LLTA Team Meeting, Wednesday October 28, 2009

Present: Robert Cagle, Miles Efron, Dara Goldman, JoAnn Jacoby (Administrative Liaison), Doug Kibbee, Kathleen Kluegel, Bruce Swann, Caroline Szylowicz, John Wagstaff (Chair), Charles Wright.

John Unsworth was in attendance to talk about textual analysis, which was on the Team’s agenda for October 28.

John Wagstaff took the Minutes at this meeting. The Minutes for the meeting of October 21 will be available by the end of this week, October 31.

John Wagstaff introduced the agenda for the meeting: (i) a discussion of textual analysis; (ii) discussion of the Team’s survey, on which Miles Efron, JoAnn Jacoby, and Caroline Szylowicz have been working; (iii) further discussion of the “Kluegel/Kilton” plan, first discussed at the Team meeting of October 21. In the end, however, the extent of the discussion of point (i) meant that we did not get to the other items, except for a very brief discussion of (ii) at the very end of the meeting. John had copies of the survey as it existed at the time of the meeting, and handed these out. The Survey Group will continue to refine the survey, and Team input is invited.

Kathleen asked about the possibility of using space in the Business and Economics Library [BEL] for either the relocated English Library or a merged English/Modern Languages unit. John will follow up on this, and report back.

Report on textual analysis by John Unsworth

John spends two days a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) running the I-cubed operation on the 3rd floor of the Main Library. He began his report by noting that work in informatics is included in the campus strategic plan. Above all, it is a discipline/methodology that is interdisciplinary in nature. Indiana University has a “College of Informatics”; Illinois, on the other hand, wishes to embed informatics within/across different subject areas, so has used a different approach from the “college” one. I-cubed currently has 3.0 full time employees, and 2 part-timers (one of them being John Unsworth).

Courses in informatics, or involving informatics, are to be found in the campus course calendar. For example, there is a minor in informatics already available, with around 120 students enrolled at this time. A Master’s in “Bioinformatics” is also available, and crosses a number of subject areas; and a doctoral program in informatics is at the proposal stage. Such a course would include both humanities and social sciences, among other things. Finally, GSLIS is proposing an undergraduate major in informatics.

John also mentioned the “MONK” project – “Metadata Offer New Knowledge”. It includes several large language corpora – such as ECHO and EEBO – that have been “speech tagged” to enable meaningful querying of the language that appears in them. John cited studies of metaphor as one example of what could be done.
Doug asked whether foreign-language corpora were going to figure in I-cubed’s work. There is no reason why not; John pointed out that around 50% of Google Books content is in languages other than English. Google has plans to set up two centers for computational textual analysis, and it’s possible that some of this work may end up at Illinois.

Robert and Kathleen again raised the relevance/irrelevance of the words “Textual Analysis” in the title of the Team, and this was followed by a discussion involving extensive input from Charles Wright and others. A consensus built up around the idea that the term “textual analysis” was, indeed, not a useful part of the Team’s title. This led on to a brief discussion of funding for informatics materials, and location of such materials in the library, among other things. The Team decided that, while textual analysis as a methodology clearly has relevance to work being done in languages and literatures, to have it specifically mentioned in the Team’s name was over-privileging it.

John therefore proposed that the Team discuss/vote upon the following motion (seconded by Kathleen):

“The Team recommends that “Textual Analysis” be removed from the Team’s name, notwithstanding that textual studies do, and may increasingly, have a role within the activities currently undertaken by the team member libraries”.

10 were in favor of the motion; there were 2 abstentions.

The Team then very briefly discussed the proposed survey. Kathleen expressed misgivings regarding the purpose and construction of the survey, questioning whether the document currently under consideration was actually a “survey” at all. The survey group will continue its work, and circulate the Team once it has a draft final text.

Finally, John reminded the Team members that communication with their academic/library constituencies is crucial to the success of the Team. He asked all members to continue to share the Team’s discussions with colleagues and others.