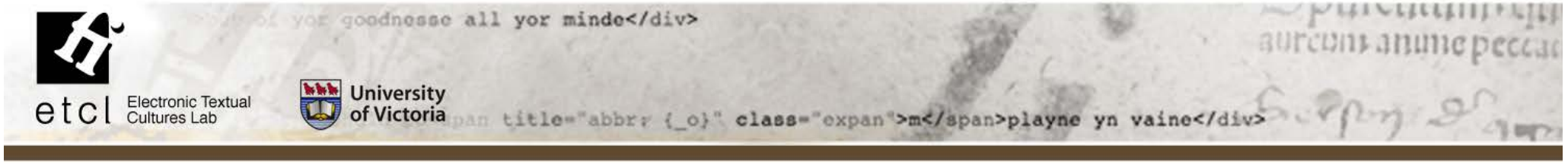
etcl Electronic Textual Cultures Lab

University of Victoria



Understanding and Engaging Knowledge in a 'Social' Context

Western Sydney U
December 2016

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Drawing on work led in the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab (ETCL, U Victoria) by Alyssa Arbuckle, Nina Belojevic, Matthew Hiebert, and Shaun Wong, working with Ray Siemens, Alex Christie, Jon Saklofske, Jentery Sayers, Derek Siemens and the INKE and ETCL Research Groups
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Activity

- **Please take a moment and jot down responses to a few things (just a few points ;)**
  1. What is knowledge?
  2. What does ‘social’ mean, in a computational context?
  3. What is the first word that comes to mind when when you hear the name “Wikipedia”?

Overview

1. Context
2. Case Study, Narrative
3. How We Approach This, Intellectually
4. What We Are Doing Now (Tools, Projects)
5. Some Current Issues to Consider
6. Conclusion

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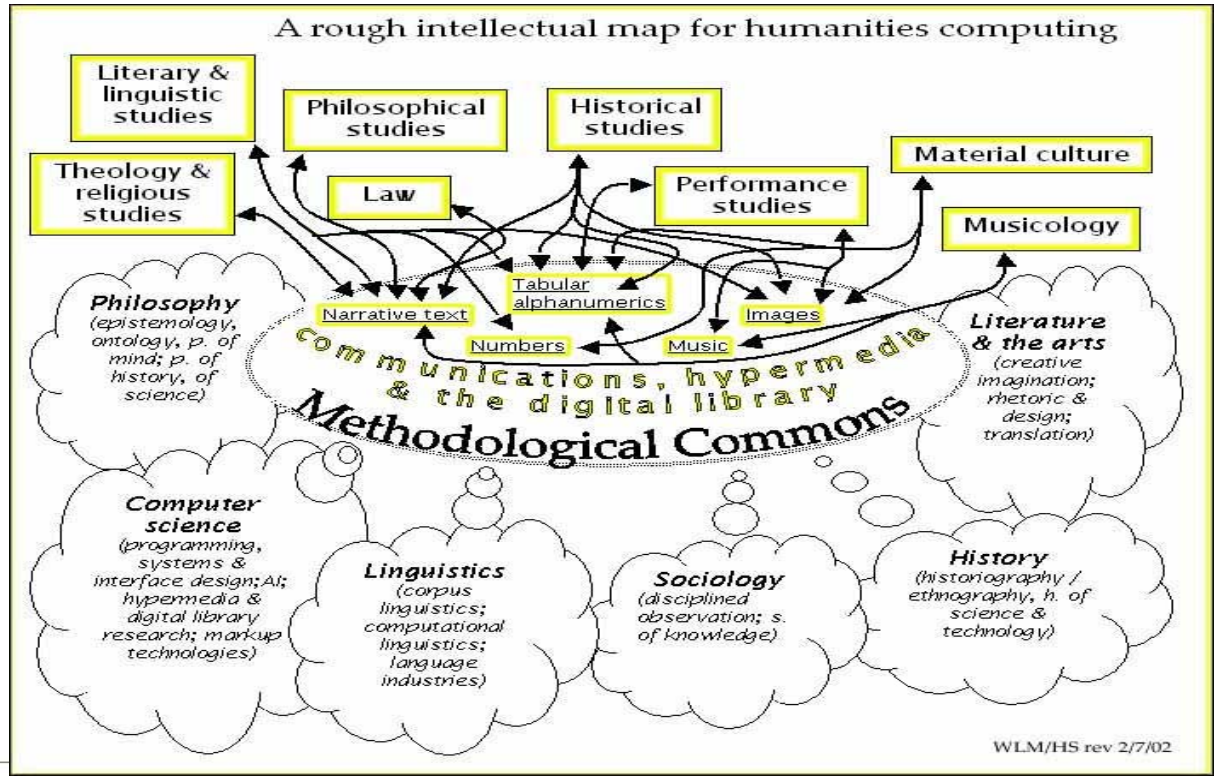
Context for this Consideration

