

## Summer Faculty Professional Development Fellowship

### Application Submitted by:

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**Title:** Professional development through preparation of a digitally enhanced tenure portfolio.

**Summary:** This summer I will begin work on a year-long project to design my tenure portfolio materials for digital, multimedia distribution. One professional development outcome relevant to this fellowship application will be scholarly presentation(s) for ISU tenure and promotion stakeholders on evaluating digital work in tenure cases. I will also produce an article about the process of preparing digital tenure portfolios. This application is requesting summer salary to support my work on this project.

### Project Background

As a new media studies scholar, I publish a majority of my research in online, multimedia formats—articles (or *webtexts*, as they are called in my field) and other scholarship like digital textbooks that are designed so that their arguments take advantage of web-based media. For instance, several of my publications include videos and interactive navigation systems that cannot retain their meaning if they are printed. Digital scholarship can be problematic for tenure and promotion purposes for a number of reasons. Some universities, for instance, require all tenure documents to be printed even though, in the humanities at least, guiding organizations such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the Modern Language Association (MLA) insist that tenure and promotion (T&P) stakeholders<sup>1</sup> should read tenure documents in the medium in which they were intended for publication (see, e.g., the 1998 CCCC Position Statement on Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for Work with Technology).

Despite such resolutions that encourage tenure procedures to keep up with scholarly pursuits, the 2006 MLA Report on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion indicated that a majority of chairs in English and language departments have **no** experience reading or evaluating digital scholarship for tenure purposes. Anecdotally (on listservs), some tenure-track faculty members still report having to print their interactive, digital work for review. Or, those who turn in CDs of their digital scholarship report that T&P committees never look at them because the tenure materials cannot leave the room in which it is stored—a room that has no computer. Less anecdotally (and perhaps more self-defeating for the field) is the 2006 survey of English studies scholars who teach and/or publish in digital media (see Anderson, Atkins, Ball, Homicz Millar, Selfe, & Selfe); most of these survey participants—faculty members who make it their careers to research digital media—indicated that they did not want to take the chance on publishing digital scholarship until they had tenure.

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<sup>1</sup> Tenure and promotion (T&P) stakeholders include tenure-track faculty members; department, college, and university tenure committees; outside reviewers; etc.

However, even tenured faculty members face obstacles when wanting to pursue digital scholarship for promotion. A December 2007 discussion on the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) listserv highlighted the problem—an associate professor going up for the rank of Full Professor queried the list looking for examples of digital tenure portfolios that she might use to support her own case. She was immediately warned off of producing a digital binder by several respondents, many of whom were already full professors. They remarked, “Don’t take the chance” and “Don’t be a guinea pig.” The problem of T&P stakeholders not knowing how to evaluate digital scholarship is compounded by the fact that tenure-track (or even tenured) scholars don’t want to produce (or are discouraged from producing) digital scholarship and digital tenure binders for fear that such work won’t “count.” Because the field has no examples of digital tenure portfolios yet, the cycle of non-evaluation continues. This is a serious Catch-22 for the humanities. **By creating a digital tenure portfolio, in which I situate my digital-only work in a way that T&P stakeholders are encouraged to read and evaluate it appropriately, I aim to provide an example portfolio for the field that can ameliorate this Catch-22 of non-production and non-evaluation.**

I am well-suited to this task and have long been a “guinea pig” for digital scholarship, starting with my having garnered support for and produced the first digital, interactive thesis at the school where I received my MFA in 2000. Since then, I have become editor of the leading digital, multimedia journal in writing studies (*Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*; 44,000 readers/month) and am often called to provide keynote addresses, serve on plenary panels and convention committees, and lead national workshops on the production and reception of digital scholarship. (See attached vita.)

### **Project Description/Goals**

I started on the path to this project by creating my third-year review portfolio (at my previous institution) as a blog (<http://www.ceball.com>)<sup>2</sup>. I have been adding materials to this site since 2006, but the blog platform is not sufficiently navigable, usable, or flexible when it comes to readability for T&P stakeholders. My goal for redesigning the digital tenure portfolio is to make the interface easier to navigate for stakeholders while still containing all of the information a print-based tenure application (and box of accompanying materials) would require.

