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The Digital Humanities as Cultural Capital: Implications for Biblical and Religious Studies

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Abstract:

Although the study of the Bible was central to early Humanities Computing efforts, now Biblical Studies and Religious Studies are marginal disciplines in the emerging field known as Digital Humanities (English, History, Library Science, for example, are much more influential in DH.)   This paper explores two questions: First, what does it mean for Biblical Studies to be marginal to the Digital Humanities when DH is increasingly seen as the locus of as transformation in the humanities? Second, how can our expertise in Biblical Studies influence and shape Digital Humanities for the better? Digital Humanities, I argue, constitutes a powerful emerging field with which Biblical Studies

and Religious Studies must engage as critical participants or analysts. Moreover, our own field's expertise on the history of canon, orthodoxy, and commentary can contribute to shaping a more inclusive and self-critical Digital Humanities.

About the Author:

Caroline T. Schroeder is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of the Pacific, where she was also Director of the Humanities Center from 2012 to 2014. Her research concerns asceticism and monasticism in early Christianity, with a particular focus on Egypt. She is the author of Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) and co-editor of the forthcoming Melania: Early Christianity through the Life of One Family (University of California Press, 2016). She blogs at www.earlymonasticism.org and maintains a website at www.carrieschroeder.com. In addition to her Digital Humanities research, she is writing a monograph on children in early Egyptian monasteries. She also serves on the advisory board for the Journal of Early Christian Studies, is a member of the Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies, and is a former member of the board of directors for the North American Patristics Society.

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Introduction

Biblical Studies and Religious Studies are increasingly becoming marginal to the emerging field known as "Digital Humanities," which is predominantly located in English departments and libraries. Religion in the media is certainly a vibrant and

longstanding area of study, particularly religion and the Bible in film, on television, and on the internet. The use of digital and computational methods to conduct research and publish scholarship on the Bible and religion, however, is less widespread.

A search for the terms "Bible" or "biblical" in major peer-reviewed "Digital Humanities" periodicals produces some hits, but few with substantive treatment of the Bible and its reception. The *Journal of Digital Humanities* contains two articles about 16th to 18th century books and sermons, which might be considered tangentially related to the history of the reception of the Bible or biblical interpretation (Burrows and Curran 2012; Wall 2014). In *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, we find an article that "explores aspects of Biblical Studies through the medium of I[nteractive] F[iction]" (Eve 2007), another that examines publishing practices in 19th century religious presses (Cordell 2013), and one about referencing and citing digital documents, including biblical and extra-canonical sources (Kalvesmaki 2014). *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (now *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*) has published far more—at least 31 articles on the Bible and its reception between 1987 and 2014; the densest period of publication, however, was the first five years, with ten articles from 1987 to 1991. In the past five years, only four have appeared.[1]

If we dig a little deeper than the search results, we see that the Bible, when it appears elsewhere, is often treated as a foundational text, or research on the Bible is regarded as a foundational moment in Digital Humanities. For example, Geoffrey Rockwell cites the building of biblical concordances as a methodology from which early text-analysis tools developed (Rockwell 2003, p. 212-213). Many biblical scholars also use software programs ("tools") such as Logos or Accordance for their research and teaching. Yet Biblical Studies' footprint in the field that defines itself as "Digital Humanities" seems to be shrinking. The recent formation of a research group and a consultation in Digital Humanities in the European Association of Biblical Studies and the Society of Biblical Literature indicate that DH's presence in the field of Biblical Studies may be on the rise in the future, but it remains to be seen whether the influence of Biblical Studies on DH methodologies will increase again.

This paper asks two contrapuntal questions. First, what does it mean for Biblical Studies to be marginal to the Digital Humanities when DH is a field positioning itself as transformative for the humanities (Svensson 2012) and is increasingly regarded as influential in academia (especially influential on its funding mechanisms)? Ian Bogost has characterized the humanities as fundamentally world-renouncing and willingly (perhaps gleefully) self-marginalizing (Bogost 2010). Exploring this question involves also asking whether "marginal" means standing on the periphery or being essential to the meaning-making of the core. My second question is this: how can our expertise in Biblical Studies influence and shape Digital Humanities for the better? Digital Humanities, I argue, constitutes a powerful emerging field with which Biblical Studies and Religious Studies must engage as critical participants or analysts. Moreover, as biblical scholars, our own field's expertise on the history of canon, orthodoxy, and commentary can contribute to shaping a more inclusive and self-critical Digital Humanities.