- **A series of pertinent issues situated around trends involving**

- Content modeling (data)
- Process modeling (tools)
- 'Problem-based' approaches (research questions)



Trends to Watch

- **Continued positive movement toward a problem-based focus, in areas of**
  - content modeling of data (representation)
  - process modeling with tools (analysis)
  - communication/dissemination
- **Specifically**
  - Increased
    - access to large data – in widely usable formats
    - familiarity with analytical processing – tools that work across disciplines, and disciplinary data sets
    - communication among those working in the community / communities that exist around that data – broadening
  - Leading to
    - basic workflow acceleration
    - advanced workflow acceleration

Trends, As We Enjoy them Now

- That increased data
- + workflow speeding (basic and advanced)
- + accelerated communication with other experts ***and*** the public we serve
- = a better chance of asking the 'right' questions (?), with better means of answering them, and better able to reflect such answers in expert communities and in larger societal discourse

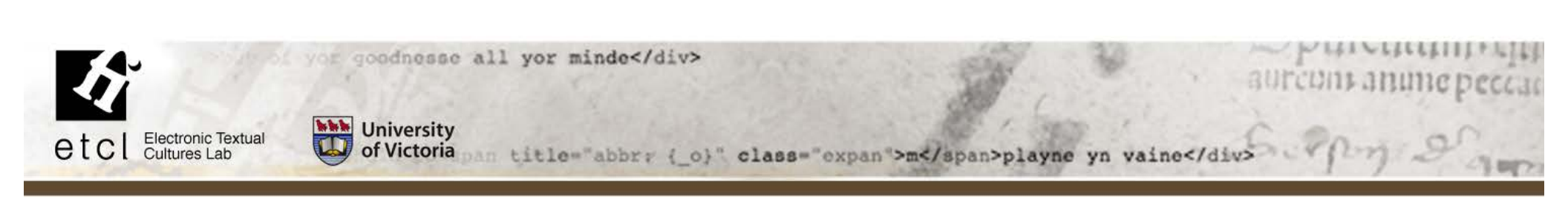
Trends, Enjoyed in Future?

- **Converging long-term tendencies that build on these trends are toward**
  - a greater increase of data yet
  - new tools creation / adoption (analytical facility + computational power), and
  - communication strategies that will likely lead, further, to some type of (increasingly technologically sophisticated) public participation in academic data creation and academic discourse via electronic means. This has the potential to change what we do quite radically ....
- **We might want to be prepared for this, or similar eventualities.**
  - The very questions that scholarship might ask and answer could undergo considerable change, reflecting this convergence.
  - Some very real and important differences in what we do will lie here.
  - The precise direction is quite hard to predict at the moment, but some potential directions are possible to discern.

