

**Scholarly Commons Unit Annual Report  
Fiscal Year 2018 (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018)**

**I Unit Narrative**

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The Scholarly Commons continued to grow its services in many ways during Fiscal Year 2018. For example, a visiting Data Analysis and Visualization Librarian joined us in August 2017 and the statistical consultations we offer in partnership with Technology Services and CITL moved out of the pilot phase. We also have a new partnership with Technology Services to provide advanced database consulting and teach a basic workshop on recognizing situations where a database is more useful than a spreadsheet.

**Consultations**

Much of our impact as a unit comes from the individual researchers we are able to help. We had 985 interactions in FY2018, with 10% addressing complex or advanced issues in our service areas (READ Scale 4-6). We were without a GIS Specialist after February 2018, and this is reflected in the reduced number of GIS consultations and the reduced number of consultations overall. A graduate hourly has been doing GIS consultations since then, but does not have the network that the previous full-time specialist did. 84% of interactions with researchers were in person this year, an increase of 6% from FY2017. This indicates to us that meeting with specialists and working in a space where help is available is important to our users, who are often using software and methods that are unfamiliar to them. 63% of our consultations were with graduate students or faculty, and the number of consultations with undergraduates is rising (70, up from 37 in FY2017). Because so much of our work is done by partners (see section below), our statistics in Desktracker are an incomplete picture of our work. But the statistics we have are:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Number**</b>	<b>Percent</b>
About the Scholarly Commons	146	20%
Software Assistance	137	19%
Questions About Scanner Use	102	14%
Data Analysis and Visualization*	95	13%
GIS	69	9%
Data Discovery and Support	62	8%
Digital Humanities	25	3%
Questions about Savvy Researcher	23	3%
Survey Research Consultations	20	3%
Questions About Usability	20	3%

Scholarly Communication	15	2%
Research Data	7	1%
IDEALS/Electronic Theses and Dissertations	6	1%
Copyright	5	1%
Open Access	3	<1%
Faculty Profile System	1	<1%

\*Does not include statistical consultations by CITL Data Analytics, but does include questions about their services.

\*\*Report generated from Desktracker and from statistics kept separately by the Survey Research Lab consultants. Because some of our services are provided by people outside the Scholarly Commons or outside the Library, these numbers are not a complete picture of the activity of the Scholarly Commons. Research Data, Digital Humanities, and Copyright are typical examples of this.

### ***Savvy Researcher***

The Savvy Researcher has passed its ten-year mark and it continues to evolve to support researchers with their advanced research and information management needs. In FY17-18 and in partnership with Reference and Information Services, we reached over 1,500 learners through 179 workshops and in seven different areas of support including: Building Research Skills (RIS), Communicating Your Research, Scholarly Communication, Geographic Information Services, Digital Humanities, Data Discovery and Management, and Visual Resources. Workshops are taught by our internal partners including subject liaison librarians and GAs, and many external partners including the Survey Research Lab, CITL, and the UI Press (new). We received excellent feedback that influences our instructional offerings: e.g., we take away less attended, add new ones, and sometimes refresh workshops (specifically in partnership with RIS and their instruction GA).

### ***External Relationships***

Many of the Scholarly Commons' services depend on relationships inside and outside the Library. Sarah Christensen (visual resources including the scanners) and Beth Sheehan (qualitative data analysis) provided consultations in their areas of expertise, for example, and Library IT set up a process for consulting on hardware or network related research issues. We partner with the Research Data Service and Scholarly Communication and Publishing on instruction, referrals, promotion of services and events, and many other projects. Two Scholarly Commons librarians are also part of LEITC, a working group of CAPT that focuses on services and infrastructure related to advanced technology in the Library.

On campus, we work closely with CITL, both the Data Analytics group and the Instructional Spaces and Technologies Group. The Survey Research Lab has office hours in the Scholarly Commons once a week and provides consultations on a request by request basis. The Graduate College co-sponsors the graduate-level Image of Research competition. The Research IT section of Technology Services works with us to offer workshops and consultations on web site usability and database design, as well as partnering to fund the statistical consultants, and the Scholarly Commons actively

participates in the development of their Research IT Portal. We also collaborated with the UI Press to offer several open sessions including workshops and a couple of panel sessions, to celebrate the Press' 100 year anniversary. Many of these partnerships extend to teaching workshops and offering consultations as well as projects, and all of them are an integral part of the Scholarly Commons' success.

