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Digital Humanities scholars have not traditionally been focused on the overall usability of their online projects or how users perceive these resources. As a result, Digital Humanities is in danger of leaving out users voices entirely. This presents an opportunity for libraries, as partners, to add value to digital scholarship by assessing the extent to which Digital Humanities resources are meeting the needs of its users.

The following study is a qualitative user assessment of Project Vox, a Digital Humanities initiative that provides pedagogical and research materials on underrepresented philosophers from the early modern period. Through interviewing six philosophy professors, this user assessment takes into account humanists' existing workflows, investigates their usage and the usability of the site, and finally examines how they perceive some of Project Vox's practices and the broader Digital Humanities landscape.

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ONGOING SERVICES IN THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES: A USER ASSESSMENT OF *PROJECT VOX*

by
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I. Introduction

As digital scholarship in the humanities has been steadily growing, questions have arisen about how to assess scholars' digital projects. These assessments have tended to focus on the evaluation of the content itself and the work's creator as advancing scholarship in a meaningful way. Much less attention has been paid to the users who are actually meant to engage with the digital resources. As Ubois and Cahoy (2016) suggest "user voices, especially those arising from empirical studies, are often missing from planning, developing, and implementing initiatives related to digital scholarship."

Including user's voices in digital humanities projects has many potential benefits for creators, institutions, and the work itself. For creators and institutions, it can bring much needed credibility and exposure to a wider audience, especially if it the project is intuitive and highly accessible for research purposes. Additionally, user feedback can be implemented to make sure that work itself is meeting the needs of researchers and remains high quality. Sustainability and institutional support is a major problem within digital humanities (Zhang, Liu, and Matthews. 2014) and user assessment is one way to stay relevant in an ever-expanding digital world.

As Sula (2013) points out, libraries are particularly well suited to bring digital humanities within a "user-centered paradigm." In this spirit, I conducted a user assessment of a digital humanities project called Project Vox. Project Vox is a website developed at Duke University as a multidisciplinary collaboration to provide pedagogical and scholarly resources on early modern women philosophers in an attempt to challenge

current narratives to the dominant philosophical canon. Project Vox is somewhat unique in that it has already enjoyed a fair amount of publicity and acclaim since its early stages, but long-term viability and expansion remain a priority. As part of Project Vox's sustainability plans, user assessments are being conducted to understand user attitudes and the overall usability of the website, but this is part of an effort to learn more about who their users are and what their research and teaching needs are.

For this study, I conducted a user-assessment using semi-structured interviews with undergraduate philosophy professors who use the Project Vox website. These interviews were structured towards better understanding how well Project Vox meets the information needs of its users. Specifically, the interviews sought to answer three main questions. First, what are humanists' existing processes for conducting research and instruction? Second, how are philosophy professors using the Project Vox website and similar projects and what if any are their usability concerns? Finally, what are the users' perceptions of Project Vox and its services and how does Project Vox fit into the academic resource environment?

II. Literature Review

Warwick (2012) points out that it is only recently that digital humanists have started to care about how potential users will engage with their scholarship. However, the literature on digital humanities assessment is still very scholar-focused as opposed to user-focused. This presents an opportunity for libraries to partner with digital humanists to provide services for evaluating and assessing the user interaction with Digital Humanities work. In this brief literature review, I will discuss a bit of the history of Digital Humanities and the assessment literature in that realm. Next, I will turn to the role of libraries in Digital Humanities. Finally, I will present some research on user studies within Digital Humanities.

1. Brief History of Digital Humanities and Assessment

While the roots of Digital Humanities go back to the mid-20th century with the text-focused "humanities computing," it has only been since the mid-1990s that the field has sought to define itself into a cohesive academic field (Hockey, 2004; Hayles, 2012). Digital Humanities as a whole matured alongside the rise of personal computing and the development of the internet. These new technologies allowed for the use of unique and varied techniques that went beyond textual analysis and led into the more interpretive "second wave" (Hayles, 2012). Some argue though, that this more interpretive and argumentative phase is only now being realized and must continue to grow if Digital Humanities hopes to be taken seriously as scholarship (Thomas, 2015). By understanding

the history of Digital Humanities, it helps to explain the current state of assessment within the field.

Hayles (2012) argues that Digital Humanities is "a diverse field of practices associated with computational techniques and reaching beyond print in its modes of enquiry, research, publication, and dissemination" (p. 45). Digital Humanities is not centered around a specific methodology or theory, but it is about using the technology in the realm of humanities that has been defined by monographs and articles. However, since Digital Humanities is much more expansive in its practices, which are outside of humanists' general practices, and because it tends to elude any precise definition, the entire discipline has had to defend itself as *scholarship*. This tension between humanists and digital humanists is something that is felt very viscerally in the literature, usually in the form of vigorous defenses. It has been part of the literature from the inception of Digital Humanities (Warwick, 2004). In Kirschenbaum (2010), titled "What Is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in English Departments," he presents Digital Humanities as a growing, young, and open endeavor that, even if it is not fully understood, deserves a place at the table. He points to a number of affinities between the Digital Humanities and English departments, namely that using computers in composition is not new and technology has traditionally been part of the social conversation within cultural studies in general. Burgess and Hamming (2011) use Bruno Latour's concept of purification to explain traditional humanists' opposition. Digital Humanities blurs the line between intellectual and material work, which then elevates production and creation to the level of criticism and interpretation. Greetham (2012) notes a number of resistances to Digital Humanities. Among them is the fear that Digital

Humanities is again "*not* critical" and that it is passing as "mere *technē*" (p. 443). He points out a more personal resistance that can affect humanists' academic careers and that is that tenure and promotion at universities are very much tied to more traditional publishing models. There are practical barriers that Digital Humanists must struggle against not only to gain legitimacy, but to also attain institutional support.

