

Dene Grigar in conversation with Piotr Marecki

THE COMPUTER IS NOT A TOOL TO HELP US DO WHATEVER WE DO, IT IS WHAT WE DO, IT IS THE MEDIUM ON WHICH WE WORK¹

Piotr Marecki: Let's start with very basic approach to the word "lab". A few days ago, we had a conversation about differences between digital humanities and digital media field. You said something like this, that in digital humanities field lab is considered like a tool for some projects, while for example in creative digital media lab is considered almost like the destination, like the main part of the project. What do you mean and how do you understand this?

Dene Grigar: When I developed this program—the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program—I had to think of how to bring multiple kinds of people together because one of our faculty is an animator, another is a video producer, another is a coder, another is a library science person. How do you bring people like that into one place where we have a common goal and common belief system, so that we're not arguing over what we should do? And so, I developed at that time what I call the Guiding Principles, and the first guiding principle of the ten or eleven we have now is, "The computer is not a tool to help us do whatever we do, it *is* what we do, it is the medium on which we work". My faculty is not focused on taking pictures with the camera, running them through Photoshop, and then printing them and for the wall. For us, everything we do is encased in the digital world; everything is part of that world. And so, the computer becomes then the medium on which we work. That's a very different view than "The tool helps us create something".

In the most recent definition of Digital Humanities I saw yesterday on Twitter (I forgot who posted it), there was an explanation, a very short, 140-character description of what DH means. Essentially the idea was that DH answers the same question as humanities, but uses computation as the method for doing it. I would offer that's what we're interested in here, because DH is part of what we do, right? For this lab though it's looking at how computers, the computer medium, can help works created in the computer medium, live on. In a sense, we're answering some new

¹ Publication financed by the program of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education "National Programme for the Development of Humanities" for the years 2016–19 (0020/NPRH4/H2b/83/2016).

questions with computation that don't exist in the print world. These are new problems to solve with the very medium that these problems arise in. Does it make sense?

Next question, about the differences and the comparisons. We are in the electronic literature lab, and you gather a lot of old devices, a lot of materials, a lot of hardware and software. Why is this institution different, and why do you call this lab, and not for example museum. What is the difference?

This is a working lab. So, this is a *working* museum, I guess you can say. The computers have a purpose here beyond just "for exhibition". But people do walk in this room, see all these old Macintoshes, and get excited because they think it's a museum. But when they realize that these computers are here so that we can see the art that was produced for them... Maybe it's a working *library*.

Actually, in museum we can also see some work, the hardware, for example, to work.

The MoMA Library is a good example, where you can see Judy Malloy's *Uncle Roger*. You could indeed go to see that work on an emulation in another part of MoMA. If you go to the Rubenstein [Rare Book & Manuscript] Library, and you want to see Judy Malloy's work, there's 27 boxes of her materials collected. But you can't use the floppy disks to read *Uncle Roger* because they are considered too fragile to be handled. There are two cases in which you could actually see the work and when you can't. Here [in ELL] the idea is that anybody can walk in, go to the library, pull out the piece, and read anything they want, on that very machine it was intended for. You are not seeing an emulation of the work but the work in its original format.

When you see Judy Malloy's work on the Apple IIe—which is a great example—then you're looking at the computer's green screen, and that's the very green screen that the character Jenny sees when she's looking at her computer in "Terminals", the third part of the trilogy. So, when Jenny is talking about the green screen, you're looking at the work on the green screen. And you get what she is referring to. [*Uncle Roger*] is emulated—it's version 6.0. You can download from the website, but you are looking at a black background with white letters. And certainly students who look at that version don't understand what the green screen is until they see the work on the Apple IIe. The cultural context is missing for them. I think the cultural context is really important because in ELL we aren't just interested in preserving the work, we're interested in preserving the experience that humans have with a work. This ties into another concept important to my program: "People come first". People take precedence over processes, protocols, policies—all of those are secondary and only serve the interest of humans. What's primary for me as a Humanist are people; for me a human being's experience with the work of art is important. This lab tries to recreate the experience that humans had with a work back when it was first released and experienced. You know, yesterday we were fooling around with the [Macintosh]

Classic and waiting for it boot up—and it was the very hassle we had years ago with computers—you know, waiting for things to load. It is part of the experience of the work; it’s something my students don’t have to contend with but need to understand so that they realize how media, computers, artistic decisions, etc. have evolved over time.

