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Claiming expertise from betwixt and between: Digital humanities librarians, emotional labor, and genre theory

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ABSTRACT

Librarians' liminal (intermediate) position within academia situates us to make unique contributions to digital humanities (DH). In this article, we use genre theory, feminist theory, and theories of emotional labor to explore the importance of discourse mediation and affective labor to DH and the interplay between these areas and academic structural inequality. By claiming our expertise and making explicit work that is often not visible, we can advocate for new and varied roles for librarians in digital humanities. Our analysis is informed by both theory and practice, and it takes a dialogic approach that depends upon the interactions between the two.

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Introduction

In her influential essay on librarians as discourse mediators, Simmons (2005) applies the lens of genre theory to information literacy instruction. She argues that librarians navigate the diverging and converging norms and values of academic disciplines by working both within and without various discourse communities. While Simmons's work is focused on information literacy, the crux of her argument and analysis has significant resonance with digital humanities (DH) librarianship. In this article, we examine the DH landscape using both genre theory and theories of affective and emotional labor in order to understand and contextualize the development of digital humanities as a field. We connect Simmons to scholars writing about emotional labor to show how this work of mediation often constitutes affective labor, rendered invisible to ourselves and others. We also look at how librarians bring together scholars across disciplines, acting as a catalyst for creative change within the academy.

Shirazi (2014) creates a framework for thinking about DH labor as both gendered and classed. She explores the relationship between service and scholarship and how these distinctions are at the heart of the class issues librarians face when doing digital work. She argues that it is power, not service, that leads to unequal collaborations. Drawing on Hochschild (2012) and using emotional labor as a lens

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with which to view academic librarians work, Shirazi contextualizes librarianship as a feminized profession in the sense that it is predominantly done by people who identify as women but also that “feminine” qualities are often ascribed to the work we do. She goes on to discuss how much of the work of librarians (teaching information literacy, maintaining library collections, reference) serves to “reproduce the academy” (Shirazi 2014). Instead of focusing on the service/scholarship divide, Shirazi asks us to “focus on expanding our conception of what work is valued in the academy.” This article takes up Shirazi’s call by focusing on labor that may not be visible in the academy but nevertheless remains vital to digital humanities. We argue that it is librarians’ liminal position within the academy that prepares and situates us to not only make unique contributions to DH but also to shape the development of DH as a field. Liminality is a concept that was first explored in depth by symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) in his study of rituals and rites of passage among the Ndembu people. Liminality and liminal spaces have since been explored by other scholars interested in how liminal spaces offer a vantage point to both see and challenge traditional power structures:

The study of liminal spaces is important because it is at places and moments of change and transformation that one can see most clearly the processes of domination and resistance, of inclusion and exclusion, and of marginalization and socialization. It is in society’s borderlands that one is challenged to recognize the other and the self and to see oneself in another. (Davis 2008, 485)

In this article we will discuss how librarians are both marginalized and empowered by their liminal position in the academy and how this perspective offers a unique and valuable role in digital humanities collaborations.

We see our article in conversation not only with Shirazi but also with recent discussions in the library literature that shed light on the importance and urgency of these topics, including a symposium on invisible work in the digital humanities and a special issue of *dh+lib* (Christian-Lamb et al. 2016). Authors in the special issue explore topics such as emotional labor, the intersections of critical librarianship and DH, the position of DH librarianship on campus, the potential of metadata to DH outreach, and the complicated relationship between service and scholarship within DH. While we use genre theory and theories of affective labor explicitly as lenses in this article, our understanding of this topic is also heavily influenced by feminist theory and practice and, in particular, feminisms outside of the dominant narrative of White feminism. We are energized by the feminist praxis Johnson and Nuñez (2015) describe in “Alter Ego and Infinite Literacies: How to Build a Real Gyrl in Three Easy Steps,” where they describe the creation of the Women of Color Blogging:

The original goal was to create another kind of internet by building survival spaces, bunkers, and caves where we would be able to breathe free of attack—or if attacked, find some kind of joyful camaraderie in clasping digital hands with each other. Over time and through proximity to each other online, the praxis at the heart of feminist work began to emerge. The tenets seemed simple: Believe and act, online and on the ground, in a history that is feminist, insurgent, and alive. Demand feminist action rooted in community and explicitly community accountable. Challenge all forms of violence and oppression, on

a global scale, but believe in process over outcome, in the practice and power of transformative justice. (50)

We want to be careful not to suggest that working in liminal spaces as White women is comparable to the experiences of people of color negotiating multiple identities. Rather, we highlight the central role of feminists of color in shaping both theory and praxis around emotional labor, liminality, and invisibility in the academy. We aim throughout to highlight how intersectional feminism has established and continues to frame what it means to be in a border space and how power, hierarchy, and privilege play out in these spaces.