The Scholarly Commons has a robust relationship with the Office of Undergraduate Research, led by Merinda Hensley. Merinda worked with the interim director to outline plans for a future campus-wide, interdisciplinary undergraduate research journal (put on hold until proper and sustaining resources can be secured) and to develop educational support for the Office of Undergraduate Research certificate, of which the Savvy Researcher workshops are a part. Merinda continues to oversee and collaborate with eight undergraduate student journals, including the newly formed social work journal (first issue published Spring 2017). We archive all issues in IDEALS and continued to explore avenues for archiving a wide variety of undergraduate student work. We also continued to professionalize student journals by indexing them and partnering with SC&P to explore DOI options. We also collaborate with the Undergraduate Library to display undergraduate research work in their space.

The Scholarly Commons hosted several visitors from other universities this year. Drs. Gabi Baesa Ventura and Carolina Vilarroel (University of Houston) spent a day with us at the suggestion of Don Waters (Mellon Foundation). They have a Mellon Foundation grant to develop a digital humanities center focused on Latinx Studies. Live Kvale from the University of Oslo also met with us this year and Karen Hogenboom spoke about digital scholarship with the Chinese Librarians Scholarly Exchange Program coordinated by Lian Ruan. Closer to home, Karen also met with Dallas Long from Illinois State University about starting a digital scholarship center.

On campus, the Scholarly Commons also participated in several orientation events and research fairs for graduate students and faculty: New Faculty Orientation, the Graduate Student Welcome Reception, the Graduate School's Professional Development Fair, the IT Pro Forum, Quad Day, and the Law School's Resource Fair.

### ***Room 220 planning***

The minimally remodeled Room 220 opened early in Fall 2017 as study space. The Scholarly Commons administers the scheduling for 220 and the study rooms within it. Literatures and Languages and the Information Desk have taken responsibility for opening and closing the room and doing hourly head counts. Also in Fall 2017, a small group including Facilities, the Scholarly Commons, and Library IT met to push forward the incorporation of technology in the room, without making staff presence necessary. Six collaboration tables were added, and two tables on wheels were added in Spring 2018 to enable more flexible small group work. In January, the Room 220 Implementation Group started meeting, chaired by Karen Hogenboom, in order to create a program statement, policies, and other details that moved the envisioned digital scholarship space closer to reality. The implementation report prepared by this group was not approved by the Library Executive Committee, but planning is moving forward to use Room 220 for digital research-focused events and activities. Karen Hogenboom, Merinda Hensley, and James Whitacre were all part of the implementation group, and the Scholarly Commons has moved most of its events into Room 220 rather than renting space elsewhere on campus.

### ***Events***

There are several events that the Scholarly Commons hosts or sponsors each year as part of its efforts to create an interdisciplinary campus community of researchers using digital methods. The graduate student Image of Research competition takes place in the spring, drawing together graduate student researchers from every college on campus to talk to each other about their work at the awards reception in April. The reception was in Main Library 220 for the first time this year, and was better attended than past receptions held at the Illini Union.

Before leaving for a new position in February, James Whitacre was a core member of the planning group for GIS Day, which always happens in mid-November. The celebration was smaller this year and took place in the Natural History Building where the Geography Department is located, but there is a good chance it will be moved to Room 220 in the future.

Merinda also helps to support Undergraduate Research Week each April through several activities: teaching workshops on how to design a research poster and how to present a professional presentation; support the Undergraduate Research Symposium by serving as a faculty judge of the research posters and managing the “Image of Research – UR Edition” competition. Merinda also supports the instructional needs of the Ethnography of the University for their bi-annual student conference and by running the corresponding poster session.

Two Scholarly Commons-affiliated staff, Sarah Christensen and Megan Ozeran, helped coordinate the spring 2018 humanities hackathon known as HackCULTure. In collaboration with the iSchool, CITL, and a student who was a former winner, they organized a three-week-long event that was specifically designed to encourage participation by students in the humanities and social sciences (who may feel unwelcome in “traditional” hackathons). In fact, students from nearly every college on campus registered to participate. During the three weeks, participants had the opportunity to attend a variety of targeted workshops, including one taught by Megan about data visualization. Five student teams completed their projects and presented at the final judging event; Sarah and Megan ensured that all five teams uploaded their projects to IDEALS for long-term public access.

The Scholarly Commons Speaker Series has been a tradition since Fall 2013. This year we hosted Ed Ayers for a day and half of meetings and a public lecture titled “Twenty-Five Years in Digital History and Counting.” In the library world, Dr. Ayers is most associated with the Valley of the Shadow digital archive hosted at the University of Virginia, but he is also a history podcaster, Pulitzer Prize finalist, and recipient of the National Humanities Medal. Humanities faculty and graduate students were very interested in his talk and in meeting with him.