You mentioned interfaces, but during my stay here I also realized the noises, the sounds of the computer are also very important. You also mentioned in your book, “Traversals”, for example in the chapter about Judy Malloy, that the sound when you start, for example Apple II, is extremely important. But I would argue that this is similar to the classical media archeology approach. So, is there something more, or do you consider your lab one of the media archeological labs?

I do, think so, but I think everyone of us has a different focus. In some cases people focus on hardware, and that’s valuable. In some cases they’re interested in game consoles, and that’s valuable. Everything we’re doing, I think, any attempt to preserve that experience, no matter what approach, is important. We are part of media archeology, but our focus is on art and the experience that humans had/have with art, which is part also of the computer itself—you can’t separate it. We need the computers to go with the art, but having this experience with this work and discovering it, exploring it, and finding delight, you know, in that experience. It goes beyond just the straight academic focus, and it goes into the level of what I consider to be the basic human foundation of this joy and delight and sublimity. We as humans find the way to transcend our human experience, finding something beyond ourselves. I think that’s the reason I’m so attracted to the electronic literature over any other type of literature, besides maybe ancient Greek, which I still adore. I love the ability for art to surprise us, to excite us.

I look at the most recent work I’ve just been crazy about, Alan Bigelow’s “How to Rob a Bank”. It’s so freaking amazing what he did, the playfulness of the social media, without using any words outside this media event. And then there’s “All the Delicate Duplicates” by Mez Breeze and Andy Campbell. That work is visually stunning. You know, you explore, cave-like, through this experience, this kind of intellectual environment. It’s extremely visual and oral. And they’re both different experiences, those two works. One is really funny and dark, and the other is dark and very deep and, you know, heavy. But they both touch the spirit, and the capacity of this thing we call the computer to make them possible—well, that is amazing to me, you know?

We’ve been arguing that the aura of this reading experience, participating in the text like this, is very important for you. What kind of theoretical approaches or theory helped you build this lab in such a way? Was it your idea, or did you also took from some others’ ideas, to create such a space?

No one’s every asked me that question before.

I went to a Ph.D. program that was interdisciplinary. We had to study aesthetics, literature, and history of ideas. We had to do a dissertation that embraced all three, that brought them all together in the one thing. And so, my literary area was ancient Greek. I love ancient Greek literature, and I learned ancient Greek to be able to do the dissertation on Homer's *Odyssey*, and translated a whole lot of it. I also translated plays, Euripides' and Sophocles'. Having worked with ancient texts and knowing how fragile they were and how many have disappeared—how we don't have but a few examples of Sappho's poetry. That's an exaggerated example, but I was made aware of what people have done over time to preserve or not preserve things. I also studied hypertext as a grad student. I mean, I essentially became interested in computer-based literary art: Hypertext, that kind of stuff. And then my history of ideas focus was feminism in cyber-culture, cyber-feminism. Bringing those three things together led to this path of where I'm headed.