Tenure and promotion has long been a worry for digital humanists. The MLA, in 2005, formulated a task force to survey academic faculties in order to measure how the value of digital scholarship is perceived by humanists when it comes to tenure. The results are not reassuring in that departments showed a strong preference for traditionally published print articles and monographs for promotion and tenure consideration. Only 1.6% of respondents saw peer-reviewed articles as "not important" and "88.9% of departments in Carnegie Doctorate-granting… institutions now rank publication of a monograph 'very important' or 'important' for tenure" (MLA, 2007, p. 10). By contrast "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" (MLA, 2007, p. 11). Raben (2007) notes that these results reinforce the division between print and online, with online publications being considered an "inferior medium." But beyond exposing a preference for certain types of scholarship in academia, MLA (2007) also demonstrates there is a technical gap between traditional humanists and digital humanists. It is this technical gap that undergirds much of the assessment literature within the Digital Humanities.

A quick recap of some characteristics of the field of Digital Humanities: inter-disciplinary humanists use a variety of technological methods to create online projects

that have only recently become more interpretive, all within an academic environment with peers that overwhelmingly prefer traditional scholarship (monographs and articles). Since Digital Humanities is so varied and technical and desires academic legitimacy, which it can only achieve through greater acceptance by other humanists, assessment literature within Digital Humanities is preoccupied with evaluating the scholarly integrity of the work. This is opposed to a user assessment, where the primary focus is on the user experience (I will focus on this in Part 3 of this section). It should be noted at this point that, while some of this assessment literature is about better practices within Digital Humanities and certain evaluative issues like peer-review, a large portion of it is directed, not at the digital humanist, but their peers who might be in charge of promotion and assessment. So the MLA's (2012) "Guidelines for Evaluating Work in Digital Humanities and Digital Media" is departments and faculty members who have a digital humanist. It should be noted that this has been the status quo for quite some time as the first iteration of these guidelines were adopted in the year 2000.

There are many other examples of work on evaluating and assessing digital scholarship. Beyond the MLA's guidelines, other professional organizations, like the American Historical Association (2015) have also published recommendations. Some universities have published guidelines of their own, specifically with the purpose helping departments to know what is sufficiently rigorous scholarship when it comes to Digital Humanities (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, n.d.; Blaise, et. al., 2007). Specifically, these documents set a number of standards and alternative metrics to consider, with focus on impact and originality, emphasizing that the final product of this scholarship will not necessarily be articles or monographs. Additionally, at least two journals have devoted

entire issues to topic of evaluating Digital Humanities (Feal, 2011; Cohen and Troyano, 2012). Rockwell (2011) does a particularly good job helping to delineate what is good work and what is not, particularly in a situation where peer-review is not always available. He writes, "the fundamental difference between digital work that is not research and digital work that is research rests in how it contributes to a larger conversation" (p. 162). While, Digital Humanities scholarship might feel foreign to humanities departments, one simply must investigate the broader academic conversations in which the work was developed. In this respect, Digital Humanities scholarship is much like other types of scholarship, but the venues for dissemination, publication, and conversation are not part of the same circles that traditional humanists have become accustomed to.

2. Libraries and Digital Humanities

User assessments have typically been in the realm of the library and something humanists are overly concerned with. So before discussing actual studies on the users of Digital Humanities, it is important to say a little about how libraries and Digital Humanities have become intertwined. Much has been written about the relationship between Digital Humanities and libraries (see Posner, 2013) and it should be emphasized that while Digital Humanities has originated from the humanities, it has been involved in libraries since its earliest days. Hockey (2004) points out that some of the earliest humanities computing projects were started for the purpose of building digital libraries. This might have just been a historical accident, but libraries and Digital Humanities share quite a bit in terms of their motivations and goals. Additionally, libraries are the logical place to look for access and training on new technologies.

The rise of the internet pushed a lot of the work of libraries into the online realm. Providing access to databases and journals online was only the start. ACRL (2006) notes that libraries have increasingly become the nexus for learning and adopting new technologies. As Digital Humanities have expanded as well, libraries have needed to learn the tools and methods for supporting this research (Kamada, 2010). Additionally, Digital Humanities and Library Science have common interests and epistemologies (Koltay, 2016). In his 2012 article, "What is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in the Library?," Vandegrift points out that even if libraries do not have a defined "role" in Digital Humanities, this is where the work is happening. Universities are putting Digital Humanities centers in libraries all around the country. Vandegrift (2012) uses Spiro's (2011) presentation on "Why the Digital Humanities?" to emphasize the links between the two. Spiro (2011) points out five objectives of Digital Humanities that are uniquely theirs in terms of scholarship:

> Provide wide **access** to cultural information
>
> Enable us to **manipulate** that data: manage, mash up, mine, map, model
>
> Transform **scholarly communication**
>
> Enhance **teaching and learning**
>
> Make a **public impact** (Slide 5)

As Vandegrift (2012) rightly explains, all of these are major concerns for libraries as well. Digital Humanities is about collaborating and building work that is discoverable and lives on past its inception. As advocates for the accessibility of information, libraries as partners with Digital Humanities, have been able to expand the reach and audiences of this new type of scholarship.

One of the ways that libraries can have a productive role within Digital Humanities is through assessment. Library Science, as a social science has a long history of evaluating their services. Digital Humanities has only recently become concerned with assessment, especially as usability has become an issue, more because Digital Humanities tends to use the tools available to them instead of designing these tools themselves (Edwards, 2012). There have been calls specifically to bring in more social scientists into projects for this reason (Borgman, 2009; Clement, 2016), but by and large it is not yet standard practice. Libraries though are primarily focused on users and their needs and they can bring these skills to bear on Digital Humanities at large (Sula, 2013).

Digital Humanities though, should not be faulted in any way for not regularly conducting user assessments. While Digital Humanities has the potential to reach great audiences, for many tools, "the users [are] almost coextensive with the makers" (Edwards, 2012). This means that many digital humanists did not have to consider how more general audiences will use their work. Additionally, just because Digital Humanities shares many affinities and motivations with libraries does not mean that they share the same object of study. Digital Humanities is principally concerned to the *production* of scholarship. Libraries are more concerned with *accessibility* of scholarship by users. Usability issues though, must be addressed for Digital Humanities projects to grow and maintain a vibrant and engaged user base and for long-term viability.