Part 1: Coptic as Marginal, Marginalia as Annotation

Most of my own work in Digital Humanities currently is on Coptic language and literature. Coptic is the last phase of the ancient Egyptian language family. It came into use during the Roman Empire and was eventually displaced by Arabic as the language of daily life in Egypt over the course of the Medieval and Byzantine period. Despite Coptic's importance for Biblical Studies and early Christian history, Coptic studies has existed on the margins, even within the Society of Biblical Literature.[2] Although for decades there has been a solid representation of Nag Hammadi studies in New Testament Studies, Coptic studies within the SBL has generally not spread much beyond a Gnostic "ghetto."
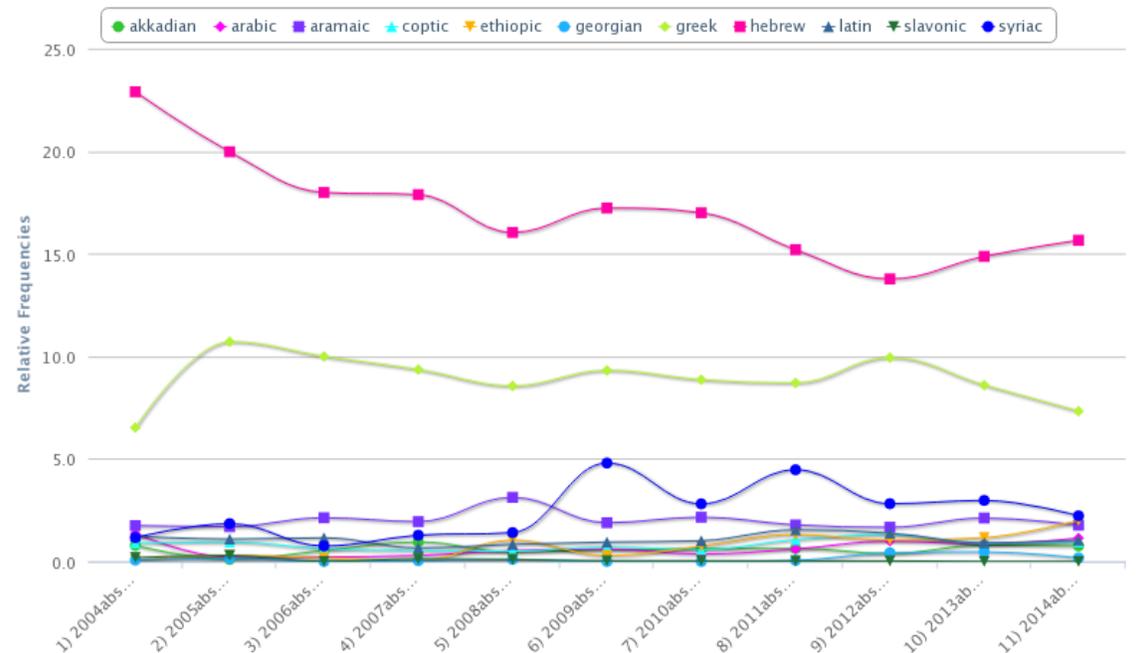
Figure 1: Relative frequencies of the names of major ancient languages in Biblical Studies in the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting books of abstracts from 2004 to 2014.

To visualize this trend, I scraped data from the SBL online books of abstracts from 2004-2014 (the only years for which the abstracts are online[3]). Using the tool Voyant, developed by Stephan Sinclair and Jeffrey Rockwell, Figure 1 visualizes the relative frequencies for the names of major biblical and ancient languages at SBL.[4] This chart has limitations; it does not include variants like "greco" for Greek, and these terms are not always specifically applied to a language. For example, the chart tracks all references to "Hebrew Bible" or "Greek philosophy" as incidences of "Hebrew" or "Greek." But nonetheless, it is illustrative. Hebrew and Greek, not surprisingly, dominate. The other languages – including Latin – hover between 0 and 4.8 occurrences per 10,000 words. Syriac seems to have had a resurgence in the last couple of years.

Figure 2 isolates the "big three" ancient languages – Greek, Hebrew, Latin – in comparison to Coptic. As you can see, Coptic's presence is still pretty low, and has not budged much over 11 years.
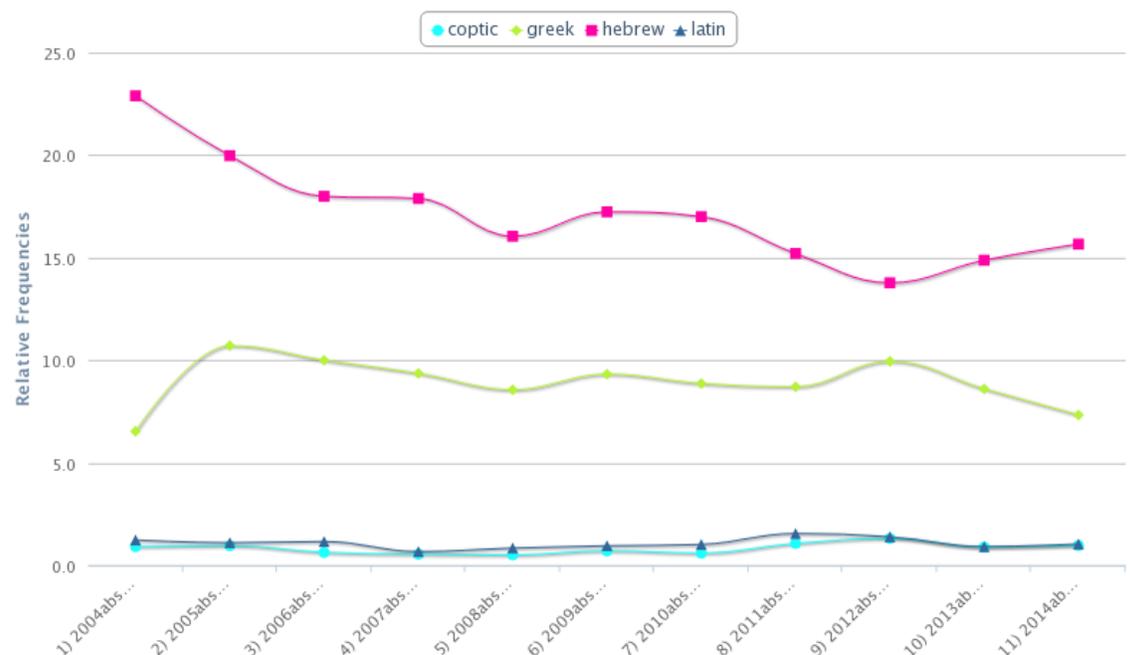

Figure 2: Relative frequencies of "Latin," "Greek," "Hebrew," and "Coptic" in Biblical Studies in the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting books of abstracts from 2004 to 2014