I held on to my computers as much as I could. When I bought my first Mac in the '86, I realized at that point that I could draw a straight line on that computer better than I could with a T-square, and I began creating... I had a business at that time, creating catalogues and things like this, for wine industry, and I was able to make the catalogues much better than the old-fashion analogue way. But I also realized I can make art that was indigenous to the machine itself. I discovered HyperCard in about 1988. I was playing around with the HyperCard but not making anything, really. But '91 is when I met Nancy Kaplan, and she introduced us [graduate students] to the Storyspace. I began making Storyspace hypertexts and, then, began buying hypertext works other people published. The first one I bought was *afternoon, a story*, then I got *Victory Garden* after, then I bought *its name was Penelope*. Many of the ones in this cabinet I bought. Because I owned those works and wanted to continue reading and teaching them (because I was teaching cyber-culture in 1998, 99), I kept my computers. It just became not so much theoretical, as much as much as a practical approach. At the time there was no theory [of digital preservation of electronic literature] to underpin this stuff. This was all kind of new, you know. If today I was to point to theories, I mean there's a lot of folks writing about this now, Jussi Parikka, Lori Emerson, Matt Kirschenbaum. There's a lot of folks doing that kind of work.

I write my own theory now, the "Sappho Syndrome" chapter, you know, points to that. But I'm much more of a pragmatist about this work. I have a mission, and that is to document as much of this early work as possible—this fragile work. That also includes now Flash. The task is getting bigger. Once I realized I was having to do more than just works made with HyperCard and Storyspace—that there was also Flash—this is when I got serious about the lab. I'm collecting [mobile devices] for preserving apps right now.

Yesterday we opened Edward Falco's "A Dream with Demons", and one of the disks is already corrupted, so you know, unreadable. It's not going to be long before all of them end up that way. I can keep buying new copies of e-lit from Mark Bernstein [owner of Eastgate Systems, Inc.], which I will continue to do, but at some point

these computers will be gone, I will be dead, and those floppy disks will be gone as well. So this stuff needs to be documented in the way that Sappho's work is documented through time, as was Homer's, as was Euripides', as was everybody else's that I admire.

Yes, but when we compare it with, for example, these ancient works, we're still using "emulators", we perceive these works through...

There's nothing wrong with emulators, and that's going to continue, but my interest is preserving the experience with that work, which is what "Pathfinders" intends to do. With Pathfinders you can watch someone experiencing a work in their Traversal, and see how they're using their fingers on the keyboard, how they're looking at the screen. You can see what it was like to look at something on a small screen, as opposed to this size screen [at a 20" iMac]. It's a different experience.

A good example of what I mean was the exhibition at the Library of Congress Exhibit that Kathi Inman Berens and I did in 2013. We had that computer behind you—that G3 iMac, the one in blue, that beautiful little computer right there. I shipped it to Washington DC. I also took my copy of "Myst" that I bought when I was younger. I showed it on that computer at the exhibit. When the doors opened, people ran in—there were 750 people that came to our exhibit over the course of three days. Kids came barreling in, and they saw these old computers, they saw *that* computer, and they said like "Oh my gosh! We get to play games!" But they couldn't understand why the interface was so little on that computer. They wanted me to make it bigger. They wanted the sound to be better, and they wanted to be able to do other things beside just hit the arrow keys to move around the environment. They kept asking, "What's wrong with this game?" That experience was important to capture, in the sense that when *Myst* came out, our screens *were* little, and we were *excited* about using four keys to move around, you know? We didn't have the kind of technology available today. Showing people how things were done twenty years ago is important to do. They can see where we came from, how we got here, and perhaps where we are going.

So I asked about theoretical approaches, and your answer is almost like... when you started to do that, preserving, collecting all those materials, there were not a lot of such approaches. But all of them are popular now, like platform studies, media archeology. So can you trail some of the history of this lab, your previous projects which were in the same area, like preserving, documenting all this stuff; and can you also mix it with your personal experience? Because I think it's very important for this... When I arrived here, when you first started you said, "This is computer I bought, this is my computer from my office from the 80s, and that one is from the 90s". And I think that's also why you designed this lab, putting in a lot of your personal experience. You have a lot of links with the history of Apple...

