Introduction

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Every year The State University of New York at Fredonia hosts the Liberal Arts & Sciences Brown Bag Lecture Series. Supported by the Carnahan-Jackson Humanities Fund, Brown Bag lectures are 30-minute informal talks by Fredonia faculty and staff that are followed by discussion and refreshments. Each year the lectures revolve around a different theme. The theme of the Fall 2013 lecture series was “Digital Futures: Technology’s Promises and Perils” (Liberal Arts & Sciences brown bag lecture series, 2014). The three lectures featured that semester were “What Makes the Forests of the College Lodge Special,” “Science and Technology,” and “Digital Humanities.”

The goal of the forum on the Digital Humanities was to explore and discuss “what the digital humanities mean for and say about the current transformation of teaching, learning and research in higher education. [And] how the values of the digital humanities (openness, collaboration and partnership) might guide one’s work through this transformation” (Provost Terry Brown and others discuss technology at next brown bag, 2013). The panel consisted of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Terry Brown, Professor of History Ellen Litwicki, Associate Professor of History Nancy Hagedorn, Coordinator of Research and Information Literacy Services, Kerrie Wilkes, and Online Learning Coordinator, Lisa Melohusky (Provost Terry Brown and others discuss technology at next brown bag, 2013).

The experiences of the panel members in the Digital Humanities varied greatly. Dr. Litwicki explained what Digital Humanities is and gave some examples of Digital Humanities projects. Dr. Hagedorn demonstrated “On the Waterfront: The Philadelphia Waterfront as a Zone of Cultural Interaction, 1700-1830,” a project she worked on during her National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship (Nancy Hagedorn compiled database of Philadelphia households of 1775 during NEH fellowship, 2012). For the project, Dr. Hagedorn utilized ArcGIS, a technology used to collect, analyze and publish data and create maps (https://www.arcgis.com/). Ms. Wilkes and Ms. Melohusky spoke on the challenges and importance of access in digital scholarship.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND RENGAS

The Liberal Arts & Sciences Brown Bag Lecture Series is a great example of one of the many Faculty Learning Communities (FLC), or Professional Learning Communities (PLC), on the State University of New York at Fredonia campus. As “teaching is frequently seen as a private enterprise, not subject to constructive criticism or open discussion” (Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007, p. 31), the Fredonia campus strives to build sustainable learning communities to bridge the gaps between faculty, staff, and departments. As Glowacki-Dudka and Brown point out:
Introduction

For faculty to feel comfortable talking openly about teaching, the environment must be based upon the basic principles of adult learning. That is, learning community participants come together with rich and diverse histories of classroom experiences and different levels of knowledge related to teaching and learning. (2007, p. 31)

The framework of many of the learning communities on the Fredonia campus are provided by The State University of New York at Fredonia Professional Development Center (PDC). Very active on campus, the PDC:

strives to meet the professional development needs of all Fredonia employees by coordinating and providing educational opportunities for faculty and staff at various stages in their careers, and providing consultation and training opportunities for technology-related issues. The Center’s goal is to provide a centralized location for collecting and disseminating information about professional development opportunities taking place on campus and beyond. The Center is committed to fostering a culture in which knowledge and expertise are shared among diverse constituencies and will provide a gathering place in which this dialog can occur. (Professional Development Center, 2014)

One of the ways the Professional Development Center facilitates learning communities on campus is by the creation of rengas. “In 2008, several Fredonia faculty attended the Lilly International Conference on College Teaching at Miami University, Oxford, OH, and brought the concept [of rengas] back to campus” (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014). Involvement in regnas and the number of topics covered by rengas have grown over the years. The Professional Development Center typically run three or four rengas each year, with approximately 40 participants (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014). The State University of New York at Fredonia Professional Development Center defines rengas as:

convivial, interdisciplinary groups of faculty, professionals, administrators, and, in some cases, students, who meet monthly to discuss topics of mutual interest over light refreshments. Like their namesake (a style of witty Japanese-linked poetry created in group settings), our Fredonia rengas value community, collaboration, spontaneity, improvisation, and wit. (What’s a renga?, 2014)