### ***Interns***

During Academic Year 2017-2018, the Scholarly Commons appointed two ABD PhD students to internships in the Scholarly Commons. Each intern worked ten hours per week as a graduate hourly. They were from the Philosophy and Communications departments, and had expertise in Python/text mining and social media analysis/topic modeling. While we hoped the interns would expand our services by consulting with campus researchers and advertised their availability, only the Python services were used. The interns did teach workshops in their areas of expertise and made large strides in expanding the Scholarly Commons community, talking formally with their departmental colleagues and informally with other graduate students. In the spring they planned and hosted a Project Forum open to digital humanists across campus, where researchers could discuss articles about digital humanities topics and methods as well as discussing their own work.

This type of group takes longer than a semester to gel and unfortunately permanent Scholarly Commons staff were unable to continue the program after the interns left. However, those who attended found it useful to talk about their work in the context of general conversation about the digital humanities.

As we hoped, the internship was transformative for the interns and their own work. One wrote that “[t]he Digital Humanities Internship at the Scholarly Commons has been an incredible opportunity for me to focus on aspects of my own research that, without the internship, I would have had no chance of developing. By providing me with the resources, community, and time that enabled me to acquire facility with digital humanities techniques, the internship has made possible an extraordinary amount of progress in my own work. In addition, consultations with visitors to the Scholarly Commons broadened my perspective on what sorts of projects are developed under the heading of “Digital Humanities.” The internship allows for increased interdisciplinary practice both for its participants and the rest of the Scholarly Commons and fills a sorely-needed space for humanists at the U of I.”

### ***Undergraduate theses***

Merinda collaborated with Library IT (Seth Robbins and Ayla Stein), the Graduate College, SC&P, LAS including specifically the Departments of Anthropology and History (and subject liaison librarians) to begin the process of a pilot to Vireo for the intake of undergraduate research theses and capstone projects (similar to the process of collecting ETD’s and partnering with the Graduate College). We completed a survey of Big 10 universities and constructed a workflow outline for intake of the undergraduate research student work with input from the Graduate College. The partnerships with LAS departments are scheduled as a pilot for spring 2018 with full uptake of all undergraduate student research by the end of 2019.

### ***Data discovery and access***

Carissa Phillips contributes half of her time to the Scholarly Commons to support researchers who need to locate and access data, occasionally through acquisition. Requests for assistance came mainly through inquiries to the Scholarly Commons’ main desk, but also occasionally as referrals from subject specialists across the Library and, increasingly, to Carissa directly as the point person for the Library’s Data Purchase Program.

The FY18 Data Purchase Program yielded two short-term (one year or less) subscriptions, but no purchases of datasets. The spring 2018 call for applications for the FY19 Data Purchase Program yielded none, but in the subsequent months numerous requests for data purchases were received, indicating that the timing and execution of the call for applications needs to be re-visited. Finally, efforts ramped up to make the data which has been purchased easily discoverable and accessible. In late 2017 and early 2018, with the help of Jason Strutz from Library IT and Tracy Popp, Carissa began administering access to our purchased datasets (mostly from the Data Purchase Program, but also some acquired by subject liaisons), through a collection of folders in Box. Requests for access have been minimal to this point, but initial trials to provide access in this way have been successful and seamless compared to past mechanisms. As the datasets are more widely promoted, through LibGuides currently being created and eventually through catalog records, the number of requests is expected to increase.

### ***Data visualization***

Megan Ozeran began developing data analysis and visualization services within the Scholarly Commons in August 2017. She spent much of the Fall 2017 semester learning about the Library, identifying services to pilot, and obtaining a broad knowledge of data visualization. Over the course of the Spring 2018 semester Megan consulted with nearly 20 university affiliates. The people with whom she consulted were able to use their subsequent analysis and visualizations in research posters, papers, presentations, and a dissertation. Megan taught two workshops in the Savvy Researcher series, “Tidy Your Data!” and “Basics of Data Visualization,” both of which included excellent engagement from grad students. She has also been developing connections with other units within the library and across campus, such as the Media Commons, IDEA Lab, Illinois Informatics Institute, iSchool, and the developing Illinois Data Science Initiative.

