Matthew Martin, Heather Murray, Deborah J. Tucker, and Lothar Spang

Digital commons inspires chapbook project for urban high school poets

A Wayne State University Libraries community outreach program

The focus of the Digital Commons Chapbook Project at Wayne State Libraries, which began in March 2006, is to introduce students to digital technology and to promote appreciation of the written word in order to aid in developing information-literate youth and young adults for the 21st century. Murray-Wright Senior High School, Detroit, Michigan, was the first school to participate in the Chapbook Information Literacy Initiative.

This project, hosted by Wayne State University (WSU) Libraries, included four team members: Matthew Martin, a WSU digital projects librarian; Heather Murray, a library and information science graduate student with a master's degree in Creative Writing; Deborah J. Tucker, the WSU community outreach librarian, who is currently working on a doctorate in instructional technology; and Lothar Spang, the senior librarian for the project. Murray-Wright High School Media Specialist Ernestine Carroll worked with the school's English teachers to organize the students interested in writing poetry. Twenty-five students began the project.

The goal of this outreach project is to provide students with an opportunity to create and digitize their own written artistic works. The students' poetry resides on Digital Commons, an institutional repository service. Historically, chapbooks have been informal self-published books of poetry collections, family stories, short stories, and story novellas. In this project, the chapbook was transformed into digital format to make it available in print on demand.

The project's five sessions

The WSU planning team, working in conjunction with Murray-Wright's media specialist, and Principal Robert Jones, agreed that the Chapbook Project would be completed in five sessions (one per week, ending March 31). Sessions 1 to 3 were held at Murray-Wright. Students were selected from grades 9 to 12. Each session held at Murray-Wright was to last 55 minutes, a normal class period, during the second hour of the school day.

Session 1: Students were introduced to the project and the basics of word processing. Students then began to input their poetry.

Session 2: Students learned about poetry formatting.

Session 3: Students were helped to scan images to accompany their poems and given further instruction on the digitizing process and technologies.

Session 4: Held at the WSU Libraries Technology Resource Center (TRC), this half-day

Matthew Martin is the former digital projects librarian at Wayne State University, e-mail: atomaton@gmail.com; Heather Murray is teen librarian at Baldwin Public Library, e-mail: murrayhe@baldwinlib.org; Deborah J. Tucker is community outreach/information services librarian at Wayne State University, e-mail: deborah.tucker@wayne.edu; and Lothar Spang is librarian at Wayne State University, e-mail: ab1116@wayne.edu

session included finalizing poetry, image layout and formatting.

Session 5: Chapbook Poetry Slam.

Matthew Martin led the first three workshops held at Murray-Wright High School. His role was to introduce the students to the institutional repository and to train the students on how to use this tool to digitally publish their poetry. The WSU institutional repository uses Depress technology and is hosted by Proquest (www.umi.com /products_umi/digitalcommons/).

These workshops included assisting the students with creating text documents digitally, leading the students through the steps required for storage of the documents, and, by using various search terms to access the students' own poems, demonstrating the importance of metadata for accessibility and retrieval. Thirty laptops were brought to the high school, which was a special accommodation for this particular site. A team of computer-support technicians made it possible for a successful set up at the site and were available for troubleshooting during the workshops. Having this support staff was critical for the success of the workshop at this remote location.

The first workshop was an introduction to WSU's institutional repository, Digital Commons (digitalcommons.wayne.edu/), which explored how an institutional repository can be used to preserve information and to make this information easily accessible to the world. Once the students were familiar with the repository, the WSU team helped each student capture his or her poetry using Microsoft Word.[1] The students were also introduced to the Macintosh operating system and shown how to digitize documents and images using a scanner. This workshop included digital imaging standards and a demonstration on enhancing images using professional imaging software (Photoshop 9.0).[2]

Once the poetry was captured, Martin created instructions on how to upload their poetry into the repository where the documents were converted to PDF.[3] After the poetry was uploaded into the repository, it became searchable via Google Scholar and thus accessible to a world-wide audience.

