

1. Research and Contribution

1.1 Background on Digital Humanities Scholarship

As funding for university presses and library acquisitions has decreased, the humanities have experienced a ‘crisis in publishing,’ yet the “gold standard” for tenure and promotion is still the university-press-published book (MLA Report on Evaluating Scholarship, 2006). The Modern Language Association (MLA) suggests scholars publish articles in peer-reviewed digital journals instead, and many journals are adopting their print standards for online distribution to accommodate the current publishing economy. However, the change in distribution from print to online does not come without a change in understanding the differences in authoring, reading, and evaluating digital scholarship. This understanding has been slow to come according to the MLA Report, which said that over 52% of humanities department chairs report having *no* experience evaluating digital books, with the percentage nearly as high for digital articles (p. 45).

1.2 Need for Book-Length Digital Scholarship

Many groups, organizations, and presses¹ now research or promote digital humanities scholarship, touching on issues such as preservation, access, copyright, peer-review/evaluation, citation, and use of multiple media. While several scholars involved with and supported by these groups are writing *about* digital scholarship, or are producing drafts of scholarship in digital forums (later to be published as print books), no one has published a “born-digital” book (i.e., a book that is created for and exists only in a digital format, with no possible print or analog counterpart) with an academic press in the humanities. As a digital humanities scholar, I aim to fill this research gap by editing the first born-digital scholarly book in English studies, which will pave the way to a better understanding of many issues in digital scholarship for the humanities.

1.3 Scope of the Book and this Application

The title of this born-digital book is *The New Work of Composing*. As the book’s call for chapters states, its purpose is to examine the complex and semiotically rich challenges scholars face as we move toward new modes of composing, new forms of rhetoric, new concepts of texts and textuality, and new ways of making meaning. This edited collection will explore how new communicative technologies and genres are changing how we define composing, writing, text, author, literacy, and scholarship. Chapters for the collection are being solicited from participants of the October 2008 Thomas R. Watson Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, the theme of which is also “The New Work of Composing.” The book will have 10 chapters: a print-like introduction that frames the book’s focus on digital composition; eight body chapters that enact concepts in digital composition; and an afterword, which I will compose, that reflects on the process of producing the book-length born-digital collection. This project is significant in that it begins the journey MLA proposed: to better understand digital humanities scholarship, especially digital books. *The New Work of Composing* will add to humanities’ growing understanding of writing in a digital age and will provide an innovative example of born-digital scholarship that will help the field consider the new intellectual work of the “book.” The deliverables that fall within the scope of this NEH summer stipend include designing the digital book’s interface and composing the afterword, both of which will be described in the Methods section.

1.4 Publication of the Book

My co-editors (the conference co-hosts) and I intend to publish *The New Work of Composing* with Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP). CCDP is the humanities’ first digital-only, open-access, academic press; it is affiliated with Utah State University Press, a premier academic publisher of rhetoric and composition scholarship (see <http://ccdigitalpress.org>). The Founding Editors, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher, have asked us to submit our prospectus, which we plan to do in Spring 2009, once we have sample

¹ A selection of groups focused on digital humanities scholarship include Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC; supported in part by NSF and the MacArthur Foundation), Institute for the Future of the Book, Software Environment for the Advancement of Scholarly Research, and the NEH. Presses include Open Humanities Press, Computers and Composition Digital Press, and university presses including Rice, SUNY, and Utah State.

chapters. They have also assisted us in solving unique pre-production obstacles that born-digital books face, such as preparing permission forms for video-interviews, providing capacious Fair Use statements, and discussing their editorial processes for peer-reviewing born-digital works. Digital humanities scholars on the CCDP editorial board include Katherine Hayles, Lev Manovich, and Matthew Kirschenbaum, among others.

2. Methods and Work Plan

The deliverables for this NEH application include completion of the book's interface and the afterword.

2.1 Interface Description and Methods

I will be collaborating with my co-editors to design the book's interface. The interface will provide rhetorical and aesthetic coherence for the collection. (Individual chapters will have their own navigational systems based on authors' individual arguments.) We will build a prototype of the design—digital mock-ups indicating navigational elements between chapters, reference lists, and indices, etc.—to submit with the prospectus. Over the summer, we will build a working model of the interface. Our main goal is to make *The New Work of Composing* accessible to readers across platforms and browsers and with as few plug-ins as possible. We are exploring Sophie, an open-source, open-access multimedia aggregator, and Adobe AIR, which has a free reader interface, as possible technological solutions. The process of implementing the interface design, and my reflection on that process, will serve the other half of my summer project, composing the afterword.

2.2 Afterword Description and Methods

This concluding chapter of *The New Work of Composing* will be an assessment of digital scholarship as a whole with an emphasis on the process of writing, designing, and editing the field's first born-digital, scholarly book. The chapter will enact using appropriate media to convey its argument both the changing nature of (digital) scholarship *and* of the book, the scope of which is represented, in part, by our need to design an interface. This concluding chapter will present a theoretical arc in which all the chapters in the collection can be situated on the digital, scholarly spectrum from print-like (Introduction) to multimedia (Afterword). In playing with the notion of an afterword—as in *after word*—I will represent the push of multimedia in digital scholarship.

