

Final Report of the Digital Projects Working Group (DPWG)

Members: Miranda Remnek (co-chair), UIUC; Andy Spencer (co-chair), UW-Madison; Jackie Byrd, Indiana; Michael Neubert, LC and Bradley Schaffner, Harvard

History of The Digital Projects Working Group:

A proposal was made at the 2002 Pittsburgh meeting of the B&D Committee of AAASS to form a Working Group on Slavic related digital projects.

In the spring of 2003 a Working Group charge was developed [see Appendix] and the Working Group was formed in May 2003.

The first major meeting of the DPWG took place in conjunction with the summer 2003 Slavic Librarian's Workshop at UIUC in Champaign-Urbana where Miranda Remnek, Jackie Byrd and Andy Spencer were present. The meeting was an open session with other librarians who attended the Workshop sitting in. The meeting lasted about 45 minutes. Immediately prior to the Working Group meeting, Miranda and her assistant Kevin Hawkins made a presentation of a preliminary listing of Slavic digital projects as a precursor to the online inventory that is part of the Working Group charge.

Major points discussed:

1. The scope of projects to be covered. In this regard there were several questions about who the potential audience was to be. If the proposed online inventory is to be used by scholars and reference librarians, then inclusion of a wide variety of digital resources including CD-ROMs and various other commercial products might have some advantages. If however the audience is mainly to be Slavic librarians who are contemplating undertaking a Slavic digital project, then the focus can be more narrow since Slavic librarians will be well aware of what commercial products are out there. The initial reaction was trending towards the second view, however it was pointed out that even if the main intended audience were librarians potentially working on Slavic digital projects, that does not prevent it from being useful to reference librarians and scholars. It is not mutually exclusive.
2. There was some discussion as to the actual technical

details of how the online inventory would be structured. There was general agreement that it should be more than a plain text flat listing. It should be marked up in some metadata schema in such a way as to be searchable in multiple ways. An expanded Dublin Core-Qualified schema or a XML based RDF DTD were proposed as possibilities. The possibility of also exposing the metadata to metadata harvesting via an OAI server system was also mentioned.

3. There was some discussion of the portion of our charge which calls for the developing of a process for making formal recommendations on digital projects. A possible role in advising existing projects, such as JSTOR, on additional future Slavic content was discussed.

4. Also mentioned as a possibility was a role in fostering and coordinating joint Slavic digital projects, similar to the role that SEEMP plays in Slavic microform projects.

6. There was also discussion of whether or not reformatting projects such as the Letopis' zhurnal'nykh statei project at Indiana University should be included, or just projects of original digital content ("born digital"). The consensus was that both types should be included.

Based on input received and decisions made at the Illinois meeting, work was continued at UIUC on the *Inventory of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Digital Projects* (<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/spx/inventory/>). As a result, the inventory portion of the DPWG's charge [Activities section, item #1] has made steady progress during the period of time of the DPWG's existence.

See also: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/spx/inventory/oppositions.html>

For the remainder of the summer and fall of 2003 business was conducted via e-mail. This mainly constituted further refinements of our interpretations of the meaning of items in our charge, and how best to prioritize work.

The next major meeting of the DPWG took place at AAASS in Toronto, Ontario Canada on Nov. 22, 2003. Attending this meeting was Miranda Remnek, Michael Neubert and Andy Spencer.

Major points discussed:

1. Input was received on issues of inventory inclusion criteria and database maintenance. The issue of whether to

include commercial resources arose again. There was some support for their inclusion, but it was pointed out that the scope of the *Inventory* needs to be restricted as long as resources are limited. In addition, this coincides with the focus of the DPWG as an effort to develop better documentation and expertise regarding full-scale digital projects, not web resources broadly conceived.

2. Also it was decided to initially focus on three main tasks of our charge: the inventory, coordination issues, and training possibilities (FAQ). It was decided that Miranda Remnek would continue to take the lead on the inventory project. Andy Spencer took charge of the building of a FAQ/training materials web-site. Responsibility for the coordination of recommendations to digital providers such as JSTOR, Project Muse and commercial digital vendors such as Eastview and CEEOL was to be decided at a future date.

3. It was suggested by Miranda Remnek that the DPWG should organize a digital panel for next year's AAASS.

Following AAASS Toronto, after much discussion via e-mail, it was decided to have a panel at AAASS Boston (2004) related to issues of Slavic digitization projects with papers by Miranda Remnek, Michael Neubert and Andy Spencer.

There was a brief meeting of the DPWG was in conjunction with ALA Mid-winter in San Diego California, Jan. 10, 2004. Miranda Remnek, Andy Spencer, Brad Schaffner and Jackie Byrd were in attendance. The main decision taken at this meeting was that Brad Schaffner would look into the coordination of recommendations to digital providers.

Throughout the course of 2004 work was continued on the inventory, and the FAQ and work was begun on the issue of coordination of recommendations to digital providers. The proposal for the Digital Projects panel was accepted by AAASS for the Boston Dec. 2004 AAASS conference.

In the summer of 2004 (and in connection with the DPWG's focus on training) an expanded 4-day Slavic Librarians Workshop/Digital Text Workshop was held at UIUC (<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/spx/slwtw/>). The event was organized by Miranda Remnek; Andy Spencer participated. The 3-day Digital Text Workshop was organized in two parts: a days of presentations by various experts followed by two days of hands-on work in a lab environment. This allowed colleagues to participate to the extent of their individual interests. Fifteen people took part in the hands-on portion, during which basic encoding issues were described and tested. The event was well-regarded, and will be repeated with variations next summer.

