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Reflections on Heliotropia and the Future of E-journal Publishing in the Humanities

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1. Introduction

With the help of a small group of scholars dedicated to the open-access dissemination of research on Boccaccio and fourteenth-century Italy, I launched an online journal called *Heliotropia* at Brown University during the summer of 2003.[2] Though none of us at that time had any thoroughgoing experience with e-journal publishing, each of us had already spent nearly a decade exploring the possibilities inherent in the marriage of hypermedia technologies and the study of Boccaccio.[3] Fortunate to have profited from the assistance of the Scholarly Technology Group at Brown and from an unusually enthusiastic reception on the part of students and teachers in the United States and elsewhere, we were guided by the hypothesis that a free-access e-journal of Boccaccio Studies would be not only an extremely useful resource in a general sense but also a significant boon to the community of Boccaccio scholars at large. What we admittedly did not anticipate was the speed at which *Heliotropia* would begin to fulfill its goals. In 2004, it was accepted as the official publication of the American Boccaccio Association and in the period since its inception has experienced a fivefold increase in accesses (see fig. 1). This success has been as unexpected as it is gratifying. While data on e-journal publishing have been collected by a number of studies over the years,[4] remarkably little critical attention has been given by Italianists to the possibilities inherent in e-publishing.[5] The

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purpose of the present essay is, in short, to introduce some of the chief concerns related to e-publishing to humanistic scholars who, however well informed they may be in their own fields, have yet to face the often bewildering challenges presented by new media.

[[figure]]figures/2009/papio/papio_2009_01.jpg[[/figure]]
While there were only about 70 e-journals in existence in 1994, this number has now risen into the hundreds of thousands. According to the 2000 (but now outdated) Society of American Research Libraries' Directory of Scholarly Electronic Journals[6]: 2390 of them were in Life Sciences; 1969 in the Social Sciences; 1139 in the Physical Sciences; 963 were dedicated to Technology; and only 520 were published in all disciplines of Arts and Humanities. Among this last group, a mere 101 served the study of literature (of all types). Clearly, the hard sciences are leading the way in electronic publishing. This is due, largely, to the nature of those disciplines. Sciences, Technology and Medicine (commonly referred to as "STM") are fields that typically rely more heavily on journals than on monographs and whose rate of innovation and speed of obsolescence are far quicker than those in the humanities. The importance of humanistic research, moreover, does not tend to drop rapidly over time. In Boccaccio studies, for example, we are not likely to see a substantial decrease in citations of Vittore Branca any time soon. Given this situation, it is virtually impossible, for example, to fund a humanistic e-journal by initially charging an access fee and then providing free archive access later. Briefly put, some of the paradigms prevalent in the sciences simply won't work – or won't work as well – in our field. For quite a while now, scholars in the humanities in general and in the modern languages more specifically have been bombarded both with warnings about the crisis of the publishing industry and with appeals to seek new methods of publication that are outside the mainstream. Stephen Greenblatt's 2002 "special letter,"[7] calling for wide-sweeping reforms of the entire scholarly publishing culture, has gone largely unheeded. So too has the MLA's special report on "The Future of Scholarly Publishing" of the same year.[8] These

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

reports address real-world dilemmas, despite being dressed in ivory-tower rhetorical trappings. Before any solutions can be found, however, colleagues in the humanities must bring themselves up to speed on the many developments that have been taking place during the last decade in other disciplines.

2. Problems of Journal Culture

Chief among the problems currently faced by editors, authors and "consumers" of non-open access scholarly journals is that related to rising costs and declining purchasing power. According to a study published by the University of California System, «Comprehensive access to the expanding volume of scholarly materials necessary for research and teaching is at risk». This brief study, which enumerates several factors that have led to the present economic crisis, provides explanatory data for what many researchers have come to understand only intuitively:

> «From 1986 to 2002, […] journal prices rose 227 percent, and book prices rose 75 percent. The typical research library spent almost 250% more on serials in 2002 than in 1986, but the number of titles purchased increased by only 6 percent. In addition, book purchases actually declined by 5 percent.
>
> **Increasing volume of information:** From 1986 to 2002, the number of journals published increased by 58 percent. During roughly the same period, world-wide production of books increased approximately 50 percent.
>
> **Large commercial publisher profits:** Science, technology, and medical (STM) publisher profits are in the 20–30 percent range due to commercial mergers or acquisitions in the industry». [9]