Rengas taking place in Fall 2014 include a Caregivers renga, Cross-Cultural Exchange renga, Flip It, Blend It, Tech-support It regna on classroom technology, and the Digital Humanities renga. Rengas can take on a variety of subjects, as:

renga topics are suggested by faculty and staff and are typically facilitated by those same people. The Professional Development Center typically assists with getting the groups up and running, then the faculty facilitators, along with group participants, take the lead in setting the topics and shaping the direction of the group. (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014)

Stemming from the productive conversation from the Liberal Arts & Sciences Brown Bag Lecture Series on the Digital Humanities, the interest in this digital form of scholarship inspired the formation of a Digital Humanities Renga on campus. Facilitated by Associate History Professor Nancy Hagedorn, other members of the Digital Humanities renga were faculty members from the History and English
departments and several librarians. While none of the librarians had any experience in the Digital Humanities, they joined the renga because they were interested in representing the library’s interests in the conversation about new research methods and practices. It was of particular importance for the librarians to enter the conversation on Digital Humanities early, because:

*until librarianship moves away from our academic inferiority complex, and embraces the calling of digital work in contrast to the vocation of servitude, digital humanities will continue to be led by smart, capable, progressive faculty members in English and History.* (Vandergrift, 2012, #alt-LIS, Skunks, Hybrarians and “strange institutions” section)

The Digital Humanities renga was initially formed as a discussion group. The librarians in the group provided a voice on what support the library could hypothetically and realistically provide, such as research assistance and access to primary documents, as well as any limitations they could foresee a Digital Humanities project at Fredonia having, such as copyright and deed of gift restrictions on archival materials. The renga discussed several topics, including the crisis shared by librarianship and the faculty in the Humanities in the 21st century, which is the need to communicate the value of our work to the university in order to continue to receive support and funding. A Digital Humanities project could potentially provide us with an impressive product that could be utilized by the university and the community and could also serve as a marketing tool for our various departments. Even though a Digital Humanities project was outside of the librarians’ immediate expertise, Digital Humanities is a natural outgrowth of the work the renga already performed because:

*[a]t its core, DH shares the most basic goal with the library – accessibility of information. The multitude of DH projects aim to take cultural materials that were previously undiscoverable digitally, the very materials humanities scholars address and utilize for their work, and connect them to a new, broad audience. Or build a tool to enable others to do exactly that.* (Vandergrift, 2012, Why Digital Humanities? section)

Another important characteristic the Digital Humanities regna had in common was a desire to participate in an emerging technology and not be left behind because of our university’s size and financial constraints. “Especially when navigating relatively new terrain in and beyond the classroom, it is crucial to identify with others who share interests and experiences” (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014). While the renga continued to consider questions such as what are the Digital Humanities, how to undertake a Digital Humanities project, and how much such a project would cost, it became clear that the best way to gain answers was by undertaking a Digital Humanities project ourselves.

**CHOOSING ANNA CLIFT SMITH**

While not typical, the Digital Humanities renga would not be the first to be inspired to initiate a major project on campus. For example, “[o]ne group has developed a successful film series which promotes cross-cultural dialogues, another assisted with developing a policy for children in the workplace” (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014). Based on the suggestions of the librarians in the renga, the group identified a potential candidate for the Digital Humanities project: Anna Clift Smith’s *Van Buren Life*, a handwritten and hand-illustrated letter and diary. Similar to The Digital Thoreau
Introduction

(http://www.digitalthoreau.org/), the renga planned to digitize the diary and utilize annotation software that allows readers to digitally interact with the text and learn from one another. The biggest advantage of using Van Buren Life is that the Friends of Daniel A. Reed Library held the copyright, overcoming the biggest hurdle of Digital Humanities projects. The diary would also be an interdisciplinary subject, applicable to local history, gender studies, and literature. The intent of the project would be to use a local author and resources to encourage students, K-12 and college, within Chautauqua County, New York, to utilize digital materials for learning, exploration and creation.

