The Value of Electronic Publishing for Scholars in Theatre and Performance:
A White Paper Prepared by the ATHE-ASTR Joint Subcommittee on Non-Print Book Publishing

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Problem:
Our colleagues in non-humanities disciplines have adjusted their tenure and promotion standards to keep pace with the changing world of publishing and the benefits of sharing work electronically in the digital age. In most of our institutions, however, the benchmark for tenure and promotion in theatre and performance scholarship continues to be the peer-reviewed print book, supplemented by a competitive number of articles in printed and bound scholarly journals. As the benefits of electronic publishing increase, the ATHE-ASTR Joint Subcommittee on Non-Print Book Publishing (hereafter referred to as the Subcommittee) recommends that, in programs where it is not already the case, criteria for tenure and promotion (as well as successful demonstration of proficient scholarship for non tenure-track faculty and graduate students) be expanded to include peer-reviewed electronic publications of substantial research projects on a par with print publications.

Background:
ATHE Vice President for Research and Publications, Robert A. Schanke, appointed Scott Magelssen to assemble the Subcommittee in August 2012. The Subcommittee convened that September. The Subcommittee's charge has been to evaluate our profession's system of vetting scholarly work vis-à-vis book length studies and offer suggestions for change, including, but not limited to, recommended measures for evaluating peer-reviewed non-print publishing, establishing some core ethical practices for digital scholarship, and recommending alternative structures for research and publication. The subcommittee prepared a mid-year report for the ATHE Research and Publications Committee in December 2012. As conversation continued, the Subcommittee recognized the value in broadening the conversation to encompass digital scholarship writ large; that is, to actively promote consideration of non-print publications in many forms (from essay-length to larger works), and not simply book-length studies. This white paper, presented at the ATHE Annual Meeting in Orlando, August 2013, serves as a final report,

and will be accompanied by a roundtable at the conference in which we can engage with members in a conversation about our work and our findings.

The Subcommittee has reviewed documents and correspondence circulated for Dr. Schanke's non-print publishing roundtable at ATHE 2012. We started with Stephen Greenblatt's 2002 letter to the Modern Language Association on behalf of the MLA Executive Council concerning dilemmas in scholarly book publishing and related materials. Greenblatt wrote that, to be promoted and tenured in most language and literature programs, a junior scholar is required to produce one, if not two, "full-length scholarly book[s] published by a reputable press," while "university presses . . . are cutting back on the publication of works."[1] Other documents read by the Subcommittee included MLA guidelines for evaluation of digital scholarship,[2] a series of articles that appeared in the *Journal of the Modern Language Association* on publishing and the state of the profession,[3] and an essay for www.astr.org by Harvey Young concerning the benefits of co-publishing.[4] Members of the subcommittee also surveyed colleagues in their own institutions about expectations concerning publications for tenure and promotion, and shared resources on digital humanities and work concerning the historic privileging of print media in academia published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* online publications, and scholarly blogs.[5]

Discussion:

What are the Benefits of Electronic Publishing?
The promise of digital publishing may now be self-evident to those working in digital humanities and otherwise making use of digital technology, but is not always recognized by those less familiar with non-print modes of scholarship. For researchers who have always used electronic sources ("Digital Natives"), as well as for scholars who have adapted their research strategies to include electronic sources ("Digital Immigrants"), digital material has served as an important resource. New research can often be published faster online, and sometimes with more convenient and affordable access than some forms of print media. Provided responsible peer review is in place for these electronic publications, they need be no less rigorous and important to the profession. Electronic studies may also include primary and supplemental material that exceeds the limitations of traditional print scholarship, most visibly in the form of direct links to supporting scholarship, online databases, interactive material, images and other figures, and timely updates and corrections. Several established presses already offer forms of electronic publishing that accommodate these features. Palgrave Pivot, a new format for scholarly publishing, for example, offers authors in Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business an electronic platform for publishing works that vary between essay and monograph-length, and makes these works available within twelve weeks of acceptance after full peer review.[6] In other words, electronic publishing signals the ability to move in generative and more accommodating directions not available in print media.