One significant way that feminist praxis informs our work is in the collaborative nature of the writing process. This project grew out of many conversations over the course of a year. While much of what we discussed is not captured on these pages, the ability to have frank and nuanced conversations about common successes and struggles is not only crucial for creating capacity and building expertise, but itself constitutes a feminist act. By discussing our personal frustrations and successes outside our institutional bounds, we were able to puzzle out some of the core issues at stake in our own DH collaborations, including power dynamics and institutional politics, as well as our own individual positionality within these structures and in society more broadly. Feminist theory frequently foregrounds the personal, lived experience as essential to understanding. Hudson (2012) highlights this embodiment in Chicana feminism and transnational feminisms when she discusses how later feminists such as Aida Hurtado built upon the work of Moraga and Anzaldúa to develop an “endarkened epistemology ... in other words, a feminists-of-color way of knowing. This endarkened epistemology calls for multidisciplinary, a bricolage of theories and methods, and a politics of urgency for scholarship to achieve social justice-related ends” (170). We see the work we have done to produce this article as engaging with this call to examine power in its many forms and challenge narratives that place our work as digital humanities librarians within a binary system of power. Personal experience is important to DH, and yet conversations and experience do not easily translate to conventions of academic writing. It is fitting that we take a dialogic approach that depends upon the interactions between practice and theory because DH straddles theory and practice in significant ways, and our analysis is informed by both. As Johnson and Nuñez (2015) describe their work with the *Woman of Color Blogging*, “Our feminist praxis demanded we build a ‘bridge’ across these differences and we did. This bridge was built on more than text and word. It was rooted in the personal, in our everyday experiences, and in our constant metamorphosis, in brutally honest exchange, accountability and transformation” (48). As important as it is to acknowledge the influence of feminism and feminists of color in our work, we feel it is equally important to acknowledge our own positionality. As three White women working in a profession that is overwhelmingly White and female, our perspective is inherently limited to contexts where our visible identities conform to institutional norms. While we embody multiple other identities (of class, sexuality, and educational access, to name a few) as well, our Whiteness offers us access and privilege that we do not want to minimize.

Discourse mediation and DH librarianship

Librarians occupy a unique position in the academy. We spend much of our time in the borderlands: bridging the gap between expert and amateur researcher to help students meet the expectations of college-level research, translating the tacit knowledge and norms required for students to do research in a variety of disciplines, and navigating between disciplinary spheres as we teach information literacy, manage library collections, and do the outreach that is so necessary to our roles as liaison librarians. With this position also comes a vantage point that is interdisciplinary in nature. Using the lens of genre theory, Simmons (2005) articulates how our interdisciplinary perspective uniquely positions us to be disciplinary discourse mediators. She describes the “powerful pedagogical partnership” that librarians and faculty make when they collaborate to teach information literacy to undergraduate students (298–99). By combining a professor’s deep disciplinary knowledge with a librarian’s interdisciplinary breadth of knowledge, we can make disciplinary research norms more visible and their respective cultures easier to navigate. But what if we were to apply this same thinking to digital humanities partnerships? Can we use our skill as discourse mediators to bring expertise and creativity to digital humanities projects?

Before answering these questions, it is worth digging deeper into how genre theory can help us understand disciplinary cultures and what implications these distinctions can have for digital humanities collaborations. Developed in the early part of the twentieth century by philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, genre theory has since been employed by scholars from a diverse array of disciplines to describe the communicative conventions of various discourse communities. By applying genre theory to academic disciplines, we can deconstruct the how, what, and why of scholarship within the disciplines:

- *How*: What research methodologies are commonly employed?
- *What*: What research questions are being asked? What type of evidence is valued?
- *Why*: What theories and paradigms are used to explain the world?