In April of 2002, Lee Van Orsdel and Kathleen Born published the results of their periodical pricing survey.[10] Proposing the rhetorical question, "Has the advent of the e-journal finally turned the periodicals industry upside down?," Orsdel and Born analyzed the impact of the advent of e-publishing

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upon journal pricing models. Among the data they collected, some may be more than a little surprising to those who have not followed the recent boom in costs. They note that the average subscription prices for journals in STM fields were 10-20 times higher than the average prices in the humanities. Periodicals in biology came in at an average price of $1,097.01; those in chemistry at $2,143.22; and those in physics at $2,218.82. In contrast, scholarly journals in the humanities were significantly lower: philosophy ($146.60), history ($126.35), literature ($110.51).[11] Italianists should be even more alarmed at this trend inasmuch as journals published in Italy are, by comparison, relatively less expensive than their counterparts in other nations and yet cuts will inevitably be realized.[12] Because libraries cannot protect the size of journal subscription budgets in the humanities while confronting enormous rises in STM prices, we and our colleagues are faced with a seriously deteriorating situation.[13] In synthesis, Italian journal prices have been relatively steady over the last decade and journals in the humanities are increasing at only a fraction of those in the sciences; nevertheless, library acquisitions budgets are squeezed on the one hand by administrative belt-tightening and on the other by constant increases in subscription fees.

To address this crisis, the MLA published in 2003 its Statement on Publication in Electronic Journals.[14] In it, the authors state:

> «Electronic scholarly journals have existed for over a decade. Commonplace in the sciences, they are gaining in audience and professional use in the humanities. Scholars at all levels may choose to publish their research in electronic formats because of the ease of distribution, discovery, and retrieval in these formats--which is a significant aid to research--and because of the multimedia features that the electronic environment affords.
>
> The electronic journal is a viable and credible mode of scholarly publication. When departments evaluate scholarly publications for purposes of hiring,

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

> reappointment, tenure, and promotion, the standing of an electronic journal should be judged according to the same criteria used for a print journal. These criteria include the journal's peer review policy, its rate of acceptance, the nature of its editorial board and publisher, and its general profile in the field it covers.
>
> The MLA believes that the continuing development of electronic publishing in the humanities offers exciting possibilities and a new medium for the dissemination of scholarly work. It represents a particularly important development in the light of recent constraints on university press publication.»

In order to understand better just what the MLA is calling for, however, one has to take a deeper look at the poorly understood phenomenon of "e-journal publishing."

In her 1999 study, "Exploring the development of the independent, electronic, scholarly journal,"[15] Alison Wells lists several advantages and disadvantages of the e-journal model. Among the former, she lists "speed of publication." This aspect, however, takes into consideration only those aspects that are medium-related. While it is true that the actual formatting and publication process takes substantially less time, the rapidity of the actual appearance of any "next issue" is largely dependent upon medium-independent forces such as editorial review times, author revision times, and so on. Less controversial are the notions that e-journals provide interactivity (readers can comment quickly on a document and can suggest changes or alternate theories), greater accessibility (one computer with Internet access costs less than a range of paper-media subscriptions), hypertextual links (though not yet fully explored, linking can provide an important additional element in e-publishing) and "added value" (non-paper-media content). Among the disadvantages, she includes the problems of indexing and abstracting (services currently in a deplorable state), archiving (but who archives digital data? Who upgrades data to new formats? What happens upon the demise of the editor or responsible institution?), "perishable

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

citations" and authenticity (the possibility of self-publishing can eliminate the essential role of the editor). A fuller understanding of these characteristics is essential to an accurate assessment of the impact that electronic journals can have on journal culture at large.