Are Digital Scholarship and Electronic Publishing Recognized as Legitimate Scholarly Work in Other Areas of the Humanities?
In many disciplines, electronic publishing is becoming or has become an accepted and important criterion for success in scholarly production. In 2006, the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion issued a recommendation that

"[d]epartments and institutions should recognize the legitimacy of scholarship produced in new media."[7] *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has been reporting on developments in electronic publishing and technological innovation in academia, including a recent feature on Kathleen Fitzpatrick, who has been leading digital initiatives in the MLA.[8] A new e-journal, *Amodern,* is dedicated to online scholarship and rethinking scholarship models in digital contexts.[9]

Several new initiatives for the humanities have been put in place to encourage digital publishing in order to bring publishing practices into line with other disciplines. The American Historical Association (AHA) has put its support behind digital publishing projects like Gutenberg-e, and "[t]he Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and more recently the NEH Office of the Digital Humanities made substantial investments in supporting digital humanities scholarship."[10] In March 2013, the National Endowment for the Humanities announced a Digital Start Up grant-supported survey, conducted by the University Press of North Georgia, in order to "encourage digital publishing in the humanities"[11] That same month, MLA announced a "born-digital" open-access collection of essays aiming to "familiarize readers with tools and techniques used in digital literary studies" on *MLA Commons*, a digital network linking MLA members and their work.[12] At the 2013 MLA conference in Boston, 66 sessions were devoted to digital humanities' impact on writing and language.[13]

Is Traditional Print Book Publishing in Theatre and Performance in a State of Crisis, and is Non-Print Publishing a Solution?
There exists a trenchant perception, based on reports from our colleagues and from other disciplines, that it is becoming more difficult to get a print book published as academic presses' resources shrink. This perception is concomitant with departments and administrations putting more pressure on tenure- and even non tenure-track scholars and graduate students to publish early and often. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, author of *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy,* writes of traditional book print book publishing, "[w]e are entrenched in systems that no longer serve our needs."[14]

The Subcommittee's work in the summer of 2013 included polling acquisitions editors at major publishers of books in theatre and performance in order to gauge whether there had been significant changes to book publishing in our areas in the past two decades that would corroborate these fears, and those outlined by Greenblatt for the humanities in general in 2002. The Subcommittee finds that while publishing concerns have not been substantially mitigated in academic publishing in English/Literary Criticism (a 2006 MLA taskforce's survey of 1,339 departments in 734 institutions substantiated concerns that tenure expectations for publishing were increasing while presses were downsizing their catalogs, leading to an overall decrease in percentage of scholars receiving tenure in fields represented by the MLA[15]), a downtick in the number of publications in relation to an increase in book proposals in theatre and performance cannot be easily ascertained. Anecdotal evidence does suggest that authors have a harder time getting their projects placed with presses than ten years ago, while at the same time authors' royalties percentages appear to be decreasing[16]

LeAnn Fields, Senior Editor at University of Michigan Press, in a conversation with Scott Magelssen, however, reports that the academic book publishing woes described by Greenblatt have not been felt nearly as poignantly thus far in theatre and performance studies. Michigan has not had to cut back on the titles published in the theatre and performance catalog, and the titles Michigan publishes continue to sell well, due in a large part to the supportive community of scholars in our field, who buy each other's books at conferences, through the press, and through other vendors. In a separate conversation with David Saltz, Fields noted that Michigan's commitment to publishing in theatre and performance has remained steady over the past twenty-four years. The numbers provided by Fields bear this out. 2012, for instance, saw the same number of Michigan titles published as 1998 (eleven both years). While numbers of books published by Michigan vary from year to year (six one year, twelve another), such fluctuation "can reflect things like staffing/workload factors at a press as much as it reflects editorial policy regarding a specific list."[17]

