Ooligan Press: Building and Sustaining a Feminist Digital Humanities Lab at a R-2

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Abstract

How can practitioners outside of R-1s afford to build a DH lab? How to connect a lab's output to the communities it serves? This essay is a case study of Ooligan Press, a student-run trade press housed within a R-2, teaching-intensive university. Two elements make Ooligan Press distinctive as a DH lab. First, Ooligan is a not-for-profit business folded into a Master's program in Book Publishing. Profits from sale of Ooligan Press books sustain the lab, which would collapse if its books were steadily unprofitable. Second, the essay uses the DH feminism "M.E.A.L.S." framework to explain how Ooligan's horizontal management structure and student ownership of the press manifest in an ethic of care. Unlike most R-1 DH labs, where priorities are set by senior scholars and directors, graduate students decide which projects the lab will develop, and which skills they want to master in exchange for their labor. Because Ooligan is self-sustaining, it can also be self-directing.

Ooligan Press is a full-scale, student-run publishing house that launches four trade books annually, the signature piece of a two-year master's degree in book publishing at Portland State University. In addition to a final researched paper, an oral defense, and a digital portfolio, the degree requires 48 credits of coursework; eight of these are fulfilled working at Ooligan Press, though many students elect to invest much more time than that.[1] At a cultural moment when some R-1 digital humanities and book history programs are exploring the materiality of moveable type letterpresses, such as the Book Lab at University of Maryland, Huskiana Press at Northeastern University, and the Rutgers Initiative for the Book,[2] book materiality at Portland State, a Carnegie-classified R-2, is commercially oriented because the press needs proceeds from book sales in order to survive. [1]

Ooligan Press sells the books it makes because sales sustain the student experience of learning how to make books from start-to-finish: from title acquisition through developmental and copyediting, book cover design and interior design, marketing, ebook conversion, social media and events-based launch, and backlist management. Book sales are also a test of how accurately the student teams have gauged the market for the manuscript they acquired and made into a book. From 2015 to 2019, Ooligan Press was 27% profitable. That number encompasses the most recent seventeen titles published over five years, generating $124,993 in gross revenue and netting $33,206 in profit. Profits are reinvested back into the material costs of the press. As of 2015 to 2019, six of the seventeen titles are currently unprofitable; all of these were published prior to 2018, a 65% by-title profitability. "The press is getting better at predicting success, but it takes a long time to see that in actual development because of the long timelines of publishing," notes former Ooligan Publisher and article co-author Abbey Gaterud. "If Ooligan had a sequence of bad books (or rising expenses) we'd be in trouble. There's no safety net." [2]

"There's no safety net" might be the motto of Ooligan Press. It dovetails with the scarce resources and the accessibility mission of Portland State as an R-2, which is charged to "Let Knowledge Serve the City": a core value so foundational to PSU that it's inscribed in gold letters across a bridge spanning a main thoroughfare of our urban campus. Ooligan's role in Portland's thriving independent publishing scene is led by its ethical commitment to stewardship and community [3]

outreach. Initiatives such as *Rethinking Paper and Ink*, a sustainability guide to critically examine the book publishing industry; "Writers of Color Spring Showcase", an annual event where local authors meet agents and publishers; "Write to Publish", a one-day conference that demystifies publishing for aspiring authors; and "Transmit Culture", a free and open-to-the-public quarterly lecture series about book publishing, all do the work of delivering accessible publishing information to broader, local publics.

At points in its nineteen-year history, Ooligan has been on the verge of shutdown. That Ooligan is now slightly budget-positive accomplishes some goals digital humanists rarely talk about in the context of labs: how can practitioners outside of R-1s afford to build a lab? How to connect the lab's output holistically to the communities it serves? What's the role of a lab in helping students achieve learning outcomes they seek when they enroll in a degree program? These questions, centered on students and community impact, are often not within the ambit of R-1 labs. And yet they are a vital component of postgraduate DH training that merit attention and support.

