Foreword

In the summer of 1983 I worked as a data entry clerk in the Newman Library at Virginia Tech where I was a graduate student in English. My job was to tag records belonging to the library in OCLC, a growing database of collections information shared by participating libraries. I can still see the blinking green cursor as I tabbed between fields—author, title, publication date, etc.—working through stacks of index cards in wooden catalog trays. OCLC, which now stands for Online Computer Library Center, is a decades-old experiment in collaboration that is now WorldCat, the largest online catalog in the world and an extraordinary resource for readers, researchers and scholars.

I had no idea that I would have a very small part in a digital revolution that was fundamentally changing the nature and role of libraries. From the perspective of a professor and campus leader whose career has paralleled this digital revolution, libraries have always been out front anticipating and preparing faculty and students for the impact of information technology on the way we teach and learn. In the mid-1990s, it was librarians who helped my students and I adapt to the remarkable new resource, the worldwide web. I learned with my students about how to conduct a Boolean search and how to evaluate electronic sources from the librarians who instructed my classes. I have deep respect for the vital partnership between librarians and teaching faculty in helping students learn in the information age.

One of the academic fields to emerge directly out of the partnership between scholars and librarians is the Digital Humanities, a new field that has had a reenergizing effect on both libraries and the humanities. The Digital Humanities emerges at the intersection of the enduring question of what it means to be human with the unprecedented processing capabilities of today’s computers. The Digital Humanities embodies the commitment to collaboration and access that was at the heart of the OCLC experiment at the start of the digital revolution of libraries. These themes of collaboration and access run throughout the essays in this collection, Supporting Digital Humanities for Knowledge Acquisition in Modern Libraries, which provides informative explanations of the Digital Humanities and inspiring examples of DH projects at a variety of institutions--public and private, large and small, national and international.

The editors of this volume are leading the way on our campus as we adapt our curriculum to prepare students to succeed in a highly computation world where massive processing power makes the world around us a programmable system of unfathomable information. These forward-thinking librarians work in partnership with instructional faculty to design and deliver curricula that develop the skills of computational thinking, new media literacies, cognitive load management, skills necessary to survive in this new era. Supporting Digital Humanities is an important contribution to the Advances in Library and Information Science (ALIS) Book Series, an example of the leadership of library professionals in disseminating knowledge and expertise in the field of information literacy and technology.

Terry Brown
The State University of New York at Fredonia, USA
October 2014