Subcommittee members gathered responses and publication data from editors at other presses as well, and, in addition to Michigan, we received material from Cambridge University Press, Southern Illinois University Press, and University of Iowa Press. Cambridge, in correspondence with Heather Nathans, reports that out of its approximately forty books per year, around fifteen are on theatre (any topic) with an additional fifteen to twenty titles in Shakespeare/Early Modern Drama. Cambridge receives approximately 200 proposals per year in theatre and performance, with an additional 200 proposals to the Shakespeare/Early Modern Drama list.[18] Kristine Priddy, Acquisitions Editor at SIU, provided data showing that their press has consistently published between four and eight titles in theatre (excluding play anthologies) most years between 1998 and 2013.[19] Nathans, Studies in Theatre History and Culture Series Editor for University of Iowa Press, reports that Iowa publishes between one and two titles a year (out of approximately 35-40 proposals), focusing as it does on developmental work with authors who "often receive detailed feedback on multiple editions of a proposal or manuscript before it is accepted for publication and/or goes to outside readers."[20] From these reports, the Subcommittee finds that the state of print publishing in theatre and performance is not in any immediate danger.

Furthermore, moving away from the solo-authored print monograph as the standard of academic excellence could have unintended consequences. Paula Kennedy, Publisher in Literature/Theatre and Performance at Palgrave, in an email leading up to the 2012 ATHE session,[21] cautions that, while publishing outcomes for tenure and promotion could stand to be more diversified, if monographs lost some of their credibility it could threaten academic presses that currently publish a sustainable number of monographs in theatre and performance (which already have much smaller lists than, say, political science). Since academic publishers rely on a good ecosystem of theatre and performance scholarship produced by a range of publishers, losing one or two lists could create a domino effect and severely hurt the field.

Is Electronically Published Material Free and Accessible to Anyone?
A growing number of peer-reviewed scholarly resources (articles, chapters, and books) are becoming available through Open Access (OA) paradigms; that is, practices in which online providers of content do not charge users, nor require subscriptions, for access (and in some cases do not restrict the use of that content).[22] Not all digital scholarship, however, is as easily accessed, and restrictions in place with e-publishers often greatly limit an electronic publication's number of users. Subscriptions to and accessions of electronic sources, for example, can be quite expensive for libraries, requiring that they reduce budget lines in other areas. It should be noted, then, that electronic publishing is not synonymous with free information or unlimited access to it. Researchers' access to online content may increase as OA practices become more prevalent, but presses do not automatically stand to lose money on electronic book publishing in theatre and performance. Most publishers in our field now offer e-book version of their print publications (which are not significantly less expensive to produce than print books, since the bulk of the costs in publishing go to review, copyediting and typesetting, vs. printing, binding, and distribution). Nor is it the case that authors who publish electronically necessarily surrender royalties when other parties access or republish their work.

Will Changing Standards of Research to Include Electronic Publishing Fundamentally Change the Way We Train our Graduate and Undergraduate Students?
Expanding indicators of success in scholarship to include digital publishing includes changing the way we train our students to conduct research. Rigorous academic training will always aim to instill in our students the best and most responsible practices in exhaustive research, careful attention to reliability of sources, and crosschecking of information for accuracy and/or opposing viewpoints. But the sources to which our students look for information and the modes by which they share their own scholarship will most certainly change and have already changed. The profession is at a significant threshold in which digital humanities and new technologies offer, and call for, new practices and resources for pedagogy. Several institutions are developing new centers and programs to assist learners in researching and generating projects. Several new initiatives for instruction and research in Digital Humanities are underway at several major universities. University of Wisconsin-Madison's digital composition center DesignLab, headed by Jon McKenzie, for instance, offers students consulting and resources in designing and implementing non-print academic projects including "digital storytelling, graphic essays, theory comix, video essays, TED talks, RSAnimates, podcasts, radio shorts, wikis, blogs, and smart games."[23] The Digital Media Center at Johns Hopkins University promotes "the use of emerging technologies in students' scholarly and creative works," in order to "confidently master new technologies and to disseminate works that effectively communicate their ideas."[24] The University at Buffalo's English Department hired a new Director of Composition and Teaching Fellows, Alexander Reid, who is invested in digital media and composition[25] and a core group of faculty invested in rethinking digital humanities across areas received funding to launch the Techne Institute for Arts and Emerging Technologies, "which includes 2 additional hires, a new staff, and a programming budget." The Institute is entering its second year and is "now developing an associated group in Digital Scholarship and Cultures."[26]

Should Digital Publications Simply be Considered Equivalencies to Print Publications?

