

Facilitated Peer Review Committee Report, 2012-2013

With Gratitude:

The Facilitated Peer Review Committee members thank the pilot project scholars, Brian Keith and Bonnie Smith, and expert peer reviewers, Emily Backe and Kim Burhop, for their review supporting both peer review of the pilot project and improving the whole of the facilitated peer review process.

Thanks go to the committee members for the time, insight, thoughtful reflection, and engaged discussion in making possible the pilot and supporting future processes.

Facilitated Peer Review Committee Members:

- Sophia Acord, Associate Director for the Center for Humanities and the Public Sphere, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Alan Dorsey, Professor of Physics and Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (1/2012 - 4/2012)
- Rebecca Jefferson, Librarian for the Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica, George A. Smathers Libraries
- Betsy Simpson, Chair of the Cataloging and Metadata Department, George A. Smathers Libraries
- Laurie Taylor, Digital Humanities Librarian, George A. Smathers Libraries (Chair)
- Ricky Telg, Professor of Agricultural Education and Communication, IFAS

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Executive Summary

The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries created the Facilitated Peer Review Committee in 2012 to establish a facilitated peer review process to support peer review of alternative scholarly works for the entire campus and to do so specifically in relation to the tenure and promotion process. Such a process emerged as a critical need across many fields to support scholarly efforts in multimedia publication, data curation, publicly engaged scholarship, collaborative works, and other forms of alternative scholarly products that do not fit within established disciplinary traditions. In order to support these needs, the committee activities and accomplishments for 2012-2013 include creating the facilitated peer review process with supporting documentation, and testing the process with supporting a pilot project.

As currently designed, the Facilitated Peer Review Committee is akin to members of a journal editorial board, a publisher's on-staff editors in providing the framework for peer review, or the program officers for a granting agency that supports and facilitates the experts who are conducting peer review. The committee establishes and refines the necessary policies, procedures, and documentation; locates the appropriate experts to conduct peer review; and supports the process of peer review as performed by experts. Peer review is conducted by experts in the field.

Committee members had rich backgrounds and experiences that informed and provided particular insights that enabled creating this process. These backgrounds included familiarity with administrative procedure, awareness of and involvement with alternative scholarly works, expertise from service as peer reviewers (for journals, conferences, grant proposals, and other scholarly forms), and expertise for the tenure and promotion process at UF with service on tenure and promotion committees. During the past year, the committee developed the process and documentation with all materials available on the committee website. After creating the process, the committee supported the facilitated peer review of an alternative scholarly work for the pilot project. The committee found the pilot to be successful in terms of supporting the needs of individual scholars, institutional review and process needs, and the needs associated with peer review for improvement and validation for scholarly rigor. The scholars and peer reviews for the pilot project also provided positive feedback on the process.

Based on the activities and accomplishments to date, the committee members recommend continuing the Facilitated Peer Review Committee. Several current committee members will rotate off, and new members will need to be appointed. After the new members are appointed and oriented, the committee will need to refine the process with terms of service for members and will revise the current charge appropriately. As with the initial committee, a minimum of five and preferably six members are recommended and a similar mix of diverse backgrounds and expertise areas should be represented on the committee for expertise and experience in

alternative scholarly works, administrative processes, and peer review for different venues and types of scholarly work. It is recommended that all members commit to approximately five hours per month for the committee, with the committee to develop new guidelines and recommendations if the need results in a demand that exceeds this time commitment. With the new members and these agreed upon parameters, the committee would then be available to support UF scholars by providing facilitated peer review of alternative scholarly works as needed and serving as experts to refer and recommend other resources and venues when appropriate. For the next stage, the current committee specifically recommends working through another project submission from a non-library applicant(s) as well as work in: 1) focusing on a particular type of alternative work; and/or, 2) creating informational resources about and tracking types of alternative work for use in inspiring and informing others.