Berkenkotter and Huckin’s analysis of disciplinary genres is particularly relevant here because they examine not only communicative conventions but also culture and power in the context of academic disciplines: “Genre conventions signal a discourse community’s norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology” (1995, 21). By examining the norms that make a disciplinary culture distinct, it is not our intention to suggest that these individual scholars do not exercise agency or that all scholars within a discipline approach research in exactly the same way. Rather, our purpose is to shed light on the tacit norms that subject specialists bring to digital humanities projects, especially those that are interdisciplinary in nature. As Simmons points out, “If the scholar does not expose students to the disciplinary discourse as constructed and dialogic and discipline-specific, the seasoned member of the community risks implying to the student that this is *the* academic discourse instead of *an* academic discourse” (305). Similarly, the unspoken assumptions that digital humanists bring to a collaborative project can hinder the ability to undertake projects that are truly collaborative and interdisciplinary. They demand someone

who has a perspective that sees the “ecology of the disciplinary environment,” as Simmons (2005) calls it, and can navigate between discourse communities with the skill of an experienced anthropologist (306). This is where librarians are poised to bring a unique and valuable interdisciplinary perspective to DH projects.

Consider this scene

Literary scholar Larissa wants to examine generic patterns across a corpus of modernist texts. Through close reading, she has identified a number of themes but is interested in identifying other patterns that link the texts. At a conference, she meets computer scientist Carmela, who is well versed in programming languages, and they decide to collaborate. Using a text-mining technique, Carmela confirms that her quantitative methods validate the patterns Larissa found in her close reading. Although Larissa welcomes further evidence for her interpretation, she had not been seeking “validation” but rather was looking to add richness to her interpretation and to find new patterns and themes. In passing, Larissa mentions this unsatisfying collaboration to her liaison librarian, who suggests that they use a digital humanities method called “distant reading.” Using this method of algorithmic criticism, they were able to uncover new patterns, which informed the close reading analysis and vice versa. Though the librarian used tools similar to those of the computer scientist, her approach was humanistic in nature, with a goal of problematizing the text rather than “solving” it.

This scenario demonstrates one of the ways that having both an outsider and insider perspective of a particular discourse community, in this case, literary criticism, enabled the librarian to use digital humanities methods that align with this discipline’s research norms as well as push the boundaries of the discipline. Although there is not complete agreement among digital humanists about what constitutes “digital humanities,” and it is not our intention to police the boundaries of this practice, most agree that digital humanities projects should go beyond the use of digital tools for their own sake to using digital tools to uncover information not available through traditional means or to present information in new ways. Most also agree that digital tools and methods should be used in *service of* humanistic inquiry, not to supplant humanistic methods with quantitative, positivist approaches. As Ramsay elucidates, “Woolf critics are not trying to solve Woolf. They are trying to ensure that discussion of *The Waves* continues into further and further reaches of intellectual depth” (2007, 489). It is this type of creative, collaborative interdisciplinary work that librarians, who occupy the spaces “betwixt and between,” are positioned to cultivate and undertake. Even if librarians are not directly involved in digital humanities projects, our work as liaisons and discourse mediators positions us well to bring scholars together to work across disciplines and to promote the library as a space of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Digital humanities projects are often sites of interdisciplinarity, but they are also liminal spaces because they represent a site of growth and change within humanities disciplines and among individual humanists entering the digital humanities for the first time. As Clark argues, borderlands are spaces that are ripe for creativity: “A work is regarded ‘creative’ when boundaries are transcended in an original and unusual way, so that the work represents a unique union of both constraint and choice” (as cited in Simmons 2005, 302–03). Librarians who are skilled at navigating different

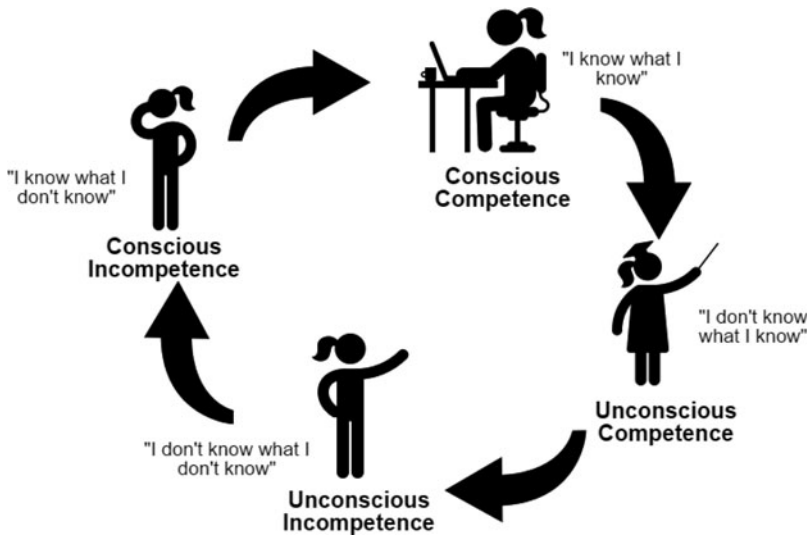


Figure 1. Developing mastery.

genre communities are positioned to be allies and leaders to those undertaking collaborative, interdisciplinary DH projects for the first time because they are adept at shifting their vision to see diverging and converging values and norms and adjusting their language to speak to different disciplinary cultures.