3. Circulation

Before we can take into consideration anything like "the circulation of e-journals," we should think for a moment about just what kinds of electronic journals there are. Kling and McKim delineate 3 types of journals, each highly distinct and with its own strengths and weaknesses:

> **Pure e-journals** – the text of the pure e-journal is completely in digital form, and the article is also primarily distributed in digital form.
>
> **E-p journals** – journals is primarily distributed electronically, but may have limited distribution in paper form. Examples include the *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research* and the *Electronic Transactions on Artificial Intelligence* .
>
> **P-e journals** – journals that are primarily distributed in paper form, but which are also distributed in electronic form. Examples include *Science*, *Physical Review*, and thousands of other scientific journals. (e.g. Project MUSE, JSTOR and others)[16]

Some of these types rely upon the "Open Access Publishing Model." Because "open access" can mean so many things to so many people, I will use the "Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing" (2003),[17] a statement published by members of the biomedical research community, for a working definition:

1. Free access and license to copy, distribute and use the work with proper recognition of authorship.[18]
2. Archival access in "at least one online repository that is supported by an academic institution, scholarly society, government agency, or

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

> other well-established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, interoperability, and long-term archiving."

In other words, you can put it a document online and provide free access but in order for it to qualify as an authentic OA publication, it must be archived in a reliable and stable location. *Heliotropia* is, according to these definitions, a pure e-journal that conforms to the open access model. Scholars who plan on establishing a comparable new e-journal must take into consideration not only its initial mode of delivery but also the ways in which its accessibility may be insured over the long term. In the absence of e-libraries, all endeavors of this sort must solve this sort of dilemma on their own.

4. Use

Now that we have an idea of the political framework on which research is presumably going to be draped, we should step back a bit and consider who is going to make use of it and how. One would think that Carol Tenopir's 2003 study, entitled *Use and Users of Electronic Library Resources: An Overview and Analysis of Recent Research Studies* (2003),[19] would respond to these questions. After pouring over dozens of analytical projects from 1995 to 2003, which she divides into Tier 1 and Tier 2 studies (Eight major ongoing studies [each with multiple publications] are identified as Tier 1 studies and are analyzed in detail, while about 100 smaller-scale studies are classified as Tier 2 studies and are examined together), she provides us with numerous conclusions, including:

1. Both faculty and students use and like electronic resources and most readily adopt them only if the sources are perceived as convenient, relevant, and time-saving to their natural workflow.
2. Personal subscriptions to journals continue to decrease, so users rely more on electronic subscriptions subsidized by the library and on the Internet.
3. Most journal article readings are of articles within their first year of publication, but a sizeable minority of readings comes from materials

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

that are older than one year.

4. Browsing a small number of core journals is important (in print or electronic forms), especially for subject experts and for current awareness searching.
5. Searching by topic in an article database is important for all other purposes.
6. Users will read articles from a wide variety of journal titles and sources if available to them, although most of the readings come from relatively few journals.
7. Print is still extremely important in almost every discipline, especially so in the humanities.
8. Print remains the most popular medium for books; e-book use is still in the very early stages.
9. Most e-journal users still print out articles that are judged useful—so a printing format such as PDF is popular.

What this study fails to discover, however, is precisely which dynamics are shaping the usage habits of readers of e-journals. This is not to say that such a paper is not useful; indeed, the simple fact that Tenopir and her colleagues are even positing these questions is a great contribution in itself. Additional studies, perhaps less thorough but more to the point, have brought other sorts of information to light that respond more specifically to what potential e-editors should know. In a survey at the University of Maryland, 31% of the faculty members reported never using electronic journals; the reasons cited were unfamiliarity with how to access the journals and a lack of need because of personal subscriptions.[20] The common perception that electronic journals are of lower quality than print, however, is a problem that may be diminishing as a higher percentage of established paper peer-reviewed journals are digitized. In the late 1990s, business school faculty members surveyed at ARL institutions reported that they did not perceive electronic journals to be of as high quality as their paper counterparts. Their responses changed, however, when they were asked to

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

evaluate a well-respected print journal evolving to electronic format.[21] While more than 70% of the faculty members in one British university believe the quality of articles in electronic journals is the same as in print journals, this same group of respondents cited the top disadvantage of electronic journals as being the impression that electronic publication is not “real” publication.[22]

These considerations must naturally be kept in mind when pondering the MLA’s assertion that: “The electronic journal is a viable and credible mode of scholarly publication.”[23] If there are real psychological barriers to creating a successful e-journal (and this indeed appears to be the case especially among scholars who are not scientists), it is not sufficient simply to expect that the current dilemma in scholarly publishing will be alleviated by a different distribution system. What is of greatest importance, especially – but not only – among scholars in the humanities is the ability of a new journal to be accepted within the ranks of established traditional paper journals.