I plan to apply for tenure during the 2009–2010 academic year, which means (if I understand the ASPT guidelines correctly) that my materials need to be ready for outside reviewers by summer of 2009. I will jumpstart this project by attending the nationally recognized Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) institute at The Ohio State University, May 29–June 10, 2008, where I can get dedicated time, technical resources, and interaction with leading scholars (who often serve as outside tenure reviewers in my field<sup>3</sup>) who can provide initial feedback to my

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<sup>2</sup> A sidenote: Of interest to ISU stakeholders may be the scholarly outreach that my tenure blog has provided. For instance, it is not uncommon for readers to comment on my articles/webtexts within a week of my posting new citations. Also, some of my scholarship that has appeared in journals not regularly trafficked by my field has received quick citation turn-arounds and inclusion on syllabi. (At least this is what folks report back to me after they read my tenure blog, pursue an article I’d posted, and used that material. Recently, my work has been cited on blogs and listservs within two weeks of my posting it.) Digital scholarship made public serves as excellent (and free) publicity for a faculty member’s home institution.

<sup>3</sup> They would not be candidates to serve as outside reviewers on my tenure case because I have collaborated extensively with them on other projects, but their expertise as outside reviewers will help me better understand how to promote and present my work to on-campus T&P stakeholders.

digital tenure portfolio project. The project will require analyzing which media will be best to present my research, teaching, and service items so that T&P stakeholders can most easily access, interact with, and evaluate my work; this rhetorical analysis may suggest that some materials get presented digitally and some in print, which would fall in line with the CCCC guidelines about evaluation in appropriate media. The design process will involve making smooth transitions between different media to aide in the readability of the project for stakeholders; as well, it will also involve the intellectual work of instructing stakeholders on how to read the digital materials. As mentioned above, there are no examples in my field, so the project itself will present many research moments that can also become publishable<sup>4</sup>.

### **Professional Development Outcomes**

There are several outcomes to this project.

- (1) The major outcome is the digital tenure portfolio itself. The report that I would write for this fellowship application would be based on the production of an example portfolio (with some or all of my research to date included), which I hope to show to ASPT constituents in early fall so that I can get permission to proceed with the digital portfolio for my tenure review year<sup>5</sup>.
- (2) I expect to coordinate several meetings/workshops (for the DSFC, CFSC, and other stakeholders on campus, as needed) in which I provide strategies for reading, interacting with, and evaluating digital work. These professional development meetings can help provide experience for tenure stakeholders who need to evaluate digital scholarship in future tenure cases. (I could also coordinate with CTLT and the University Club to host related workshops for interested parties who may not be T&P stakeholders.)
- (3) My digital portfolio will serve national/field goals
  - a. as a precedence-setting example for others' digital tenure portfolio cases,
  - b. as a possible model that national committees (such as the CCCC Committee on Computers in Composition and Communication, which wrote the 1998 Position Statement on Work with Technology) can use to update the guidelines on evaluating digital scholarship, and
  - c. as a research dissemination tactic akin to Harvard's (Mitchell, 2008) recent announcement about its open-access scholarship portal that ISU and digital writing studies as a field can implement.
- (4) I also plan to write an article about the process of constructing the portfolio to meet the rhetorical needs of T&P stakeholders, for submission to the *ADE Bulletin* (or similar administration-related journal). The timeline for this outcome is roughly August of 2009.

### **Budget & Justification**

1-month summer salary/stipend      \$5,000

I am requesting summer salary so that I can have dedicated research time to work on and complete an example of this project.

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<sup>4</sup> I received an NFIG for the upcoming year to study how tenure-track faculty present their digital media publications to their tenure review committees (although none are doing digital-based portfolios), so this project will fit into the expected outcomes of that grant as well.

<sup>5</sup> Dean Olson indicated that CD-ROMS as supplements have been approved, but some of my work requires it be read on the Internet, not offline, which is why I am pursuing this project.

## References

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