2.3 Work Plan and Other Support

The deadline for submitting chapter proposals has not occurred yet, so I do not have a book outline to present. However, my timeline for completing the project is sufficient to produce a quality book. (Due to space limitations, I provide a brief timeline below.) I received a course release for Spring 2009 from my university, which will provide time to complete the interface prototype and sample accepted chapters to be submitted with the prospectus (i.e., items in italics below). The work in relation to this NEH application is in bold. In past summers, I have supported my income by leading/assisting national workshops on multimodal composing for a majority of the summer. This stipend will allow me uninterrupted time to compose the afterword and to travel to Louisville to collaborate with my co-editors on the interface design.

Excerpted Timeline for The New Work of Composing

November 15, 2008	Submission proposals due
<i>January–March</i>	<i>Complete interface prototype, sample chapters, & introduction</i>
<i>April 1, 2009</i>	<i>Prospectus sent to CCDP with 2 chapters, intro, and interface prototype</i>
June–August 2009	Draft afterword & interface
May 1, 2010	Full manuscript sent to CCDP for review

3. Skills and Materials

This section outlines my ability to complete editorial and authorial work on *The New Work of Composing*.

3.1 Editorial Experience

I have over 11 years of combined editorial experience on print and digital scholarly journals, 8 of which have been with *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, where I am editor. *Kairos* is the premier online journal in English studies with an acceptance rate of 10%, and over 45,000 readers per month. *Kairos* has been

publishing born-digital scholarship since the journal started in 1996 (see <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net>). As editor, I mentor authors in composing and revising, and lead the staff through stages of review, copy editing, and design editing (i.e., editing the design of texts to be usable, accessible, etc.). I am proficient in hand-coding multiple computer languages and scripts and using multiple web, image, audio, video, animation, and other multimedia editing programs. A short list of languages and technologies I use include XHTML, PHP, CSS, Dreamweaver, Quicktime, Final Cut, Audacity, Sophie, Word, Flash, etc., and can quickly learn others. My editorial experience with *Kairos* makes me well suited to edit *The New Work of Composing*. More relevant to this stipend application, however, is my experience in redesigning *Kairos* this past summer, a process in which a team and I implemented a new navigation and journal design that would allow individually designed articles to cohere. That process will be similar to designing the book's interface next summer.

3.2 Research and Authoring Experience

In addition to editing *Kairos* for the last eight years, my research area is reading and composing digital media texts. I have or will be presenting keynotes, featured sessions, or invited workshops on evaluating digital scholarship at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, The Ohio State University, Miami University of Ohio, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the Modern Language Association, among others. I have published peer-reviewed print and born-digital scholarship about digital scholarship in top journals in my discipline, including *Computers and Composition*, *C&C Online*, *Fibreculture*, and *Kairos*, and I have a forthcoming co-edited collection, *RAW: Reading and Writing New Media* (with Hampton Press) and chapters in other academic presses (print and digital) on digital scholarship and born-digital texts. My research about digital scholarship and my practice in authoring digital scholarship makes me well suited to undertake and complete this unique book project and, in particular to this NEH application, to design the interface and author a born-digital afterword that reflects on the current state of publishing digital scholarship in the humanities.

4. Final Product and Dissemination

As mentioned in earlier sections, my main research project over the next two years is to complete this born-digital, co-edited collection called *The New Work of Composing*. The deliverables relevant to the time period of this 2009 NEH Summer Stipend application include my authoring of a born-digital, reflective “Afterword” and the design of an interface for the book. Rather than discuss the dissemination of the interface and afterword, however, I will focus on the publication of the entire book project. As stated earlier, my co-editors and I plan to publish the book with Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP), with whom we have already been in discussions. The mission of CCDP is to distribute free, open-access scholarship, particularly in born-digital media. CCDP authors receive no royalties, nor do they pay to publish (other than the cost of permissions), and the press publishes its books for free on its open website. Everyone with an Internet connection will have access to this book if CCDP publishes it. Regarding the audience for the afterword, interface, and, thus, the entire book project, it will be primarily English studies scholars, particularly those interested in digital media. I also expect scholars in humanities (in media, cinema studies, technology studies, communications, art, design, etc.) and social sciences (in library science, sociology, psychology, informatics, etc.), and organizations (such as academic presses, MLA, and NEH) to be interested in *The New Work of Composing*, since we expect it to be the first born-digital book in the humanities.

Because CCDP is a new academic press and *The New Work of Composing* has already presented it with technological and editorial issues that are typical of born-digital scholarship (i.e., digital copyright, permissions, peer review, and tenure evaluations), we have been in close contact with the editors so that we can resolve these and similar issues as they arise. Due to this contact, and to my previous editorial experience with the founding editors of this press—Selfe and Hawisher are founding editors of the journal *Computers and Composition*, of which I was Associate Editor in 2003–04, and they are series editors for the collection I have forthcoming from Hampton Press—I am confident that we can secure a contract for the book with CCDP. However, should the book project be rejected, the afterword I propose to write during this NEH stipend timeframe would be easily revised for publication in any number of online (preferably open-access) journals interested in digital scholarship (*The Journal of Electronic Publishing*, *Kairos*, *Vectors*, *C&C Online*, *Fibreculture*, etc.).