DH at an R-2 is expressly tied to teaching and learning. At Ooligan, feminist pedagogy manifests itself in horizontal structures of power and built-in managerial overlaps in student responsibilities. We foster an ethic of care and mutual dependence. This ethic of care might be why Ooligan persisted despite funding calamities a decade ago, when it was on the verge of collapse. Today, the press's acquisitions editors do extensive forecasting, including profit-and-loss projections based on sales data available for "comp" (comparable or comparator) titles. This forecasting allows Ooligan to guess more accurately which people, and how many, will buy its books, sales necessary to recoup the significant investment in printing. Printing costs are not a budget line item funded by Portland State University. Being self-sustaining shields Ooligan from the boom-bust cycles that can beset DH centers and labs, where there's top-down money for startup but rarely for maintenance [Sample 2010] [Posner 2016]. As Ooligan Press has become more successful at making books people want to buy, the lab has expanded its capacity, adding ebooks (in 2012) and audiobooks (in 2018) to the slate of digital objects that book publishing master's students can learn how to make.

In this R-2 DH lab, students decide which projects to develop, and which skills they want to learn and master as a byproduct of their labor. More traditional labs orient graduate students to objects of study or critical making that have been decided by faculty and/or lab directors. Ooligan Press vests even freshly-admitted newcomers with the same authority to speak in meetings and direct the goals of the press as more experienced students and faculty. This feminist principle is aligned with similar organizational efforts documented in panels like "Feminist Infrastructures" at the Allied Digital Humanities Organization's 2016 conference in Kraków, and the "Feminist Infrastructures and Technocultures" assembly at the University of California San Diego in 2013. It aligns historically with second-wave feminist social organizational practices, where women formed collectives and made books like *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, originally published in 1970 by the Boston Women's Health Collective. It is a feminist principle that context and participants' lived experience should factor into calibrations of value.

As DH field survey moves from the "big tent" [Svensson 2012] to the "expanded field" [Gold and Klein 2016] (*pace* Krauss 1979) to, most recently, micro-domains where work "is not always fully legible to those not versed in the particular methods or conversations taking place in that domain" [Gold and Klein 2019, xiii], we articulate Ooligan Press specifically as a digital humanities lab. The implied prestige of digital humanities has little impact on perceptions of Ooligan Press. Ooligan gains nothing particular from being recognized as "DH." But DH has something to gain from locating a lab like Ooligan Press within its domain because as the field now includes R-2s, SLACs, small private universities, and community colleges, the field will benefit from developing nomenclature to describe how DH is practiced without the budgets, resources, and priorities of R-1s. A dearth of scholarly information about non-R-1 DH can be attributed to the lack of time and research money teaching faculty typically have to support writing and conferencing.

In their introduction to *Debates in Digital Humanities 2019*, Gold and Klein call for "work that exposes the impact of our embeddedness in [social, political and technical] systems and that brings our technical expertise to bear on the societal problems those systems sustain" [Gold and Klein 2019, xi]. Here's a problem: how to make DH available to students at a chronically underfunded regional comprehensive university — students who are the most likely to have experienced the alienating effects of poverty, racism, sexism, ageism and homo- and transphobia? How to reveal the assumptions and ideologies expressed in "off the shelf," "frictionless" software products made by Adobe, Google, Microsoft and Apple

— not to mention the social media platforms marketing teams work in to launch books — if not by studying them using DH methods and tools? Our solution in the book publishing graduate program has been to integrate a technically intensive business as part of the curriculum and to give students actual power to perform work at every point in the book communication circuit [Darnton 2007] [Squires and Murray 2013]. Rather than the hierarchies of a traditional DH lab, where the most senior people retain the privilege of writing interpretive essays about lab findings [Mann 2019], Ooligan Press students benefit directly and immediately from their own labor, in ways discussed below.

