We are extremely pleased to nominate the Digital Humanities Incubator as a leading example of innovation in research libraries. The Incubator addresses a critical need, advances shared goals within our university, and serves a model for other institutions.

We believe that the Incubator succeeds on two counts: first, it models a hands-on, results-oriented training program designed to engage librarians more fully in digital humanities research; second, it fosters an environment of innovation essential to the future of research libraries. By achieving these objectives, the Digital Humanities Incubator demonstrates how programmatic innovation in delivering staff training can breed substantive cultural change in organizations.

We have found that, here and elsewhere, librarians far too often work on the fringes of digital humanities research projects. Librarianship today demands coordinated and executable tactics to embrace the potential of digital scholarship. The Digital Humanities Incubator leads librarians through a focused curriculum of workshops aimed at teaching project development skills especially suited to work in emerging areas such as the digital humanities. This knowledge positions librarians not only to support and encourage faculty research projects but also to develop their own research agendas and projects, frequently in ways that enrich library collections.

The Digital Humanities Incubator bridges formal or external career development, on-the-job training, and more informal learning opportunities through a program that is aligned with librarians’ existing responsibilities but distinct enough to permit experimentation, exploration, and risk-taking. Response to the Incubator among library staff has been quite enthusiastic, with nearly full enrollment at each workshop session and a slate of a dozen project proposals presented at the capstone event. As one participant put it: “The MITH Team has done some amazing work, and it is great to see the opportunity to engage in a digital project offered to librarians and archivists.”

The University of Maryland Libraries and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) are particularly worthy of recognition because the Digital Humanities Incubator offers the research library community a concrete, replicable model to engage librarians more fully in 21st-century scholarship. It grows from the expertise of one of the nation’s leading institutes for digital humanities and the strategic vision of a leading academic research library. By implementing this series, the University of Maryland is helping librarians realize their potential as researchers and innovators, even if the humanities is not their specific research interest. In the words of one participant, “I was inspired. I’m not dealing with Humanities, but I feel I could come up with a project that will fit in the broad Digital Humanities concept.” With inspiring vision, the DH Incubator is “a difference that makes a difference,” to quote Gregory Bateson’s apt words, and we enthusiastically nominate it for the Stanford Prize in Innovation in research Libraries.
Narrative Description

Statement of Innovation

Academic libraries are reinventing themselves in support of teaching, research, and public service, but organizational culture often conspires against meaningful reform. Fostering new opportunities for creativity and innovation itself requires innovation.

Participating in and supporting digital scholarship is a key strategic need for academic libraries as the materials and analytical practices of many disciplines become increasingly digital. Both collections and services must evolve in response. These changes require libraries to develop new skills among staff and to realign roles and work patterns. The University of Maryland Libraries and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) have created a unique program to develop and train librarians in new, digital skills. This program, the Digital Humanities Incubator, has not only delivered practical training but it has also raised visibility of creative and enterprising opportunities for digital work across different divisions of organization and it has contributed to a far-reaching cultural change. The Incubator’s innovation has two dimensions. First, the Incubator is a programmatic rather than an ad hoc approach to building collaboration between libraries and the expanding field of digital humanities (represented by institutional partner MITH). Second, the Incubator’s hands-on, project-based approach to digital skill development for librarians allows for a training program that is flexible and agile in responding to community needs.

Participants in the Digital Humanities Incubator are guided through a series of workshops and exercises on the process of developing digital humanities project ideas, finding data, evaluating tools, and crafting a compelling proposal for internal or external funding. Skills learned in this program are grounded in participants’ own project ideas and interests, supported by brief in-depth lectures. The program thus offers a model for nurturing digitally engaged, research-intensive librarianship. With this training, librarians can reclaim roles as authors and leaders of the academic research mission of the university—marrying information organization and curation with scholarship and public engagement through the use of digital technologies.

The Incubator also contributes directly to librarians’ ability to act as subject liaisons with faculty. By understanding the project development process themselves, librarians can better communicate the potential of digital projects to faculty, help identify opportunities that integrate library collections, and enlist faculty and student researchers in joint projects. By engaging with faculty in this meaningful way—as practitioners trained in aspects of digital scholarship—librarians are increasing their value to the campus community and supporting the university’s mission.