5. Peer Review

The only way that the credibility of an e-journal may be created is through a scrupulous peer review process. While this is true of any new scholarly publication, it is especially vital to those that appear free of charge in a medium that has not yet gained widespread recognition as a vehicle for the dissemination of scholarship. The MLA Statement, we will recall, calls for e-journals to be judged according to the same criteria used for print journals: «These criteria include the journal’s peer-review policy, its rate of acceptance, the nature of its editorial board and publisher, and its general profile in the field it covers.» The Bethesda Statement goes a bit further:

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

> «We reaffirm the principle that only the intrinsic merit of the work, and not the title of the journal in which a candidate's work is published, will be considered in appointments, promotions, merit awards or grants.»[24]

The importance of the reputation or "trustworthiness"[25] of the e-journal is increasingly high. Were *Speculum* or *Renaissance Quarterly* to transform their publications from completely paper- to OA web-distribution, however, their revenue base would drop precipitously, which could well cause their eventual demise. Insofar as we are now at the beginning of the e-journal age (at least with regard to the Humanities in general and to Italian Studies in particular), an entirely new paradigm must be established and, most probably, one that does not rely on the established print media leading the way. This leads to the catch-22 of new e-journals: without the support of established scholars in the field, the "authority lag" will keep e-journals in a secondary position and, as long as this is the case, many leading and untenured scholars will hesitate to sign on to e-publications. It is worth our while to take a look at one instance of this hesitation, letting it stand as anecdotal yet powerful testimony to the difficulties presented by "authority lag." Frank Domínguez, one of the authors of the MLA guidelines for evaluating with digital media, recently wrote a brief article that opened with the following sketch:

> «A promising assistant professor recently asked what I thought about publishing an article in an electronic journal housed at a prestigious institution. The question did not surprise me, because the medium had been present for all of his adult life. I urged him to be cautious, because of his rank. As someone who has been involved in the creation of electronic materials for the past two decades, I was disappointed with the conservative nature of my advice. And as I tried to come to terms with it, I realized that my reluctance stemmed in large measure from the lack of scholarly infrastructure for electronic materials, including guidelines and standards of peer review,

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

> comparable to those that ensure the quality of print materials. As a profession, we have not yet developed an academic culture that can evaluate such activities. Consequently, we are reluctant to reward electronic publications when it comes to tenure, promotion, or even yearly salary raises. Under these circumstances, I could not in good conscience recommend that any junior faculty risk spending precious time before tenure involved in activities that might not be recognized or rewarded at that crucial point in his or her career.» [26]

Despite going on to argue for «the full integration of electronic resources into academic culture and its reward system», Domínguez had decided to open his essay with a candid admission of our as yet underdeveloped research evaluation procedures. With so many question marks punctuating the general description of e-scholarship, it is no wonder that even an unabashed proponent of legitimate new media publications was disinclined to offer encouraging words to a junior colleague. Discouraging a young Hispanist's participation in e-journal publications may at first blush seem to be prudent advice, but where – we must ask ourselves – does such an unmitigated repudiation of e-publishing in the humanities eventually carry us?[27]

6. Costs

This is a hotly debated point. Estimates of how much money can be saved by switching from paper- to e-journals range wildly, from substantial[28] to nothing.[29] Moving beyond traditional print media means shifting the cost away from subscribers (principally subscriber institutions) and at times toward the researcher or the journal itself. Many e-journals in the hard sciences recoup their costs by charging the authors themselves to publish their articles.[30] It takes little imagination, however, to foresee what would happen were this model transferred to the humanities.