Occupying a liminal space between disciplines allows librarians to navigate between disciplinary cultures but also to bridge the gap between expert and novice researchers. Leckie (1996) discusses how professors' enculturation into their discipline has distanced them from the experience of novice researchers such as undergraduate students. If you look at developing mastery as a process of both gaining competency and changes in awareness of one's competency (see Figure 1), it becomes clear how it might be challenging for professors, who are likely unaware of how competent they are as researchers, to help students go through the steps necessary to become proficient researchers (as cited in Ambrose et al. 2010).

Leckie (1996) goes on to describe the differences between an expert research model and a novice research model (as outlined in Table 1).

Librarians—through their liaison work, information literacy instruction, and professional preparation—are often simultaneously at different levels of mastery of researching in various subject areas. As information scientists, breadth is our depth. This perspective makes us skilled at teaching research skills, and our position between novice and expert realms helps us to act as ambassadors between students and professors.

While professors may have developed unconscious competence in their chosen discipline, the same cannot be said when it comes to doing research outside their chosen discipline. In fact, when undertaking interdisciplinary research or starting research in a new subject area, their incompetence in certain areas becomes more visible. Their research strategy may shift from tracing citations to doing database searching, and the messiness and uncertainty that comes with this new perspective

Table 1. Table of expert vs. novice research competencies based on Leckie (1996).

Expert (professor)	Novice (student)
Deep knowledge of the discipline to draw upon	Scant knowledge of the discipline to draw upon
Awareness of important scholars in the field—tracing citations an important research strategy	No awareness of important scholars and difficulty tracing the scholarly conversation
Acculturated into the norms, values, and language of discipline	Little knowledge of the context in which scholarly work is produced and may not understand disciplinary differences
Acknowledge the iterative, nonlinear, and sometimes ambiguous nature of research & inquiry	The ambiguity & uncertainty inherent in approaching research with a question is threatening and anxiety-inducing
Understand that there is agreement, disagreement, consensus, & dissent in the scholarly literature	If uncovered, may ignore dissenting views in favor of what they think is the “right” perspective
Information-seeking strategy	Coping strategy

rises to the surface. Similarly, when starting a new digital humanities project, professors will likely be required to learn a new tool or research methodology, collaborate with someone outside their discipline, and deal with the risk that comes with trying something new—all of which can shift them outside their position as unconsciously competent researchers. Librarians, with their position between expert and novice, have the skills and perspective to help new digital humanists navigate this new terrain.

Our perspective between expert and novice research realms also helps us advise faculty who want to introduce their students to digital humanities in their courses.

Consider this scene

A faculty member, Therese, asks a librarian, Jean, to join class to teach students how to build an interactive timeline. In Jean’s experience, the students have fewer challenges navigating the timeline software than they do with applying concepts related to visual storytelling, fair use and attribution, and understanding the role of metadata. In negotiating class time and planning for the session, Jean suggests that the session focus on the latter categories, including a storyboarding exercise, rather than strictly a technology how-to. Therese respectfully disagrees and encourages Jean to create handouts and videos about fair use and metadata creation. Jean concedes and builds a session that is mostly focused on the mechanics of the tool but integrates the other content as she can.

In any given classroom, students may have either much more or much less facility with technological tools than faculty often assume. The librarian’s liminal role gave her a perspective on students’ capacities for negotiating and navigating the pieces of a DH project. In a classroom context, it can be important for librarians to help manage student and faculty expectations of DH tools. We both build confidence and make a case for given tools and also highlight and discuss the limitations of these tools. We make decisions about the appropriate balance for teaching the tools and methodologies and critiquing those tools and technologies based on our experiences with the faculty, the class, the subject matter, and our own level of familiarity with each of these. This intellectual and emotional labor is a continuation of the role we

play in helping faculty reckon with gaps in their students' research abilities. Just as we know that students need to see the bigger picture (metadata, Boolean logic, research as inquiry, research as an iterative process) to use a research tool (database) successfully, students also need support with things like visual literacy, copyright/fair use, and digital storytelling in order to use a DH tool such as Timeline JS.