Overview and Committee Activities

Overview

The Facilitated Peer Review Committee was established in 2012 with the approval of the Dean of the Libraries to support the peer review process for innovative and/or nontraditional forms of scholarship and scholarly work, which is particularly needed for new works of digital scholarship. This process is critically needed across many fields to support scholarly efforts in multimedia publication, data curation, publicly-engaged scholarship, collaborative work, and other forms of alternative scholarly products that do not fit within established disciplinary traditions. The need to support such a process at UF arose with a digital scholarship project created by two faculty members in the Libraries, and that project served as the pilot project for the committee.

Potential committee members were approached based on their rich backgrounds and experiences that could inform and provide insights to best develop this process. The final committee members who agreed to serve collectively offered a wide varied of expert knowledge and diverse backgrounds which included familiarity with administrative procedure, awareness of and involvement with alternative scholarly works, expertise from service as peer reviewers (for journals, conferences, grant proposals, and other scholarly forms), and expertise for the tenure and promotion process at UF with service on tenure and promotion committees. From 2012-2013, the committee established the requirements for the facilitated peer review process – with the committee acting akin to an editorial board that would facilitate, but not conduct, peer review – specifically for innovative forms of scholarship. The committee established the norms, standards, and documentation for the facilitated peer review process, and refined and applied the process for the pilot project.

The committee activities required approximately 5 hours per month for each committee member, with additional time required of the chair. The committee used this time for developing, reviewing, and refining documentation and for facilitating peer review for new projects. For the pilot project, the scholars contributed time to complete the application for peer review and to revise the application based on feedback from the committee. The peer reviewers contributed their time by serving as reviewers in reviewing the alternative scholarly work, completing the peer review evaluation form, and providing feedback to the committee on the process.

Committee Activities

In all activities, the committee reaffirmed the importance of supporting alternative scholarly works in a manner that upholds peer review and is in alignment with individual and institutional needs. The committee engaged in creating the facilitated peer review process to support and

uphold the sacredness of peer review as a process for fair evaluation that respects diversities¹ with the needs of individual authors and institutional units in mind in terms of measurement, communicability, and reporting. The committee designed the process to mirror traditional peer review (following models of peer review for publications and tenure and promotion and grant awards) as closely as possible with all materials peer-reviewed in accordance with already established standards of excellence.

For the operational aspects, the majority of the committee's activities were conducted over email. The primary committee activities were developing and refining the process documentation throughout the year.

The committee created documentation (available on the committee website and with this report) as the necessary documentation to support the process and this includes documentation to provide context for the process for scholars, peer reviewers, and committee members. The committee created:

- Peer review guide for peer reviewers and submitting authors
- Application for authors to request peer review of alternative scholarly works
- Letter template to peer reviewers explaining the facilitated peer review process and requesting peer review
- Peer review form for use by peer reviewers

The documents were initially developed from February-November 2012. In November 2012, the scholars for the pilot project used the documentation and submitted their application to request peer review. The committee reviewed the application and discussed questions with the scholars from November 2012 through January 2013. In January 2013, the scholars submitted a revised application, which the committee approved to move to the peer reviewer stage. By March, the peer reviewers completed the reviews. The committee reviewed the responses and developed the final response to scholars, sent in May 2013. The final committee activity in drafting this report was delayed by the committee chair's schedule until August 2013

The committee members, scholars, and peer reviewers provided productive feedback on the facilitated peer review process. All provided substantive engagement and feedback that clarified and improved the process. In addition to the committee's focus on the immediate, local needs at UF, the committee members were also contacted and discussed the process with colleagues at other institutions who expressed great interest in the process. These conversations provided additional productive feedback and informed the process.

¹ See Michéle Lamont, *How Professors Think* (Harvard University Press: 2009), for a discussion of peer review as a standardized and ritualized process wherein peer review becomes and is sacred.

Findings and Recommendations

The committee was successfully created with members with rich backgrounds and experiences that made it possible to create this process. The committee successfully accomplished its goals in developing and testing the facilitated peer review process for the pilot project. The research done as part of creating the process confirmed the lack of alternatives and the clear need for this process for specific, immediate needs and for the larger activities needed in creating support for alternative scholarly works. The high level of engagement with the scholars for the pilot project greatly enriched the resulting project documentation which embodies the overall findings.