Some of the traditional costs of journal publishers, such as printing and distribution, have in fact been eliminated or reduced by e-journals, since they

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

shift some of the cost to readers. Printing an online document, for example, must be done at the reader's end. Pure electronic publishing considers principally the costs incurred by the peer review process and copy editing. Relative costs per article or per page (i.e. those related to peer-review and editing) therefore depend on the submission rates. Each journal must calculate its own costs relative to its editing process and decisions regarding format. The bells and whistles decided upon by a journal's editors naturally inform all economic choices.[31] Andrew Odlyzko, e-publishing guru and director of the Digital Technology Center at the University of Minnesota, has estimated that, all things considered, an article in a standard print journal runs approximately $250 per page.[32] Summing up his findings in another essay, Odlyzko builds upon his previous analyses and offers this scenario: «An editor of a much smaller journal,» such as *Heliotropia*,

> «thinks that extensive editing of manuscripts is required. In his journal, he does all the editing himself, and the resulting files are then sent directly to the printer, without any technical staff at the publisher being involved. He estimates that he spends between 30 minutes and an hour per page, and thinks that having somebody with his professional training and technical skills do the work results in a substantially better result. If we assume a loaded salary of $100,000 per year (since such work could often be done by graduate students and junior postdocs looking for some extra earnings in their spare time), we have an estimate of $25 to $50 per page, or $250 to $1,000 per article, as the cost of running an electronic journal of comparable quality.»[33]

What cannot be eliminated, obviously, is the set of costs that are related to the editing process. Even a new journal that has eschewed all traditional marketing strategies and has additionally striven to reduce costs wherever possible for the benefit of its readers is unable to escape the need for computer equipment and software, a budget for mail and telephone usage and the costs, tangible and intangible, of spending long hours editing and checking bibliographies. These expenses are endured by larger journals as

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

well, but it is only through the abandonment of the free-access model that an editor and his staff may eventually enjoy economies of scale. It is, therefore, well-nigh impossible for even the most well-meaning editorial staff to produce journal issues that approach lengths commonly associated with the traditional medium. The only choice then for journals that are to compete on a page-per-page basis for the attention of scholars is the adoption of an individual or institutional subscription system or a pay-to-download delivery mechanism. Given that specific costs depend on each e-enterprise, the final analysis on the question of relative costs is, well, absent.

7. Longevity

Closely related to the issues of archiving and "trustworthiness" is the problem of longevity of research. With regard to the MLA's statement that e-journals promise "ease of distribution, discovery, and retrieval," we should consider the advice provided by the group who was charged in 1999 by the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers to produce a «paper on what constitutes 'publication' in science in the electronic environment.» (If Italianists are waiting for a similar mandate in their own field, it is quite likely they will be gravely disappointed.) Among the group's conclusions are two points related directly to the problem of longevity in scholarly publishing:

> «It [a published work of scholarship] must be unambiguously identified (e.g. by a SICI or DOI); It must have a bibliographic record (metadata) containing certain minimal information.»[34]

Although researchers in the humanities may be bewildered by this jumble of acronyms, many of their colleagues in the hard sciences are not. In 2002, the Open Archives Initiative published their Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH). This protocol provides overviews of the possible metadata formats with an eye to enhancing precisely what the MLA sees as an already

fundamental aspect of e-publishing: i.e. ease of distribution and discovery. Two years later, the OAI published its definition of "Static Repository Specification," which would address the question of "retrieval**."** A Static Repository provides a simple approach for registering relatively static and small collections of metadata records through the OAI-PMH. These records are to be contained in an XML file that remains accessible at a persistent HTTP URL and that archives both metadata records and repository information. Retrieval information, then, becomes accessible via OAI-PMH through the standardized intermediation of a Static Repository Gateway.

While such a plan seems quite encouraging, this type of registration has thus far remained unfortunately rather utopian in practice. The fundamental difficulties in retrieval were analyzed by Ford and Harter who examined the ease of locating pure e-journals through online directories and catalogs.[35] They examined four online directories and two online union catalogs in terms of their coverage, accuracy, currency and agreement of entries for 36 pure e-journals. The study showed noticeable differences in those databases and a general dysfunctional system of archiving. A 2002 study by Kling and Callahan of the Center for Social Informatics (Indiana University) revealed that, in even the best of situations, it is difficult to maintain the accuracy of e-journal databases (which, by the way, typically make no claims to comprehensiveness).[36] The total percentage of unique http URLs that were functioning and current was 66.7%, compared to 50% current and functioning URLs overall. Anyone who has been baffled by apparently ubiquitous broken links should have no trouble whatever in seeing the problems inherent in the e-distribution of scholarly literature. Though it may be old and dusty, a nineteenth-century volume of *GSLI* – once it is placed on a library shelf – is not likely to frustrate you with the disappointing 404 ERROR. Hence, while many e-journals fulfill the first half of the open access criteria, a significantly large number, simply by virtue of limited longevity, do not manage to fulfill the second.