In addition to the affective labor required to help manage expectations about tools taught in the preceding scenario, there is work involved in performing authentic enthusiasm for teaching content we believe will be less useful for our students. Our experience working with a large number of students across many classes using these tools may not be visible or compelling to our faculty colleagues, but that does not mean that our contributions are not valuable. Further, we should be careful not to internalize these messages or to let them discourage us from advocating in areas where we do bring expertise. It takes courage to incorporate content the faculty member does not deem as important. Much of this work constitutes emotional labor, which we will discuss in depth later on.

Entering the new terrain of a digital humanities project, whether that entails incorporating DH into the classroom or a research project, can be like entering a new culture. Hochschild (2012), who literally wrote the book on emotional labor, insightfully reminds us that “cultural rules are seeing rules” (xi). Cultural norms and values that you previously took for granted become more visible in a new cultural environment. Likewise, a scholar's incompetencies in navigating this unfamiliar territory become more visible to them while the competencies that librarians contribute to a DH collaboration may become clearer. For librarians, then, digital humanities could also be a site to transform our role in the classroom and reclaim our expertise as discourse mediators.

Consider this scene

As a liaison librarian, Gerri is used to having a variety of relationships with her departments. In some departments, she is well integrated into the major curriculum, but in others, despite outreach on her part, she has not made inroads. In the philosophy department, she is routinely asked to show students how to use subject databases, but her instruction is perceived as little more than tool demonstration. One day, Susan, a faculty member in the philosophy department, approaches Gerri about incorporating digital humanities into a course. Members of her department have become concerned about the declining number of students choosing this major and the national dialogue about the “relevance” of the humanities. Susan has a history of classroom innovation as a way to engage students and build their capacities in transferable skills. Together, Susan and Gerri explore digital tools and methods that might align with her course goals and develop an assignment. In much the same way she would ask Gerri to demonstrate a database, Susan asks Gerri to demonstrate use of the digital tool. Gerri agrees but also advises Susan to incorporate library sessions on research and visual literacy. Because Gerri was new to DH, she was more open to a collaborative relationship with the librarian in this context. Not only was Gerri viewed as an expert instead of a service provider, she also had more agency over the role she played in this class.

When entering a new culture or navigating the spaces between them, rules and norms that are not dominant in the cultures we normally inhabit become much

more visible. When faculty try new methodologies or traverse disciplinary cultures, there is an opportunity for librarians to show off their skill as disciplinary discourse mediators and negotiate more equitable collaborations and roles in the classroom. But playing the role of discourse mediator requires a significant amount of both intellectual labor and also affective labor.

Affective labor and DH librarianship

While the terms *affective labor*, *emotional labor*, and *emotion work* will be used somewhat interchangeably in this discussion, it is beneficial to spend a moment tracing the genealogy of the concept. The concept of affective labor comes out of 1970s Marxist feminist criticism that sought to theorize the seismic shift from proletarian, material labor to feminized, immaterial labor. Oksala notes that the term *feminization of labor* signifies not only the quantitative rise in the number of women in the workforce but also “a qualitative change in the nature of labor: the characteristics historically present in female work—precariousness, flexibility, mobility, fragmentary nature, low status, and low pay—have increasingly come to characterize most of the work in global capitalism” (2016, 281). Sociologists and other social scientists note that the rise of the service economy and the feminization of labor brought with it increased reliance on emotional labor. Hochschild’s (2012) groundbreaking work, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, on the emotional labor of flight attendants (among others), remains the cornerstone study of emotional labor in postindustrial capitalism. First published in 1983, the book’s influence has grown exponentially in the past decade, a phenomenon the author attributes to the relentless growth of the service economy itself (ix). According to Hochschild, emotional labor is labor that

requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. ... [It] calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality. (7)

She uses the related term *emotion work* to describe the performance of this work in the private sphere (7). Emotional or affective labor also includes unpaid domestic work, a corrective to earlier Marxist critiques of labor that largely ignored unpaid (typically feminized and racialized) work. The study traces the rise of the pink collar professional: She (and, increasingly, he) helps others not only by providing valuable services but by working hard to ensure that those she serves feel comforted, cajoled, even coddled by her care.

This reading of affective labor acknowledges that all people do engage in some kind of emotional labor, but women do more. Hardt and Negri, in their *Empire, Multitude, Commonwealth* trilogy, offer a neo-Marxist analysis of affective labor that intervenes at a later moment in the postindustrial age than Hochschild. They go so far as to claim that “[i]n fact any woman who is not willing to do affective labor on call—smile appropriately, tend to hurt feelings, knit social relationships, and generally perform care and nurturing—is viewed as a kind of monster” (2009, 134).