Caveat (a not-so-hidden agenda)

- **Our group hopes to**
  - engage in the process of making sense of this important trend, in a way that both
    - seeks to understand the traditions of the past, in a contemporary context
    - embraces the best of the present (and predictable future), both as an extension of the past and as a departure in places from it
  - expand community understanding around the subject, via both
    - explication of our environmental scan, carried out in the annotated bibliographies (which we will publish as well)
    - discussion of our targeted intervention (case study)

- **I don't know of anyone who has top-level, across-the-board expertise in this broadly-construed area. Working together to understand this is our best approach.**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Overview

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   - Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript (BL Add MS 17492)
     - http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The_Devonshire_Manuscript
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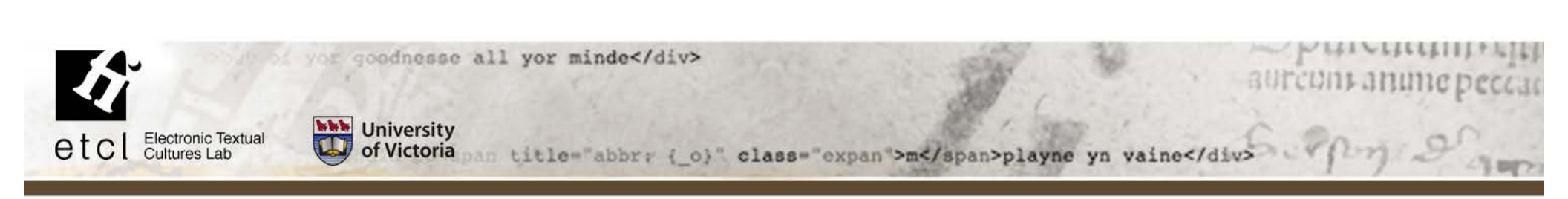
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Consider: Knowledge Production Has Always Been 'Messy' …

- **Knowledge and the book? There was no single "print culture" animating a world inaugurated by Gutenberg, but myriad localized print cultures. (Johns)**
  - Our understanding of 'the book' has been altered almost unrecognisably over the past generation.

- **Knowledge was and is inevitably plural, with multiple institutions, political and economic conditions, and cultural specificities affecting their production through unique agencies. (Burke)**
  - Scholarly understandings of how knowledge is produced and conveyed have been transformed in recent decades by profound "changes in knowledge regimes." (Burke)

- **Conversation, epistolary correspondence, manuscript circulation and other informal modes of scholarly exchange are seen to sit at the fount of academic knowledge disciplines and their establishment.**

… Certainly the Internet Has Always Been

- **Earlier essentialist conceptions of the internet have been exchanged for more nuanced accounts acknowledging the complex historical, political, economic and cultural contexts involved in its formation and development. (Streeter)**

- **Reflecting our assumptions about print culture and knowledge, there is no unitary digital culture producing homogenous knowledge throughout the global realm of the Internet.**
  - With knowledge increasingly produced and mediated by software, "The Media" no longer can be conceived as a single deterministic force, but rather as an ecosystem. (Manovich)
  - Medium has its specific effects but they are locally massaged, and by diverse forces. (McLuhan)

This Reflects Human, Social Patterns of Interaction and Exchange

- **Who makes who?**
  - *Techne* makes subjects but, in our moment when cultural production and technological innovation are so intimately allied, evidence that socially situated actors also remake *techne* surrounds us. (Foucault and Sheridan; Bijker and Law)
  - The technologies which effect the material and symbolic production of a cultural object within a given field are themselves generated from the multifaceted complexities of social fields and agents within them. (Bordieu; Bijker and Law)

- **1960s? Personalization and Socialization, Counter-Culture/Power**
  - The counter-cultural sixties and the Cold War were concurrent countervailing forces.
    - The emergence of personalization and socialization in computing is traceable to the work of Stewart Brand and his "Whole Earth" initiatives of the 1960s. (Turner).
  - The period gave rise to these new social forms of knowledge production existing outside both university and capitalist economic structures, while simultaneously conducive to the structuralism and isolationism exemplified by English departments. (Graff)
  - Larger projects seek to transform knowledge "regimes"—power structures that have become increasingly rigidified over time by institutionalized hierarchies and their modes of communication—in reintroducing into knowledge creation the dynamics of interplay inherent to sociality itself.