Beyond serving as a training program, an important function of the Incubator has been to foster an experimental culture in the Libraries. The Incubator model offers a safe place for librarians to brainstorm, learn, and grow and is but one example of a larger effort to provide an experimental culture that allows innovation to thrive. Many other solid examples exist within the University of Maryland Libraries. The Libraries’ work to engage stakeholders in an architectural redesign of the main library proved so successful the process is now a model for other campus-wide planning measures. The newly created Digital Stewardship Unit offers guidance and support for digital projects such as journal publishing. Librarians and others gather monthly over brown-bag lunches to teach each other about new programs, apps or
resources they’ve discovered. The Incubator serves as a common ground where these and other internal activities such as the work of a task force on competencies for liaison librarians

**History of Development and Implementation**

The University Libraries and MITH are longtime partners. With the university’s College of Arts and Humanities, the University Libraries have supported MITH since its founding in 1999. MITH, which can claim a successful string of digital humanities projects, made its home in the university’s main library until last year when it moved to spacious new offices in the special collections library. However, as MITH flourished—having secured funding from grantors including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Science Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Library of Congress and the Institute for Museum and Library Services—its partnership with the University Libraries lapsed.

For example: MITH’s faculty fellowship program, geared to the needs of research faculty, did not meet the needs of librarians, who had little time or expertise to pursue their own digital initiatives. Only two projects out of over a dozen in the history of MITH’s fellowships have included librarians as primary investigators. Technology often outpaced librarians’ ability to leverage it. Furthermore, severe budget limitations (hiring freezes, state-imposed furloughs, and subsequent exodus of young talent) demoralized many and stifled innovative thinking.

As a first step in reinvigorating the partnership, in 2011 the University Libraries and MITH created and funded a joint position. The Assistant Dean for Digital Humanities Research at the University of Maryland Libraries, Trevor Muñoz, is also MITH’s Associate Director. He develops joint projects between MITH and the Libraries, coordinates activities and initiatives, and leads a digital scholarship strategy along with library colleagues. These activities have crystallized as a formal, annually revised charter between the Libraries and MITH that identifies roles, responsibilities and goals for each partner. As part of that charter, the partners committed to providing support to each other’s strategic goals. The library appointed a new liaison for digital humanities, Ms. Kelsey Corlett-Rivera, while MITH opened its project development and grant writing expertise to library divisions through consultations with Assistant Director Dr. Jennifer Guiliano. These small steps to develop capacity to have the partners’ expertise “on-call” set the stage for the development of the Digital Humanities Incubator.

The Incubator involved very little overhead and was implemented using in-kind support in the form of staff time. This flexible and agile arrangement has allowed the program to adapt to serving the needs of librarians with diverse roles in the organization (including alternative schedules). The workshop cycle consisted of four workshops, each held twice. Workshops on each topic were offered once in the morning and once in the afternoon on alternate days, spaced at least two days apart. This allowed part-time librarians, library division heads, and full-time reference/subject librarians to have the opportunity to attend without having to make special work arrangements. This also allowed for librarians to repeat the same workshop content to allow for differing types of learning styles. Librarians were able to attend the first workshop, listening and taking notes, then return for the second to ask questions and further understand what they might have missed the first time. This was particularly important for the “data” workshop where participants were encouraged to scrape, manipulate, and explore data in ways unfamiliar to most librarians but crucial to much digital humanities work.

Additionally, by interlacing office hours with each workshop, the instructional team was able to revise content, post answers to questions, and facilitate immediate interventions on the project
level where needed. In part, this blended structure combining instruction with hands-on work with participants’ own project ideas allowed for quick implementation, demonstration of core concepts, discussion and reflection. Librarians attending without their own project were encouraged to join a colleague’s. This “learn and do” philosophy enabled collaboration across divisions in rewarding ways.

**Intended Clientele and Assessment**

The Digital Humanities Incubator at Maryland has been targeted at academic librarians and staff who wish to gain new skills for developing, supporting, and leading digital projects. MITH previously supported individual faculty projects through a fellowship program targeted at the College of Arts and Humanities. Faculty within the College of Arts and Humanities generally are nine month long appointments and maintain a regular schedule of leave to support their research activities. Additionally, they have regular access to University resources to support their research. Librarians, on the other hand, while they can hold faculty status are employed twelve months of the year and do not receive university-level support for their research activities.

From the beginning the Incubator was explicitly framed as an experiment to develop a more broad-based, programmatic collaboration between the Libraries and MITH. In order to assess the impact of the program, the Incubator’s directors solicited feedback from participants about their experiences. Quantitative and qualitative online surveys were distributed to librarians who participated. Assessment activities sought to explore not just the effect of the incubator on librarians’ knowledge of digital humanities methodologies and tools but also how the institutional partners (Libraries and MITH) could surface and support long-term research initiatives building on ideas first explored within the Incubator. As part of assessment, Mr. Muñoz and Dr. Guiliano also conducted individual consultations with 15 Incubator participants leading up to and following the fourth and final workshop in the series. These qualitative interviews allowed for revisions of workshop content, identification of potential projects and library partners, as well as the opportunity to identify additional resources needed from MITH and the University Libraries to support innovative librarianship.