In the session at TRC, led by LIS graduate student Heather Murray, students were led through the process of adding other poems to their digital chapbook directly through the Digital Commons. Continuous changes can be made to the Murray-Wright Chapbook by the poets themselves, making it a unique living environment.

Each student created a personal account with Digital Commons. Using this account, the participating students are able to upload new poetry to the Murray-Wright Chapbook from any computer with Internet access. Registration with Digital Commons requires an e-mail address to retrieve account information. Students who did not possess an e-mail address were walked through the process of obtaining a free Web-based e-mail account via Yahoo! Other students were able to use their time searching the Murray-Wright chapbook to look at their poetry and to learn how to navigate the Digital Commons.

During this time the differences between students' technology skill levels became apparent. Many had prior experience with the use of online forms and learned the process of uploading their poetry very quickly. The walk-through of the process seemed to benefit everyone, however. The uploading process allows students to assign their own keywords to each document before it is added to the chapbook. Besides these keywords the chapbook is searchable by individual poet names, poem titles, the high school's name, and some general keywords. For this project, all works to be added are stored in a "holding file" until they are approved by the school's media specialist.

Celebrating a job well done

The conclusion of the program was celebrated March 31, when the students took part in a poetry slam. The term poetry slam often refers to an open mike poetry or rap contest among young poets, although the Chapbook Poetry Slam was not in contest format. The students recited one or two poems from the stage of

the Kresge Library auditorium at WSU, while their poems were simultaneously projected from the Digital Commons Chapbook site onto a large screen behind them.

The WSU team decided to go all out and invite the students' teachers and families and the dean of WSU Libraries, as well as WSU colleagues and WSU students to the poetry slam. With a solid audience, the poetry slam went into full swing, first with a computer lab demonstration in the library's TRC, and later with the student's poetry readings in the auditorium. The demonstration of the Digital Commons was of especially high interest to WSU librarian colleagues.

Everyone was impressed by the quality of creative verse written by the young authors. Some in the audience said they were drawn to tears by the depth, sincerity, and serious nature of the students' work. Both the readings and the Digital Commons demonstrations were video-recorded and added as a link to the repository and are Google searchable under "Murray-Wright High School."

Already the WSU Libraries team is preparing to introduce the technology to an elementary school and to two other Detroit high schools. The Digital Commons technology provides an exciting opportunity to reach out to the local community, interface with future students, and help build assets of the institutional depository.

Notes

1. Heather S. Murray and Marisa Conte, *Word Basics*. 2006. Available at www. lib.wayne.edu/resources/digital_library /digitalcommons/chapbooks/WordBasic.pdf and Heather S. Murray and Marisa Conte, *Fun with Formatting in MS Word*. 2006. Available at www.lib.wayne.edu/resources /digital_library/digitalcommons/chapbooks /FunwithFormatting.pdf.

2. Matthew A. Martin, *Digital Images*. 2006. Available at www.lib.wayne.edu /resources/digital_library/digitalcommons /chapbooks/DigitalImageHandout.pdf.

3. Matthew A. Martin, *Adding to the Murray Wright Chapbook*. 2006. Avail-

able at www.lib.wayne.edu/resources /digital_library/digitalcommons/chapbooks /addingtothemurraywrightchapbook. pdf. ✏

---

archival rights analysis for researchers at UW-Madison.

With increased collaboration among librarians and others across campus, we can effect a transformation in the landscape of scholarship. Leadership and activism are needed from the newest members of the library profession; to make a difference, we urge you to contribute new ideas and enthusiasm to help change the system for the better.

Notes

1. Association of Research Libraries, *ARL Statistics 2004–05*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 2005: 11.

2. Karla Hahn, "New Tools for New Times: Remodeling the Scholarly Communication System," *C&RL News* 67, no. 10 (November 2006): 608–14. ✏