In the Digital Humanities, this marginalization of Coptic and other rare languages is even more visible, despite massive ancient and medieval manuscript digitization projects at major Western museum and library repositories. To illustrate this phenomenon, I will compare the work of five major world heritage repositories with significant holdings in Coptic manuscripts and prominent manuscript digitization programs: the British Library in London, the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the Austrian National Library in Vienna, and the Vatican Library in Rome. At the British Library and the Bodleian, the digitization of important cultural heritage

documents for the history of global Christianity privilege manuscripts written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew—the same top three ancient languages in the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting Abstracts (in Figures 1 and 2).[5] At the time of writing, if you search the British Library's Digitized Manuscripts you will get 5 hits for Coptic. Two of these hits, however, are not Coptic. One is the 13th century Cuthbert Gospels, for which a bibliographic entry mentions Coptic book binding. The other hit is a Greek fragment of the Gospel of Thomas; the Gospel of Thomas has survived in its entirety in Coptic in the Nag Hammadi Library, but the fragment digitized at the British Library is a Greek witness (not a Coptic document).[6]

At the Digital Bodleian, numerous Greek, Hebrew, and Latin manuscripts appear upon a search, but no holdings in Coptic (and none in Syriac, either.) At the Bibliothèque nationale's digitization portal, Gallica, a search of manuscripts with the key word "Copte" resulted in 33 hits in June 2015; several, however, are not manuscripts but rather digitized books whose copyright status puts them in the public domain.[7] To its credit, Gallica seems to be adding more manuscripts to the site, and has added material while I have been writing this article. The Vatican Library remains the only major world repository of Christian cultural heritage with a digitization project that explicitly states its intention and plan to digitize and post online photographs of *all* of its manuscripts (Pasini n.d.). Their project began in 2014. Finally the Papyrus Museum at the Austrian National Library in Vienna has been digitizing its collection over the past few years, and many of their Coptic papyri and manuscripts are available online.[8]

Coptic language, literature, and manuscripts are essential for the study of the Bible and early Christianity, but they are nonetheless marginalized in the field and in digitization efforts, as are other "dead" languages. As my survey indicates, some major cultural heritage repositories have begun to digitize their Coptic holdings while others lag far behind. Although the internet and digitization have been heralded as means of widening and democratizing access to information, digitization efforts—like research in the academy in general—replicate the pre-digital centrality of the Western canon in a new digital canon. Even though Biblical Studies as a field also privileges Greek, Latin, and Hebrew documents, we also have consistently made space for others and have

invested the knowledge of these languages with value; Coptic's marginality in SBL from 2004-14 has been consistent, but this means so too has its *presence*. The same is true for other languages outside of the "big three." We as a field, the people who will study these digitized manuscripts, need to intervene and advocate for more inclusive digitization efforts.

Part 2: Marginalia as Demarginalizing the Marginal

The very word "marginal" means of the margins, and evokes for those of us who do work on manuscripts the phenomenon of marginalia, of writing in the margins. Marginalia are simultaneously ideas and commentary on the outside— not part of the center, not central— *and* ideas and commentary too important to be left out. For example, in this manuscript of the New Testament book James, the biblical text floats in the center of the page surrounded by commentary as marginalia. Indeed, the size and prominence of the commentary, compared to the text, suggests that the marginalia may hold at least as much (if not more) significance (see also Jongkind 2013).
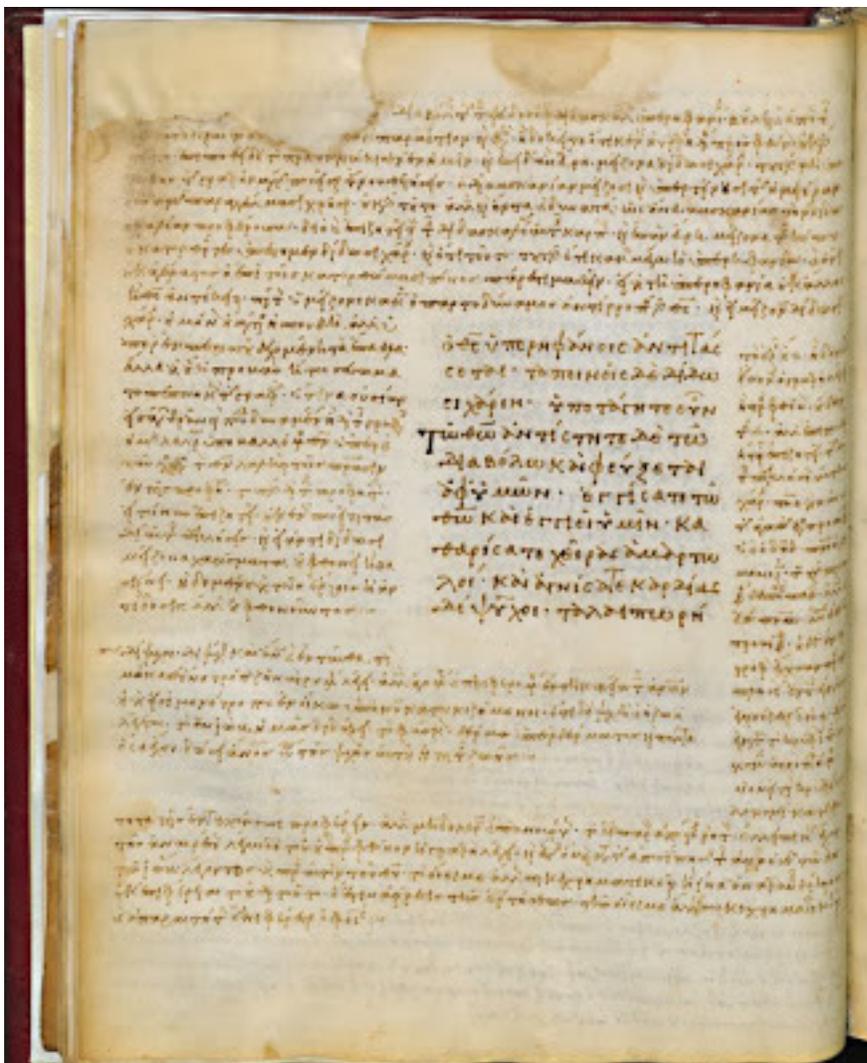
Figure 3: Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo VIII.14, f. 17v.[9]

Through marginalia, we write ourselves into a canon. Marginalia are witnesses to a community of readers and authors unconfined by an "original text." Marginalia signify both the insignificant and the surplus, a surfeit of meaning that cannot be contained by the primary text and yet is in constant relationship with that text.[10]

Marginalia's very existence points back to the text at the center, centering it, often telling us it is canon, for whom it is canon, and why. And yet marginalia doesn't merely comment on the text, describe the text, supplement the text— it can define and even

change the text. The marginalia on folio 4v of quire 77 in Codex Sinaiticus is familiar to most biblical scholars. The following page, folia 5r, provides a witness to the "original" ending of the Gospel of Mark occurring at 16:8: the women flee from the empty tomb; the resurrected Jesus does not appear. On folio 4v, in the lower margin, a scribe has written the text known to us now as 15:47 and the beginning of 16:1.[11] Marginalia shape canon and create meaning.