Participants were encouraged but not required to “pitch” an idea for a digital project during the capstone event for the Incubator program. These short (5-minute) presentations drew on skills acquired during the Incubator, forcing participants to frame their research interests in terms of potential audiences, available technologies, and overall feasibility of timeframes and budgets. Thirteen librarians or teams of librarians participated in the “pitch round” during the capstone event. These presentations were evaluated by an audience of their peers from the Libraries as well as by the MITH staff. Five finalists were chosen to continue refining their proposals for a potential joint project with the MITH staff. Further joint work with MITH staff includes an additional six months of group work focusing on the creation of project prototypes and the development of a full-fledged project proposal for funding support. The selection of these “next-stage” projects was based on their potential innovation and alignment with the Libraries’ and MITH’s strategic goals.

Unsuccessful proposals also generated new digital initiatives for the Libraries by being turned back to divisions that could assist in their development. These spin-off projects—one related to crowdsourcing and one related to acquisition of basic programming skills—will be further articulated with the assistance of the Libraries’ Digital Stewardship unit during 2013-14.

Based on assessment of the program, the Digital Humanities Incubator will be sustained as a joint activity represented in the formal charter for the partnership between the Libraries and
MITH. Content created as part of the Incubator series will be released under a Creative Commons license by the instructors for use by other institutions. Significantly, the University of Maryland Libraries have committed to 20% staff release time for librarians involved in at least one “next-stage” project librarian emerging from the Incubator. Additionally, Mr. Muñoz and Dr. Guiliano will be working with the Digital Stewardship Unit and MITH to train additional instructors in the Incubator series to offer additional workshops and training in future iterations so as to insulate the Incubator from disruption by administrative leave or other staffing changes among current personnel.

Principal Players

Trevor Muñoz, Co-Director & Principal Instructor

Trevor Muñoz is the Assistant Dean for Digital Humanities Research at the University of Maryland Libraries as well as an Associate Director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH). Trevor holds an MA in Digital Humanities from the Department of Digital Humanities at King’s College London and an MS in Library and Information Science from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Trevor’s responsibilities at Maryland include developing and implementing joint programs between the University Libraries and MITH. His research focuses on issues related to curation of humanities data including data management planning, systems, and best practices. Trevor is co-editor of *DH Curation* an online resource for information about data curation in the humanities and co-organized the first Humanities Data Curation Summit intended to promote the development of sustainable practices for preserving digital humanities research.

Jennifer Guiliano, Co-Director & Instructor

Jennifer Guiliano received a Bachelors of Arts in English and History from Miami University (2000), a Masters of Arts in History from Miami University (2002), and a Masters of Arts (2004) in American History from the University of Illinois before completing her Ph.D. in History at the University of Illinois (2010). She currently is an Assistant Director at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities at the University of Maryland and a Center Affiliate of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications.

She has served as a Post-Doctoral Research Assistant and Program Manager at the Institute for Computing in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (2008-2010) and as Associate Director of the Center for Digital Humanities (2010-2011) and Research Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of South Carolina.

Dr. Guiliano’s doctoral work explores the intersection of critical sport history, race and ethnicity, and the early twentieth century through the lens of collegiate sport mascots and halftime traditions. She is currently revising her dissertation, “An American Spectacle: College Mascots and the Performance of Tradition,” which traces the appropriation, production, dissemination, and legalization of Native American images as sports mascots in the late 19th and 20th centuries. You can download the open-source dissertation.

Her post-doctoral work contributes to the growing discipline of digital humanities through her explorations of how computing transforms both the questions humanists can ask as well as the answers that can be generated with digital tools, methods, and pedagogies. Her day-to-day
responsibilities at MITH focus on project development including grant writing, project management, staff supervision, and aiding the MITH team in their digital humanities endeavors.

**Additional Contributors**
Travis Brown (Assistant Director of Research and Development, MITH) served as a guest instructor for the workshop on “Preparing & Working with Data.”

Advisors to the Digital Humanities Incubator include Neil Fraistat (Director, MITH), Patricia Steele (Dean, University Libraries), Babak Hamidzadeh (Associate Dean for Information Technology, University Libraries), Jennie Levine Knies (Head, Digital Stewardship, University Libraries), Jim Smith (Software Architect, MITH), Daniel Mack (Acting Head, Collections Management and Special Collections, University Libraries), and Gary White (Associate Dean for Public Services, University Libraries).

**Published Mission Statement**
The mission of the University of Maryland Libraries is “to enable the intellectual inquiry and learning required to meet the education, research and community outreach mission of the university.”

**Publications, Presentations, and Press**