The question remains: if so many indexing databases are available online,

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

why is there no system to ensure to which the e-publications they point are also similarly available? Since pure e-journals and electronic databases are based on the same medium, the transition from one to the other would seem to be automatic, but that is far from the case. One potential solution for addressing both the problem of indexing and that of medium longevity is the Institutional Repository. Clifford A. Lynch, Executive Director of the Coalition for Networked Information, explains that an Institutional Repository is «a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members. It is most essentially an organizational commitment to the *preservation* of these digital materials, including long-term preservation where appropriate, as well as [to their] *organization* and *access*.»[37] Examples of this sort of system would include DSpace (MIT and HP Corp.) and eScholarship (U of CA system). But is the Institutional Repository the answer to retrieval and archival issues? Before we leap in unbounded optimism, we should take into account Lynch's caveats regarding potential dangers lurking in this type of solution. One potential disadvantage is "gate-keeping," a situation in which institutional repositories are cast as tools of institutional (i.e. administrative) strategies to exercise control over what has typically been faculty controlled intellectual work. Such a scenario would engender institutional- rather than peer-review. (You may get deans or people in IT making decisions that affect the quality of your scholarship.) Another foreseeable shortcoming is that institutional repositories may become fashionable (for the wrong reasons) in administrative circles, producing repositories that are set up hastily and without much real institutional commitment. Much of the work and time dedicated by colleagues to making their research easy to find then goes by the wayside.

8. The future

What, then, does the future hold for e-journals or, in the terminology currently in vogue, for "scholarly communication through e-media"? Andrew

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

Odlyzko predicts that «some of the coming transformations may appear uncomfortable today. For example, the notion of a final definitive version of an article, which seems so basic to scholarly publishing, is likely to fade away. Could anyone propose a definitive version of the human genome database?» he asks. «It already is a living object, constantly enlarged, corrected and updated. Increasingly, scholarly communication will take the same road.»[38] Clearly, Odlyzko is here referring specifically to the sciences; however, we in the humanities must recognize that all of our new e-publishing paradigms have been built upon the experimentation carried out over the last decade by scientists and that the lion's share of our solutions will derive at least in part from their successes.

Even if, after considering the rather chaotic nature of e-journals as it stands today, we still are tempted to throw up our hands in despair and, indeed, to go ahead and let the scientists make *all* the decisions, we should be encouraged by the inherent optimism of the MLA's Statement on Publication in Electronic Journals and by the nearly inexplicable optimism apparently shared by our Canadian colleagues. According to a study produced by the universities of Calgary, Alberta and New Brunswick for the Humanities and Social Sciences Federation of Canada,[39] the explosion in e-journal publishing over the last decade is an unqualified plus. Despite the fact that only about half of the respondents (50.9%) had ever consulted an e-journal, 87.6% of them believe that e-journals will be more widely available in the future and 66.1% plan to be involved in e-publishing personally. Nor is this cheerfulness attributable solely to youthful scientists; 34% of the respondent professors are in the humanities and 41% are full professors. What do these responses reveal about the next decade in scholarly publishing? More important still, what is the role of the individual humanist in this morass of opinions and data? If scholars in the humanities do not increasingly dedicate significant thought and energy to these issues, it seems clear that they will continue to be less able than colleagues in other disciplines to reap the potential benefits of this nascent phenomenon. Graver still is the likelihood

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

that they will face appreciable difficulties in shaping e-publication to fit their present and future needs.

Notes

[1] An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Seminar on Digital Editing at Columbia University on May 2, 2006.

[2] My principal collaborators were, and remain, Massimo Riva and Vika Zafrin.