Some readers of this essay may disagree with the designation of Ooligan Press as a DH lab because its output is commercial print product, not a boutique tool or dataset. Such a position is understandable, but unwarranted. Technical engagement with Silicon Valley products does not stop or disincentivize students from performing critique of those tools and technical systems. Required coursework in the book publishing program introduces students to creative coding in HTML, CSS and JavaScript; text analysis; media theory; media archeology; and cultural studies in those contexts. This, coupled with required coursework in research methods, broadens the range of questions students ask about book publishing and equips them with scholarly training to answer them. In this essay we trace how Ooligan Press is intersectional in the lab's human processes and in its nonhuman technical and commercial systems. In doing so, we are mindful of work by Tara McPherson, Miriam Posner and Julia Flanders, which framed for us, as Flanders puts it, "the difficulty . . . in creating a single coherent account of the operations of diversity in theories about how 'building' operates in digital humanities."[3] Ooligan Press stands apart from the prestige economy stoked by "colonial and masculinist lineages" of "inherited lab models" that "can have direct influence not only on the types of projects taken up by a lab, but on its overall ethos" [Livio, et al. 2019].

The M.E.A.L.S. framework developed by Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont (2018) organizes the following case study of Ooligan Press: Materiality, Embodiment, Affect, Labor and Situatedness. We locate Ooligan Press in the lived reality of our students of all genders, most of whom work part-time jobs while also staffing the press, taking a full academic course load, interning at local Portland-area small presses, and — some of them — raising families. In doing so, we underscore the Value of inclusivity. (Losh and Wernimont added "Values" to the M.E.A.L.S. matrix in their introduction to *Bodies of Information*.) We three authors of this article, the full-time faculty in the PSU Book Publishing program, value the digital labor of Ooligan graduate students and offer this essay as documentation to join the work of recuperating women's "invisible labor" in technical settings [Terras and Nyhan 2016] [Hicks 2017]. Such elisions might historically have been justified by declaring women's contributions to be merely technical, not analytic.[4] Today's variant on that diminution might be that the women's technical proficiency is "commercial," not metacritical when held to the standard of making boutique tools. The book publishing industry is between 74-80% cis-female [Lee and Low 2020] [Milliot 2019], and Ooligan Press's students proportionally matriculate more female, nonbinary and/or and queer than the publishing industry norm. We hope this essay will help others think through how the humanities' interrogative stance takes shape in the applied context of a book publishing program that sells books to survive and is run in accord with feminist principles of power.

Ooligan Press Within Book Publishing Studies

Book publishing master's programs are positioned within various departments. The location of PSU's book publishing program within the English department on the one hand seems like a natural extension of the study of literature, but on the other like a strange marriage of humanities and social sciences. Indeed, scholars who research within the academic discipline of book publishing often draw from concepts and methodologies that are associated with sociology (such as Bourdieu 1993, Thompson 2012). It's possible that one factor in the prevalence of sociological methods in book publishing is due to an effort to distinguish book publishing from literary analysis of the text itself. However, book publishing is very much a *humanist* endeavor because while both humanities and social sciences have human subjects, relationships, and interactions as crucial to the research and fields, the primary difference between humanities and social sciences is method — qualitative vs quantitative, philosophical vs scientific. For this reason, book publishing might be called *applied humanities*, which demonstrates the pairing of conceptual and theoretical knowledge with practical application that typifies book publishing degree programs. Book publishing has a vocational tie in the same way that business schools, engineering departments, and other social and natural science fields prepare their students

for work in the world. However, much like these other fields, book publishing is not *only* vocational.