Not just Apple. My first computer was actually in 1982, the IBM that the University of New Orleans bought me to do mail merge activity. I was running the recruiting office at the time, and I had to send out thousands of letters every month to students, parents, schools, and advisors. We couldn't type them fast enough, so we got an IBM. I was using WordStar. It was arcane. I couldn't just use one key to do one thing. I had to learn to combine keys, etc. It was the same later with my Greek software program. I had to type two or three keys on the keyboard to make one diacritical mark. This made working on a computer arduous and not a lot of fun. I actually *freaking* hated it. But when my fingers touched the Macintosh in 1984, I thought, "Oh my God, now this makes sense to me, this is beautiful, this is amazing". And, you know, there was no counterpart to that in the Windows world yet. That came a decade later.

How old were you then?

In the '84 I was 30.

So what was your position?

In '84 I owned my own business. I left the university in '83 and started a design and marketing company. I was using old-fashioned methods of making catalogues and wine label designs, like, using a T-square and an exacto knife. When I touched the Mac, I said "Oh my gosh, now I can see how to make this work". In '86 I could finally afford one which I couldn't do in '84. In '86 [my first husband and I] got our first Mac. I think it cost almost like \$3000. It was very expensive. But that computer in '86 was my computer in my first years in graduate school, and then I bought the LC II, which I just adored. It offered color, which meant I could design with color. In 1993, I taught myself to code my first webpage on command line.

So what was your first project?

It was academic. My first project was for my dissertation, which was to track down every instance of the *Odyssey* in the arts, starting with the Middle Ages to the present, in literature, ballet, opera, symphony, painting, whatever it was—and hypertext—and studying how Penelope was portrayed. My first round of research left me with about 10 or 15 works, and my professor said "Oh, that's good". I told him that I thought there was more. At that point I had been using the internet since 1990—I had my first internet account at the University of Texas in Dallas in 1990. This meant I was able to get into library databases, which at the time were opening up to users. I was doing my research online, which few people were doing at the time; it was very rare. I went to Princeton's library database, I went to Oxford's. I went to a library in Vienna, Austria. I was all over the world, getting into library databases... I ended up with 346 instances of Penelope in the arts. My professors thought that 50 would be good, and I ended up with seven times that.

Now what do you do with all this data? I had so much data. I decided to put everything on-line. I made a webpage where I put research, and I posted a notice of my

website on “The Humanist”, asking people to look over my findings and let me know if they knew about other works I may have missed. My major professor was very concerned that I would lose my dissertation topic, that somebody could take my work and write their paper first—then my research would not be unique, and I couldn’t finish my dissertation. I laughed because my belief was that sharing was a good idea, that sharing is what we do on the net, right? Everything on the web should be free, right? Secondly, I told him that I believed that collaboration was the best way to do research, and I knew this because in my translations of Homer’s work I was working with a colleague. The two of us were graduate students and translating together. Of course we could go faster together than one of us alone could. And so we were doing this collaboration. And my third response to him was, “I’ve already read all these works, it’s going to take someone a long time to catch up with me. And there’s no one else interested in this topic that I know of, I think I’ll finish”. And I did. But that experience of going through the research and all of that... I mean, I fell in love with the computers in ’84 and continued falling in love with them. I couldn’t go back to pen and paper after that. I still have a hard time with pen and paper.

But the beginnings of the lab. To get to that question... Because I was collecting this work, and I had computers, I just kept these computers. In 2008 I chaired the Electronic Literature Organization conference and curated an exhibit. I actually decided to do *three* exhibitions: the first one would be at a local gallery downtown, the second was at the community college that partners with the university—so the students there can see this work—and the third was at the WSUV campus. This last one was the “early pioneers” exhibit. What that allowed me to do was pull things out of my library, which I had, to show at that exhibit. But I didn’t have enough computers at the time. I had only, I think, six at my home. By the time I opened my doors to the lab I had sixteen, but I had eight at the time, in 2008, which included my university computers. I had a collection of the work that I could show on these eight computers, but I wanted to show more work—so I needed more computers. One of my former students, who was as geeky about the computers as I am, collected Macintoshes, which was what I needed for this work, because much of the early Eastgate works were basically produced for Macs. I contacted Jeff, and I said “Jeff, here’s what I need, do you have these computers?” and he did, so he lent me another eight computers. Because of that, I was able to show this beautiful work to people who hadn’t seen it in 10 or 15 years—or ever.