The Mysterious Manuscript

In 1979, Ms. Ruth Lambert Miller, a resident of the Village of Fredonia, placed on deposit in Archives and Special Collections of Daniel A. Reed Library at the State University of New York at Fredonia, a collection of correspondence, press clippings, political cartoons and other memorabilia related to her father’s, Hon. John Samuel Lambert, illustrious legal career.

Lambert’s legal career began shortly after moving to Mayville, NY, the county seat of Chautauqua County in 1871, with a clerkship in the surrogate’s office. Lambert continued to study law in the Fredonia offices of Morris and Russell. In 1877, Lambert was admitted to the bar and entered into a partnership with Morris and Russell the following year.

Lambert was elected Supervisor of the Town Of Pomfret, New York in 1880, an office that he left, merely two years later, in 1882 after being elected Chautauqua County judge. In 1889, Lambert was elected to Eighth District Supreme Court of New York, as well as in the appellate division of New York City, until retirement in 1921.

The “Honorable John S. Lambert Collection” was, as a letter from President of the State University of New York Dallas K. Beal to Ms. Ruth Lambert Miller states, “a temporary restricted gift to be used by faculty and students pursuing research in local history, or for any other research for which the materials might be relevant” (D. Beal, personal communication, September 25, 1979). The letter also states “ultimately, the gifts shall become absolute and unrestricted as to all items remaining the possession of the college subsequent to January 1, 2005” (D. Beal, personal communication, September 25, 1979).

In an inventory of “materials deposited in Reed Library”, dated February, 1979, the manuscript, item number fourteen, is simply referred to as “Original Manuscript with hand-drawn illustrations entitled ‘Van Buren Life’. No Author, no date”.

It was not until November 1994, when the collection was being reprocessed, that the mysterious manuscript gained some well-deserved attention. Ms. Kay Silliman, a retired Fredonia High School teacher and library volunteer, discovered the manuscript among the myriad of books and articles written by and about the Hon. John S. Lambert (Osborne, 1996, p. A1).

Ms. Silliman took upon herself the arduous task of transcribing the manuscript, which begins with an entry entitled “The Storm” dated December 29, 1904:

Was it real—or was it a dream?/The lamp burned dim in its shaded hood/And the cottage rocked in the gale’s fierce clasp./Moaned and creaked with the fearful strain./And frozen spray on the window stood./Was it real—or was it a dream?/You stood by my side in the storm-tossed night./Your eyes alight with the old sweet smile/And I felt your arms as they drew me close./And woke—to see but the shaded light. (as cited in Friend of Daniel A. Reed Library, 1996, p. 2)
The manuscript captures a fortnight of life at Van Buren Point, speaking to shared moments and memories.

Van Buren Point was a resort owned and promoted by J. Lansing Moore of Buffalo, until 1896. One of Moore’s promotional cards describes the Point as follows:

*Van Buren Point has long been famous for it coolness and healthfulness in summer, it picturesque beauty, and the almost wonderful variety of its attractions as a watering place.*

*The site of the hotel, which is set in a landscape of extraordinary beauty, is near the extremity of the Point, and commands an unobstructed view...Attached to the hotel, and under the same proprietorship, is a farm of one hundred acres, from which the hotel is to be supplied daily with its vegetables, fruits, cream, milk, eggs and flowers.*

*Nearly a score of cottages have been erected on the hotel grounds, and families desiring home exclusiveness, while enjoying a complete relief from the care of a household, will find them very desirable. Water and sewer connections serve every cottage.*

*Bathers have the choice of a daily contest with the surf on the west beach, or the less sensational privilege of a swim in the quieter waters of the bay. At no spot on Lake Erie are the bathing facilities so complete as at Van Buren Point...* 

*For the young people there are several Shetland ponies...the ladies, when they come to make the acquaintance of the lawns for tennis and croquet, and the hammocks that are suspended from the trees and invite to indolence and idleness, will see that they have not been forgotten...* 

*Van Buren Point is an hour’s ride from Chautauqua Lake, forty-five miles from Buffalo, and five miles from the villages of Dunkirk, Fredonia, and Brocton, and is reached by rail on the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and the Pennsylvania Rail Roads. The hotel omnibus will convey guests to and from the Van Buren station, which is situated about a mile from the house. (as cited in Friends of Daniel A. Reed Library, 1996, p. 14)* 

However, by December, 1904, it had transformed into, as a 1903 newspaper article states, a place “within reach of all, cottages renting for the whole or half month” (as cited in Friends of Daniel A. Reed Library, 1996, p. 15).