… and Humanists Have Always Engaged This Sort of Thing

- **Embracing**
  - Humanities scholars first approaching the internet found the new forms of textuality and agency it produced liberating. (Haraway; Aarseth)

- **Studying**
  - The internet that has emerged in its complex of contexts is inherently open in protocol while also capable of transforming entrepreneurial innovation into centripetal sites—such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter—that corporately institute what are becoming basic social practices of "instantaneous" communication. (Liu)

- **Problematising**
  - The effects of social media on existing scholarly practices may be both positive and negative. (Mrva-Montoya)
  - As the internet became integrated into globalization processes, scholars opened up lines of critique, from challenging search engines for their biased representations of knowledge, to denunciating data collection practices of social media. (Introna and Nissenbaum; Berry)

- **Acting? (Or is our engagement largely passive?)**
  - Historically, bringing in process associated with what we now call 'qualitative assurance'

More Context: Web/Hums 2.0

- **Web 2.0 practices and standards have encouraged scholars to rethink from a user perspective the design of the scholarly resources that capture and convey our knowledge**
- **Community and collaboration are integral to scholarly knowledge creation, and in the electronic world draw on collaborative electronic tools for basic activities such as: content provision, annotation, marking / tagging / bibliography, and analysis.**

- **In such work, carried out via Web 2.0 principles, the central role is that of *facilitator* of knowledge creation rather than a didactic *authority*.**
- **Humanities practices that follow Web 2.0 are often associated with the notion of 'Humanities 2.0'**

More Context: What is Web 2.0?

Web 2.0

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Web 2.0 describes web sites that use technology beyond the static pages of earlier web sites. The term was coined in 1999 by Darcy DiNucci and was popularized by Tim O'Reilly at the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in late 2004.[1][2] Although Web 2.0 suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specification, but rather to cumulative changes in the way web pages are made and used.

A Web 2.0 site may allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to websites where people are limited to the passive viewing of content. Examples of Web 2.0 include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video sharing sites, hosted services, web applications, mashups and folksonomies.[3]

Whether Web 2.0 is substantively different from prior web technologies has been
describes the term as jargon.[4] His original vision of the Web was "a collaborativ

More Context: Humanities 2.0?

The New York Times

Humanities 2.0

Articles in the Humanities 2.0 series from The New York Times.

HUMANITIES 2.0

Geographic Information Systems Help Scholars See History

By PATRICIA COHEN

Many-layered mapmaking is helping scholars recreate vanished landscapes and envision history.

July 27, 2011

HUMANITIES 2.0

Digital Humanities Boots Up on Some Campuses

By PATRICIA COHEN

New digital tools are bringing new ways to teach humanities courses, even Shakespeare.

March 22, 2011

HUMANITIES 2.0

For Bentham and Others, Scholars Enlist Public to Transcribe Papers

By PATRICIA COHEN

A project in London is using crowd-sourcing to transcribe 40,000 unpublished manuscripts of the Enlightenment philosopher Jeremy Bentham.

December 28, 2010

HUMANITIES 2.0

In 500 Billion Words, a New Window on Culture

By PATRICIA COHEN

A Google-backed project allows the frequency of specific words and phrases to be tracked in centuries of books.

December 17, 2010

HUMANITIES 2.0

Victorian Literature, Statistically Analyzed With New Process

By PATRICIA COHEN

A computer-generated process gives scholars a view into Victorian thought.

December 4, 2010

HUMANITIES 2.0

Humanities Scholars Embrace Digital Technology

By PATRICIA COHEN

Digitally savvy scholars are exploring how technology can enhance understanding of the liberal arts.

November 17, 2010

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Humanistic Engagement, Here, is Increasingly Active

- **The Humanities' reintegration with the public sphere**
  - For the humanities, in our current context, reintegration with the public social sphere by digital means offers reinvigoration and continuation of its knowledge practices, its repositories and the principles they have evolved. (Liu; also Caidi and Ross)
  - This might be perceived as an alternative to reliances within the humanities on corporate-based funding, aligning programs to strictly economic incentives, or the commodification of its disciplines as training platforms. (Ang; Balsamo; Vaidhyanathan)

- **Such a trajectory for "Humanities 2.0" involves redesigning knowledge creation practices for social involvement, extending its production outside of institutional structures.**
  - Situated "users" are capable of redefining what media become despite the generic "publics" they are constructed for and set out to construct. (Gitelman)
  - The remediation of culture by its users through the interconnectedness of Web 2.0 software illuminates that print-based knowledge undergoing digital transformation today were socially compelled in their formation.