3. Digital Humanities Users and User Assessments

It should be emphasized again before going into user assessments within Digital Humanities, that the discipline has a lot in common with digital libraries. Furthermore, libraries and library scientists have been assessing digital libraries for over 30 years and

the evaluations of Digital Humanities assessment have taken much from these user studies. Marchonini (2000) has set the gold-standard for assessment by showing the necessity of tracking progress over time and the need to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods to do a comprehensive evaluation. It is not my goal here to discuss this vast and expansive literature in-depth, but merely to point to some additional resources (see Kani-Zabihi, Ghinea, and Chen, 2006; Jeng, 2005; Kahl and Williams, 2006; Fuhr, et. al., 2006; Xie, 2008; Rodriguez-Campos and Hoye, 2006; Chowdhury, Landoni, and Gibb, 2005; Kelly, 2014).

When it comes to user studies specifically in the Digital Humanities, there is a profound lack of published materials to be found within Library Science. Again, much regarding assessment has either centered on evaluating scholars or digital libraries. While user assessments in the Digital Humanities should have similar methods and principles as other user experience, there are a number of reasons to talk with users within this particular domain. Primarily, it could provide insight into what causes individuals to seek out digital scholarship over articles and monographs. This is important because Digital Humanities is a unique area of scholarship, and one which has conventionally been viewed by other humanists as having significant barriers to entry (Edwards, 2012). Such understanding could also improve the quality and impact of digital scholarship, in that it could build wider audiences and interest in the scholars' work. Furthermore, Digital Humanities uses a plethora of tools and strategies in their scholarship, with many being available for use by the general public. Assessing Digital Humanities users can provide much needed guidance for improvements and best practices for these tools. Finally, each Digital Humanities project has its own distinctive audience and set of users. Assessment

can provide localized and specific feedback on the project which, depending on your users, can be akin to peer-review. Reaching out to your audience in an assessment is another way that Digital Humanities can engage with their users and forge relationships built around scholarship.

Warwick (2012) is somewhat critical of Digital Humanities for not practicing user assessments sooner. Digital humanists have complained for many years that the technologies they use are not being more widely adopted, something that Warwick (2012) attributes to the model dominating the discipline of "designer-as-user" (p. 9). To illustrate limitations of this model, Warwick (2012) discusses a study she participated in with the LARIAH Project. In this study researchers conducted a log analysis, which sought to determine the use and flow of various online resources in the arts and humanities. The log analysis was only the first part of the methodology, with the second focused on interviewing the creators of a sample of Digital Humanities projects. The log analysis showed that around one-third of the projects were not being used at all. Additionally, users tended to avoid projects that has confusing interface design or involved the need to download resources or data. The study also showed that many projects lacked information as to their purpose or their content. Given these results, it is clear that if Digital Humanists want to have their work viewed, then they must have proficient user interfaces and follow sound design techniques.

Tracy (2016) conducted a user study of a Digital Humanities publishing platform, Scalar, at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign. This study involved a survey and follow up interviews with faculty, staff, and students who had previously attended a Scalar information session. While the uses of Scalar were diverse, in general participants

saw it more as a teaching tool in the classroom for assignments rather than a way to publish their own research. Tracy (2016) also found that the training students and faculty received was insufficient to fully navigate Scalar. Though many felt that students' use of Scalar in the classroom was ultimately successful, in a broad range of activities from creating accounts to uploading content to annotations, students encountered usability issues. In addition, users' perception of what they would be able to do with Scalar did not accurately match with the affordances of the platform, especially with Scalar's insistence on nonlinear storytelling. Tracy (2016) provides evidence that users and designers often have different goals and assumptions about the product and the scholarly possibilities. The assessment can demonstrate potential improvements to bring expectations more in line with the reality.

Ubois and Cahoy (2016) are particularly preoccupied with making sure users have a way to provide feedback on tools and projects. Their study looked at the digital behaviors of humanists, specifically at scholars' current workflow needs with regard to managing citations. This needs assessment used a survey, interviews, and finally sessions observing scholars at work. By investigating humanities' scholars existing patterns of research and citation gathering Ubois and Cahoy (2016) were able to find ways to make Zotero a more intuitive and comprehensive tool for humanists. They found that humanists see archiving of materials as an important part of their scholarly work, but that many do not take the time to properly store and backup files. Thus, they partnered with Zotero to add compatibility with "Hydra-based institutional repositories" making it simpler to archive materials while saving citations.

All of these studies are illustrating the direct benefit from performing user assessments in the Digital Humanities. Ubois and Cahoy (2016) put this very succinctly: "through user-focused and DH-centered research, the voices of the humanities scholars can come center stage and direct need-based software development with impact." Digital Humanities is about providing new forms of research, which brings original voices to the humanities. Assessment in Digital Humanities creates a two-way street with users where the impact of a given Digital Humanities project can be measured, assimilated, and improved.

III. Project Vox and Study Methodology

Project Vox was developed in response to a large gender gap within Philosophy departments. Currently, Philosophy has one of the worst ratio of men to women in all the humanities at only around 21% of all faculty (Paxton, et. al., 2011). This ratio is closer to many disciplines in the sciences like engineering and mathematics that have struggled with similar gaps (Calhoun 2015; Thompson et. al., 2016). Additionally, in 2009 women only made up about 30% of all Philosophy doctorates, the lowest percentage from any humanities discipline (Healy, 2010). There is still not a full consensus of the cause of this gender disparity (see Doughtery, et. al., 2015; Baron, et. al., 2015; Thompson, et. al., 2016), but there is evidence that women are leaving Philosophy or rejecting it as a viable course of study after being exposed to an introductory undergraduate course (Paxton, et. al., 2011). Subsequently, it is hypothesized that the lack of women figures taught in the "canonical" history of philosophy contributes to this disparity, as women come to view Philosophy as exclusively a major for men. The motivation driving Project Vox is to provide these resources for undergraduate professors of Philosophy and their students to have an effect not only on who is taught in Philosophy courses, but, eventually, who makes up the Philosophy majors and departments.

