

Editors' Introduction

Sophie Ziegler, Leah Duncan

Y'all. This has been quite a year. A lot has happened, and we doubt anyone's made it through unchanged.

As we write this, at the end of 2022, we feel compelled to reflect on the many things that are different since our last issue. As an editorial team, we've learned a lot about what it means to ask for the time and expertise of our colleagues. The *Journal of Critical Digital Librarianship* was founded on the idea that publishing timely ideas and case studies can (1) respect the time and expertise of the authors and reviewers we work with; and (2) act as a means of community building. Concerning the first point, we've learned quickly that we're all stretched to our limits. As journal editors, we don't want to add to the stress of our colleagues in the field, many of whom are already navigating excessive job expectations. As such, we made the decision to abolish deadlines. We now work at the speed of the authors. If check-in dates are helpful, we'll help set them; but in general, we acknowledge that this project is one small part of everyone's life, and that it'll happen eventually (or in some cases maybe not), and that's okay. This deadline-free approach has meant that we are publishing only one issue this year (instead of the two we originally planned), and, if we're being honest, it might mean this project has a limited lifespan. Be that as it may, for now we think this approach has helped us work with authors to craft meaningful submissions without adding to the burnout we see all around us. Our publishing process carries its own challenges and frustrations, but we do hope it remains a rewarding experience for our authors and reviewers.

As to the journal being a means of building community, we see the beginnings of success. We've certainly had a chance to bring together authors and reviewers who might not have met otherwise. And we certainly feel like we're building strong relationships with everyone active participating in the journal's workflow. Over the next year, we'll continue to brainstorm new avenues to build community, perhaps with meetups at conferences or even a conference of our own someday.

But we also feel that the professional community is changing. Within the field of digital librarianship, a lot of us are simply stepping away from the profession completely. We don't have hard numbers, but anecdotal evidence (which is to say: talking to people we know) it seems like

libraries are losing a lot of talented people.¹ Indeed, even one half of *JCDL*'s editorial team (Sophie) has stepped away from their full-time library job. While there are many reasons people leave librarianship, we think a lot about the role of critical engagement. Is librarianship, and in particular, digital librarianship, ready for critical evaluation from within? How many of us are leaving the field after determining that it is not? How does a journal like this one, which aims to surface and promote critical approaches to digital librarianship, fit within this current moment when so many exciting new projects are starting, so many new directions are being explored, but yet so many people are leaving from frustration?

And all of this is happening against the backdrop of a collapsing Twitter. Though it was never without its shortcomings and frequent toxicity, Twitter has long served as a means for many of us in the field to find each other and to build real connections. It's hard to overstate the importance of Twitter to this journal. That was where we first connected to many of the authors who contributed to our first issue, and that's where we most effectively advertised and promoted and connected with new authors. As we write this, Twitter seems to be in freefall, with record numbers of users leaving the platform to avoid the new owner's special brand of toxicity. We have yet to find a way to mourn for the potential loss of this platform for our community, nor can we yet fully appreciate the effects this will have on our ability to effectively communicate developments in digital librarianship.

All of this is on our minds as we wrap up this new issue, and the pieces in this issue specifically address the changes we're seeing in the field. First, we're delighted to include Sophie's interview with Diego Pino Navarro. The first piece to take advantage of our new rolling publication model, the interview has been available as a pre-print since January 2022, but it feels as fresh and relevant as ever. Themes such as belonging, identity, and community respect shape the conversation, as Navarro explains the motivation behind launching a new digital library software suite. Navarro invokes the role of empathy in ongoing digital library software development, and the need for a digital library system that empowers local control of digital items and metadata. This empathetic approach, according to Navarro, resists the capitalistic impulse for continuous growth and instead prioritizes generosity and care.

The role of care is also central in Shira Pelzman and Kelly Besser's case study, "Toward Ethical and Inclusive Descriptive Practices." They describe the process of completely revising the descriptive process of archival material and digital library content. Redescription is a big theme currently in archives, digital archives, and special collections. We're excited to add this case study to the current wave of literature on the topic, particularly because Pelzman and Besser add an institutional insight we haven't seen in many other case studies. In their paper, they reveal the importance of a library-wide reimagining of descriptive practices. We get a view of how

¹ In fact there are whole online community spaces popping up for former and soon-to-be-former library workers. See, for example, GLAMedOut on Discord.

departments across the UCLA Libraries came together to change decades-old practices. There is much for us to learn from, and aspire to, in their account.

The theme of mutual growth and co-learning is central to Ben Chiewphasa and Matthew Sisk's article, "Leveraging Critical Information Literacy to Develop Social Justice-Minded Data Literacy Competencies." They investigate how a community of practice inclusive of librarians who work with data in different ways (collections as data, information literacy, data services, etc.) can promote and strengthen various critical approaches to librarianship (critical information literacy, CritQuant, etc.). Chiewphasa and Sisk argue that justice-oriented librarians across the field can work more efficiently to undo the historic harms of librarianship when they break through silos and focus on what their varying positions hold in common.

Critical engagement within the field of GIS is explored in depth in Lena Denis's article, "From Mapping Place to Mapping Space in Library GIS Work." Denis argues for considering the difference between "place" (specific points on a map) and "space" (geographically framed relational networks) when planning and guiding GIS work in libraries. She shows readers that GIS librarians can better assist patrons while also developing awareness of oppressive cartographic traditions by incorporating non-Western and other modules of map making.

We're excited to share these articles with you. We believe they represent important and timely critical investigations into what digital librarianship can be. As we watch this year end, we hope this issue offers a glimpse into a world that we can create; a lack of imagination is often a reason for inaction, and we hope that reading these articles spark new imagined futures. We're endlessly thankful to the authors in this issue. Open peer review is not easy and it is not quick. It means talking face-to-face about shortcomings and challenges. The end result is very often stronger than otherwise possible, but we know it's not always an easy journey. All of this, of course, could never be possible without the reviewers who generously volunteer their time, energy, and expertise and do so with gentleness, grace, and determination. Many of the same people also serve as copy editors and step forward for various other tasks as we scramble to keep track of all the moving parts. All reviewers are listed on the journal website. If you know any of them personally, or happen to meet them, we hope you'll let them know you appreciate their work (and maybe offer to buy them a coffee, tea, or adult beverage).

With deep appreciation and hope for the future, we release this issue into the world.

Sophie Ziegler & Leah Duncan
December, 2022