The discovery of this manuscript, with it wonderful literary, artistic and historical aspects, and its mysterious author, sparked the interest of several local residents, from several different backgrounds, in identifying the author.

Among those individuals were A. C. Baldwin, Elizabeth “Kris” Beal, Jen Besemer, Sue Besemer, Margaret Brandt, Jean Connelly, Elizabeth Crocker, Adelaide Hart Dodge, Jan Fairbairn, Carolyn Grady, Susan Jemison, Vince Martonis, Lynne McElhaney, Sara Baker Michalak, Howard Morse, Jon Orten Dahl, Isabel Pierce, Douglas Shepard, Kay Silliman, Wendy Woodbury Straight, and Barbara Weaver.

After transcribing the manuscript, Ms. Silliman shared the transcript with her friend and fellow library volunteer, Ms. Babaraba Weaver. According to a Sunday Observer article dated March 24, 1996, “it was Mrs. Weaver who would identify the mysterious woman who wrote the diary as Anna Clift Smith” (Osborn, 1996, p. A1).
Introduction

In “An Essay on Anna’s Life and Times”, the author outlines the in depth process:

After several months of dead ends, Weaver first spoke with Geraldine Dewey, a cottage owner from Van Buren Point, who immediately postulated that the author may have been a woman who was known to some as Bird Smith and whose real name was Anna. Upon reading the diary, Dewey became totally convinced of the narrator’s identity by the journal’s clever disclosure of the author’s first name.

Weaver next loaned a copy of the journal to Adelaide Hart Dodge, a Fredonia native who lived for some time on Lake Erie between Greencrest and Lake Erie State Park. Asked if while living in the Town of Portland she had ever heard stories of an earlier resident, an eccentric woman often described as a hermit, [Dodge] answer so positively that I realized I’d hit pay dirt, Weaver noted.

Dodge remembered meeting Smith through Emma Hart, Dodge’s aunt, who had lived on Temple Street and had walked to the Barker Street school with Smith in the late 1880s or early 1890s. An examination of County Clerk records and the School District Trustee’s Annual Report for the Town of Pomfret, 1882-1906, later confirmed the plausibility of this recollection. (Friends of Daniel A. Reed Library, 1996, pp. 8-9)

In the Sunday Observer article, dated March 24, 1996, illustrates how a need for entertainment at the Friends of Reed Library Annual Meeting in October 1995 spurred further interest in the manuscript:

Actress Mary Charbonnet, associate professor of theatre arts at Fredonia State University College, read from the work entitled Van Buren Life. It was this performance that people started to ask questions and became fascinated by the words of an independent woman in 1904.

People who became interested at Mary Charbonnet’s performance and other members of the community who heard about the discovery have organized to make the most of their talents. The group has even been mischievously nicknamed the ACS (Anna Clift Smith) Sleuthing Society. (Osborne, 1996, p. A1)

Several sources were used, as the March 24, 1996 article states, “to make discoveries about Anna”, including “phone calls, mailings, photo copies and faxes…land titles, former acquaintances, newspaper accounts that verify entries in the diary, family histories, personal traits, education and finished artwork” (Osborne, 1996, p. A8).

In “An Essay On Anna’s Life and Times” the author comments on the legendary figure that was Anna Clift Smith:

The team realized they had discovered a legendary figure when word began to surface that during Prohibition, Smith had used firearms to chase bootleggers from her Portland property.