Anyone who engages in liaison or DH work or has contact with faculty, students, or other library users will see the work we do fitting easily within the framework of emotional labor. Typically, liaison work involves building trust (often in the context of meeting with students only once or twice), creating partnerships, and facilitating knowledge production. Similarly, while the work of digital humanities librarians may vary widely, it frequently includes some of the following: building and maintaining credibility, forging partnerships, and managing expectations on all sides of a project. For both liaisons and DH librarians, then, building partnerships and inspiring confidence in our expertise are key components to successful collaboration. While some of this work involves concrete, identifiable tools and traits (intellectual labor), a comparable proportion involves building an invisible lattice of support through emotion work. This might take the form of appearing enthusiastic about projects that you suspect will be too unwieldy to succeed given the time and human resources available and knowing how to manage the proposer's expectations without damaging their enthusiasm for the digital project. It can also involve working as a mediator in negotiations between faculty and technologists, providing a bridge between different spheres of knowledge and expertise. Within conversations with technologists and faculty, there can be an added layer of emotional labor: maintaining a professional demeanor even when your expertise is marginalized in a given project.

Consider this scene

Librarian Lola and Professor Pam worked on a semester-long DH project requiring students to contribute to an online exhibit. Before and during the semester, the team collaborated in designing several class sessions, developing instructional materials for use outside of class, and configuring the technical infrastructure and environment in which the students would work. Lola gave students an orientation to the tools, taught them about fair use and securing permissions for using digital objects in online exhibits, shared some best practices for visual storytelling and exhibit building, and provided detailed feedback on drafts of student work. The project, which received grant funding and garnered attention from the university, became available to the public after the course ended and the professor had an opportunity to make final edits on the student's work. Lola was disappointed to find that among the list of people credited, there was no acknowledgement of her contribution or role in the project.

It is not uncommon for librarians who are highly involved in an online project to find their contributions invisible. This can impact relationships between collaborators and contribute to burnout. Beyond the work required to manage disappointment, when the work of academic staff is not visible, it is difficult to advocate for the resources required to support and engage in these time-intensive projects when the contributions of all collaborators are not acknowledged. Administrators and faculty can significantly underestimate the time and energy required for digital humanities projects when a realistic picture of the amount and type of work is routinely obscured. Further, when a librarian engaged in DH work seeks new employment opportunities or grant funding, she can find it challenging to point concretely to her contributions on projects that bear no trace of her work on the surface.

Hochschild (2012) discusses emotion work as a kind of “... ‘shadow labor,’ an unseen effort, which, like housework, does not quite count as labor but is nevertheless crucial to getting other things done. ... The trick is to erase any evidence of effort, to offer only the clean house and the welcoming smile” (167). She offers a term for this effort: *niceness*. Niceness, to Hochschild, brings nuance to mere deference. Beyond “the offering of cold respect, the formal bow of submission, the distant smile of politeness; it can also have a warm face and offer gestures small and large that show support for the well-being and status of others” (168). She points to a gendered aspect to the emotional work of deference: We all do it, but the heavier burden falls on women. She further associates this gendered dynamic of niceness and deference with notions of womanhood that celebrate “being adaptive, cooperative, and helpful” and that compel women to be “on a private stage behind the public stage, and as a consequence [women are] often seen as less good at arguing, telling jokes, and teaching than [they are] at expressing appreciation of these activities” (168). Many, if not all, of these attributes are seen as desirable in librarians: Adaptability, cooperation, and helpfulness are almost universally seen as core values of the profession. Placing a premium on amiability comes, at times, at the expense of valuing other important contributions that librarians make. While individual librarians in a variety of settings may find their intellectual capacity and teaching ability acknowledged and appreciated, that recognition is often hard won. Since our perceived value lies in these “private-stage,” invisible talents, it can be a challenge to make our intellectual labor visible in the context of the hierarchy of academic labor. Like librarian Lola in scenario four, we find ourselves deeply engaged in collaborative projects, often winning effusive verbal praise for our contributions, only to be erased from the public version of this work.