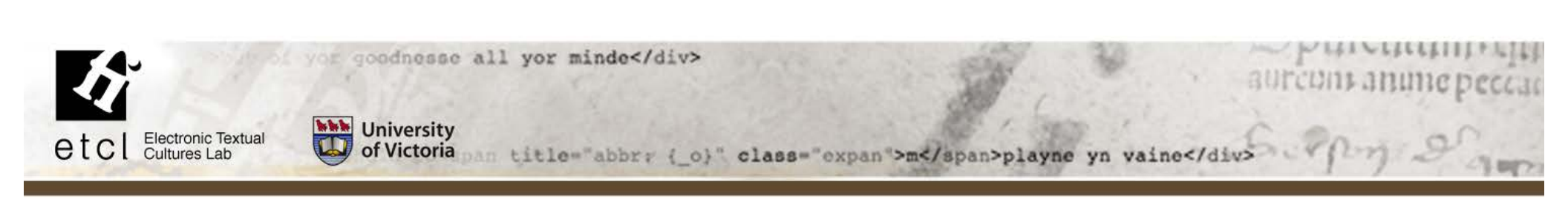
… and That Activity is Grounded in *Digital* Humanism

- **The digital humanities have developed into a meta-discipline for redesigning methods and communication structures of the humanities to facilitate social-based knowledge creation.**
- **This development hinges on stakeholders, both in and outside the academy, becoming technically capable of using and developing its new methodologies and forms of communication.**

- **Pragmatic, Ground-Up, Process-Oriented, Inclusive**
  - In reintegrating humanities practice with the social sphere it seeks to serve, other early but subjugated forms of scholarly communication -- which prioritized the needs of scholars while non-differentiating between academics and "**citizen scholars**" -- offer more suitable starting points for the development of scholarly communication and publishing platforms to replace extant knowledge production practices. (Ackerman, Berkenkotter; Huckin; van Ittersum)
  - These grass-roots efforts, growing out from within the humanities itself, uphold traditional scholarly values of sharing and knowledge advancement in looking to digital methods and design. (See Besser; Rosenzweig Center; Van House; Guedon)

… which is Reorienting in Nature

- **In considering its research into the design of societal knowledge and communication structures — in what has been heralded as an age of design (Latour) — the humanities might shift productively away from its currently detached focus on purely textual conveyance and towards**
  - inherently argumentative experimental prototyping (Ramsay and Rockwell)
  - modelling (McCarty), and
  - hands-on critical making (Ratto)
- **thereby developing new perspectives by which to approach the *technoculture* of contemporary society. (Balsamo)**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Content Provision

- **Activity**
  - User-derived content is imperative for social knowledge creation in electronic environments.

- **Examples**
  - A data portal platform, **CKAN** fosters user-generated content with its guided publishing process, metadata customization, versioning, and analytics, while allowing users to engage with this data through searching and tagging data sets, social networking, building extensions, and API access.
  - ***Omeka*** is a comprehensive open source content management system (CMS) for displaying online digital collections of scholarly editions and cultural heritage artifacts.

Content Provision

Examples

- ***PyBossa*** is a micro-tasking platform that utilizes crowdsourcing in order to carry out small, user-derived tasks and contributions.
- Using Mozillas ***Open Badges***, an alternative credential-granting system, ***Badge Stack*** is a WordPress plugin that facilitates the creation of rewards- or achievements-based environments, with earned badges presentable across the web.

Content Provision

WIKIPEDIA

English
The Free Encyclopedia
4 240 000+ articles

Español
La enciclopedia libre
1 020 000+ artículos

Русский
Свободная энциклопедия
1 000 000+ статей

日本語
フリー百科事典
860 000+ 記事

Deutsch
Die freie Enzyklopädie
1 590 000+ Artikel

Français
L'encyclopédie libre
1 390 000+ articles

Italiano
L'enciclopedia libera
1 030 000+ voci

Português
A enciclopédia livre
780 000+ artigos

Polski
Wolna encyklopedia
970 000+ haseł

中文
自由的百科全書
690 000+ 條目

Annotation

- **Activity**
  - The affordance of collaborative annotation tools is another form of social content provision, and likewise disperses traditional authority.