Part 3: Marginalia as Markup

Marginalia is also annotation, it is markup. It does not merely describe a text or add to a text— it defines a text. Markup is analog and digital. Annotations date at least as far back as the scribes and readers of ancient and medieval manuscripts, who made their mark in textual history. In the Blackwell *Companion to Digital Humanities*, Allen Renear defines markup in text encoding in the following way:

> Markup, in the sense in which we are using the term here, may be characterized provisionally, as information formally distinct from the character sequence of the digital transcription of a text, which serves to identify logical or physical features or to control later processing…. The term *markup* comes, of course, from traditional publishing, where an editor marks up a manuscript by adding annotations or symbols on a paper copy of text indicating either directly (e.g., "center") or indirectly ("heading") on how something is to look in print. (Renear 2008, p. 219)

Renear notes that markup is not always regarded as outside the text, separate from the meaning-making of texts, reading, and interpretation: "In addition, other fields and disciplines… make important connections between markup practices narrowly understood and other bodies of knowledge and technique." Yet in Digital Humanities, Renear seems to think that this first, narrower definition of markup predominates:

However, although such a broad perspective can be illuminating, the significance of markup for humanities computing is best approached initially by considering markup's origin and development in computer-based typesetting and early text processing. (*ibid.* p.220)

So, is markup about representation? Design? Meaning? In describing markup in terms of the state of the field, Renear seems to double down on the first two—representation and design— and shy away from the third. Markup in Digital Humanities does not make meaning in and of itself. He goes on to describe the evolution of "descriptive markup" as privileged in humanities computing, because it was seen to allow a scholar to capture "what text really is" (*ibid.* p. 224, citing DeRose et al. 1990).

In the world of Digital Humanities, one of the major standards for annotation and encoding of documents is the TEI— the Text Encoding Initiative. Founded in 1987, it defines itself as "a consortium which collectively develops and maintains a standard for the representation of texts in digital form".[12] I will address the issue of standards in Part 4 of this essay, but for now I want to note the use of "representation" in this self-definition. The guidelines position TEI's annotations not as an attempt to create or fix meaning but as a "representation" of something else.

Even within the Digital Humanities, however, there is debate over whether annotation itself is really representational. Renear as an aside mentions the debate over "whether TEI markup is excessively 'interpretive'" (2008, p.236). As Renear phrases it, framing the debate in this way privileges a certain definition of representation, and expresses a somewhat positivist desire to avoid interpretation through encoding. On the question of whether TEI XML markup is a representation of texts or excessively interpretive, my own answer is a resounding "Yes."

One Digital Humanities project in the field of Classics employs digital markup in order to decenter the primacy of the edited text in modern critical editions. The creators of the Homer Multitext project note that editors of modern, critical editions of Homer "choose what they judge to be the original text," and position that edited text at the center of the page (Dué et al n.d.). The critical apparatus— the annotations, the analog editorial

markup— is relegated to the bottom of the page. Thus, in the case of critical editions, the record of the material witnesses to Homer— the actual manuscripts— become markup, marginalia, while the editorial intervention becomes the primary text. The Homer Multitext project digitally annotates Homer manuscripts (including scholia and marginalia), employing digital markup to make the ancient and medieval traditions of the texts more visible. Thus, Homer Multitext utilizes digital markup in an effort to privilege the meaning-making of ancient and medieval singers, performers, and readers, and suggests that editorial attempts to privilege the meaning-making of an "original" author or text are "self-defeating" (Dué et al n.d.).

Just as traditional marginalia documents the meaning-making of a text for a reader or community of readers, digital markup contributes to the meaning-making of digital and digitized text.

Part 4: Digital Humanities as Cultural Capital

I have thus far characterized some Digital Humanities research as similar to traditional Humanities research in its concern with the meaning-making of text: what is text, who makes meaning of a text, who authorizes that meaning, who determines what meanings are marginal or central? One of the foundational premises in the Humanities is that meaning-making is capital. We Humanists concern ourselves with the creation and control of cultural narratives in history, literature, religion, philosophy, and other humanistic realms. Within the academy— within our departments— technology is also a form of capital. How many of us in the Society of Biblical Literature would define ourselves as Digital Humanities scholars? How many of us instead have thought to ourselves (or said aloud to colleagues who do identify as Digital Humanists), "I really find all this Digital Humanities stuff interesting but I have no idea where to get started"?

Understanding Digital Humanities in academia as cultural capital will go a long way toward explaining why many academics who do not identify with "Digital

Humanities" experience the barrier to entry for Digital Humanities as too high. We don't know where to begin, or how to begin, especially if we do not code.

The Digital Humanities as a field has reached a stage in relation to the rest of the Humanities academy in which there is an existing set of standards, methods, and technologies that form a kind of cultural capital. These standards, methods, and technologies have developed over decades, and now, I would argue, it is very difficult to be recognized as a "Digital Humanist" if you do not know and understand them. Projects that digitize texts are expected to encode according to the TEI guidelines. Scholars embarking on some kind of curatorial project involving video, photographs, or audio will likely hear advice to encode their metadata according to Dublin Core standards, and may be guided to use the tool Omeka. The days in which you can achieve reputation and status as a digital scholar in the Humanities by simply putting resources on the web are nearly over, if not over entirely.

