions we mentioned in our grant application will need to be included. We will have to decide whether strategies for coding the interviews will be strictly determined in advance. We’re likely to end up with a mix between codable and open-ended answers. Corey also mentioned the danger of selection bias in doing our qualitative study based on responses to the initial survey.

The possibility of having difficulty engaging researchers for the survey, especially in the case of “failed” projects. Lisa suggested asking questions such as “What sort of support would you have needed in order to succeed?” Corey suggested the possibility of focus groups at DHSI and DH. Ewa added that focus groups could be an intermediary step between the broad group survey and individual interviews. Ewa noted that it’s acceptable to begin the ethics approval process by seeking approval for just the first stage.

It might prove necessary/desirable seek participants outside the ITST program, for example colleagues who held Standard Research Grants, or since 2012, Insight Grants. We’ll have to see what our participation rate looks like.

**RAs: additional tasks this summer**

Janelle reminded us that Tye Landels-Gruenewald was charged with the task of setting up a Praxis and Documentation module for the Endings website. The group agreed to ask Tye to work on an ontology of documentation, or “documentation primer” that will include a list of types of documentation, ideally with bibliography of research on documentation. This should be a solid basis for a future article.