And that happened in 2008?

2008.

So in 2008 you had sixteen...

I had sixteen available to me.

This were the origins of Electronic Literature Lab, yes?

Yes, that's the origins, and because after that happened I realized there was a need for it. The response to the exhibition was so strong, and the students here who didn't know about this stuff also were excited. They thought it was really cool. People who came to the exhibit and hadn't seen the work in a long time were also excited about seeing the work again. I thought to myself, "Hell, this is a great idea". I went to the university and asked for space. It took two years to find some. I had, by that point, bought those computers from Jeff, and so I started with sixteen computers.

Speaking of 2008, how was the lab landscape in that time? What kind of labs were your inspiration, did you have any...

There was nothing *that I knew of* that existed. If there were labs, I really didn't know about them. I mean, I don't think Lori started hers until later than that. And I don't know about any Nick... I don't know when Trope Tank started. I didn't think I was the only person doing this—I don't have that grandiose vision of myself—but if other labs existed, *I just* didn't know. If people were talking about it, I didn't hear about it. Social media was new. In 2008 people were just starting to get online in Facebook and Twitter (I started on Twitter in 2008, and Facebook in 2007, I think). But most of my academic friends were not yet on these things.

So in that time did you use this name, "Electronic Literature Lab"?

I called it "Electronic Literature Lab". I called it "ELL".

So the history of this lab is now, like, nine years? What were the most important changes in the history of this lab?

Once I realized what I was doing... I mean, once I started to get a grip on what the scope was, I began to collect mindfully. But it took Anne Balsamo coming here to give a talk at the university for me to understand how the lab could contribute meaningfully to the notion of scholarship.

Anne walked around in the room, and said, "Oh my God, this is really amazing. You should write a grant around this. This is important, what you can do, you can take things out of your library and experience them on that computer, that's important". And I said, "Oh, that's good to know", because I was just doing this, because I thought it was good for me, to be doing this, you know. "No, no, you should be doing something with this". And because of her instigation, Stuart [Moulthrop] and I began working together on the Pathfinders project. Stuart was at a conference with Anne, and she said, "I saw Dene's lab. You guys really got to do something", because he was talking about doing along the same lines. So Anne Balsamo was crucial for spurring us on to write the Pathfinder's NEH grant, which got me on the path.

What was the date when she visited?

I want to say 2011-ish, '12-ish. Susan Schreibmen, who's another important DH scholar, saw my computers. She came to the MLA 2012 conference in Seattle where

Kathi, Lori and I had curated an exhibition of electronic literature. So, she also encouraged me. Just having people do this made me realize it was a good idea. By myself I would never have thought it would matter in scholarship in the way I am doing it now.

Speaking of the amount of the hardware, between 2008 and 2017, how many computers do you have?

I have 60 now. Once people realized I was collecting, they began to donate their old computers to me. Sometimes it was a matter of me needing a particular system software or feature found on a particular piece of hardware, and I'd get Jeff to help me find it. He helped me buy everything. And then at some point a year ago—I think I had 48 at that point—he decided he was going to get rid of all his Macintoshes because he had so many and he was getting ready to move, so I bought what I could and he gave me the rest. He ended up giving me software manuals, software... I mean, I got everything you can imagine. You know, every [Macromedia] Director version. Early Photoshop. MacPaint. About a week later, he contacted me and said, "I'm going to give you everything else I've got". So he brought another load of computers, software, etc. to the lab. Okay, so I own this stuff people are donating to me, but at some point, I'm letting this go to someone else. I'm trying to train as many students as I can so that they can continue the work as long as possible.