This, I would argue, is the effect of cultural capital and institutional structures. In his famous essay "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," Pierre Bourdieu argued that institutions ("structures" in his words) can be (and have been) established that allow for the "controlled mobility of a limited category of individuals" and perpetuate existing class structures, including inequalities (1973, p. 258). Education is in some ways the most nefarious of these institutions, because it perpetuates existing class power and privilege while masking this very activity:

> Indeed, among all the solutions put forward throughout history to the problem of the transmission of power and privileges, there surely does not exist one that is better adapted to societies which tend to refuse the most patent forms of the hereditary transmission of power and privileges, than that solution which the educational system provides by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and by concealing, by an apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fills this function. (*ibid.* p. 258)

In her analysis of race, inequality, and higher education, sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom has argued that access to education, often touted as the solution to economic and racial inequality, is not on its own the answer. Higher education does not transform the American class system— it replicates it, in no small part because higher education is so embedded in systems of institutional racism that it perpetuates rather than ameliorates social inequalities. "Degrees cannot fix the cumulative effect of structural racism that doesn't just reinforce the link between family wealth and returns to educational attainment in the labor market but exists as a primary function of that link," she writes (McMillan Cottom 2014).

Education's role in the perpetuation of socio-economic inequality is in part economic and financial, but it is in part about cultural capital: about having the facility to understand, appreciate, and appropriate high status culture. Bourdieu writes,

> In view of the fact that the apprehension and possession of cultural goods as symbolic goods (along with the symbolic satisfactions which accompany an appropriation of this kind) are possible only for those who hold the code making it possible to decipher them or, in other words, that the appropriation of symbolic goods presupposes the possession of the instruments of appropriation, it is sufficient to give free play to the laws of cultural transmission for cultural capital and for the structure of the distribution of cultural capital between social classes to be thereby reproduced. By this is meant the structure of the distribution of instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed. (Bourdieu 1973, p.259)

So, what does this have to do with Digital Humanities and Biblical Studies? I posit that there is a cultural capital of the Digital Humanities, and that this capital is "symbolic wealth" (which is not disconnected, of course, from financial wealth), "worthy of being sought and possessed" and extremely difficult to access if one is not born into that class.

The most visible cultural capital in the Digital Humanities are the standards, methods, and technologies that define the field at any given moment. The more subtle

form of cultural capital is the comfort and familiarity with technology— the implicit knowledge about computing— that enables a Digital Humanist to adapt to and incorporate new technologies and standards as technology changes. Digital cultural capital takes other forms, as well.

One example of the digital symbolic capital is the Text Encoding Initiative guidelines. Most funded text-based Digital Humanities projects digitize and encode according to the TEI guidelines. Projects used by scholars in Religious and Biblical Studies include the Digital Mishnah, papyri.info, the New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room, and our own project, Coptic SCRIPTORIUM. Any Digital Humanities project applying to the NEH for an Office of Digital Humanities grant also needs to have a data management plan that describes the formats and standards for its data. For text projects, TEI is the standard. It is cultural capital, which is tied to financial capital.

The marginal status of Coptic Studies and other subfields within Biblical and Religious Studies is expressed within the TEI guidelines themselves. During the colonial period, Coptic manuscripts were taken from Egypt in bits and pieces; often, what had been one codex in an ancient or medieval Egyptian monastery now resides fragmented in multiple libraries and museums across Europe and the United States. Sometimes, various random fragments of different texts have been bundled together into one shelf mark or call number in the modern repository. Until our project (Coptic SCRIPTORIUM, 2013-2016, co-created by Caroline T. Schroeder and Amir Zeldes)[13] requested a change, the TEI guidelines and tagset for encoding manuscripts that are broken into pieces were designed from the perspective of the library or repository, not the original manuscript. The element <msPart> (manuscript part), according to the guidelines, "contains information about an originally distinct manuscript or part of a manuscript, now forming part of a composite manuscript" (TEI 2008). This element is recommended " in cases where what were originally physically separate manuscripts or parts of manuscripts have been bound together and/or share the same call number." In the world of quote-unquote "oriental" manuscripts, especially Coptic, many originally intact codices were dismembered and distributed in pieces across the globe to multiple repositories. There was literally no good way according to the TEI guidelines to encode the fragmentation of

the codex. The tag <msPart> is explicitly for *existing composite* manuscripts, not an original manuscript broken into parts. Our project submitted a feature change request (Schroeder et al. 2015a) to the TEI consortium, so that the element could be used for dismembered manuscripts. That request was approved in July, 2014, and then modified in May 2015 to provide a new element (<msFrag>) for fragments.

Our feature request to expand what annotations within the tag <m> for morpheme has also been approved (Schroeder et al. 2015b). Coptic is a language that puts together various morphemes to create bound groups; its building blocks are not the same kind of self-standing "words" as in English and most Western European languages. We need to change the XML encoding standards to account for Coptic's difference, to allow annotation elements that other languages might use for "words" (inside the <w> tag) to appear also within morphemes.

This is cultural capital— a system for encoding and extracting meaning for which certain populations literally have no access or must work that extra mile to gain access. Moreover, this cultural capital extends far beyond the tagset and documentation of the TEI; it consists of the architecture of knowledge about language— an architecture built on principles of the dominant language families and literature collections— that lies behind the TEI standards.

My use of TEI XML as a simultaneous example and result of cultural capital should not be taken to imply that the initiative and its members are hostile to "marginal" projects or non-Western perspectives. The TEI has been very accommodating to our requests for feature and documentation changes. My analysis seeks to unfold a denser institutional phenomenon, which the TEI guidelines reflect: the definitions of value implicit in these standards and the gulf in cultural capital between them and those who stand in the margins.