Only four other teaching presses exist, and all four of them are fairly recent initiatives, without the infrastructure, institutional history, and integration that are central to Ooligan Press. Bowen Street Press is part of the publishing master's program at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia (established in 1988), which houses the oldest publishing program in Australia [Weber and Mannion 2017]. Bowen Street Press is student-run, founded in 2016, and publishes primarily anthologies, zines, and magazines. Lamplight Press is the only student-run press as part of a publishing program in the UK, at Loughborough University, but Lamplight Press is for undergraduate students, not graduate students. Lamplight previously published 4 books a year, was self-distributed, and was founded in 2013, but it hasn't been since 2015 that anything has been published at the press, presumably in part because the faculty member who founded and championed the press moved to a position at another university. The third example of book publishing teaching presses is New Rivers Press, based at Minnesota State University Moorhead. This press is not integrated with a book publishing program; however, it is a student-run publishing company, with distribution through Small Press Distribution, a trade book distributor that does not have the national reach that large distributors like Ingram do. The fourth example is Lookout Books, launched in 2011, a literary book publishing press located within the Department of Creative Writing at University of North Carolina Wilmington; students work in the press as part of coursework for a BFA certificate in Publishing. Lookout Books is distributed by Consortium (owned by Ingram). Of these four teaching presses, Lookout Books and Bowen Street Press are the ones that come closest to the kind of teaching press experience and output that Ooligan Press provides, but even that is a far cry from the national distribution, varied output, integrated systems, and longevity that characterize Ooligan.

Book publishing programs assess student knowledge and prepare students for work in the publishing industry through individual book projects. This often entails a student taking a book through the various stages of the publication process (editing, marketing, design) and finally culminating in a printed and bound (or digital) product. This corresponds generally with a publishing program guiding and instructing students through the various aspects, agents, and processes within the book publishing workflow, value chain, or communications circuit [Darnton 2007, Squires and Murray 2013]. Examples of programs that integrate final book projects include Drexel University, Emerson College, New York University, University of Stirling, University of Sydney, University of Central Lancashire, and Kingston University. Other programs utilize the publication of a student-run journal as the collaborative book project that culminates or at least contributes to the book publishing master's degree experience. Examples of such programs include National University of Ireland Galway, Simon Fraser University, and University College London.

However, neither of these culminating experiences (student-run journals or individual student-produced book projects) replicate the chaos, uncertainty, and changing nature of the industry. In other words, these hypothetical publishing scenarios and individual projects offer a small window into what publishing is and what publishing professionals do, but it's only through a lab like Ooligan Press, with real time and money constraints and a constant influx of new problems to solve, that students gain and practice the problem solving, critical thinking, and reflection skills that are necessary in book publishing.

Materiality

Ooligan Press became a structured entity through a set of accidents and precarities: backdoor founding by a non-tenure track English department faculty member; little funding; grandfathered-in national distribution; and lab integration into the curriculum only because there developed a one-credit gap between graduate class credit hours (two classes = 8 credits) and the nine-credit minimum to qualify for loans and financial aid. These contingencies made Ooligan Press possible to exist, and shape its present-day characteristics. Such serendipity makes the press difficult to replicate in a top-down DH lab model. A bottom-up approach rife with contingencies led to Ooligan's success.

It is the core belief at Ooligan Press that students own the press. Being a student at Ooligan is to be responsible for the editorial direction of the press and the success or failure of the books we publish. Founded in 2001 alongside the master's in publishing program at Portland State University, Ooligan Press is staffed by one full-time non-tenure-track professor (the Publisher) and a rotating cohort of approximately sixty students. The two other faculty in the program,

Berens and Noorda, advise the press.

Distribution services from Ingram Publishing Group give Ooligan's books access to the same retail outlets and opportunities as major publishers like Taunton Press, Indiana University Press, and Granta Books. Without this access, Ooligan would be unable to sell the books it produces beyond what personal outreach to retail outlets could net, and would make its operations unsustainable. Through a connection with a community advisor, who was also the publisher of a local company called Graphic Arts Books, Ooligan found a new distributor through Graphic Arts. About a year after solidifying this relationship, Graphic Arts was partially sold to Ingram Publisher Services and Ooligan found itself lucky enough to be brought in under Graphic Arts' wing.