[3] This exploration is perhaps best illustrated by the *Decameron* Web, edited since 1994 by myself and Massimo Riva, and the new Virtual Humanities Lab, both generously funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. For background on our work, see: Massimo Riva and Michael Papio, *La novella tra Testo e Ipertesto: il Decameron come modello*, in: G.M. Anselmi (ed.), *La narrativa italiana dal primato allo scacco*, Roma, Carocci, 1998, 65-85; M. Riva, *The* Decameron *Web: Teaching a Classic as Hypertext at Brown University*, in J.H. McGregor (ed.), *Approaches to Teaching Boccaccio's* Decameron, MLA, New York, 2000, 172-82.

[4] E.g., D. Mogge, *Seven Years of Tracking Electronic Publishing: The ARL Directory of Electronic Journals, Newsletters and Academic Discussion Lists*, «Library Hi Tech», 17/1 (1999), 17-25; A. Okerson, Are We There Yet? Online E-Resources Ten Years After, «Library Trends», 48 (2000), 671-94.

[5] Two notable exceptions to this observation are the highly successful *Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies*, edited by Federica Pedriali and *Griseldaonline*, published by the Italian Department of the University of Bologna.

[6] http://www.arl.org/scomm/edir/archive.html <cited 29 April 2006>.

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

[7] http://www.mla.org/scholarly_pub <cited 29 April 2006>.

[8] *Profession 2002*, New York, MLA, 2002, 172-86.

[9] *The Facts: The Economics of Publishing*, http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/facts/econ_of_publishing.html <cited 29 April 2006>.

[10] *Periodicals Price Survey 2002: Doing the Digital Flip*, «The Library Journal» April 15, 2002. Available online at: http://www.libraryjournal.com/index.asp?layout=article&articleid=CA206383. Though this study is now four years old, this discouraging trend, as your library's acquisitions staff will surely tell you, has only worsened.

[11] Orsdel and Born, table 1.

[12] The average price of Italian journal subscriptions, according to Orsdel and Born (tables 3 and 4), was $125.04. Despite being a "bargain" in comparison to Dutch ($1823.23) or American ($514.94) journals, however, subscriptions to Italian periodicals will certainly decline in the coming years, as the average periodical price is already a remarkable $749.83 and rising.

[13] Peter Suber, in his essay entitled *Promoting Open Access in the Humanities* <cited 29 April 2006> notes that «total U.S. federal funding for university research in fiscal 2001, in all fields, was about $19 billion, which constituted about 60% of all funding for university research. Of this, eight federal agencies, all in STM fields, provided 97% of this funding, and two of the agencies alone, NIH and NSF, provided $14.2 billion or 75%. By contrast, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) budget for 2002 was $124 million, less than 1% of the STM funding from the 8 leading federal agencies alone».

[14] This statement was approved by the MLA Executive Council at its 24-25 October 2003 meeting and was publishied online: http://www.mla.org/statement_on_publica. Similar pronouncements have

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

been made by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

[15] Summarized at: http://panizzi.shef.ac.uk/elecdiss/edl0001/ch0402.html.

[16] R. Kling, G. McKim, *Scholarly Communication and the Continuum of Electronic Publishing*, «Journal of the American Society for Information Science», 50 (1999), 890-906.

[17] http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/bethesda.htm

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[19] Published by the Council on Library and Information Resources and available online at: http://www.clir.org/PUBS/reports/pub120/pub120.pdf.

[20] I.F. Dillon, K.L. Hahn, *Are Researchers Ready for the Electronic-Only Journal Collection? Results of a Survey at the University of Maryland*, «Portal: Libraries and the Academy», 2/3 (2002), 375-90. See also D. King, C. Tenopir, C. Hansen Montgomery and S. Aerni, *Patterns of Journal Use by Faculty at Three Diverse Universities* available online at: http://www.dlib.org/dlib/october03/king/10king.html.

[21] C. Speier, J. Palmer, D. Wren and S. Hahn, *Faculty Perceptions of Electronic Journals as Scholarly Communication: A Question of Prestige and Legitimacy*, «Journal of the American Society for Information Science», 50/6 (1999), 537-43.

[22] H. Tomney, P.F. Burton, *Electronic Journals: A Study of Usage and Attitudes Among Academics*, «Journal of Information Science», 24/6 (1998), 419-29.

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

[23] See note 14 above.

[24] See note 17 above.

