



Project Title: Connecting Existing Infrastructure to Provide Better Resources for Digital Scholarship and Well-Being

Submitted by: Andrea Rehn, Director, Digital Liberal Arts Program, Whittier College
(I am submitting this proposal, but it was written collaboratively by all members who will be attending.)

Team Information:

Attending team members:

Andrea Rehn, Associate Professor (English), Director (DigLibArts and Whittier Scholars Program)

Convenes team and connects project plans to curricular, student, and faculty needs.

Shezad Bruce, Manager of Media and Classroom Services

Project lead on MaDLAB project, expertise in acquisition and implementation of instructional technology; works closely with IT and Wardman Library. He is designing the new learning space.

Sonia Chaidez, Instructional Media Designer, Co-Coordinator (DigLibArts)

Works with faculty members supporting digital pedagogies. Leads the campus-wide Digital Storytelling project, whose students will be major users of the new space. Her office will be part of the new design.

Anne Cong-Huyen, Digital Scholar, Co-Coordinator (DigLibArts)

Works with faculty members supporting digital pedagogies, and also teaches courses in Media Studies. Her office will be part of the new design.

Additional members include:

Samantha Alfrey, Instructional Librarian

Works with faculty teaching first year students as well as with students at all levels.

Expertise in information literacy will be important to programming for the space.

Seamus Lagan, Professor (Physics)

Chairs DigLibArts Steering Committee. Additionally, as former Shepherd of the new science building, has extensive experience planning learning spaces.

Troy Greenup, Director, Campus Technology

Directs acquisition and implementing of technology infrastructure for the campus. Hires students to assist campus members with technology issues, students who will now be partially seconded to this new collaborative center.

Project Description:

Whittier College is a private liberal arts college and Hispanic Serving Institution in southeast Los Angeles. Members of four groups from our campus, the Digital Liberal Arts Program (DigLibArts), the Bonnie Bell Wardman Library, Media Services, and Campus Technology (IT) are proposing a joint project to develop space, expertise, and programming to incubate digital learning and research across the disciplines. Currently, these are all distinct departments and programs who employ student workers and professional staff, and though some elements and duties overlap, their distributed and disparate nature does not serve the campus community well. None of these developments would be possible without the collaboration, support, and sharing of resources between these departments. Our goal is to plan how to sustain this collaboration for the long term. The plan is two-fold: (1) spatial transformation and creation of “MaDLAb”, and (2) learning-centered programming which will be supported by the resources in MaDLAb.

The first part of the plan, which initially brought us together, involves converting part of the main floor of Wardman Library into a space, tentatively titled “MaDLAb,” that will concentrate storage, check-out, and support expertise for academic technologies. The proposed MaDLAB (tentative name) is to provide support for students to find digital media consultants, peer mentors, and assistance in hardware, software, and praxis. As a small institution with limited resources, we need to think carefully about where to locate resources for benefit of all the various constituencies of our campus. Ultimately, we hope to create a space or spaces that will serve hubs for student collaboration, faculty innovation, and community outreach. Two additional multi-use spaces for meeting, instruction, and collaborative work are also envisioned. Through these spaces, this collaboration aims to create a community and environment that fosters student initiative and creativity.

Where ILiADS will play a major role is toward our overarching goal, of sustainable collaboration supporting student-centered programming--workshops, online modules, and resources in digital research and creation practices, information literacy, and overall digital well-being--that can be woven into first-year courses and beyond. The four groups who will be collaborating all provide various services and support for students. What we need to do is figure out how to combine our efforts, streamline our processes, and refocus our goals toward encouraging student initiative, collaboration, and creativity.

Whittier College is uniquely situated as one of the few MSI/HSI private liberal arts colleges in the United States. With the support of our Digital Liberal Arts 2020 initiative, we have the opportunity to envision a collaborative model for digital liberal arts in our uniquely diverse campus community. What would digital projects for an HSI in Southern California look like?