In an August 8, 1963 Yesteryears column [entitled] A Patriotic Woman, historian Elizabeth Crocker said that Smith used the heavy caliber revolver to disperse the men hauling Canadian ale ashore near her home. Smith then guarded the cargo until authorities arrived to confiscate it.
Introduction

Crocker called Smith a colorful and courageous figure [sic] who wished to live a peaceful life with the right to enjoy the beauty of the lake and hills, time to portray these in paint, for the pleasure of planting trees, shrubs, and flowers, and for the companionship of her pet animals. (Friends of Daniel A. Reed Library, 1996, p. 9)

The publication of the manuscript, including the detailed essay on Anna Clift Smith’s life and times came to fruition in 1996, as the March 24, 1996 Sunday Observer article notes, as fund-raiser for the Friends of Daniel A. Reed Library group (Osborne, 1996, p. A8).

The 68-page, hand-illustrated manuscript provides a glimpse into the life of, as a Sunday Post-Journal article dated January 12, 1997 states, “a turn-of-the-century woman who defied stereotypes” (Husted, 1997, n.p.).

Funding Anna

The renga moved forward with plans to create a pilot project to digitize the Anna Clift Smith diary and create an online interface that will allow faculty to employ it in their classes during the following school year. The next step was to seek funding by submitting a proposal for a project grant to the New York Council for the Humanities (http://www.nyhumanities.org/). The goal was to receive funding three months ahead of the start date for the project. In consultation with the librarians on the estimated cost of scanning and coding, which included software and time, a renga member met with a representative from the Office of Sponsored Programs about putting together the budget.

As part of the grant, the renga discussed possible tie-in programming. Proposed ideas included keynote lectures on various aspects of the book’s contents at different venues for the campus and broader Chautauqua Community during the 2014-15 academic year and offering a workshop each semester, open to all the regional colleges and universities as well as high schools, on how the material can be incorporated into the classroom in a variety of subject areas (N. Hagedorn, personal communication, March 29, 2014).

Ideally, receiving this grant would put us in good stead for a Digital Humanities grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities the following semester to expand the project. Unfortunately the renga did not receive the New York Council for the Humanities project grant. Time constraints did not afford the group much time to look into other funding options and the project had to move forward.

The Digitizing and Transcribing of Van Buren Life

The beginning of the project corresponded with the end of the Spring semester. Over the summer, the library undertook the technological piece of the project. This included digitization, transcribing, text encoding, arranging for web hosting, choosing a common editing tool, and assuring the project was ready to be used by classes come Fall semester. The digitization of the diary was completed in-house since the library had access to the original Anna Clift Smith manuscript and had recently purchased a new scanner that allowed for extensive customization. Reed Library does not have an archivist or a full-time librarian working in the Archives and Special Collections department. Because of this lack of person-power, the library has not undertaken a major digitization project in recent years. While digitization does not make a Digital Humanities project, it is often the first step. With no recent experience in digitization, technical and software knowledge was lacking in the librarians and staff, such as Extensible Markup
Introduction

Language (XML), text encoding -- “the practice of creating machine-readable texts to support humanities research” (Renear, 2004, p. 232) -- or TEI Guidelines, a descriptive markup system developed primarily for literary works by the Text Encoding Initiative Guidelines (http://www.tei-c.org). This put the library at a disadvantage because, as Green points out:

[1]he efforts of libraries to digitize their collections over the past several decades have been the root of librarians’ collaborative research support for digital humanities. In this work, text encoding became one of the initial and most prominent paths that libraries took to explore the connections of digital humanities to their services. (2014, p. 220)

Librarian Cindy Yochym was brought on to the project to become the library’s digitization and encoding expert. The library also paid for Ms. Yochym’s extra time to digitize the diary and encode the scans, as this project was outside of her normal workload. With limited knowledge of Anna Clift Smith or Digital Humanities, Ms. Yochym read Van Buren Life and looked at some related archival material. In preparation for digitization, Ms. Yochym met several times with her supervisor to set up a plan and timeline. She also connected with a Digital Humanities renga member who had experience with a similar project for suggestions on settings, use of naming conventions, etc. The suggested product was the visual XML and TEI editor, oXygen (http://www.oxygenxml.com/). oXygen proved to be a particularly good choice for novice users because of its What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) interface, giving the user the ability to see the results of their edits immediately on screen. The librarians then met with the Library Director to discuss the plan, consider staff time, and purchase of software (oXygen) and hardware (an external storage device). Ms. Yochym describes the digitization process as follows:

When I did go to scan, there was quite a bit of time involved in fine-tuning the placement of the pages and setting the darkness levels on the scanner. With the consultation of my supervisor, I tried to get the best image possible. I scanned both the “transcribed” version of the book (in easily readable typeface) and the original manuscript. For the manuscript, I wore gloves and gently turned the pages with a small piece of paper that I devise to reduce damage to the document.

It took three hours to scan the manuscript, followed by 50 minutes to rename the files (each page was a separate file initially given a name by the equipment consisting of long string of sequential numbers) to a logical, human-readable, consistent system, e.g., “anna-org-manu-01.” It took two hours to scan the transcript, followed by 30 minutes to rename these files. (C. Yochym, personal communication, November 14, 2014)

Ms. Yochym then used Adobe Acrobat XI to convert the .tiff files into Optical Character Recognition (OCR) files. This would make it possible to take the OCR files and tag them using TEI conventions. Having no experience with TEI, Ms. Yochym spent several hours looking at online examples and how-tos, which gave her sufficient knowledge to complete the project confidently.

Building Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life

Since the renga did not receive a grant to fund the Anna Clift Smith project, the renga had to reconvene to discuss the financial aspect of the project. The renga’s original plan for the hosting of the digitized diary and the annotation software was using Drupal and plugins. When our outsourced technical as-
assistance fell through late in the project, the renga had to again shift focus to the librarians and library resources. In choosing our hosting site and annotation software, the library had several considerations: hosting, price, ease of use, and time frame.

Even though Reed Library enjoys a good relationship with the State University of New York at Fredonia IT department, hosting the digitized document on the State University of New York at Fredonia server was not an option at that time. After some online research, the library chose Omeka.net (http://www.omeka.net/). The Director of Daniel A. Reed Library agreed to pay the annual hosting fee for the Omeka plan. An economical advantage of Omeka is the library could pay for the minimum plan needed with the option to upgrade as the project expanded.

For annotation software the library chose the free tool eMargin from Birmingham City University. eMargin is “an online collaborative annotation tool. You can highlight, colour-code, write notes and assign tags to individual words or passages of a text. These annotations can be shared amongst groups, generating discussions and allowing analyses and interpretations to be combined” (Birmingham City University, 2014, n.p.). The eMargin portion of the project was titled, The Annotated Anna.

Another consideration for software was ease of use. For the librarians, the features of Omeka had to meet the needs of the project. Omeka allows you to build exhibits and share collections. It is an established web-publishing platform with technical assistance should the library run into any trouble. Omeka also allows for collaboration since more than one librarian would be working on the project. This ease of use also had to apply to the end users who must be able to quickly acclimate to Omeka and eMargin to complete their assignments. While not as seamless as originally envisioned, the interfaces of Omeka and eMargin were deemed intuitive enough for the students to move between the two without too much confusion. The librarians also incorporated the library’s Flickr account into the Omeka page to crowd-source photos, past and present, of Van Buren Point.

Lastly, the time frame was very short. Two fall classes incorporating Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life were scheduled to begin in less than a month. The Coordinator of Collections and the Digital Services Librarian set aside a few days to devote to getting the basics of the site up and running. The librarians had to quickly build the shell of the Omeka site, upload each page of the scanned diary pages and diary images, begin cursory Dublin Core metadata, link the Omeka site to eMargin, and upload the transcribed text of the diary to eMargin. Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life (http://annacliftsmith.omeka.net/) went live in September 2014.

Looking to the future, Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life can grow in a bevy of ways. The library still has to discover a way to incorporate the TEI portion of the digitization and encoding process. Other avenues of development include social media, photography, secondary source documents, and maps. Bringing more stakeholders into the project is key because as this project grows, the library staff likely will not.