In many cases, peer-reviewed solo-authored works that are born-digital, i.e., never intended for print media, can easily be considered equivalents to print publications. Much of the promise of digital scholarship, however, lies in productions of works that are very different from the linear format of print publications, with links to supporting scholarship, interactive features, and visuals that are not possible in the print medium. Evaluating material in digital publications requires other criteria than, for instance, word count, since the content may in many cases be visual or aural, versus words on the page. Therefore it is necessary to recognize the labor and virtuosity of the process and the endorsement of peer scholars in the field as indicators of scholarly proficiency rather than the traditional look of the final product.

Furthermore, digital scholarship often engages in very different processes of scholarly collaboration and digital production than many traditional projects (e.g., the print monograph). Bethanie Nowviskei suggests that to try to impose the same standards on digital scholarship as we do on print scholarship is to approach the assessment process backwards, since the production of digital work is rarely equivalent to writing a print publication. "A search for equivalency in product," writes Nowviskei, "can lead us to overlook those incommensurate collaborative processes by which digital scholarship is created: systems of production that require closer partnership than ever before among individual scholars and the technologists, student and postdoctoral researchers, content creators, designers, faculty colleagues, archivists, and cultural heritage professionals who work collectively to generate, assemble, disseminate, and preserve new knowledge and new scholarly interpretations."[27] The move toward assessment of digital scholarship, then, involves adopting different measures. It may eventually involve, too, moving away from privileging solo-authored work in assessment as much as is currently the norm.[28]

David Saltz, Principal Investigator for the Virtual Vaudeville Live Performance Simulation System,[29] notes for example that large-scale digital projects often require very different kinds and levels of resources (technical and financial) than conventional print-based humanities scholarship. Creating professional-level computer graphics, 3D modeling and animation, interactive programming, and so forth takes a high level of technical skill, and often specialized, and very expensive, hardware and software. Moreover, such projects are often necessarily collaborative; it is simply impossible for a single author to complete them. Hence, large-scale digital humanities projects, from the standpoint of process, often have a lot in common with scientific research. The Virtual Vaudeville project would have been impossible, for instance, without the $900,000 digital libraries grant it received from the National Science Foundation; this funding supported important scholarly research (such as visits to archives and historic vaudeville theatres), but the vast bulk of it was used for computer equipment (including a motion capture system) and a staff of full-time CG artists and programmers for 2-3 years.[30]

Is Establishing that a Work of Digital Scholarship has been Rigorously Peer Reviewed More Difficult than it is with Traditional Print Publishing?

Tenure and Promotion and Search committees in Theatre and Performance may regard establishing the credentials of a digital publication a challenge, since vetting processes like double-confidential peer review cannot be established by familiar means like the imprimatur of an established academic press's title page. Some advocates of digital publishing, however, argue that it is often easier to trace explicit peer support of a digital publication, especially if the publication is accompanied by a forum for peer response and commentary. In other words, the responses of multiple readers in comments sections, in addition to the work's original peer referees, may be even better than the traditional confidential review process. "Typically," writes Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "when a reputable scholarly press publishes a book, we can assume that the editor and two to three independent external reviewers have read and commented on the text and that their responses have helped the text arrive at its present state. For texts published in an active digital network, however, we have the opportunity to see how many more readers respond to the author's work, collectively producing more assessment, not less. Even more important, who those readers are and what they have to say about the text become available for assessment as well. In other words, digital publication can provide a superabundance of critical response rather than an absence of assessment."[31]

Dr. Saltz also notes that an upside of funding from sources such as the NSF for digital projects is that these agencies have rigorous review processes in place, and in the sciences receiving competitive grants from such funding sources in itself factors into the tenure and promotion process. As theatre and performance scholars begin to engage more and more in such research, then we may want to look to the sciences for models.[32]

Eventually, scholarly organizations representing areas of research in Theatre and Performance like ATHE and ASTR may even develop protocols for marking and endorsing ("badging") digital publications where there is not a recognized publisher attached.