### ***Statistical consulting***

The Scholarly Commons’ partnership with CITL and Research Technology Services to provide statistical consulting for campus continues to be a popular and valuable service. It is the only free statistical consulting service that is open to all of campus. The consultants met with 439 researchers and had 1,553 contacts with researchers all together during AY2017-8 and Summer 2018, including email and other non-synchronous media. Consultants are available in the Scholarly Commons 30 hours per week during the semester. These statistics are not included in the chart of consultations above; a separate report is attached to this report.

### ***Major challenges***

Maintaining GIS services and our connection with the GIS community on campus was one of our major challenges this year. When James Whitacre left in February 2018, we were able to hire an academic hourly 15 hours per week to consult with GIS users until we could hire a full time person. Karen Hogenboom has been keeping in touch with the BTAA Geoportal project managers and serves on the project’s Strategic Leadership Group, as well as participating in the planning group for GIS Day in Fall 2018. James was the liaison between the Scholarly Commons and Library IT, a role that Karen Hogenboom has also taken over. This is only a small portion of the projects and relationships that James worked on, and hopefully the position will be filled before the end of FY2019.

Another challenge is making our data visualization services sustainable. Megan Ozeran has created resources, consulted with researchers, participated in projects, and taught workshops about data visualization. Her position ends in August 2020, and we need a more permanent plan for covering these responsibilities either full time, as many of our peer libraries are, or in combination with other areas like data science or computer programming in the humanities and social sciences. We have similar sustainability issues with computer programming for the humanities and social sciences, and for topic modeling.

Related to this issue, the Data Science Initiative is poised to offer data science as an undergraduate general education course. They are stressing the use of data science by humanists and social scientists, which makes the Scholarly Commons a logical partner, perhaps in partnership with other units in the Library. But with only 3.5 full time librarians (one of them visiting) we do not have the capacity to support even the basic data needs of this program. If we cannot step up the planners will probably turn to ATLAS for help, and while they can help with the technology necessary to serve up data for the class they are not trained in data management. The classes also need exposure to the principles of data literacy, which is a natural role for the library.

***Significant changes to unit operations, personnel, service profile, or service programs***

Personnel changes included James Whitacre leaving the Library in February 2018, and Harriett Green shifting from her Digital Humanities role shortly after Eleanor Dickson moved away in late FY2017. Dan Tracy took on Digital Humanities half time when Harriett became the head of the Scholarly Communications and Publishing unit, but had a learning curve and a time when he and Harriett were working to transfer relationships and projects. Also, the interns (more fully described above) worked in the Scholarly Commons for a total of 20 hours per week, but we were not able to extend the program to a second year because of stress on our gift funds, which support staff and programs in our unit, and other demands on our librarians' time that made it not feasible to supervise additional people. Finally, there was no AUL for research during most of the fiscal year. We needed to be more intentional during this gap about nurturing our partnerships with the other units in the Office of Research, who had different reporting lines than we did. Communication with library administration was also a challenge during this period.

Even as our digital humanities and GIS support temporarily weakened, we were able to create a new partnership with the Research IT division of Technology Services to offer a basic workshop and consultations about database design.

***Progress on FY18 annual goals***

- *Collect and analyze stories from users of the Scholarly Commons' space and services in order to assess the quality of our services and inform planning).*

This project has expanded into an ethnographic study of Scholarly Commons users, and now involves Jen Yu and her graduate assistant as well as Merinda Hensley and Karen Hogenboom. An observational study was done in Spring 2018, and a survey of Savvy Researcher workshop attendees should go out in Spring 2019 with interviews of specific users to follow.

- *In collaboration with the Collaboratory Implementation Team, prepare a program statement for Main Library 220 that builds on the Collaboratory Planning Team report (Strategic Framework 3.2).*

The program statement was submitted to the Library Executive Committee on April 10, 2018 as part of the Implementation Team's report.

- *Collaborate with CITL Data Analytics and Technology Services to obtain stable funding for statistical consulting services in the Scholarly Commons (Strategic Framework 1.5)*

During FY18, CITL Data Analytics was able to find funding for FY19 from Technology Services, the College of LAS, and Scholarly Commons gift funds (\$5,000). None of this money is recurring, but each partner is convinced of the value of the service and should be willing to commit funds next year.

- *Increase Scholarly Commons support for gatherings of researchers in various formats to discuss and conduct digital scholarship.*

The biggest progress we made toward this goal was through our events and the Project Forum that was run by the interns. Ed Ayers' visit also drew many digital humanists and reinforced that the Library is a central point for supporting their work.