**Anna Clift Smith in the Classroom**

One of the ways the resource was disseminated was through two Fall 2014 classes, *English 314: Women Writers* and *History 396: An Introduction to Digital History and Humanities*. Both are three credit undergraduate courses. The librarians involved in the Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life project were incorporated into the Women Writers course. The students read Anna Clift Smith’s diary. They were then asked to pick a topic on which to annotate the diary using eMargin. The students met during class time in the library classroom. The librarians talked about how the project came about and the challenges
Introduction

they experienced. The librarians showed the class how to use the Omeka and eMargin sites. They also highlighted library resources that would help them in their project. Incorporating the librarians into the class is another step in making the librarians more visible on campus and in research project, as opposed to being silent partners.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the trajectory of Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life, the development of our Digital Humanities project from campus conversation to renga to Omeka was very organic. The success of a renga is measured by “[p]articipation, the ability to sustain conversations over a period of time, [and] meeting goals [and] objectives as defined by the group” (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014). The benefits of rengas mirror those of the Digital Humanities:

- Cross disciplinary dialogues.
- Gathering people from different backgrounds and departments with diverse perspectives.
- The development of collegial networks.
- Bringing faculty from various areas together to discover the similarities and differences that exist from department to department. (D. Eckenrode, personal communication, November 21, 2014)

As demonstrated in this preface, the librarians and faculty involved in the Digital Humanities renga and Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life had limited knowledge of Digital Humanities and the best practices for Digital Humanities projects. But the renga discovered together, taught each other, and learned from our mistakes. The most valued members of a Digital Humanities project are not always the most experienced. Ms. Yochym, reflecting on her experience with Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life Digital Humanities project:

*I always come back to how grateful I am to have been asked to participate. I was given the opportunity to: become very familiar with Anna Clift Smith’s story and the story of how her journal was found and published; learn about the digitization process; speak briefly to two classes about my experience; and have a small role in the long history that brought Van Buren Life to an audience, made even wider through Digital Humanities.* (C. Yochym, personal communication, November 14, 2014)

The project continues to evolve and the renga look forward to incorporating the ideas of additional classes and the community. The same can be said for Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life. The unanswered questions regarding the involvement of librarians in Digital Humanities inspired the creation of this work, which will serve as an asset to librarians navigating a Digital Humanities project, as well as a guide for scholars in the Digital Humanities exploring potential partnerships.
REFERENCES


Introduction


ADDITIONAL READING


APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS

Cindy Yochym, Librarian, Daniel A. Reed Library

*What was your experience/knowledge of Digital Humanities before taking on the Anna Clift Smith project?*

I had no knowledge or experience with Digital Humanities, other than to know that there was a Digital Humanities Renga on campus. I had only a very slight awareness of Anna Clift Smith and her book, *Van Buren Life*. I only knew that the book was mentioned on the Friends of Reed Library page of the Library’s website and that it was in a display case in the Library.

*Describe the digitizing process. What were the challenges of digitizing Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life? Was there a learning curve involved?*

Before I began the actual scanning, I met several times with my supervisor to set up a plan and timeline. We then met with another librarian who had substantial experience in Digital Humanities. Her suggestions were followed for settings, use of naming conventions, etc. My supervisor and I then met with the Library Director to discuss the plan, and consider staff time and purchase of software (xml editor) and hardware (an external storage device).

I read *Van Buren Life*, including the backstory of how it was found and published by the Friends of Reed Library. I also saw some of the related archival material.

When I did go to scan, there was quite a bit of time involved in fine-tuning the placement of the pages and setting the darkness levels on the scanner. With the consultation of my supervisor, I tried to get the best image possible. I scanned both the “transcribed” version of the book (in easily readable typeface) and the original manuscript. For the manuscript, I wore gloves and gently turned the pages with a small piece of paper that I devised to reduce damage to the document.

*Roughly how long did it take to digitize Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life?*

After the preparation mentioned in question 2, the process of scanning went along quite smoothly. It took three hours to scan the manuscript, followed by 50 minutes to rename the files (each page was a separate file initially given a name by the equipment consisting of a long string of sequential numbers) to a logical, human-readable, consistent system, e.g., “anna-org-manu-01.” It took two hours to scan the transcript, followed by 30 minutes to rename these files.