- **Examples**
  - The extendible ***AnnotateIt/Annotator*** allows users to make comments on texts and supports tags, mark-down content, and individual permissions per-annotation.
  - ***Co-ment*** is a text environment designed for commenting and annotation that integrates with multiple content management systems through an API.
  - ***Digress.it*** is a collaborative plug-in designed bring the practice of marginalia making to the WordPress environment.

Annotation

- **Examples**
  - An extensible web application, ***Domeo*** uses the Annotation Ontology (AO) RDF framework in permitting fully automated, semi-automated, and manual annotation on HTML or XML documents, as well as both personal and community annotation with access authorization and control.
  - ***Marginalia***, which is capable of integrating with learning management systems like Moodle, includes forum discussion functionality while serving as a straight-forward tool for personal and collaborative annotation.
  - ***TEXTUS*** is a collaborative annotation platform for text collections which supports bibliography creation and citation.

Marking, Tagging, Bibliography

- **Activity**
  - Community bibliography applications, which often incorporate folksonomy tagging, facilitate the collaborative creation, organization, citation, and publication of bibliographies.

- **Examples**
  - ***Bibliography Module*** for the Drupal CMS, also called ***Drupal Scholar***, enables users to manage, present, and cite scholarly publications in various citation styles.
  - ***BibServer*** is open source software for publishing and sharing large bibliographic collections on the web through a RESTful API and JSON format, providing also a range of data visualization options.

Marking, Tagging, Bibliography

- **Examples**
  - Supporting multiple administrators and users, ***Document Database*** is a PHP-based document management system that uses the BibTeX format in its support for bibliographical data.
  - **WIKINDX** is described as a "Virtual Research Environment" and enables collaborative text and bibliographic data management, creation, and use.
  - **Zotero** is an open source reference management system that integrates with word processors and other writing environments. Users can assign tags, organize research material into collections and sub collections, and create topical collaborative research groups for sharing and discussion of libraries and notes.

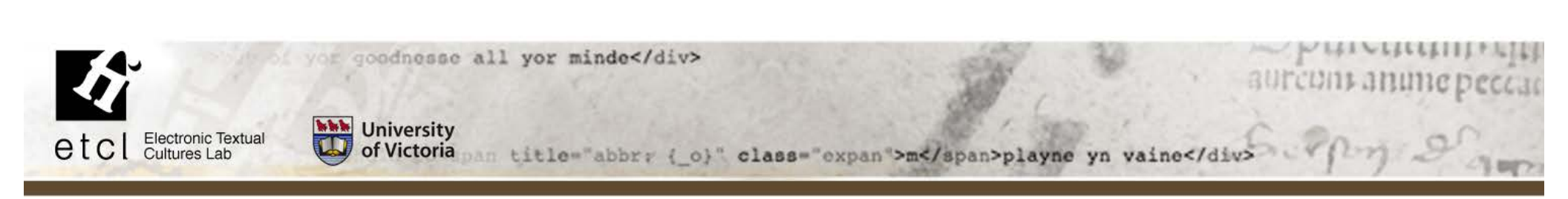
Analysis

- **Activity**
  - A growing number of online tools create new opportunities for collaborating during the text analysis process.

- **Examples**
  - ***CATMA*** is a web-based text analysis and literary research application that allows scholars to exchange analytical results online. The application boasts a number of features: users can apply analytical categories and tags; search the text using Query Builder; set predefined statistical and non-statistical analytical functions; visualize text attributes and findings; and share documents, tagsets, and markup.
  - ***Highbrow*** visualizes the density of scholarly annotations and references within individual texts, videos, and audio recordings; it is also able to show groups of analyzed items together in a collection to facilitate pattern discovery by the researcher.