So 60 max, mostly...

Yes, and I so many because I have backups of important computers, like the Classic. I've six Classics. I have a lot of iMac G3s; I have another Apple IIe on the way. I have two of the "Lampshade" Macs. I have three G4 Towers. I have backups of hardware needed for the works I had in my library. I do have two PCs running versions of Windows.

How about software, speaking of the amount?

We are collecting software and have a large collection of it along with the manuals that go with them.

How about creative works, for example those that you're using? This is very important for this lab...

Yeah, I've got 300 roughly. Some need HyperCard 1.0 and 2.0. I've got early versions of Storyspace, for others. I have other software needed to run the works in my library.

What was really cool about working under Nancy Kaplan [at UTDallas] is that she and Stuart were friends with Mark Bernstein, and when she got the beta version of something, she would share with us. So I had beta versions of Storyspace. We got to see what it looked like at this version, here's what it looks like step further, here's

a step further... And you could see the progression of the software in that. And we did the same thing with the HyperCard.

What else is unique in this collection?

I've got that computer behind you, the G3 iMac. You know, on it is Netscape Communicator, which allows me to look at Talan Memmott's "Lexia to Perplexia". It was created in 2000, so that it's running on the right browser. And because I have had the internet capped to the speed of the period works circa 2000 were originally running, it means they run at the right speed.

I also asked about this Apple's Macintosh stuff. In my opinion it's very important for this lab, and also very unique. For example when compared to Media Archeology Lab, where Lori has different platforms, Nick also has got these different platforms. That's why I asked you about your first contact with the computer. You said there was IBM and you decided to connect with Macintosh. At that time you also had the opportunity to use Commodore, Atari, Amiga all of this stuff, but you didn't mention it.

I played "Pong", so my first game "console" was that one. I couldn't afford it because I was making \$499 a month as a receptionist at the Houston Chamber of Commerce. But a guy I was dating *could*, so in 1976 when I was dating him, we would go to his apartment and play "Pong". I was fascinated by it. But I felt that consoles were marketed to boys. If you look at all the ads, there were always boys in the picture. So I didn't... I don't know if this affected me as radically as I think it does now, but I didn't see it as something for *me*. I didn't see that as *my thing*, because there were always little boys playing on these computers, and that wasn't me. I was already in my twenties, thirties. But when I would go to visit my family, my cousins, my nephews, I would play on their consoles with them. I loved to do it, I mean, I played "Zelda", I played on Ataris, I played on a lot games. But I didn't buy consoles or games—until *Myst*, which definitely seemed aimed at me.

But on the other hand there was a lot of almost literary stuff, like for example interactive fiction designed for those computers.

My early interest in interactive fiction came from playing in MOO/MUD-based environments. I'd also play interactive fiction work like *Zork*, so my experience with gaming really was a computer-based gaming experience, with these kind of interludes when I'd go and visit my family and play games on other platforms. I should mention that I played and liked games on the Game Boy, and got to experience that platform before it was released in the United States. But it was called *Game Boy*, not a *Game Girl*, or *Game Kid*. It just seemed that it was not aimed at me. My experience with digital media was deeply influenced by Kaplan and the folks in my graduate program, from 1990 to 1995. And that was the Storyspace hypertext world.

So it was very important for your biography...

Yeah, it's really important. And HyperCard. But I was playing with HyperCard before Storyspace. At the time, the Apple Corporation put out a beautiful catalogue that I could get for free at Kinko's. It contained places I could write to for free software. A lot of this was work produced with HyperCard. I remember buying one about the Great Philosophers of the World—or something like that on HyperCard. I remember getting a copy of the “Literary Machines” by Ted Nelson at some point. Before the browser was released, I was playing with MUDs. After the browser became popular and ubiquitous, I shifted my own work, like a lot of people, to the web and net art.