This development turned out to be one of the best in Ooligan's history: with the guidance of IPS's experienced sales reps and with the clout of the Ingram name behind them, the books produced after this partnership quickly became more successful than any of Ooligan's previous titles. Without a personal connection between two publishers, Ooligan would have struggled to convince such a large, nationally known entity to take it on as a client. Producing only three or four titles a year, Ooligan's output would not be large enough to entice a major distributor. But Ooligan's placement with Graphic Arts, combined with its singularity in publishing education, allows the relationship to be successful.

As the press operations have matured over time, so have the digital tools used on a daily basis to improve communication, keep records, produce books, and maintain history. Adoption of these tools has been, like most things at Ooligan, organic. Early in the press's history, Apple iMacs were procured and local licenses for Adobe Creative Suite products like InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, and Acrobat were installed to assist with print book production. These tools were purchased with one-time infusions of tech money from either the Dean's office or the University's Office of Information Technology. As ebook production entered the press's operational scope, these tools, combined with other free programs like Sigil, BbEdit, Wordpress, and Kindle Previewer, were repurposed to make digital books.

Project management tools have been used since the beginning, but have become more integrated and sophisticated as freely available, high-quality digital tools have appeared on the market. Ooligan adopted the Google Suite of products in 2009 and quickly integrated the full function of Google Drive, Docs, and Sheets. Prior to this adoption, most production scheduling was handled by Microsoft Excel files shared on a PSU server space, leading to versioning problems and clunky access points. The Google Suite erased those issues, but brought new challenges of document ownership transfer, overwhelming numbers of documents, and difficulties in shared organization of files. To combat these problems, digital content managers in 2012 proposed adoption of Trello, a cloud-based and free project management software. Rolled out over the summer of 2013, the smooth operation of the press quickly became reliant on Trello's kanban-board structure. Based on a standardized template board, project managers and Publisher construct a new board for each project after its author contract is signed, customizing it for the new project's timeline and intricacies.

While book project managers are responsible for the life cycle of a book from contract signing to post-publication publicity, department managers — another group of second-year graduate students — are responsible for the quality of work in the more traditional division of labor. These managers work with project managers and team members on specific parts of the book's life cycle, ensuring professional-level quality in the books. These redundant layers of management serve as a backstop against shoddy work and also against the problem of relying too heavily on one person to carry the burden of an entire project. Managers are often taking the four-credit Publishing Studio course, therefore ensuring more time in their course schedule to devote to Ooligan work; but they are also taking other courses, and often working off-campus jobs, raising families, doing internships, and simply living messy human lives. Ooligan's structure allows students the space to be developing humans, sometimes needing a day or two off, while also ensuring that the work can continue. If a student does need to take time off from school for any reason, the book and author do not suffer in the long run.

Embodiment

Ooligan is an experiential learning practicum where metacognitive reflection loops the practicum's applied learning into academic coursework [Kayes et al. 2005] and where academic coursework contextualizes the use of digital tools by providing theoretical and cultural frameworks for understanding their situatedness in commercial and other systems.

Students present weekly project updates at press-wide meetings, teach domain-specific lessons, write midterms and final papers, and gather exemplary work they've made in digital portfolios. These academic outputs are one form of value at Ooligan; another is the hands-on contribution Ooligan Press books make to Pacific Northwest culture. Ooligan's mission recognizes "the importance of comprehensive representation and diversity, particularly within the publishing industry, and [is] committed to building a literary community that includes traditionally underserved voices." Ooligan encourages submission of "works originating from, or focusing on, the experiences that come from these people and communities within the Pacific Northwest."

Students can, and usually do, take Ooligan coursework each term — WR574 Publishing Studio for four credits or WR575 Publishing Lab for one credit — including some summer-term coursework. This allows students to engage long-term with the books being published at Ooligan and also allows for two years of technical and problem-solving skills development. Students report that this long-term, in-depth involvement with book projects is one of the biggest benefits of PSU's program: they iterate skills and build mastery that could not be developed over the course of one term in a more traditional classroom-project setting.