Project Vox, as a Digital Humanities initiative, highlights women's contribution to philosophy in the early modern period. It does this by the creation of a website (projectvox.library.duke.edu/) that includes pedagogical and scholarly materials on selected women thinkers from the History of Philosophy. Among the materials are

sample syllabi from actual courses and suggestions for including these non-canonical figures in novel ways. Some of the other additional features are: an image library that collects images of the philosophers (if available) and other relevant images to their life (bookplates, acquaintances, maps, buildings, etc.); biographical content on all of the philosophers; bibliographies of primary and secondary sources, including outbound links to their writings when possible; and an interactive timeline that situates our featured philosophers within the broader culture. Currently there are five women represented on our site, which is only a small portion of the number of women practicing philosophy during this period. Their names are Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway, Émilie Du Châtelet, Damaris Cudworth Masham, and Mary Astell (who was just added to the site in March 2017). It is worth noting that these women are not necessarily representative of all the women philosophers in the 17th and 18th Centuries. However, they were chosen based on the expertise of our group and our relationships with other practicing philosophers, who are experts on these thinkers.

The purpose of this user assessment was to learn more about our users, namely undergraduate philosophy professors, and their needs, how they are using the Project Vox website, and their perceptions of the website and the Digital Humanities in general. To accomplish this goal, I conducted semi-structured interviews centered around these three areas. Consequently, I structured the interview around these three areas and identified specific topics that were of concern to Project Vox. The questions ranged from being very general (i.e. how do you develop a syllabus?) to highly specific to our website (i.e. does the "library" in our URL add or subtract anything from your experience of Project Vox?). All the interview questions were developed so that they could be answered

without having the Project Vox website in front of them. While it was not necessary that the interviewees referred to the website, many chose to during the interview.

Selecting the professors to interview was somewhat of a challenge, mainly because it is still a question as to how many philosophy professors are using Project Vox's resources. I used a method of selection similar to that of Tracy (2016), who chose participants that had previously attended a training session on Scalar. In this case, I developed a pool of potential participants based upon their previous exposure to Project Vox. Most potential participants were chosen because they had attended a conference in the Spring of 2016 on New Narratives in Philosophy, where Project Vox was discussed at length. These same philosophers also completed a Project Vox survey in October 2016 used for internal purposes only, and indicated that they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview. Other potential participants were identified through previously contacting Project Vox about using the resources into the classroom. In total, 16 interview requests were sent, with nine respondents consenting to the conversation. However, because of geographic and scheduling difficulties, only six interviews with Project Vox users were finally conducted. The participants were evenly split between professors early in their careers (assistant professors) and professors in a later stage of their careers (associate professors and full professors).

All of the interviews were conducted over the phone in March of 2017 and I took notes during the conversation on the interview questionnaire. The phone calls were recorded and labeled with a unique identifier to protect the interviewees' privacy. After all the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed and identifying information, other than their academic rank, was redacted. The transcripts were then

entered into NVivo 11 and coded for consistency. Primarily, the coding was organized around the topics that the questions were meant to address, with additional coding for categorizing more narrow themes and shared concerns identified from multiple readings of the transcripts.

Finally, this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Additionally, Project Vox signed off on the user assessment and written consent was received from all participants prior to being interviewed.

IV. Results

The results of the interviews are broken down into three general areas. The first deals with their background and workflow where the scholars discuss their process for research, teaching, and other related issues. The second section is concerned with the interviewees' use of Project Vox and the usability of the site. The final section is where respondents discuss their perception of specific practices of Project Vox, the direction of the initiative, as well as the broader Digital Humanities landscape that Project Vox is a part of. It should be emphasized that the boundaries of these divisions are porous and are not necessarily independent of each other. A note on pronouns: I will use the plural and gender-neutral "they" and "their" to refer to singular individuals.

1. Background and Workflow

As mentioned earlier, the interviewees were evenly divided between early career philosophers (ECPs) who were all assistant professors and later career philosophers (LCPs) who were made up of one associate and two full professors. The ECPs more generally taught only undergraduate courses. LCPs by contrast may not have current teaching responsibilities, but they generally have taught or are currently teaching graduate classes as well. All six described their subject specialties as being early modern philosophy, with a few indicating an expertise within topics or philosophical figures within early modern philosophy.

All the philosophers interviewed were asked about their research process; both how they developed a new topic of inquiry and where they would go to find scholarly

resources for those topics. The responses for developing a new topic vary widely, but there were some consistencies across all the researchers. Typically, new research questions grow out of previous research or exposure to new ideas, whether it is through conferences or other academic relationships. Research process tended to be nonlinear, where there is not a direct line from research to a finished product, but a lot of back and forth. Additionally, philosophic research is very textually driven. Especially for early modern philosophers, there is an emphasis on studying primary resources first and then moving into the secondary literature. For example, LCP 1 said "usually a new research question arises from having read primary source material and wondering what's going on. And then, I tend to first work through primary sources and once I feel I have a way in, I then turn to secondary source material if there is any."

When it comes to finding research resources, philosophers had eclectic mix of strategies. Many described bibliography chaining as being very useful for discovery. Databases were particularly useful as well. Some common databases and resources for secondary materials, with their mentions are as follows: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) (5), PhilPapers (4), Philosopher's Index (2), Google Scholar (2), and Academica.edu. All of the resources were evenly distributed through the early and late stage philosophers, except that only ECPs described using Google Scholar, and one LCP used Academia.edu. Many of the databases were valued for types of research. SEP is highly valued as starting point for research on a topic, but also its philosophic depth. One ECP said of the SEP, "that's practically my bible." PhilPapers on the other hand was valued for its introductory helps as well as its broad definition of philosophic literature. However, one ECP felt that it lacked resources particularly for the history of philosophy.

Books, both monographs and edited volumes, are also very important for research. Libraries became important for these volumes in particular, with two philosophers indicating that having the ability to find these materials through inter library loan was very useful. Finally, ECP 1 indicated that they used social media as an outlet for resource discovery. This professor was the only interviewee who mentioned this method. It involves sending out questions through social media to crowdsource responses or starting places to learn more about the topics.