I'm asking because for such approaches, like platform studies, platforms are crucial. But...

I love platform studies.

You design the view of the world through different platforms you use. So can you say that you identify with the Macintosh, with Apple...?

I do because so much of the early digital media art and literary works were produced for it. It was only later when Microsoft won its court case with Apple and was able to produce Windows for PCs that we saw works produced for both platforms. But really there was not much choice before that. You had bpNichol producing work with DOS, which was fantastic. You had those examples. But it was Eastgate Systems, Inc. that was functioning as a publisher of hypertext literature with a catalogue of works one could buy that influenced many of us interested in this kind of media. I mean, Judy Malloy was so unique in the sense in that she had ARTCOM publishing her work in 1986.

When Andy Warhol wanted to have some contact with the computer he decided to do some stuff on Amiga. For example, there was a bunch of stuff...

I was a research assistant for an art professor who was producing computer art on Amiga. This was in '92, so I was familiar with it. But that was art, not literature. I took a painting classes from him, and when I put words on the canvas, he told me that it was “crap” because words belong to literature and images belong to art—and the two are separate. He made it clear that there is a distinction between what he was doing and what hypertext authors were doing. And I couldn't mix them up. Even though I argued that Picasso put the words on his canvases decades before, he said no, *you're not Picasso*.

But what about interactive fiction? You don't have the interactive fiction works here, they were designed for different platforms. And there's even more literature, computational literature than there is hypertext...

I do have them, but they are on 5¼[-inch] floppies for that computer [Apple IIe]. So, I have some.

So sometimes it is said that one of the most important parts of labs, doing research in such a context as a lab, is the output, which is not very common in traditional humanities where people were just producing text. Here we can do research, we can use some tools, and you can have, what some people are calling output, which is very common for science, but not very common in the humanities, for example sharing, or discussing some ideas, concepts or stuff like this. Speaking of your lab, what would you call the most important output you created?

I think methodologies are very important. That's one of Stuart's and my major contributions to the field—methodology. That's what *Traversals* and *Pathfinders* do pretty well.

You said methodology, but I would say collaboration that is also very important in this field, especially in this context. What is unique, speaking of situation here? For example you have librarian that works with the projects. Why people with such a knowledge are very important for you?

When I first started, it was just me working in the lab. Then I was able to hire a student to help me to do some things—create jewel cases for CD-ROMs and make copies of things. So I've always been able to hire one student to help me. I have Greg [Philbrook], my Technical and Instructional Specialist. But now with the funding I got through the distinguished professorship, the university for the ELO, and other sources, I now have another professional in the room with me, Nicholas Schiller, a trained librarian. That made three people working with me. Then I have added three more students, all who are helping me with documenting the works in my collection. One of them focuses on my games, one on electronic literature, another to do content development, and another to handle the documents. I also have invited 11 people to be affiliates in my lab. Some of them are from my own faculty, but mostly they are people from around the region, from Lewis and Clark College, University of Washington, Pacific Lutheran, who can come here and work with us as well.

But what is their interest, mostly?

Last summer I taught digital documentation for the first time at the DHSI [Digital Humanities Summer Institute]. I taught 18 people, most of them were librarians and archivists. They told me that what we were doing was not being taught elsewhere, and that they needed to know this information. And from that 18 I invited the ones that were located in the region to be part of my lab.

Because sometimes it is said that besides methodology, tools, people, teams, collaboration, one of the most important parts of the lab is the space. Did you design your space, is it important for you and why, what is unique?

We have to have a space; we can't work without it. The space I had originally was actually bigger, with more cabinet space. But it was located across campus, and

I couldn't get there as often. When the chance came to move to move to Skybox, which is where we are now, I jumped at it. It was close to my office and classroom. Its large open windows make it possible for it to showcase the computers and library, which meant a lot of visitors to the university can be brought here and see it.

