Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Victoria, 2010)
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“Social Knowledge Creation and Emergent Digital Research Infrastructure for Early Modern Studies”

Department of English

Tuesday, February 23, 2016
9:00 A.M.
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Raymond Siemens, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jentery Sayers, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Jonathan Bengtson, University of Victoria Libraries, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. John Willinsky, School of Education, Stanford University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Michael Hayes, Department of Geography, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This dissertation examines the creation of innovative scholarly environments, publications, and resources in the context of a social knowledge creation affordances engendered by digital technologies. It draws on theoretical and praxis-oriented work undertaken as part of the Electronic Textual Cultures Laboratory (ETCL), work that sought to model how a socially aware and interconnected field of study might operate. Through two case studies—A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript (BL Add 17,492) and the Renaissance Knowledge Network—teams of individuals working in and around the ETCL drew on medieval and Renaissance studies for inspiration, guidance, and scholarly materials. This work draws on the theoretical work of D. F. McKenzie, Jerome McGann, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Adrian Johns, Alan Liu, Lawrence Lessig, Terry Eagleton, Ray Siemens, Constance Crompton, Alyssa Arbuckle, and a number of others. These scholars and digital humanities practitioners have sought to explain and often re-contextualise how knowledge work occurs in the humanities; as such, they form a body of scholarship that undergirds and enriches the present discussion around how the basic tasks of humanities work—research, discovery, analysis, publication, editing—might alter in the age of Web 2.0 and 3.0.

Through discussion of A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript (BL Add 17,492) and the Renaissance Knowledge Network, this dissertation argues that a pervasive shift in scholarly communications standards and methodologies is ongoing. Further, it puts forward the idea that the overall patterns of behaviour that govern how humanities scholars act within a densely interwoven digital humanities can be valuable lenses through which to understand wider movements in knowledge work.

This dissertation makes several original contributions to digital humanities, early modern studies, and to discussions of humanities knowledge infrastructure. In content it reports on and discusses two major digital humanities projects, putting a number of previous peer-reviewed publications in conversation with each other and the field at large. The second of these—ReKN—is currently (as of summer 2015) in process and supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It represents a major intervention in Renaissance studies that is poised to directly impact the way scholars undertake basic research. In form this dissertation also intervenes in discussions surrounding graduate training and professionalization. Incorporating previously published, peer-reviewed materials from respected journals, as well as grants, white papers, and working group documents, this project represents a departure from the proto-monograph model of dissertation work. Instead, it is grounded in four years of theory and practice that closely resemble dissertations produced in the natural sciences.

Keywords: Devonshire Manuscript, Renaissance Knowledge Network, digital humanities, early modern studies, social edition, humanities, metadata, research environments.