[25] The reputation of the e-journal hinges on what Kling and McKim (see note 16 above) have been termed “trustworthiness,” by which they mean that «the document has been subject to a social process that assures readers that the content of the document satisfies the norms of quality accepted by the community. Trustworthiness is typically marked by peer review process, social status of the journal, and publishing house quality, but less formally may also be based on the author’s reputation and institutional affiliation.»

[26] F. Domínguez, *The Path before Us: Suggestions for Managing the Transition of the Spanish Middle Ages to the Electronic Age*, «La Corónica», 33/1 (2004), 229-45.

[27] To be fair, we must confess that Domínguez’s arguments later in the essay are perfectly justifiable: all e-journals should adhere to the same scholarly standards to which we hold any legitimate academic publication. What is truly troublesome is that a large (albeit steadily decreasing) percentage of those who now serve on promotion and tenure committees in the Humanities are likely to find the anecdote more convincing than the evidence.

[28] A. Odlyzko, *The Economics of Electronic Journals*, «The Journal of Electronic Publishing», available online at: http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/04-01/odlyzko.html. See also Stevan Harnad, *The Self-Archiving Initiative: Freeing the Refereed Research Literature Online*, «Nature» 26.410 (April 2001), 1024-25. Available online at: http://www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/~harnad/Tp/nature4.htm.

[29] See S. Whisler, S. F. Rosenblatt, *The Library and the University Press: Two Views of the Costs and Problems of the Current System of Scholarly Publishing*, (2001) available online at: http://www.arl.org/scomm/scat/rosenblatt.html

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

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[30] In the fields of Immunology and Microbiology, according to a recent survey, 83% of scholars said they would be willing to pay to have their research published (10% of whom would pay over $1000). In the arts and humanities, however, a full 71% wouldn't pay a dime. See I. Rowlands and R. Olivieri, *Overcoming the Barriers to Research Productivity: A Case Study in Immunology and Microbiology*, Publishing Research Consortium. Available online at: http://www.publishingresearch.org.uk/overcoming_barriers.htm.

[31] J. Holoviak and K. L. Seitter, *Transcending the Limitations of the Printed Page*, «The Journal of Electronic Publishing» available online at: http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/03-01/EI.html.

[32] While the type of journal and text preparation varies considerably from one periodical to the next, I have selected his middle value of $3000 per article and adopted his notion that an average length is roughly 12 pages. See Odlyzko's *Tragic Loss or Good Riddance? The Impending Demise of Traditional Scholarly Journals*, «The International Journal of Human-Computer Studies», 42 (1995), 71-122.

[33] See note 26 above. See also S. Harnad, *On-Line Journals and Financial Fire Walls*, «Nature» 395 (10 Sep 1998), 127-28.

[34] In *Defining and Certifying Electronic Publication in Science*, A Proposal to the International Association of STM Publishers Originally Drafted October 1999; Revised March and June/July 2000. Frankel and Elliott, co-chairs. Available online at: http://www.aaas.org/spp/sfrl/projects/epub/define.shtml.

[35] C.E. Ford, S.P. Harter, *The Downside of Scholarly Electronic Publishing: Problems in Accessing Electronic Journals through Online Directories and Catalogs*, «College & Research Libraries», 59 (July 1998), 335-46.

ISSN: 1825-411X | DOI: 10.1473/stor300

[36] R. Kling, E. Callahan, *Electronic Journals, the Internet, and Scholarly Communication*, «Annual Review of Information Science and Technology», 37/1 (2002), 127-77.

[37] *Institutional Repositories: Essential Infrastructure for Scholarship in the Digital Age*, *ARL Bimonthly Report*, February 2003. Available online at: http://www.arl.org/newsltr/226/ir.html.

[38] *The Public Library of Science and the Ongoing Revolution in Scholarly Communication*, in: *Nature* web forum, Future e-access to the primary literature, Sept. 18, 2001. Available online at: http://www.nature.com/nature/debates/e-access/Articles/odlyzko.html. The Public Library of Science is available at: http://www.plos.org.

[39] The survey was conducted by telephone using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing system. The telephone numbers called constituted a random sampling of a database constructed from the faculty directories of the following universities: The University of British Columbia, The University of Saskatchewan, York University, Laurentian University, Dalhousie University, The University of New Brunswick, Laval University, University of Sherbrooke.