But how did you design this space? Is the history of computers important for designing the space?

I designed the lab so that the computers were placed in order by computer age and by operating system because I just want to be able to find what I needed quickly. I didn't want to have to say, "Okay, where is that computer?" I had to beef up the electrical system in the room to accommodate my collection. As it is right now, I can turn on all 20 computers on the counters and not blow out the electricity in the building. You may also notice that there are computers on shelves on the walls and computers stuffed in every corner of the room. These are backups. Everything I need for any work in my library is sitting on the counter ready to be booted up and used. Because I have close to 300 works, along with books and other objects, I turned the cabinet that was already in the room into space for my library. We use the table in the middle of the room for documenting work and for meetings. Certainly more room to work would be better. There is no place to fix computers, right now. The light tent we use for photographing works is in the way. But key for me is having computers ready to use.

Last question, about the financial aspect of this initiative. Is this lab supported by the university, who's the owner of this hardware...?

I own mostly everything. I either bought it myself, or it was donated to me. I also own the software. A few things are owned through the university. When people donate to me I give them a choice: Do you donate to the university or do you donate to me? Because if it goes to the university, if I have to leave here, it stays at the university. If they donate to me, then it stays in the collection wherever I am. The truth of the matter is that right now the lab is contingent upon me. That's just the truth of it. So I don't think the university would want to worry about what to do with this stuff, unless I made the step to donate the lab and its contents to it, which I'm hoping to do. In the meantime I'm writing grants around my lab and spending my own funds.

Do you have some grants from different, like, institutions, private sponsors?

Yes, sometimes there are private foundations... The NEH gave us our first grant and that supported students because I don't have to buy any equipment. But I gave students fellowships, and I was able to pay for, you know, travel to conferences.

Around such a lab, on the campus, in such a context, did you manage to get some money, for example for this year, next year, next term... Do you need plan, like a strategy for this, how it looks like here in States?

It's maybe different in the U.S. than for Europe, I mean you may get support. We have to go out and find ours most of the time. Universities want to support their own faculty, but governments don't necessarily focus on this unless it's through a grant. So you write the NEH grant, which is a federal government grant to support you. A lot of small foundations could support you, too. My university awarded me a distinguished professorship, which comes with funding for two years for the lab. That is *great* support, but at I am already writing grants in anticipation of the years after that support ends.

So what is your next step?

The next step is I'm writing some bigger grants. I'm writing a grant to fund our work in the lab.

But for example, speaking of the research projects... The future of the lab. Because now you are able to document all this electronic writing. Are you thinking about some other projects?

My next project... I mean, I'm working on "Pathfinders 2", that's what funding is for. I've got Carolyn Guyer and Michael Joyce coming in for that. I'm setting up a documentation series, which includes some of the "Traversals"... That's going to be another book—you know, a "Pathfinders"—like book on Scalar. I also have a book that's in production right now, with James O'Sullivan on electronic literature, so I'm waiting for that to be finished, hopefully this spring. And I just submitted a proposal for another book on feminist war gaming. Those are the projects that are lined up. But mostly, all I really want to do is just to sit down in the lab and document that work that's in there. I mean, I could do it day and night. Along the way, I'm finding things that are incomplete with ELD and fixing those. Just working to get e-lit documented however and wherever I can. There is always work to do in here.

I had some interviews from the lab projects where there was the question: what makes your lab a lab? So there are some people pointing at, for example, coffee maker, because that's how some people created community...

To me a studio is a very personal place for production, whereas a lab is where many people work together on projects that have some sort of theme like biology labs that work on cancer, environmental science lab that works on parasites in the water. You might have four different projects going on at the same time, but everyone is working on that thing. And that to me is what lab does. And it's also work that can be replicated. You don't necessarily want to replicate art. You want to replicate *process*. And so we're developing processes and are able to then share these so that other people can use them. To me that's it. And we do lab reports—I never did a studio report in my life...

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