Since the press operates within the structure of a classroom but also outside of it, it has developed its current structure organically to deal with the unique challenges of running a business within a classroom. For example, the first Ooligan cohort had eight students; all students worked collaboratively on all aspects of the book production process, mostly in dedicated classroom face-to-face settings. Over time as the number of involved students increased, the organizational structure evolved to one that emulates that of the wider publishing industry, with departments structured around the main divisions of labor: editorial, design, marketing and sales.
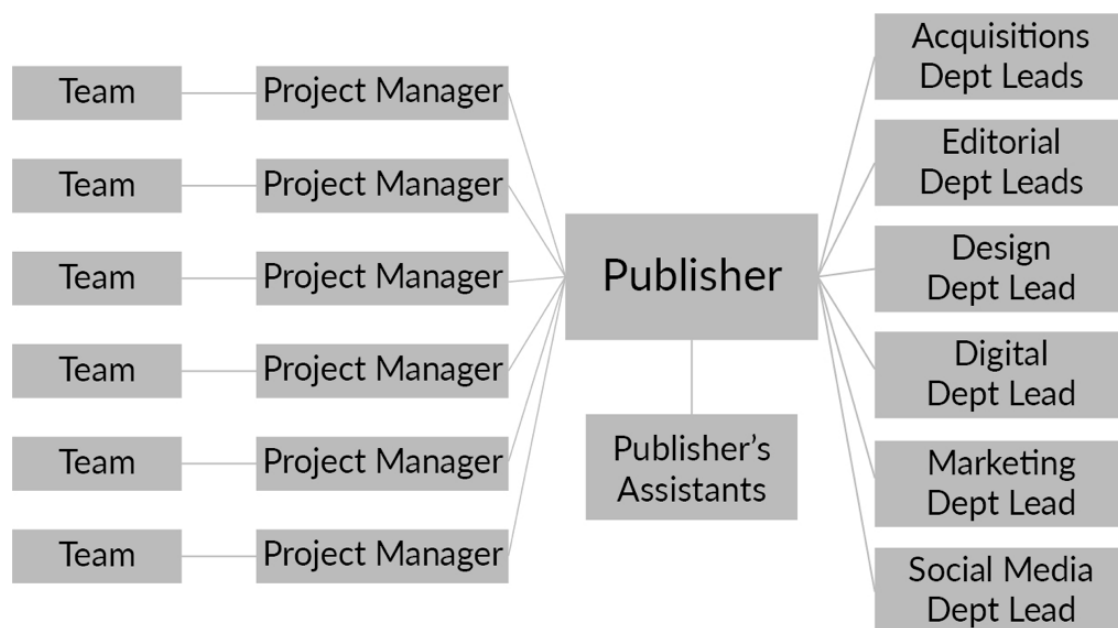

Figure 1. Ooligan Press has six books in various stages of production at all times. Only the Publisher is faculty. All other press work is done by students, 50% of whom are new each year. Figure credit: Gaterud.

As Ooligan grew in number of students and number of titles published, this structure evolved, with a switch to a project-based approach rolled out in 2011. The reasons for this shift were two-fold. One, students were given a broader understanding of the full process that a book goes through inside a publishing house, which came from curricular needs. The publishing program aims to give students a broad understanding of all aspects of the publishing process, and faculty found that students tended to silo their work and their exposure to areas where they felt most comfortable. To increase exposure to new and emerging fields in publishing — like digital content production and marketing — required students to work with an entire book rather than a department. Gradually their work would encompass all aspects of

book production, thereby making their understanding of the process deeper and broader.

The second reason for a shift to project-based teams was as an effort to overcome the biggest hurdle at Ooligan: institutional memory. As one cohort of managers graduates from the program, the next one steps in over the summer term and takes full control of their project or department. The Publisher trains new managers to:

- Run meetings effectively
- Use the tools of production management (Trello, Google suite)
- Evaluate the production schedule over one term, and also the school year
- Apportion work assignments to team members based not only on what needs to get done, but also on the amount of time the team member has allocated to Ooligan work based on their enrollment in Studio or Lab
- Manage interpersonal communication issues
- Discern when to reach out to management colleagues or the publisher for help.