Another important aspect of research is finding primary resources and four of the six interviewees said that they use scanned original documents in their research. One of the major reasons for searching out the originals is to find the writings in the original language, be it Latin, French, etc. Also, accessing the physical version of these works are usually reserved for special research trips and the online forms are more convenient. Two of the digital libraries mentioned for finding these scans were Early English Books Online and Gallica.

For developing a syllabus, there were a variety of approaches. LCP 2 described it as "a matter of coming up with the storyline so to speak" or as LCP 1 explains that writing a syllabus is about "figuring out what's going to make the course hang together conceptually." In this regard, courses were organized either by philosopher first or by topic first. Many of the interviewees said that to help with this organization they look for other syllabi online. However, there was a lot of frustration in finding useful syllabi. ECP 2 describes performing Google searches, which then took her to many personal websites of other philosophy professors, which are of varying quality. There are many challenges related to finding resources for classes as well. These challenges mostly came from the

interviewed philosophers desire to incorporate more underrepresented philosophers. Multiple philosophers described wanting an equal representation between men and women philosophers on their syllabi. Teaching figures with less representation in philosophy also makes it difficult to find readings for students that can be easily accessed. ECP 3 described combing through multiple anthologies on African, East-Asian, and Indian philosophy to develop a syllabus, which had a satisfying end result, but also required a significant time commitment. LCP 3 also mentioned using anthologies to start research from scratch, but that ultimately, they do not always have the time. None of the philosophers who mentioned using other syllabi indicated that they use the syllabi as written. The syllabi are for inspiration or ideas on philosophical figures and readings. LCP 2 explained that syllabi can even offer ideas for alternate forms of grading and assignments.

When it comes to a document preference between digital and paper resources, the LCPs were in total unanimity. All preferred paper copies of articles for research more than the use of a screen. Mostly this preference was based on the affordances of paper for careful reading and retention. Two LCPs indicated that they almost always print out necessary articles that they find during online research. LCP 3 felt that reading electronic articles was useful for determining relevance, but that deep reads all had to be done on paper. With the ECPs, there is more of a mix of digital and paper. All were inclined to use digital as a matter of convenience. Printing out articles was done, but not systematically. One ECP has gone almost exclusively digital to improve accessibility and organization of their files.

Note taking and annotation habits are similar to reading habits: LCPs all take handwritten notes within margins or on print outs and ECPs type their notes. While ECPs are inclined to use digital formats, they tend to use a separate window for note taking, rather than annotating on the electronic document itself. Again, much of this choice is about convenience and being able to access important documents wherever they happen to be working. LCPs indicated a willingness to use electronic notetaking only when the situation required it. For example, if they were visiting a library's special collections and writing utensils were banned, then they would have to use a laptop.

All the participants were asked about their use of a citation management program with only two responding that they use it regularly (one ECP and one LCP). The other four participants responded with a mix that they have been told they should use a citation management application, that they have received training for one, but have not adopted it, or that they have tried to use one in the past, but have been unable to maintain it long term.

2. Usage and Usability

When it comes to the philosophers that Project Vox highlights, all of the interviewees have taught or researched one or more of the figures. Mary Astell was added to the website during the interviews, so the answers tended to vary based upon when their interview took place. Five of the respondents said that they have taught all four (or five) of the women on Project Vox. When it came to research, though, less of the interviewees have done research on these figures. Two ECPs have done no research on these figures. LCP 3 actually tended to use teaching as a way to incorporate new figures into their research program, saying "once I teach it I will dive into more the secondary literature

and the other materials." Other early modern women philosophers were also mentioned as part of research. Princess Elizabeth, Madelaine du Scudery, Grabrielle Suchon, Mary Shephard, Anna Maria von Sherman, and Elizabeth of Bohemia were some of these named.

The participants were asked about their initial exposure to Project Vox. This turned out to be a difficult question to answer and every respondent started their answer with some variation of "I'm not really sure." What is clear though, is that many who have used Project Vox resources have a professional relationship with its core team or board of directors. Philosophy conferences were mentioned as a possible venue for exposure by these individuals as well. Other possibilities were from media stories, Googling one of the figures, or an email from their university librarian. It was also difficult for the interviewee to give an exact measurement of how often they visit the Project Vox website. Based on their answers, scholars are not visiting it with regularity, but it depends on either their teaching or research at the moment or the need to verify some information. Often scholars will visit just for a refresher on a particular topic or figure. However, many respondents indicated that they like to check in to see what is new on the website, looking at images and especially for new syllabi. This is shared by both early and later career philosophers. ECP 3 said "I would check back in every couple of months to see what was new. So not for a particular reason, but with respect to teaching, getting other people's syllabi to do something new." LCP 2 echoed that same sentiment: "I've gone to it on two or three different occasions to look at syllabi to see what people are doing."

The discussion on frequency of visits already has given preview of what the interviewees are using when they visit Project Vox. The syllabi are the main lure to the

website. Five of the participants indicated that they use and value the website syllabi. LCP 3 praised the syllabi stating "this is something I imagine a lot of people have said, I really appreciate the different approaches that syllabi at Project Vox reflect," which can be extremely helpful for people who still want to teach the canonical philosophers, but need help finding ways to incorporate more early modern women into their classes. While this approach was appreciated, others also would like to see more syllabi exclusively about women in philosophy. The multimedia resources, (images, videos, interactive timeline) are also something that has been highly valued, but ECPs were more likely to mention wanting those resources for classroom use. ECP 1 mentioned that students enjoy the images and videos and that they hoped that there could be more resources like that for assignments. LCPs also enjoyed the multimedia resources. LCP 1 was emphatic: "I think the images are fantastic" saying that the images and the timeline gave students much needed contextual information. This professor also indicated that they check the Project Vox website especially for the images. However, LCPs were less likely to use them for pedagogical purposes, with one responding to question about classroom use by saying "I don't, but I don't see why not. I could actually. So that's a good idea, I'll make a note of that." Bibliographies, both the primary and secondary sources, were also used by the interviewees. These were also used for developing syllabi and for research. LCP 2 described the Du Châtelet bibliography as the "most thorough bibliography of secondary sources now available."