Sloniowski, informed by Hochschild, tackles the issue of librarian invisibility in the context of the neoliberal university. She argues for the importance of this work, which examines how universities profit, both culturally and financially, from the emotional labor that librarians perform and which remains unexamined and undertheorized (2016, 647). She further notes “a curious gap” in the literature of academic labor in neoliberal colleges and universities that specifically addresses the invisible labor of academic librarianship. Sloniowski highlights divisions between the quantifiable productivity of the digital librarian, who can announce with pride that “he batch uploaded 1,000 objects into our university library’s new digital repository,” and her own experience as a reference librarian of needing to neglect her own priority list in order to tend to emotional needs of others (646). This quantifiability divide leads to “certain forms of digital immaterial labor [being] valorized as mind work over the emotion work of liaison librarians, and such valorizations have their roots in gendered divisions of labor” (653). While liaison work and digital librarianship are counterposed in this example, it is worth exploring how this plays out in the context of digital humanities work that is performed by liaisons. For librarians whose work includes both traditional liaison work and support of DH projects, the dynamic in place for their liaison work often bleeds into their digital collaborations. If prior collaboration involved instruction within the context of an established course, teaching students how to effectively search, or building research

guides for an area of specialization, there is often much work that must be done to build confidence in the librarian's role as an intellectual partner. In other words, if the prevailing image of liaison work is as a form of service, working with faculty as a partner and collaborator may involve a cognitive leap on both (or all) sides of the project. Even as some of our work might fall under the valorized forms of digital labor Sloniowski alludes to, much of the work will echo liaison work and remain invisible.

Like Sloniowski, Shirazi (2014) engages with Hochschild and complicates the narrative of emotion work and invisible labor further by discussing them in the context of librarians' frequent lack of a "status shield":

[W]hen we call for librarians to approach collaborative digital work as partners and not service providers, I would like to see some acknowledgement of the fact that there are different power relations at play in these collaborative relationships. Power relations that are embedded in the hierarchies that make up academia, in both the social stratification of varying job ranks and the hierarchical classification of service and scholarship. (Shirazi 2014)

She notes that women and people of color are more likely to bear the brunt of "criticisms and rudeness ... because they lack the social status that affords respect" (Shirazi 2014). This statement speaks to possibly the most crucial and concomitantly most difficult aspect of emotional labor in librarianship: Because of our position within institutional hierarchies, it is common to experience a wide range of microaggressions. From presumptions about our intellectual capacity to misperceptions about the time and technical expertise we expend in collaborations with them, faculty, often unwittingly, reinforce a power differential in our partnerships. Shirazi muses that the real problem may not lie in the service/collaboration debate: "Perhaps the problem isn't service itself, but exploitation."

Shirazi asserts that it is the invisibility of emotional labor that is at the heart of what often makes service relationships exploitative. Because most if not all emotional labor happens, à la Hochschild, on the private stage, it can be difficult to measure (Hochschild 2012, 168). Morgan (2016) points out a unique component of the DH librarian's collaboration on DH projects: It is often voluntary. She suggests that the voluntary nature of her collaborations with faculty are in fact what make them emotional labor: "[w]hile I can make strong recommendations, the scholars I work with are the ultimate decision makers; and this is why my work *is* emotional labor, as opposed to pure technical advice." Morgan notes a paradox in the widespread perception that librarians are "*available* for research collaboration, instead of actively involved" but also cautions against making the consulting relationship too formal. Part of the work is being comfortable with messiness and uncertainty and offering a space to explore ideas that are new and uncertain for the researcher and often the librarian as well. This can be tricky territory to navigate: It can open a space for new, creative insights, but as Shirazi rightly points out, it can also leave collaborators open to exploitation. Morgan offers a positive model of the role of emotional labor in DH librarianship: "If emotional labor is ongoing, and acknowledged

as work that deals with risk-focused, administrative, and scholarly decisions, then it can contribute to reframing the relationship between scholars and librarians as one of more equal partnership, rather than mere service provision.” If Morgan is hesitant to offer a model for how this might look, we can see in it both an outward plea and a call to action to be more explicit about the role of emotional labor in DH librarianship.

Discourse mediation and affective labor

We have talked about the contributions librarians make to DH projects as discourse mediators and emotional laborers. It is now important to explore how intertwined these roles are with each other and the work we do. The contributions librarians make to DH are diverse and varied, and even the more tangible aspects of this work (including but not limited to teaching methodologies, evaluating technologies, setting up workflows, digitization) can be invisible. Some of the most important labor we bring to digital humanities projects is intangible, yet instrumental to every DH project: managing expectations, fostering and modeling experimentation, and facilitating collaborations across campus. When working across disciplines and academic departments, this work moves beyond setting clear guidelines, goals, and expectations for collaborators to include discourse mediation. What makes librarians’ role in DH projects unique and valuable are our skill and expertise as both discourse mediators and emotional laborers.

