

*Expanding Access to Research and Scholarship:
A View from Emory University*

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Expanding access to research and scholarship has been viewed—and must be viewed—in terms of costs and benefits. At the same time, we cannot shape a full discussion without the question of responsibility for access. We begin this discussion with a framework provided in Willinsky’s *The Access Principle*.

A commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it the responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit by it (p. xii).

Examining this principle invariably leads to lively debate around issues of “who pays for what and when.” While these discussions continue—deliberated with arguments of policy and advocacy—time, technology, and the creativity of researchers and scholars move forward. The responsibility for access has now met the responsibility of preparing individuals and institutions for access. At all of our institutions, it is likely safe to say, there are faculty leaders skilled in the use of technologies and methods supported by new technologies. And graduate students arrive already skilled. Their digital tools, methods, and skills are the touch points for this timely and, perhaps, increasingly urgent discussion on accessibility and responsibility.

This work, as well, shapes a new set of imperatives for institutions and academic leaders. We encourage faculty, scholars, and researchers to go to the cutting edge, to the limits of imagination and beyond, in their work. How we work with them to arrange different and newly imagined workspaces, laboratories, and “*collaboratories*” is a question essential to their research and scholarly progress and to the preparation of our graduate students—the next generation of scholars and researchers. These spaces are not just where they work, but are also tools themselves, resources that help to create the new identities that emerge from their use of technology and that shape eventual access to their work.

The point here is that the accessibility discussion has moved forward and increased in its dimensionality. The dimensions of faculty development, preparation of graduate students, and the necessity of new shapes for work spaces have been added.

Some examples are described below from Emory University. These projects and programs have emerged from interest, creativity, and persistence—in the spirit of response and responsibility to the opportunities our scholars, researchers, faculty and graduate students provide.

The Emory Center for Digital Scholarship

The Emory Center for Digital Scholarship (ECDS) is a new organizational umbrella designed to unify existing digital support services into a centralized resource for teaching and research. It provides “consultation and support for digital teaching, research, preservation, publishing and

exhibiting.” It has grown, in part, from Mellon Foundation funding to create new functional collaborations for librarians, faculty and graduate students.

Examples of projects produced by faculty and students aligned within ECDS include:

- Southern Spaces, a peer-reviewed, multimedia, interdisciplinary open-access journal published in collaboration with the Robert W. Woodruff Library.
- Virtual Rome, created with faculty leaders in Art History, is a virtual, walkable experience of 17th century Rome based on Giovanni Battista Falda’s detailed 1676 plan of Rome.
- Lincoln Logarithms, which uses digital tools to analyze 57 sermons delivered after the assassination of Lincoln, is produced in collaboration with the Pitts Theological Library and scholars in Candler School of Theology.

From principles established in the Mellon Foundation supported project, Digital Scholarship Commons or DiSC, ECDS supports collaborative research, publishing, and archival projects that incorporate GIS mapping, digital literary analysis, visualization tools, video editing, and electronic data. ECDS staff support faculty and students with training and expertise in instructional technology and digital assignments (such as e-portfolios and digital stories).

ECDS is the outcome of several innovative programs and projects that advanced the use of new technologies at Emory and concurrently helped to frame discussions of access.

Overall, the goals of initiatives within ECDS can be viewed as institutional commitments to advance the digital environment for research and creative work as well as plans for how these activities are organized, more specifically by:

- changing the way 21st century digital scholarship is conceived;
- increasing opportunities for marketing and outreach through digital publishing;
- organizing new space and structures within libraries that support 21st century digital collaborations; and
- changing the ways that the next generation of scholars and librarians engages with research and the library.

Emory Center for Interactive Technology

Also within the umbrella of ECDS is the Emory Center for Interactive Teaching (ECIT). ECIT supports student training for digital media assignments and also works with faculty, staff, and students to create other technology-enhanced materials. While the services here are dedicated to teaching and pedagogy, it is worth mentioning because of how it addresses current and emerging needs for faculty development and professional training for graduate students.

To stimulate and enhance connections between faculty and graduate students to prepare for contemporary teaching using new technologies, the Laney Graduate School funded and partnered with ECIT to support the three-year Technology, Pedagogy and Curriculum (TPC) program. TPC was an initiative designed to empower Emory’s graduate students with the knowledge of how to effectively use technologies such as wikis, blogs, digital video, iTunes, and more in their own teaching. The program’s goal was to build upon the resources available to

graduate student instructors by giving them a sustained, concentrated introduction to instructional technology, focused upon their particular pedagogical goals. TPC was wildly successful in helping students to shift their perspectives on digital best practices and what is possible in the classroom through the use of technology.

The Voyages Project

As new information about slave voyages emerged in the late 90's, along with a surge in technological capacity, a historical project was born. Two years in the making at Emory, The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database provides searchable information on more than 35,000 slave voyages to the Americas between the 16th and 19th centuries, as well as maps, images and data on some individual Africans transported. The principal investigators for this astounding endeavor were Emory's now Professor Emeritus David Eltis (History) and Martin Halbert, formerly of the Digital Programs and Systems Division of the Woodruff Library.

The database is intentionally collaborative and can grow and change over time. The digital innovation and leadership of Emory University Libraries was pivotal in the design and launch of this application and continues to play an important role in deploying the database and providing instructions on how to navigate and understand it. It is an incredible example of interactive scholarly work that is also publicly accessible. And it is an example of technology enhanced research methods that have changed disciplinary engagements, collaborations, and discoveries.

Digital Components in the Dissertation and Thesis

The Laney Graduate School is also responding to technological advancements in student research and how they are included in the thesis or dissertation. In 2013, the Laney Graduate School established guidelines for the inclusion of video components in dissertations and theses. The guidelines provide instructions for identifying a video as a component of a thesis or dissertation. They do not address the substantive issues of whether videos are acceptable components of dissertations, and if so, to what extent or in what roles. Those issues are at present determined by faculty in each program.

The guidelines are intended to ensure that video components of theses or dissertations posted in the Emory Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) Repository are identified as such components. They provide for this identification inside of the video itself, in order to ensure that any video accessed through the ETD system will carry information about its origin, even if it is viewed by someone who has not seen the ETD entry or read relevant text parts of the thesis or dissertation.

In closing, we return to the beginning. Expanding access to research and scholarship must be viewed in terms of costs and benefits and be grounded in discussions about the responsibility of access. But, we must also seize opportunities to nurture scholarship and research that pushes boundaries through the use of new technologies, tools, and methods. Institutional responses will of course vary by needs and degrees of advancement, but it is clear that we have a part to play not only in responding through discussions of access and responsibility, but in supporting and developing the advancements we must now consider.

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