Tied up with the resources that the interviewees are currently using are other aspects of the website that they appreciated. Two respondents described the website as "beautiful" and there was a general sense that it was organized well and easily navigable.

Others really responded to the level of context that Project Vox gives these philosophers with the variety of resources. LCP 2 described Project Vox as allowing users to ”go from images of the author, images of the text, the printed text, images of the contextual features... I think that’s super fantastic.” The methodology sections, particularly for the images, was singled out as helpful, not only for understanding the context of the resources, but also some of the barriers within philosophy for non-canonical figures. ECP 2 explained this well:

> I want to be able to talk to the students about what’s the process of trying to change the canon or recover certain texts and look at them more closely when we don’t already have the infrastructure. I’m going to be able to get the student to go on Project Vox and see what that process is looking like as it’s in progress and I think that’s really nice.

Furthermore, many respondents indicated the uniqueness of Project Vox in congregating all of these resources in one location. Again, ECP 2 describe this lack of functionality for other resources: “Even though there’s of course tons of Descartes resources, you don’t get a webpage that has like ‘here’s a bunch of syllabi on Descartes, here’s some of his primary texts, here’s some of his relevant biographical information.’ It’s a lot more dispersed.”

When asked about where Project Vox needed to improve, there was an overall consensus that there needs to be more content. This could either be new features and philosophers, but also just filling in or expanding on the underdeveloped parts of the website. When it comes to adding new philosophers, one LCP mentioned that they had a list of over 80 women doing philosophy over this time period. They went on to explain

that Project Vox should seek to grow their research team to populate the site faster. ECP 3 felt that more could be done with the multimedia content, especially with short videos for students. The interviewees also had a sense that the resources that are currently available are still incomplete. For example, ECP 2 stated "it is true that there are a lot of sections that are yet to be filled in. I guess the way to describe it is I'm eager to see how some of those get filled in." There was also disagreement between the respondents as to the difficulty level of the resources. ECP 1 felt that there should be more interpretive helps for the website to recommend specific resources and readings for adjunct professors who wanted to incorporate more women into one of their courses. They drew an analogy between reading Wikipedia or an article on Google Scholar, where Project Vox is more like Google Scholar. However, LCP 2 felt that the biographical content was geared more towards students, calling it "not quite the level of encyclopedia" and that the resources could be more valuable for high school instruction.

Interviewees had a number of other suggestions for the website. Here is a partial list of features that they would like to see added:

Better explanation of the Project Vox team and their roles.

Descriptions of primary texts about what philosophical subject they contain (i.e. free will, natural philosophy, etc.)

A tagline for Project Vox that can briefly describe the website and what it is used for.

A list of current philosophers with contact information, and descriptions of their research specialties (although this suggestion was given with the caveat that more

exposure might mean less time overall with the potential increased contact with other students).

More training opportunities for students and possibly a small research or travel fellowship.

Create a URL that is easier to remember and recommend to students.

3. Perception and Direction of Project Vox and Digital Humanities Landscape

When it comes to the participants' perceptions of Project Vox, the authority and reliability of the content is an important question. All of the respondents said that they did consider the content authoritative, but the follow up question of "what aspects give you that impression?," the answers tended to diverge. Four of the six respondents mentioned that part of it was because they knew people involved with Project Vox. This could be either team members, board members, or even the philosophers named on the syllabi. ECP 3 commented that they did not know how newcomers to the site who did not know any of the philosophers involved with it would react though. Another aspect that was mentioned frequently in a positive way was the fact that Project Vox website has detailed "About" pages that name the researchers and the describe the methodology. There was one LCP who wanted more detail about the team and more listed partnerships to enhance the credibility. Two philosophers also mentioned that the website looks like money was spent on it and that the layout of the website looked professionally made. One LCP went a bit further and explained that they tend to judge the framework before they ever get to evaluating the content. The content of the site was mentioned by two interviewees as being important, saying that the tone of the writing sounded academic and the level of detail in the resources (syllabi and bibliographies) also looked scholarly.

The connection to Duke University and Duke Libraries also came up with regard to authority. In particular, all the interviewees were asked about the URL of Project Vox, projectvox.library.duke.edu, and whether or not they viewed the "library" part as adding to or taking away creditability. All the respondents began their responses by saying that they either had not noticed it ever, or that it did not affect anything. Two respondents actually thought that having "library" in the URL might help with discovery for libraries and librarians. There was also the sense that Duke Libraries was a legitimate and authoritative scholarly organization in their own right. Only one respondent mused that projectvox.duke.edu might add some "gravitas" but it was not a definitive assertion. Finally, LCP 1 thought the library association was important for the authoritativeness of the site, but that having a URL that was easier to remember might be useful for referrals for students. It could even be a URL that redirects to the current one, but is easier to transfer. However, this philosopher also noted that a Google search of "Project Vox" gets you to the site as well and another interviewee mentioned that using Google is precisely how they find the Project Vox website.

Currently, the more synthesized resources on Project Vox, such as the biographies and bibliographies, do not display the author of the content. While the respondents did not feel that it detracted from the quality or authority of the content, there was unanimous agreement that crediting authors is an important practice to implement. Two primary reasons were given for displaying authorship: work should be credited and it allows visitors to follow up about the content. With regard to the credit for credit's sake, LCP 1 expressed their reasoning this way: "I assume that grad students are involved or librarians are involved or something. It's always good to credit authorship, just to give people…that

recognition." This philosopher went on to say that especially as the project progresses and the team changes, it is important to note who has done what. As for follow-up, two respondents mentioned that they actually experienced not knowing who to contact about some of the content. ECP 3 also explained that as a recommended resource for students, citations are a major concern. Having no author on scholarly materials might cause students some anxiety, saying "I can picture my students panicking." Again, while crediting authors is a good practice, none of the respondents thought that it reflected badly on Project Vox or the team. Many expressed confidence in the vetting process based on who is connected to Project Vox.