Another way this cultural capital, intertwined with financial capital, manifests is in the growth of Digital Humanities Centers. At a conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, the Director of the NEH Office of Digital Humanities spoke about the importance of "Centers" for Digital Humanities scholarship (Bobley 2014). Digital Humanities Centers convey both

legitimacy and expertise: in other words, cultural capital. Bobley's talk reveals that institutions with Digital Humanities Centers thus have cultural capital in academia. This cultural capital translates directly to wealth accumulation (i.e., grants). As Bobley remarked, in evaluating Digital Humanities grants the agency considers (among many other aspects of the project proposal) whether the institution applying for the grant has a Digital Humanities Center.

Understanding Digital Humanities advances as cultural capital exposes the tension many scholars engaged in— or even just interested in— digital or computational work experience. Many of us feel compelled to "catch up" with our peers in English Departments while also feeling powerless to do so.

Part 5: Orthodoxy & Heresy: Is the Digital Academy Catholic?

Conversations about standards and uniformity persist in Digital Humanities. I think we in Biblical Studies and Religious Studies can contribute to this conversation about the nature of the field because of our expertise in historical debates about uniformity and diversity, namely debates about orthodoxy and canon. In early Christian history, we see assertions of a catholic (with a small "c") or universal church in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch in the second century. This term, "catholic," evolved in usage from the sense of "universal" to include the valence of orthodoxy: "catholic" as true and universal (which encompassed the orthodox church) stood in contrast to heresy, which was deemed both false and particular. Was there ever a catholic or universal community of Digital Humanities? The TEI Consortium in some ways strived to create such an institution, to provide an encoding canon for all who used humanities computing methodologies on text.

Irenaeus of Lyons famously wrote in *Against Heresies* about orthodoxy, positing that one truth, one faith had been handed down from the apostles until his own day to a universal church (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.3). He also warned of the danger of spreading heresies— those of the Valentinians, the Gnostics, the Marcionites, who he claimed all diverged from the one true church. He produced a geneaology of heresy to match his genealogy of orthodoxy.[14] Unity characterizes orthodoxy's family tree— a universal

church descended from the apostolic church. Diversity characterizes heresy's family tree— a multiplicity of religious communities diverging from and separating from the catholic church.

Unease over a multiplicity of encoding practices also concerned the Text Encoding Initiative during its first years. As Renear writes of the meeting that created the TEI guidelines:

> Anxiety about the diversity of encoding systems appears early —one finds that at a 1965 conference on computers and literature for instance, an impromptu meeting was convened to discuss 'the establishment of a standard format for the encoding of text…a matter of great importance.' (Renear 2008, p. 232)

Meaning making was at the heart of this move toward standardization and institutionalization. The emerging TEI standards concerned not only the "characters" and "transcription" of text but also the "encoding of structural and analytic features as well" – encoding for the extraction of meaning. As Renear explains:

> The original motivation of TEI was to develop interchange guidelines that would allow projects to share textual data (and theories about that data) and promote the development of common tools. Developing such a language for the full range of human written culture, the full range of disciplinary perspectives on those objects, and the full range of competing theories was a daunting task. (*ibid.*, p. 234)

The group sought to provide standards in order to ensure interoperability and the sharing of data and tools across projects: to create a universal church of Humanities Computing Text Encoding. As Renear observes, such an objective is easier to articulate than accomplish. The online cartoonists at XKCD created a humorous strip about the impulse to standardize, which exemplifies this conundrum. The first panel reads: "Situation: There are 14 competing standards." In the second panel, a stick-figure man says to a stick-figure woman, "14?! Ridiculous! We need to develop one universal standard that

covers everyone's use cases." The woman replies, "Yeah!" Then panel three brings the punchline: "Soon: Situation: There are 15 competing standards" (Munroe 2011). The utopian dream for uniformity and unity butts up against the reality of diversity.

We in Religious and Biblical Studies know that the push for uniformity, even if well-intentioned, has political consequences. It effectively marginalizes those who do not conform. The TEI community is self-aware regarding this issue, though I would argue more work could still be done to interrogate how standards function in Digital Humanities— work that Biblical and Religious Studies scholars know much about doing. Renear co-authored with Brown University digital librarian Elli Mylonas a piece for the 10th anniversary of the TEI that explores this tension:

> It is easy to talk about accommodating diversity, about interdisciplinarity, about multiculturalism, about communications across various intellectual gaps and divides. But few efforts along these lines are more than superficial.... What is an object of critical contest and debate for one discipline, is theory-neutral data for another, and then completely invisible to a third… Practices that would seem to have much in common could vary radically—and yet have enough in common for differences to be a problem! And even where agreement in substance was obtained, disagreements over nuances of terminology for instance, could derail a tenuous agreement. (Renear and Mylonas 1999, p. 5)

At this point, members of the Society of Biblical Literature or North American Patristics Society may be asking themselves: are Mylonas and Renear writing about Digital Humanities or about early Church Councils?

According to Renear, the TEI tackles this by deliberately leaving it to encoders on specific projects to apply meaning and interpretation to their annotations. Specific projects must, in his example, define what is a "paragraph" or other object to be encoded (Renear 2008, p. 235). The guidelines, thus, implicitly acknowledge the production of meaning that occurs in the encoding of a text. Yet, the orthodox hermeneutics of encoding are more Gadamerean than Derridean, maintaining a faith in a text object with

its own semantic integrity, where meaning is produced in dialogue and in relationship with the encoding itself as well as the encoding community (Renear 2008, p. 236).

Mylonas and Renear also point to community building as an even more important outcome of the TEI consortium than the standards themselves. This reminds me again of Ignatius and Irenaeus, who regarded the community of the universal church as the foundation of both doctrine and practice. It also brings to mind the Council of Nicaea, which was ostensibly in part about staking out the boundaries of a community.