Analysis

- **Examples**
  - ***TAPoR 2.0*** (Text Analysis Portal for Research) presents a large collection of textual analysis tools for scholars and researchers.
  - ***Voyant*** is an online text analysis environment (with API support) that allows users to submit texts in a variety of formats to show word frequency, usage, and their placement throughout documents.
  - ***WordHoard*** is a Java application for tagging and annotating large texts or transcribed speech, that offers analysis by word frequency, lemmatization, text comparison, and custom queries.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   - **Focal Points** and areas to be considered for our **Scholarly Engagement** are derived from our environmental scan
6. Conclusion

Scholarly Communication and Digital Scholarship: Shifting Future

- **Focal points**
  - What is the role of the humanities in social knowledge production?
  - How can academics harness new tools and modes of scholarship to productively engage with each other as well as with other members of the public?
  - How can the humanities actively reflect on and proactively repurpose the history of scholarly communication?
  - How can the digital realm foster social knowledge creation from within the academy?

- **Scholarly Engagement: Consider…**
  - re-thinking our academic critical mode, our role
  - imagining future digital libraries
  - politicizing the digital humanities

Communities, Content, and Collaboration

- **Focal Points**
  - The rise of social media has encouraged a unique mecca of transnational, national, and local communication and social knowledge creation.
  - The polyvocal and democratic undertones of social media present a formidable opportunity for engagement between various groups of people and movements.

- **Scholarly Engagement: Understand this potential**
  - Although the depth of social media's influence on creating knowledge and culture necessarily remains unclear at this time, many scholars speculate on, encourage, study, and employ social media.
  - Understand scholarly social knowledge creation tools to analyzing the inner workings of social knowledge production in current popular networks like Facebook and Wikipedia.

Society, Knowledge Construction and Constriction

- **Focal Points**
  - Even as it proves rewarding to analyze productive social knowledge construction practices and theories, it remains equally interesting to analyze where these activities are restricted, limited, or ideologically ordered.
  - Pertinent questions include:
    - Through which channels does knowledge flow?
    - Who constrains knowledge, and how?
    - How does acknowledging the constriction of knowledge influence our present and future decisions regarding policy, law, and society?

- **Scholarly Engagement: Question simple positivist approaches**
  - Consider the field of knowledge production from a more theoretical standpoint
  - Span critical theory and socio-technology studies
  - Directly engage with the digital environment and computational culture

Iterative Critical Making

- **Focal Points**
  - Critical making integrates the previously disparate fields of more abstract, conceptual critical theory and a sustained commitment to design and building.
  - Articulated through ideas of "learning by doing" and hands-on collaboration, critical making often focuses on social knowledge production with a more literal interpretation of the term production.
  - Generally, Humanities 2.0 scholars will look to adapt many techniques and approaches into their building practices (typically user-focused many-to-many approaches).

- **Scholarly Engagement: Understand 'critical' making, and iteration**
  - Consider underlying consensus that, since knowledge is frequently created through the collaboration of various individuals, methodologies, and tools, the design of these interactions (or the space where the interactions occur) needs to be critically examined and implemented.
  - Understand how to design digital projects and spaces that stimulate social knowledge creation while maintaining important ethical or discipline-based standards.

Game-Based Approaches

- **Focal Points**
  - Gamification, or the use of game-design elements and mechanics in non-gaming contexts, is popular in corporate and consumer-facing digital environments—most often to increase user engagement with a site, program, or application. In academia the adoption rate has been slower.
  - Initially gained popularity in the realm of social media networks (i.e. *Farmville* and *Foursquare*).
  - Just beginning to receive attention in the area of social knowledge creation. While forms of gamification are increasingly common in pedagogy (i.e. through digital interfaces and point systems for student tasks), the approach remains rare in other areas of the humanities.

- **Scholarly Engagement: Consider the benefits / pitfalls of gamification**
  - Consider how to enable a community of knowledge and content contributors – through engaged participation of a variety of users, readers, and individuals, social knowledge creation environments.
  - Understand potential risks. Video games in general and gamification in particular have been a relevant topic in the conversation around socioeconomic and institutional realities and issues of exploitative labour dynamics, credential and compensation systems, and work/play dichotomies in the digital economy.