Consider this scene

Librarian Annie and technologist Terry are working with professor Pete on selecting a theme and template for a digital platform. Pete expresses frustration that the theme doesn’t have an easy mechanism for students to create footnotes for their essays and online exhibits. Terry explains that attribution is different in an online environment and suggests some strategies for citation informed by best practices for writing for the web. Annie observes that Pete feels his concerns are being minimized and also senses Terry’s frustration at what she perceives as an overly rigid perspective about citation. Annie understands and sees these differing expectations and assumptions as illustrative of varied discourse norms.

In addition to mediating between faculty and students, librarians frequently play mediator between faculty and colleagues in an academic or instructional technologist role. This scenario highlights how discourse mediation often constitutes affective labor because it involves sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics, skilled navigation of departmental politics, and the suppression of our own feelings because we must do all of this in a way that does not alienate any of our colleagues. This can be particularly challenging when collaborating on classroom assignments because the openness for expertise to flow in all directions may be limited, making for a trickier emotional landscape.

While supporting DH work with faculty and students, we are often modeling an attitude of experimentation. We hope to help our collaborators build a context for themselves about how to approach problem solving and troubleshooting. Morgan

(2016) underscores this point well in her essay on emotional labor and DH, writing that part of her role as a DH librarian is building confidence in scholars. She goes on to describe her work as

transparently disclosing some of the potential obstacles they might face, and which are hard for newcomers to imagine in advance. My goal is to underscore that obstacles, like bugs, are par for the course; and also, to give people a sense of what digital work involves so that they can decide whether it's something that they want to pursue.

Part of what DH librarians do is make explicit the limitations of technology and foster a spirit of experimentation in the face of these limitations. This can require masking or repackaging our frustrations or negative emotions into a curriculum suitable for whatever group we are working with. Hochschild reminds us that this suppression of feeling is part of emotional labor and argues that the “emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself” (168). The specific way that we lead by modeling and coaching colleagues is one illustration of how librarians draw on their capacities as discourse mediation and affective laborers.

Empowerment from betwixt and between

Because our expertise lies between and among disciplines, and relies on our ability to mediate and modulate across academia, depth of expertise can feel elusive. The expertise librarians bring to the field of digital humanities opens the door to a variety of roles we can potentially play, including: supporter (by advising, teaching, researching), connector (bringing together scholars of various disciplines), collaborator (partnering with faculty to teach digital humanities in the classroom or work on digital scholarship), and leader (managing a DH project or modeling experimentation). Sloniowski (2016) shares new roles DH offers librarians, such as programmer, but reminds us that these roles occur within traditional academic structures “with professors directing the work of librarians and other alt-academics whose intellectual contributions are devalued as merely service work or project management” (661). Her caution is an important one, in part because of the potential for exploitation.

However, because our contributions are neither strictly defined nor rigidly formalized, we have an opportunity to exercise freedom in the roles we choose to play. While visibility will not solve all issues related to inequities in digital labor or academic hierarchies, acknowledging and claiming these liminal spaces can lead to a kind of empowerment. In her paper on embodied epistemology, Aida Hurtado, professor of psychology, points to the importance of border crossing to educational equality. She writes, “It is only in breaking boundaries, crossing borders, claiming fragmentation and hybridity that theory will finally be useful for liberation” (2003, 216). We can embrace the ambiguity that comes from working across disciplines and boundaries because we are already doing it. This is where we can excel provided we advocate for ourselves and one another. Part of this advocacy involves being explicit about the nature of our role in DH research, pedagogy, and teaching. This advocacy could include getting support for initiating librarian-led DH projects.

While research time can be difficult to garner, we have found that engaging in our own digital scholarship, even in modest projects, builds confidence, energy, and actually creates capacity for working with faculty on DH projects.

The issue is not that we don't want to do emotion work or service but rather that we want the contributions we make to digital humanities projects to be visible and valued. Visibility is not strictly about credit either. The visibility of our contributions in current and past projects impacts the type and diversity of roles that are available to us in the future. Choice, as much as credit, is what is at stake here. When our labor is invisible to faculty we support, project partners, or institutional stakeholders, our range of options can shrink. By continuing to affirm our expertise, experiment with new roles, and make explicit work that is often not visible, we exercise agency and help transform academic hierarchies.

Librarians are not the only people on campus capable of the balance and agility required to mediate across discourses and disciplines, but we are accustomed to this work of interpretation, translation, and bringing people to common ground. Therefore, we are uniquely situated to support, lead, and shape the growth of DH on our campuses and beyond, in the classroom and within the field more broadly. All librarians engaged in DH work, regardless of status or visibility of their labor, can embrace and claim discourse mediation as expertise.

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