### ***FY19 annual goals***

1. Host an open house in Room 220 to highlight range and depth of Scholarly Commons and Office of Research services to the Library and to campus (Strategic Direction 1)
2. Promote data visualization services to campus in order to increase consultations and create a community of researchers in the social sciences and humanities who are working with visualization (Strategic Direction 1)
3. Strengthen the Scholarly Commons' connections with subject liaison librarians in order to disseminate information about our services more consistently among departments and to identify potential areas of collaboration (Strategic Direction 2)
4. Replace the GIS Specialist and orient the new person to GIS activities on campus and in the Library (Strategic Direction 1)

In order to achieve these goals, the Scholarly Commons needs to create or add staff time to reach out even more consistently and thoughtfully to the rest of the Library. The number and quality of professional development opportunities for digital scholarship librarians is increasing, and support to attend more of these conferences would help us to learn how others are addressing some of the issues we face. We also need to navigate new issues around hiring the GIS Specialist as an academic professional, which will require help from and good communication with Library Human Resources. Some of our goals have expenses tied to them that deplete our gift funds, which will run out in the foreseeable future. So we need to be in conversation with the administration and Advancement about how to move forward in a sustainable way.

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### ***Graduate Assistants and Projects***

The Scholarly Commons had four graduate assistants (2.0 FTE) during FY2018, though one left in February to take a job and was replaced with a graduate hourly. GAs work the majority of our open hours on the front desk, update our website and Libguides, teach workshops, manage social media presence, and complete many other projects during the year. For example:

- Social media (Twitter, Commons Knowledge blog, and Facebook)
- Workshops developed and taught (selected examples)
  - Making Scanned Text Machine Readable Through OCR (with Merinda Hensley)
  - Finding Social Science Data (with Beth Sheehan and Karen Hogenboom)
  - Conducting Research with Primary Sources & Digital Tools (with Merinda Hensley)
  - Story Maps (with James Whitacre)
  - Research posters (with Merinda Hensley)
- Designed advertising for several Scholarly Commons events and promotions
- Supervised undergraduate students working on Mapping History at Illinois project
- Designed posters for hallway outside Room 306
- Supported deposit of undergraduate research into IDEALS, including archiving journals

- Assisted with managing reference collection

## II Statistical Profile

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### 1. Facilities

- User seating counts (if applicable)
  - 10 seats at tables
  - 10 seats at public workstations
  - 4 seats at scanners
  - 7 seats across from public workstations for collaborators
  - 4 seats in group study rooms
  - 8 seats at soft seating
- Number of hours open to the public per week (if applicable)
  - Summer II 2017: 35 hours
  - Fall 2017: 45 hours
  - Spring 2018: 45 hours
  - Summer I 2018: 35 hours

### 2. Personnel

- Kayla Abner, Graduate Hourly (February 16 to August 15, 2018)
- Claire Berman, Graduate Assistant and Graduate Hourly. .25 FTE (paired with RBML)(August 15, 2016 to May 11, 2018)
- Merinda Hensley, Associate Professor. 1.0 FTE
- Ian Harmon, Graduate Assistant and Graduate Hourly. .5 FTE (August 16, 2016 to February 15, 2018)
- Karen Hogenboom, Associate Professor. 1.0 FTE.
- Jasmine Kirby, Graduate Assistant and Graduate Hourly. .5 FTE (August 16, 2016 to August 11, 2017)
- Megan Ozeran, Visiting Assistant Professor (Resident; August 16, 2017 to present)
- Carissa Phillips. Associate Professor. .5 FTE (located in Room 300)
- Joe Porto, Graduate Assistant, .5 FTE (August 16, 2017 to May 15, 2018)
- Emilie Staubs, Academic Hourly (gift funds). 1.0 FTE
- Billy Tringali, Graduate Assistant and Graduate Hourly. .25 FTE (paired with RIS)(August 16, 2017 to present)
- James Whitacre, Academic Professional. 1.0 FTE (beginning of fiscal year to February 15, 2018; position vacant until end of fiscal year).
- Aaron King, Graduate Hourly (15 hours per week from February 19, 2018 to present)

### 3. User Services

Head count: 4,091 (from Desktracker)

Reference interactions: 985 (see Section 1 for detail)

Circulation: Not applicable

Presentations:

Number of presentations: 59

Number of participants in group presentations: 511

#### **4. Other statistics (optional)**

Units may report any additional data that is collected within the unit and is illustrative of its activities in FY16. Examples might include website analytics, training sessions provided within the Library, LibGuides usage, tallies of materials processed or transferred, and so on.

### **III Appendices (optional)**

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- Annual report from CITL Statistical Consulting is attached to this report.