In the fall of 2004, the co-chairs explored the possibility of adding one or two additional members if the Working Group is continued past the original two year charge. Michael Brewer of the University of Arizona and Kevin Hawkins of University of Michigan were mentioned as possible new members.

Conclusions:

1. Work is progressing well at UIUC on the digital projects inventory:
 - a) The inventory now includes over 70 digital projects listed on the web (<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/spx/inventory/projects.html>). A MySQL database has been developed, and many of the projects also have a database record currently linked from this page.
 - b) Each database record includes fields for the categories we selected (http://www.library.uiuc.edu/spx/inventory/inventory_scheme.html) and we are now designing a search interface on these fields.
 - c) We have also been developing web input forms, and they are being tested. When acceptable we will invite selected colleagues internationally to submit records to the database for local editing.
 - d) We have decided to rename the inventory I-DEEEP (Inventory of Digital Eurasian and East European Projects)—to reflect future plans which include OAI-compliance not only at the collection level but also selected item-level metadata harvesting...
2. The Slavic digital projects training and informational FAQ, is currently on a test server at UW-Madison and should be moved to its permanent server location by the end of the year (2004). At that time the permanent URL will be announced probably via the slavlibs listserv, with possibly a brief note in AAASS NewsNet.
3. Work has begun on developing guidelines and methods for allowing Slavic librarians to have better input into selection of materials for digitization projects, both non-profit and commercial. Brad Schaffner has contacted JSTOR's Carol McAdams to begin preliminary discussions.
4. As part of the educational charge of the DPWG, Michael Neubert has undertaken to be guest editor of an issue of "Slavic & East European Information Resources" which will be devoted to Slavic digital projects.
5. Miranda Remnek and Andy Spencer have also had discussions with Michael Biggins, current chair of B&D, concerning the possibility of extending the Working Group beyond its original two year charge, possibly making it a standing sub-committee of B&D. Given the continuing importance of digital projects to Slavic and East European librarianship and Slavic and East European Studies in general, it is the

recommendation of the co-chairs of the Working Group to the B&D Committee that the work of the Digital Projects Working Group be continued and that the B&D Committee consider the possibility of making the Working Group a regular standing sub-committee of B&D.

Appendix

AAASS Bibliography and Documentation Committee
Working Group on Digital Projects
Charge: May 2, 2003

Purpose

1. To develop a range of mechanisms that will provide more comprehensive documentation of existing digital projects in the Slavic, East European and Eurasian field, and, where possible, more extensive participation in future academic and commercial initiatives;
2. To assess the need for a permanent AAASS Bibliography and Documentation subcommittee devoted to digital activities relevant to Slavic, East European and Eurasian library collections.

Scope

In exploring the need for a permanent oversight committee the working group will need to finalize criteria for specifying the types of digital initiatives in which the group should have an interest. The following oppositions are suggested; these may be modified as work progresses:

- i) Types of projects
 - a) Reformatting v. "new model" (born-digital) scholarship
 - b) Single-text/single-format corpus v. multifaceted archive (texts, images, audio)
 - c) Primary v secondary sources
 - d) Full-text (historical, literary) v. indexing/bibliographic
 - e) Text v. numeric/multimedia
 - f) Freely-accessible v. fee-based
 - g) Internet-based v Intranet (password)-based
 - h) CD-ROMS: networked v non-networked
 - i) Access v preservation
 - j) Academic versus commercial

ii) Geographic provenance

The group will begin by considering coverage of projects taking place in Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and in Western Europe, as well as in North America.

Activities

The working group will assess the need for, and feasibility of, the following activities, and, where appropriate, propose ways of engaging in them.

1. Creating and sustaining an online inventory of current digital projects in the Slavic, East European and Eurasian field in the humanities and social sciences.

2. Fostering systematic and informed participation in future initiatives by:

- * developing a process for the B& D committee to make formal, consensus-based recommendations on digital projects to commercial and other information providers;
- * establishing contacts with representatives in library and professional organizations with digital interests, such the Digital Library Federation, CLIR, Association of Research Libraries, ACRL E-Text Discussion Group, Association for Computing in the Humanities, Text Encoding Initiative, etc;
- * furthering contacts with commercial vendors in the Slavic field and elsewhere.

3. Increasing the range of digital information opportunities for Slavic librarians by:

- * identifying research & publication topics for examination by committee members and other colleagues
- * identifying and documenting websites, listservs, and other resources on digital issues;
- * providing updates on new digital developments at annual conferences;
- * creating and maintaining a website to consolidate all of the above

4. Increasing the range of digital training opportunities for Slavic librarians by:

- * organizing annual panels or roundtables to foster understanding of digital issues;
- * sponsoring more extended digital workshops at meetings like the University of Illinois' Slavic Librarians' Workshop
- * working with members of the Slavic and East European library community to produce an online training FAQ that covers practical problems and solutions arising from in-house digitization projects and services (including observation of standards, archiving

requirements, copyright issues, software issues, delivery issues, methods of on-demand conversion of print material to e-formats, etc.)

5. Complementing national efforts to establish digital repositories by:

- * investigating and supporting the creation of Slavic digital archives on the national level (either at general repositories, or at major Slavic institutions)
- * investigating and advocating models of data storage and data sharing at individual institutions.

Membership

The working group will be composed of two co-chairs and up to three members. The working group will make recommendations for membership of the permanent committee.

Time Frame

The working group will have a two-year charge. It will provide a preliminary report on its activity at the annual AAASS conference in November 2003, and a final report with recommendations by the annual conference in November 2004.