Recommendations
1. While print publishing continues to be a viable means of disseminating certain kinds of research in our field, digital publishing in Theatre and Performance, rigorous in content, and subject to evaluation by peers, also ought to be recognized as a legitimate indicator of scholarly productivity in research and publication.
2. ATHE and ASTR should adopt guidelines for the evaluation of digital scholarship as a resource for hiring, reappointment, and tenure and promotion. Guidelines should include:
    a. Updateable definitions of digital models of scholarly research and publication
        i. These include but are not limited to online e-books and e-journal publications or online material with adaptable and "reflowable" content, such as websites, social media, and EPUBS. They can also include non-online publications such as CDs and DVDs, as well as digital tools or software for teaching or research, encyclopedias, databases, and so forth.

       b. Parameters for assessment of these publications

           i. Evaluators should seek qualified reviewers of digital scholarship when making hiring, tenure and promotion decisions regarding a candidate with non-print publications. In programs where candidates are reviewed by internal committees and there are no suitable internal reviewers qualified to assess the work of digital scholarship, qualified reviewers from different programs or institutions should be sought.

          ii. Solo-produced digital scholarship and collaborative digital scholarship need not be subject to the same measures and weights in a scholar's portfolio. If collaborative, the scholar being evaluated should provide to evaluators at the earliest stages a clear indication of the portions for which she or he is responsible, or the degree to which the publication has been generated by her or him.

        iii. Digital works ought to be examined in the medium for which they were created. For instance, if a work is born-digital, peer evaluators should not view print-outs of the material. If a work is interactive, evaluators should not assess static pages.

       c. A position on ethical and fair creation and use of digital publication

           i. Chairs and administrators should make clear at the time of hiring or at the beginning of a provisional or promotional period the expectations for evaluating digital scholarship.

          ii. When candidates with an expertise in digital scholarship are being sought for a program, these expectations should be made explicit in the job posting.

        iii. Digital scholarship should comply with federal, state, local, and institutional regulations.

        iv. Search and tenure and promotion committees should keep up with innovations in digital technology that help scholars with disabilities access, conduct and produce research.

         v. We should look to other discipline's guidelines for evaluating digital scholarship to keep up with the changing landscape of digital media and its uses. Resources for developing our own guidelines are readily available. A good start is the MLA guidelines for the evaluation of digital scholarship. These guidelines are available at http://www.mla.org/guidelines_evaluation_digital

3. These guidelines should be broadly shared with:

       a. members, tenure and promotion committees, external evaluators, program chairs and directors, and upper administrators.

       b. our upper-division undergraduate and graduate students in our pedagogy and training.

       c. researchers, so that digital research projects are undertaken with a clear set of professional expectations for a digital publication.

4. ATHE and ASTR should make space in annual meetings for the sharing of digital scholarship in theatre and performance.

5. ATHE and ASTR should create awards encouraging and recognizing excellence and innovation in digital scholarship.

6. Journals represented by our scholarly organizations, in consultation with their editorial boards, should devote space to peer review of digital scholarship in addition to book review sections.

Summary

Digital publishing in Theatre and Performance should not be considered simply an electronic equivalency to traditional print publications. Nor should digital publications replace traditional print media. Rather, digital publishing stands as a value-added venue for sharing scholarship, an important development in research and publication, and a legitimate medium for scholarly work. Therefore, it ought to be considered as an indicator of proficiency and success in our fields, as it already is for scholars in other areas of academia, and explicitly encouraged and celebrated by our organizations. The Subcommittee hopes that these recommendations will be taken up by our leadership in Theater and Performance organizations, and advocated with upper administrators in our institutions, in order to maintain and advance the scholarly health of our profession.

Notes

[1] Stephen Greenblatt, Letter to MLA, 28 May, 2002; Readings also included, but were not limited to: "Hot Type" *Chronicle of Higher Education* (21 June, 2002), 1916; Russell A. Berman, "Reforming Doctoral Programs, the Sooner the Better," *MLA Newsletter* (Winter 2011).

[2] MLA "Guidelines for Evaluating Work in Digital Humanities and Digital Media" <http://www.mla.org/guidelines_evaluation_digital>.