With the help of my supervisor, I used Adobe Acrobat XI to convert the .tiff files created into OCR files. This took a few hours of preparation and research, but approximately one hour to complete.

*Describe the text encoding process (oXygen). What were the challenges of encoding Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life? Was there a learning curve involved?*

The librarian in charge of Collection Development installed the xml editor, oXygen, on my computer. This would make it possible to take the OCR files created in step 3 and tag them using TEI conventions. I had no experience with TEI. There were several hours spent looking at any guidance/examples I could
find online. Following these examples, I then slowly attempted to tag the header and expand from there. My tagging was very basic and only the essentials. There was a large learning curve.

*Roughly how long did it take to encode Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life?*

I tagged over a few weeks, approximately one to two hours per day. I do not have exact figures.

*Do you have any other thoughts you’d like to share about your experience with the Anna Clift Smith Digital Humanities project?*

Reflecting on the project, I always come back to how grateful I am to have been asked to participate. I was given the opportunity to: become very familiar with Anna Clift Smith’s story and the story of how her journal was found and published; learn about the digitization process; speak briefly to two classes about my experience; and have a small role in the long history that brought *Van Buren Life* to an audience, made even wider through Digital Humanities.

**Dawn Eckenrode, Director, Professional Development Center**

*Describe the history of faculty learning communities as it pertains to the Fredonia campus. In other words, what led to the creation of rengas on the Fredonia campus? Has involvement grown over the years?*

- Fredonia’s Renga Learning Communities are modeled after Milton Cox’s (Miami University) best practices for faculty learning communities: [http://www.units.miamioh.edu/flc/](http://www.units.miamioh.edu/flc/)
- [Building Faculty Learning Communities](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YDD1Wr2915oC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=learning+communities+milton+cox&ots=w813_W9PNJ&sig=ayiTgdCGJ8nVKwnza8O8wj_0omc#v=onepage&q=learning%20communities%20milton%20cox&f=false)
- [Developing Scholarly Teaching and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Through Faculty Learning Communities](http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/csalt/documents/RichlinCox2004.pdf)

In 2008, several Fredonia faculty attended the Lilly International Conference on College Teaching at Miami University, Oxford, OH, and brought the concept back to campus

Dr. Natalie Gerber was instrumental in their early formation, and she coined the idea of calling our Fredonia learning communities “Rengas,” which is a style of witty Japanese-linked poetry created in group settings). Our Fredonia rengas value community, collaboration, spontaneity, improvisation, and wit.

Yes involvement and the number of topics have grown. We typically run 3-4 Rengas each year, with approximately 40 participants.
How are rengas formed? Are renga topics faculty-suggested?

Renga topics are suggested by faculty and staff and are typically facilitated by those same people. The Professional Development Center typically assists with getting the groups up and running, then the faculty facilitators, along with group participants, take the lead in setting the topics and shaping the direction of the group.

A product of the Digital Humanities renga is Anna Clift Smith’s Van Buren Life (http://annacliftsmith.omeka.net/). Have you seen any particular projects come out of other rengas before?

One group has developed a successful film series which promotes cross-cultural dialogues, another assisted with developing a policy for children in the workplace, some groups get together to discuss ideas without the intention of creating a product-- that is part of the beauty of a Renga-- the participants get to shape the direction of the learning.

What do you see as the benefits from participation in rengas on the Fredonia campus?

Some faculty feedback:

- Cross disciplinary dialogues -- getting people out of their silos
- Getting together with people from different backgrounds, departments, with totally different perspectives.
- The most important benefit is the development of collegial networks. Especially when navigating relatively new terrain in and beyond the classroom, it is crucial to identify with others who share interests and experiences.
- This brings a good number of faculty from various areas from around the campus together to discuss what the similarities and differences that exist from department to department.

A place where planning and follow-through can be organized and maintained

How is the success of a renga measured?

Participation, the ability to sustain conversations over a period of time, meeting goals/objectives as defined by the group.