The interviewees were asked about other digital scholarship besides Project Vox that they currently use to get a sense of the other networks these scholars are a part of. There was some unfamiliarity with the term "digital scholarship" and the answers reflected a very broad interpretation. Everything from more traditional databases like Philosopher's Index, digital libraries such as EEBO, the SEP, blogs, and podcasts were mentioned. A few of the interviewees elaborated more on Digital Humanities as a concept. ECP 3 talked about using online timelines for assignments for their students, but they considered this more "blended learning" than Digital Humanities. LCP 1 went in depth about one Digital Humanities project called the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon, which they described as "incredible" but also saying "I don't know how that translates to philosophy very well." There was the sense that Digital Humanities in its interactive and textual analysis forms is not very well suited to philosophy research.

Related to other digital scholarship, the interviewed philosophers were asked about how they use social media for academic purposes. There was a big divide between

the ECPs and LCPs on this issue, with the LCPs using social media little to none for this reason. The LCPs gave comments like the following: “You know, I really don’t,” “I’m not on social media at all,” and “I want my social media to be an escape.” Some expressed a willingness to follow organizations that they support, like Project Vox, but tend not to engage in sharing or reposting of content. There was more interest in social media for academic reasons. ECP 1, as previously mentioned, uses social media to crowd source resources on philosophical topics. The other ECPs described using their social media for calls for papers or relevant talks in the area. All of them were more inclined to follow philosophical organizations and to share content than the LCPs. Additionally, there was agreement that Facebook is the better platform for scholarly engagement on social media.

As for Project Vox’s role in the current resource environment, there was a strong sense that Project Vox is really for teaching resources and as a general introduction to these philosophical figures. LCP 2 expressed it this way: “I see Project Vox as being primarily good on the teaching and the getting going.” When it comes to being a teaching resource, this also encompasses the use of Project Vox as a resource for assignments for students. ECP 2 explained that “it’s a really good resource for teaching because it is an alternate [resource]. Like I think it’s nice to be able to guide students to things on the internet that aren’t books.” Additionally, Project Vox’s resources, are seen as offering a unique perspective on these philosophers that is helpful of reaching students. LCP 1 said,

> Project Vox has a lot more context. It sort of brings figures more to life. Largely through the images, but also through the big picture that gets traced out. I think it’s valuable, especially in teaching because, I don’t know, most philosophers

> don't say anything at all about [the context]…I think it's a natural question for students to want to know something about the dead people they're reading. And Project Vox does a really good job at addressing those question that usually get short shrift for whatever reason.

As an introductory resource, two respondents compared Project Vox to the SEP. ECP 3 said that they considered Project Vox "a sister site to the [SEP]" and LCP 1 called Project Vox a "compliment to SEP in many ways," but added that the SEP has more "philosophical substance" and Project Vox has more "context." The interviewees also mentioned that Project Vox resources help save time because the information is "heavily curated." ECP 3 talked quite a bit about how scholars are under a lot of pressure meaning that there is not always a lot of time to research a new topic exhaustively, thus the need for an "entry point." Related to this issue is the question of research. Some interviewees, especially a few LCPs, did not think that Project Vox was useful for in-depth research, but that other sites might provide better resources that had primary texts or articles. It is clear though, that Project Vox is being used for reference purposes. This can be seen in the comparison to the SEP and reliance on the bibliographies to find relevant resources in other places. As LCP 2 said, Project Vox "facilitates research and facilitates other people working in that kind of thing."

Project Vox is currently focused on providing resources on a very narrow group of philosophers, namely European (mostly English) women philosophers from the early modern period. All of the interviewees were asked where they thought that Project Vox should go next. The general consensus was that there were two ways to expand the project: temporally and geographically. On the temporal dimension, philosophers were

interested in highlighting women and underrepresented men philosophers from other eras, further in the past, but also some more recent. Expanding geographically would include looking at various non-western philosophical traditions from around the world that are not currently well represented. Some of the mentioned areas were Asian philosophy, Arabic philosophy, or Jewish philosophy. More recent areas of interest such as African-American and Latino philosophy were also suggested. In general, there is the sense that going outside the canon is very difficult and a major time commitment to do on one's own, meaning that an online resource for these other areas in philosophy would we very welcomed. For example, ECP 3 said,

> So I think there's some interesting and difficult questions to be raised. But to me I would be overjoyed if something like Project Vox took on this really hard task of making public who the early modern thinkers of color are, where to find their texts, and kind of shining the light on them the same way they've been shining it on Cavendish and Du Châtelet and Masham and Conway.

There was the recognition though, that Project Vox is working with finite resources and expanding into other times and locations is going to be a large undertaking. In this regard, the respondents did not want Project Vox to give up the women philosophers in the early modern period either. For example, LCP 2 thought that Project Vox should keep expanding the number of women on the site and growing partnerships with other researchers. ECP 1 suggested that they would like more teaching materials, but saying of the scope of Project Vox "it's kind of nice that it is more focused in my opinion." One more moderate suggestion from LCP 1 is to look at more women in other European countries to provide more materials in English on non-English speaking women

philosophers. Overall there is a definite desire to expand Project Vox and to see online resources that are centered on other currently inaccessible subject areas.

V. Discussion

These six interviews bring up a number of issues that are important for both Digital Humanities in general and Project Vox in particular. When looking at the ways that these philosophers do their research, there is a clear generational divide. ECPs are much more comfortable working digitally, while LCPs tend to print out important documents. Finding ways to meet both needs are valuable. Currently Project Vox only offers PDFs for their syllabi, but the website does not offer them for the more synthesized portions. Such a document would not necessarily be used to take notes on, but it can be easily printed out. Along the same lines, ECPs were much more likely to return to the website for repeated viewings of the material. This indicates that they still might be willing to visit Project Vox even if there are downloadable options available.