Social Knowledge Creation in Electronic Journals and Monographs

- **Focal Points (in the context of other issues)**
  - The journal – and, in some disciplines, the monograph -- has provided structural stability to disciplines by meeting the needs of various stakeholders: the general public; booksellers and libraries; researchers who wished to make their work known and claim authorship; a scientific community wanting to build upon previous findings; publishers seeking to capitalize on discovery; and academic institutions desiring metrics for evaluating faculty. (Fjallbrant)
  - The increasingly digital inclination of scholarly communication has provoked individual scholars and editorial teams to thoughtfully develop digital scholarly publications.
  - There is a move to understand how journals and monographs can enable and enact social knowledge practices in the online sphere.

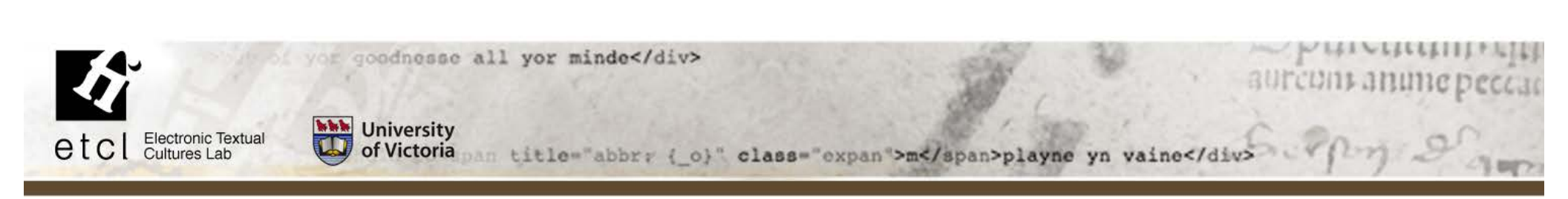
Social Knowledge Creation in Electronic Journals and Monographs

- **Academic Engagement: Recognise the nuanced and multifaceted nature of this evolution, its tradition and its future**
  - Consider issues surrounding contemporary journal and monograph production, focusing on
    - meditation on how these actions can benefit scholarship and scholars both within and outside of the academy.
    - advocacy for further integration of the democratic, user-based interactions and productions encouraged by the rise and popularity of Web 2.0 practices
    - rumination on the history of the academic journal and apply this knowledge to the current state of scholarly communication
  - Acknowledge that, as the stakes in journals and academic publishing held by publishers and the entrenched reputation-based hierarchies of scholarly communities have come to outweigh the particular interests of researchers, the system faces increasing criticism with calls for reform by way of the efficacies and openness afforded by software and the internet. (Cohen; Erickson; Fitzpatrick; Guedon; Jagodzinski; Lorimer)

Social Knowledge Creation in Electronic Scholarly Editions and e-Books

- **Focal Points (in the context of other issues)**
  - The form and function of digital scholarly editions and e-books have evolved in parallel with the internet itself.
  - Simultaneously, digital scholarly editions and e-books carry forth and reflect bibliographic theories, often concerning the inherent sociality of texts.

- **Academic Engagement: Recognise (again) the nuanced and multifaceted nature of this evolution, its tradition and its future**
  - More questions here, and sprawling ones
    - How can authors and editors facilitate social knowledge creation via electronic publication?
    - How can authors and editors integrate already-existent social knowledge production practices within their projects?
    - How can editors harness the allowances of the digital realm to best represent the social text?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Overview

1. Context
2. How We Approach This, Intellectually
3. What We Are Doing Now (Tools, Projects)
4. Some Current Issues to Consider
5. Case Study, Narrative
6. **Conclusion**

Conclusion: Exemplary Instances

- **Some exemplary instances of social knowledge construction**

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Activity

- **Please take a moment and jot down responses to a few things (just a few points ;)**
  1. What is knowledge?
  2. What does ‘social’ mean, in a computational context?
  3. What is the first word that comes to mind when when you hear the name “Wikipedia”?