The TEI has functioned as a case study here for examining the theoretical intersections between religion and Digital Humanities. There are a number of other mutually informative areas for further explanation; Ian Bogost's recent article in the *Atlantic* on faith in "black box" algorithms comes to mind (Bogost 2015).

My discussion of orthodoxy, universalism, and Catholicism here dovetails with my analysis of cultural capital in academia. One must know what is orthodox— what the correct terminology is, who the key figures are in the orthodox community, etc.— and what is considered out of bounds, in order even to position oneself as orthodox. A couple of years ago, a debate raged within the field of Digital Humanities about what Digital Humanities was, and what kind of student or scholar might be considered a "digital humanist." I would argue that this debate concerned the intersection of canon, orthodoxy, and cultural capital. The highest-value capital was presented as coding. For example, Stephen Ramsay's paper, "Who's In and Who's Out," delivered at the 2011 Modern Languages Association Meeting and later posted to his blog, defined Digital Humanities as about making things, and, in particular, making things with code (Ramsay 2011). Knowledge of coding here is positioned as the highest valued cultural capital. Some prominent Digital Humanities scholars, of course, pushed back, noting that this definition is exclusionary and privileges white men, who historically have had the cultural capital of programming knowledge. As recent research has shown, the decline of women in technology coincides with the rise of the personal computer, and advertising campaigns targeted towards boys (Margolis and Fisher 2003; McGrath Cohoon and Aspray 2008; McPherson 2012). Women and people of color as social groups lack the cultural capital of code.

Other Digital Humanities scholars, such as Ryan Cordell, have taken a different tack. Cordell argues for understanding *encoding* or *annotating* as a core Digital Humanities practice. He writes, "Textual encoding has never been as sexy as text analysis, at least for those looking at DH work from outside the field. In many ways, encoding inherited the stigma of scholarly editing, which has in English Departments long been treated as a lesser activity than critique… In short, any vision of digital humanities that excludes or dismisses the close and careful work of digital preservation, editing, and publication is simply false" (Cordell 2014). Cordell recenters *annotation* as a core Digital Humanities practice. Noting that editing and annotation have often been on the margins in the modern academy, not as privileged— not accruing as much status or dare I say cultural capital?— as analytic work, such as monographs and journal articles. Cordell aligns himself with the marginal and puts annotation at the center.

Conclusions

Cultural capital is a hard nut to crack, because, as Bourdieu observes, it is self-generative. I offer the following "conclusions" not as solutions to the problems I have outlined above, but rather as strategies for navigating the terrain— strategies in which scholars of Biblical and Religious Studies already have expertise and which they can apply to the emerging digital and computational landscape in the academy.

The margins are not marginalized. Radical annotation brings beauty with its destructiveness. Many of us have seen marginal decorations in medieval and Byzantine manuscripts in which the beauty of the annotation almost obscures the text. Jesse Stommel wrote an article titled "DH Is About Breaking Stuff", as a deliberate play on Ramsay's position that Digital Humanities should be defined by making, especially making (with) code. Stommel stakes out the position of the heretic by challenging conventional wisdom, questioning institutions, and speaking on behalf of the disempowered, especially the disempowered student. Stommel writes, "The humanities have also always been intensely social, a vibrant ecosystem of shared, reworked, and retold stories. The margins of books as a vast network of playgrounds" (Stommel 2013). In play,

Stommel breaks things. He writes, "all of my courses work to violently dismantle fact and print, instructors and introductions, and I revel together (and part and parcel) with students in both discovery and uncertainty."

Marginalia can change canon. As we see in Biblical Studies, marginalia can seep in between the letters and the words, can disrupt their meaning and write new stories. Radical annotation means not being *afraid* to break stuff. Not letting our fear of getting something wrong get in the way of doing something transformative.

Making room for diversity means making room for heresy. In an essay in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, Jamie Bianco Skye calls on digital humanists to "seriously question, maybe even interrogate… our roles in the legitimization and institutionalization of computational and digital media in the humanistic nodes of the academy and in liberal arts education" (Skye 2012, p. 100). Skye calls upon scholars to resist the systematization and routinization that she argues comes from these institutionalizing impulses. She writes, "Recently, we've seen a winnowing of what was an experimental and heterogeneous emergence of computational and digital practices… to an increasingly narrow, highly technical, and powerful set of conservative and constrained areas and modes of digital research" (*ibid.* p. 101). This narrowing orthodoxy, Skye charges, is a result of standards. "This overcoding and compression of protofields and specific computational practices into the field of the Digital Humanities is directly linked to the institutional funding that privileges canonical literary and historiographic objects and narratives." Making room for heresy and critique is particularly incumbent on those of us who *have* cultural capital. As mentors of students, and as reviewers of grant proposals, we need to make room for the non-canonical and the unorthodox. Because there innovation and new knowledge lie.

We need to ensure access for our students to digital capital as cultural capital. And here, I am attempting to use Bourdieu against himself, because, as he and McMillan Cottom remind us, it is difficult to accrue to ourselves cultural capital we do not already have. No matter how many THATCamps I attend, I will never become Matt Kirschenbaum, Bethany Nowviskie, or Melissa Terras. It doesn't mean I should not do these things, but it means being realistic about the state of the field and my position in it.

We need to cultivate privileged allies (cross-disciplinary collaborations, inter-institutional collaborations), and to recognize our own power within the academy. This is difficult work, and requires leveraging some measure of pre-existing cultural capital. Supporting our students' experimental work is essential. We can focus on the transformative power of our research rather than the drive to keep up with technology.