All of the interviewees described returning to Project Vox to see new content. This is valuable to understand for any online resource. Regularly adding new content helps visitors want to return to the resource. In the case of the philosophers who participated in the study, they were not even asking to see new philosophers, which can take a long time to produce. Hoping to view new syllabi, images, or other teaching helps, like videos, were all reasons for returning to the website. Additionally, explicitly identifying the recent material on the website can direct visitors to the content that they have not viewed.

It is clear from the interviews that Project Vox's users consider it a valuable resource that fulfills a very real information need. The focus on pedagogy is unique

among scholarly resources in philosophy and there are not similar resources available on other topics within the discipline. However, the site is also being used for research purposes, but it is not always identified as research by the users. The users see it more in a reference role, something they can refer back to for clarity, verification, or to point them in the right direction to find other resources (i.e. secondary literature). However, there is are accessibility questions with the literature and the philosophic figures that are featured on Project Vox. This is compounded when the resources are in another language. Most of the interviewees use primary sources in their research and making more of those available, might help to change the perception that Project Vox is not for research.

The research concern also leads to a question about discoverability. Checking bibliographies was the most common way that these scholars found new materials. Bibliographies tend to contain more traditional scholarly literature, such as journal articles or monographs. Thus, for Project Vox (or other Digital Humanities projects) to extend its reach, being discoverable within these same venues is important. It is significant as well that none of the interviewees thought that authorship needed to be added for citing the materials in their own work (one respondent mentioned that students would appreciate it). This might indicate again, like reference material, that Project Vox is not a resource that scholars are concerned about citing. It is valuable for background reading and providing context, much like an encyclopedia or Wikipedia. However, publishing or housing primary sources might be way to inject Project Vox into the current scholarly communications environment. With Project Vox, most interviewees discovered it through word of mouth, whether by knowing individual team members or seeing a presentation on it at a conference. Such a process might not be scalable or reproducible

over the long-term. In addition, social media appears to be a viable strategy for discoverability as well, at least when it comes to ECPs. Being as widely discoverable and available as possible in both traditional and online contexts will further the impact of Project Vox.

Authority was a very prevalent theme of the interviews. Seeing how the interviewed philosophers judge authoritativeness and reliability has broad implications for Digital Humanities more broadly as well. As with discoverability, many philosophers said that the trusted the content because they know the people on Project Vox team. This in and of itself is not a negative, but it does create some potential barriers. Early modern philosophers seem to be a relatively small community and seeing recognizable names is important. On the other hand, taking into account some of their other mentioned aspects of authority are important for turning new visitors of the Project Vox website into users as well. The design and organization of the site has a major impact on the rest of the content. These features should continue to be revisited and optimized for future audiences. The editorial processes for the content were also valuable to maintain the academic tone and quality of the writing, even though it is more exposition and less argumentation. Additionally, Project Vox offers very detailed background and methodological information, which one interviewee described as "forthcoming" about their goals. There more "meta" explanations provide a sense of openness that creates a feeling of authoritativeness.

Another issue that came out in the interviews as how users of Project Vox perceived digital scholarship in general. None of the philosophers expressed a sharp divide between traditional scholarly resources and digital scholarly resources. In other

words, Project Vox was not considered a resource for research just because it was digital, but because of its current content. Many of the respondents were not familiar with what is considered digital scholarship, as opposed to traditional scholarship; it is all just scholarship. Even when interviewees expressed skepticism at the usefulness of some Digital Humanities projects, it was dependent on the type of research that those projects could be used for that motivated the comments. Overall, the interviewees put databases and digital libraries on par with Project Vox. Each resource though fills a specific niche. Some respondents expressed their pleasure that Project Vox is a digital resource that is easily accessible (especially considering the lack of resources for the women featured on the site) and authoritative, that both they and their students can use. In fact, there is a general sense that philosophy as a discipline could use other Project Vox-like websites for more underrepresented philosophers. ECP 3 explained about why it is so difficult to research these philosophers in the first place:

> I would think it would be great if there was some resource on African American philosophy, on Latino philosophy… Again, it's a training thing you know? We don't learn a lot of this stuff, hardly any of it in graduate school and then we're all so busy trying to get tenure and to publish and live our lives that to take on as an extra project learning stuff that we don't know is a real time commitment. If there were some entry point where we could know a summary of a figure's view and know one or two texts we could assign. That would be a way to get it onto our own syllabus.

Project Vox could potentially be model for branching into other areas of philosophy that are non-canonical. If expanding the scope of the project as it currently stands is not

within Project Vox's ability, then exporting the model to other scholars might be another option.

VI. Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study, foremost that it is narrowly focused on a single organization. Project Vox is a unique initiative with resources that relate specifically to their overall goals. Many aspects of it cannot be replicated at other institutions. Regardless, their commitment to longevity and evaluation is a pattern that all digital humanities projects should aspire to. Additionally, the study only uses a small sample of interviews from an already concentrated population (undergraduate philosophy professors who use Project Vox). While these interviews are not representative of the humanities or philosophy in general, they can be viewed as a subset of that population that have very definite user needs. More work needs to be done to concretely determine the typical user behaviors of humanists with regard to research and teaching. A related limitation is that there are many voices that are not included in this study, with students being the most prominent omission. Performing a needs assessment of student users of the site and receiving feedback on their impressions of Project Vox and its resources will be important for Project Vox to continue to be a valuable scholarly resource. Limited though the study may be, it can still offer a model for assessing the needs of users of a Digital Humanities project and provide suggestions for how to turn user feedback into practical improvements.

VII. Conclusion

Digital Humanities is a growing form of academic research within the humanities. It also affords scholars the opportunity to have a major cultural impact by developing wider audiences and receiving feedback from them. While user assessments are not regular practice for digital humanists, they can be integral to meeting the needs of users, while also providing tangible benefits for long-term viability of any project. Libraries also have the opportunity to partner with scholars to provide these services. Project Vox is comprised of an interdisciplinary team that is dedicated to continuous improvement and communication with its users. This user assessment of Project Vox showed that more can be done to match the research and instruction patterns of the philosophers who use the site. It also demonstrated that there is a real desire for more digital scholarship within philosophy to provide a way into new or underrepresented subjects and thinkers.

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