What does digital innovation look like at an institution that primarily serves undergraduate students? How do we make that experience important and visible? What are the digital literacies required for our undergraduate students? What kinds of resources, spaces, and staffing can help support these activities? What varieties of maker spaces are needed on our campus, and how can they work together? These are the central questions that we hope to broach at Iliads.

The objective of the DigLibArts 2020 Initiative, funded by a second major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is to enable the campus to come together in **learning communities** to envision ways to build bridges among various student learning experiences. This goal grows out of years of discussions across campus, among faculty from all divisions of the college, and staff and administrators from Academic Affairs to Student Life to Admissions. To facilitate this goal, DigLibArts seeks to nurture the **digital well-being** of all campus members. Our vision is for Whittier graduates to become flexible learners who will thrive across virtual and physical spaces as informed multi-modal public scholars able to teach themselves new skills as technologies change, to imagine alternative uses for existing technologies, or to create new solutions for the challenges ahead.

But DigLibArts is supported on soft money, unlike Media Services, the Library, and IT. So while DigLibArts can advance the College toward these important goals, the long-term viability of DigLibArts itself is in question. How can it transform from a grant-funded entity to an ongoing part of the campus? Is there a role for DigLibArts beyond 2021? Will Media Services, IT, and the Library be able to absorb the work of DigLibArts in the future, or does DigLibArts serve a distinct and valuable role? If so, what is that role?

To see a summary of DigLibArts projects to date, please visit our website: diglibarts.whittier.edu.

The Role of ILiADS:

This Whittier College team hopes to be able to gather off-campus at ILiADS to work through the details of the collaboration, which is still in its infancy, and may yet run into challenges. As the project is so new, we would like to consult with and hear from other interdepartmental programs at peer institutions and learn more about staffing structure, securing ongoing funding, minimal technologies, and other logistical concerns we may not have considered yet.

Project Timeline:

April 2017 - On-campus meetings with various campus stakeholders (faculty, staff, students) about MaDLAB proposal, and future phases which will include MaDLAB [Maker] (Phase 2) and instructional space (Phase 3).

May 2017 (Phase 1) - Media Services and the Library will start building the MaDLAB, which will serve as the initial consultation space and checkout station for media and tech equipment.

Late Summer 2017 - Plan Phases 2 and 3. Begin acquisition of equipment for maker space. Research possibilities by visiting local institutions and holding dialogue with colleagues at other institutions. Plan initial assessment of 1. first year information literacy instruction and 2. Information and digital fluency instruction integrated into sophomore and upper division instruction.

Fall 2017 - Launch of MaDLAB. Assess how students are using the space and what else they want and/or need. Adjust plans for additional phases based on these results and then seek funding for Phases 2 and 3 from Educational Resources Committee (ERC). Assess first year information literacy instruction.

Spring 2018 - Continue assessment of first year information and digital literacy instruction. Begin conversations about how first year instruction connects to sophomore and upper division information and digital fluencies. Revise plans for Phase 2 and 3 based on received funding and results of assessment.

Summer 2018 - Build Phase 2 and 3: Build new instructional and/or collaboration spaces as indicated through assessment.

Fall 2018 and beyond: Continue to work together as a merged entity to better support campus digital well-being.

Sustainability:

For the initial space conversion, we have secured start-up funding from Media Services in the amount of \$40k. We are working to institutionalize the costs of infrastructure, technology maintenance and replacement, and staffing into the various operating budgets. In addition, of course, each of the participating entities has its own budget, and distinct budget priorities. Planning a way to bring these various budgets together in order to better serve our campus community is the very essence of our proposal. In other words, sustainability is our goal. We want to move beyond the “building the airplane as we fly it” phase, which we have been in for the last four years or more, to a sustainable collaboration model that will serve us for a long future.

Thank you for your consideration,

The MaDLab/DLA project team

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