To paraphrase Skye, "digital and computational work" produces new worlds, "both felt and real but multimodally layered worlds" (Skye 2012, p. 108). Worlds of empowerment, engagement, interactivity. This transformative power resides in both the output and the process. The output, I would argue, is easier to gauge: Is what you do transformative? Will it change the field? Process is harder but possibly more important. Does it promote collaboration and equity? Is the project transparent? In the words of Skye: in digital work, "in the creation of context, relationality, and interactivity, the lived collaboration of the "user" (and in the classroom, the "student") becomes a performance, a necessary flow and return of participatory and synaesthetic rhetorics" (*ibid.* p108). This transformative collaboration requires commitment. Who does the labor and who gets credit? Is what you remix yours to remix, or are you appropriating someone else's cultural heritage? In creating our research, we are creating the communities of our fields; Skye challenges us to be mindful of the kinds of academic spaces we create with our research and teaching methodologies.

In a time when humanities fields are increasingly under scrutiny and attack in what has come to be known as the "Humanities Crisis," please do not misconstrue my argument as claiming that the Digital Humanities can "save" an imperiled Biblical Studies or Religious Studies.[15] Our fields need neither salvation nor a savior, as we of all people should understand, since our bread and butter is interrogating claims to salvation. Rather, I argue that Digital Humanities needs our critical engagement. Like other related disciplines, we would be wise to make room for the digital and computational turn in the Humanities within our departments and our guilds at both the graduate and undergraduate levels and in research, for the Humanities has already turned. Moreover, our engagement with the digital and computational must be critical, in the spirit of the work of Digital Humanists such as Elizabeth Losh (2014) or Jacqueline Wernimont (2013) in English,

whose theoretical critique of the digital is informed by their critical practice of digital and computational methodology. We are well-positioned, even on the margins, to critically intervene in and contribute to the evolution of the quickly growing field known as Digital Humanities.

Notes

[1] In the interest of space, I do not cite all of them here but direct the reader to the journal's website at http://llc.oxfordjournals.org.

[2] A number of important extra-canonical texts have survived only or primarily in Coptic: many documents in the so-called "Gnostic" library discovered at Nag Hammadi, the Gospel of Judas, and the Gospel of Peter are the most prominent examples.

[3] Society of Biblical Literature, "SBL Meetings and Events." Available at: http://sbl-site.org/meetings/congresses_pastmeetings.aspx. [Accessed June 22, 2015.]

[4] Stéfan Sinclair and Geoffrey Rockwell, "Voyant," created in 2009. Available at: http://voyant-tools.org/. Corpus available at http://v1.voyant-tools.org/?corpus=1461357445646.9320 [Accessed April 22, 2016.]

[5] "Digitisation," *British Library*, http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/digi/digitisation/ [Accessed June 22, 2015]; "Digitised Manuscripts," *British Library*, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/ [Accessed June 22]; "Fancy a Giant List of Digitised Manuscript Hyperlinks? - Medieval Manuscripts Blog," http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2013/07/fancy-a-giant-list-of-digitised-manuscript-hyperlinks.html [Accessed June 22, 2015]; "Digital Bodleian," *Digital Bodleian*, http://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ [Accessed August 28, 2015].

[6] A search using the "Advanced Search" page of the Digitised Manuscripts portal on the British Library website (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/AdvancedSearch.aspx [Accessed June 22, 2015]) resulted in the following hits:; *Add MS 34602: Fragments from Two Psalters (Rahlfs-Fraenkel 2017, 1217)*, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_34602&index=0; "*Add MS 37534: Life and Miracles of Saints Cosmas and Damianus (BHG 373b), Imperfect*, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_37534; *Add MS 89000: The St Cuthbert Gospel*, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_89000; *Papyrus 1442: Papyrus Codex, Imperfect, Containing Tax Register from Early Arab Egypt (P. Lond. IV 1419)*, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Papyrus_1442; *Papyrus 1531: Gospel of Thomas Fragment (in Greek), Written on the Back of a Survey List (P.

Lond. Lit. 222, P. Oxy. IV 654, TM 62840),
http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Papyrus_1531.

[7] "Copte - 32 Résultats," *Gallica: Bibliothèque Nationale de France*,
http://gallica.bnf.fr/Search?ArianeWireIndex=index&f_typedoc=manuscrits&q=Copte&lang=FR&n=15&p=1&pageNumber=3&isSearch=false [Accessed June 22, 2015].

[8] "Catalogue of Published Texts: Papyrus Holdings", *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek*.
Available at: http://www.onb.ac.at/ev/collections/papyrus/papyrus_researchhold.htm.
[Accessed August 28, 2015].

[9] Image courtesy MiBACT; further reproduction by any means is forbidden. Image available through the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana online search interface, "Visualizzatore Immagini TecaDigitale Ver. 4.0," at
http://teca.bmlonline.it/ImageViewer/servlet/ImageViewer?idr=TECA0000611096&keyworks=Plut.08.14#page/42/mode/1up [Accessed June 24, 2015]. The manuscript is catalogued in Kurt Aland et al., eds. (1994).

[10] My work on marginalia is loosely inspired by Jacques Derrida (1991; 1998) and Michel Foucault (1977). An early summary exploration of the connections between manuscript marginalia and hypertext by William Slights can be found in Jon Bath et al., eds. (2000).

[11] The manuscript itself is in the British Library in London. An image of the manuscript page can be found online at "Codex Sinaiticus - See The Manuscript | Mark |," *Codex Sinaiticus*, available at
http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=34&chapter=15&lid=en&side=r&verse=47&zoomSlider=0 [Accessed June 24, 2015].

[12] TEI: Text Encoding Initiative, available at http://www.tei-c.org/index.xml [Accessed 19 April 2016]

[13] *Coptic SCRIPTORIUM* is available online at http://copticscriptorium.org.

[14] For a recent study of orthodoxy and heresy (including but not limited to Irenaeus) in terms of identity construction see Todd Berzon (2014); for a study on heresy as a discourse of "othering" in early Judaism and Christianity see Robert M. Royalty (2012); for a recent examination of heresiology as othering with respect to a particular figure, see Judith M. Lieu (2015).

[15] Here I allude to Adeline Koh's recent article (2015), arguing that Digital Humanities cannot save imperiled Humanities programs because of its focus on technology rather than humanistic questions.

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