[3] Steve Anderson and Tara McPherson, "Engaging Digital Scholarship: Thoughts on Evaluating Multimedia Scholarship," *Profession* (2011) 136-151; Geoffrey Rockwell, "On the Evaluation of Digital Media as Scholarship," *Profession* (2011) 152-168; Bethany Nowviskie, "Where Credit is Due: Preconditions for the Evaluation of Collaborative Digital Scholarship," *Profession* (2011) 169-181; Kathleen Fitzpatrick "Peer Review, Judgment, and Reading" *Profession* (2011) 196-201.

[4] Harvey Young, "The Value of Co-Authorship" *ASTR News* (2011), <www.astr.org>.

[5] Additional resources we read included, but were not limited to: Lee Bessette, "The Print Fetish," *Inside Higher Ed,* 7 October, 2013 <http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/college-ready-writing/print-fetish#.UHIqw9-Pw70.twitter>; Michael Bérubé, "The Humanities, Unraveled," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (22 Feburary, 2013), Philip Lewis, "The Publishing Crisis and Tenure Criteria: An Issue for Research Universities?" *Profession* (2004) 14-24.

[6] Palgrave Pivot website, <www.palgrave.com/pivot>.

[7] "Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion." Modern Language Association. 2006, <http://www.mla.org/pdf/taskforcereport0608.pdf>, 5.

[8] Jeffrey R. Young, "An Academic Hopes to Take the MLA Into the Social Web," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (26 February 2013); <http://chronicle.com/article/Kathleen-Fitzpatrick/130914/>.

[9] *Amodern* website <http://amodern.net/>.

[10] Steve Anderson and Tara McPherson, "Engaging Digital Scholarship: Thoughts on Evaluating Multimedia Scholarship," *Profession* (2011) 136-151.

[11] "NEH Digital Start Up Survey: Encouraging digital publishing in the Humanities," Listserv announcement, DIGHUMANITIES-L Archives, 13 March, 2013.

[12] "Literary Studies in the Digital Age," *MLA Commons*, March 2013. <http://dlsanthology.commons.mla.org>.

[13] "Digital Humanities at MLA 2013" *Sample Reality* <http://www.samplereality.com/2012/10/17/digital-humanities-at-mla-2013/>.

[14] Kathleen Fitzpatrick *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 13.

[15] MLA Report on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion.

[16] Robert Schanke, email to Scott Magelssen, 11 December, 2013.

[17] LeAnn Fields, email to David Z. Saltz, 12 July 2013.

[18] Heather Nathans, email to Magelssen, 13 July 2013.

[19] Kristine Priddy, "Report from Southern Illinois University Press on Publications in Theater, 1998-2013," 17 June 13.

[20] Cambridge also reports that the Cambridge Companion series continues to publish theatre titles on a regular basis, as does the Cambridge Introduction series. While the Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama series closed in 2009, some of the titles in that series have since been released in paperback. The Cambridge Studies in Modern Theatre series is being revived, with Maria Delgado and Simon Williams as the editors. (Heather Nathans, email to Magelssen, 13 July, 2013).

[21] Paula Kennedy, email to Robert Schanke, 4 July, 2013.

[22] "How Open Is It?" Guide, Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, and Public Library of Science *<api.ning.com/files/i3p-GqAnwlOww.../HowOpenIsItGuide.pdf>*.

[23] DesignLab, Digital Humanities @ University of Wisconsin-Madison <http://dighum.wisc.edu/designlab.html>.

[24] Digital Media Center, Johns Hopkins University <http://digitalmedia.jhu.edu/>

[25] Alexander Reid faculty page, University of Buffalo <http://english.buffalo.edu/?page_id=452>.

[26] Sarah Bay-Cheng, email to Magelssen, 14 October, 2013; email to Subcommittee 7 July, 2013.

[27] Bethany Nowviskie, "Where Credit is Due: Preconditions for the Evaluation of Collaborative Digital Scholarship," *Profession* (201)169-181.

[28] See, for instance, Harvey Young's provocative essay on co-authorship on the ASTR website.

[29] <http://vvaudeville.drama.uga.edu/>.

[30] David Z. Saltz, email to the Subcommittee, 21 July, 2013.

[31] Kathleen Fitzpatrick "Peer Review, Judgment, and Reading," *Profession* (2011) 196-201. 199.

[32] David Z. Saltz, email to the Subcommittee, 21 July, 2013.