One example of the pilot project informing the overall process occurred for the use of equivalencies. From committee discussions, early findings and recommendations emerged, including that the use of equivalencies. Equivalences have been found problematic for innovative research; yet, equivalences were deemed useful for the facilitated peer review process to ensure support for individual scholars and institutional needs. The scholars and peer reviewers found equivalencies useful, although noting that equivalencies do require a somewhat awkward process to establish the equivalency where the alternative scholarly work must be mapped to an established mode of scholarly production. The pilot project was particularly informative for this process, with the scholars recommending that the work be equivalent to two journal articles. This mapping for type and impact-as-quantity was informative and led to a productive discussion and process refinement to best utilize equivalencies.

Based on the activities and accomplishments to date for the Facilitated Peer Review Committee for 2012-2013, the committee members specifically recommend:

- Continuing the Facilitated Peer Review Committee, with changes in membership.
- Changing the membership so that several current committee members will rotate off and new members will be appointed.
- Framing new committee activities to include:
 - Refining the current charge (including clarifying on the use of the word “work”)
 - Refining the process to add terms of service for members
 - Refining the process to add guidelines for membership
 - Operations of the initial committee provide one model with: a minimum of five and preferably six members; and, recommended member commitment to approximately five hours per month for the committee, with the committee to develop new guidelines and recommendations if the need results in a demand that exceeds this time commitment.

- Activities of the initial committee showed the critical importance of backgrounds and expertise in relevant areas for members,² and representation should continue for critical areas while also seeking members who can augment and provide additional diversity in terms of backgrounds and experience to further inform the process and future concerns.
- Supporting appropriate, concrete activities for the immediate next phase:
 - Identifying and working through another project submission, with project from a non-library applicant(s)
 - Performing work that does either or both of the following: focuses activities and develops resources on a particular type of alternative work, and/or creates informational resources about and track types of alternative work for use in inspiring and informing others
- Supporting appropriate activities for the immediate next phase and beyond:
 - Refining all processes and documentation with new member input and committee discussion
 - Supporting the UF campus with the facilitated peer review process for alternative scholarly works as needed
 - Supporting the UF campus with expert referral and recommendation to appropriate resources and venues, when available, for peer review in addition to or instead of the facilitated peer review process
 - Disseminating information about the process to campus
 - Reviewing all processes and documentation with supporting the facilitated peer review process for additional projects, changing and refining the processes and documentation to best support all
 - Reporting regularly with reports publicly accessible to support review, improvement, and new opportunities

Additional recommendations from the pilot project may arise over the course of the next year. One of the scholars for the pilot project is going through the promotion process in 2013-2014. It is expected that discussions with current committee members, the scholar, and the review committee will occur and will cover the pilot project review and the promotion review process. Discussing the processes together should provide information that can inform changes, new discussions, and new directions for the facilitated peer review process.

In addition to these specific recommendations, the committee recognizes that feedback and discussion on all aspects of process for the pilot project are needed, and that feedback from many

² Including administrative procedure, awareness of and involvement with alternative scholarly works, expertise from service as peer reviewers (for journals, conferences, grant proposals, and other scholarly forms), and expertise for the tenure and promotion process at UF with service on tenure and promotion committees.

perspectives will best support the committee's ongoing development. The committee recommends seeking out additional feedback and engagement from interested parties as time allows.

Supporting Documents

The facilitated peer review process is evolving, and this report serves to document the process to date. Current versions of all supporting documents are available online through the committee website.³

Copies of the supporting documents are also included with this report.

Committee and process documents:

- Charge for the Facilitated Peer Review Committee
- Peer Review Form for Alternative Scholarly Works
- Application for Facilitated Peer Review Support for Alternative Scholarly Works
- Letter template with specifics for pilot project
- Peer Review Guide for Peer Reviewers and Submitting Authors

Pilot project documents:

- Application to request peer review, completed by the scholars
- Peer Review Forms, one from each of the two peer reviewers
- Letter by the committee synthesizing the evaluations from the peer reviewers

³ <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/committees/fprc>