While the work of the press is diffuse, spread among many teams, the need for a central organizing figure in the form of the Publisher became apparent. The Publisher serves as the instructor of record for Publishing Studio and Publishing Lab (plus one other graduate-level course per term) and the administrator of business matters relating to outside vendors, internal stakeholders, and community outreach. She also serves as the mentor to every student working within the press.

The work of Ooligan Press happens both in the classroom and outside of it. Twice a week for two hours, the class meets in various formats. The first hour (of the weekly four) is spent at the Ooligan Executive meeting, where all students working at the press meet and hear reports from managers and the Publisher about production schedules, weekly assignments, and departmental progress. Then for hour two, each project team meets to get new assignments, discuss work-in-progress, and troubleshoot. The work is collaborative, but also individual, with more advanced students taking on more responsibility and often serving as mentors and one-on-one collaborators to incoming students unfamiliar with the work or process. Managers grade their individual team members according to an established rubric.

Affect

The success or failure of a book heightens the stakes for student work in a real, tangible way. When a book is successful, a student can claim as much reward and pride in it as the author themselves. When *Blue Thread* by Ruth Tenzer Feldman won the Oregon Book Award for young adult literature in 2012, a dozen students and faculty were in the auditorium and erupted in cheers when the winner was announced. The same scene played itself out again in 2017 when Eliot Treichel's *A Series of Small Maneuvers* won the Oregon Book Award Reader's Choice award. Students who have worked on a title can find their names published in the back of every Ooligan book on an Ooligan Credits page, cementing themselves in the book and author's life long after they have graduated.

But when a hurdle is encountered or a mistake made, the real-world, human consequences are also felt at a deeper level. A project manager in 2017, after discovering a major omission in an already printed book, reacted with tears — and then a plan to address the omission — in a private meeting with then-Publisher Gaterud, and then a tearful confession to the press at the weekly meeting. A student in 2018, after leading the press to acquire a book that she had first heard informally pitched at a writer's conference, told Gaterud that she'd never been prouder of herself in an educational setting. The stakes are real and the reactions are as well, something prospective students understand as much as graduates. Fifty percent of recent graduates cite the opportunity for hands-on experience at Ooligan Press to be the deciding factor in attending PSU, far more than location (16%), career prospects (15%), and even cost (6%).

Publishing is a process such that each book can be conceptualized as a "startup" [Sattersten 2011] and those entrepreneurial competencies of tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility, and curiosity are all essential in real-world publishing. How to equip students with these entrepreneurial competencies? Experiential learning, like the student work at Ooligan Press, is a prominent approach in entrepreneurship education in the U.S. [Cooper et al. 2004] [Pittaway and Cope 2007] and helps to develop self-regulated learning, where students are proactive in seeking information and mastering skills necessary to tackle a particular problem [Zimmerman 1990].

Labor

Overwork and passion for that work are material contexts for the students and the three full-time book publishing faculty who co-authored this article. "Office hours" bleed into weekends, evenings, phone calls during our commutes to accommodate our students' overstuffed work schedules. In thinking about the sustainability of a not-for-profit press and of ourselves, we invoke DH work on capacity, care and codework by [Bethany Nowviskie 2015, Fiona Barnett 2014, Lauren Klein 2015], and the many women in our networks whose overwork "for love" greases the DH gears. We book pub faculty collectively decided upon the necessity of making our "invisible" faculty labor infrastructurally visible and supported. In 2018, we revised the curriculum to require all students to take a research methods class; previously, training in research methods was conducted under the auspices of advising, which meant extensive office hours and emails outside of coursework. In 2020, we revised the curriculum again to permit students to repeat the research class because students were requesting independent studies to seek additional mentoring and time for research; Portland State does not pay faculty to offer independent studies.

The book publishing program can offer graduate assistantships to only a small portion of the incoming class, which in turn impacts how many of our students take extra jobs and loans to earn their degrees. Personal financial risk is another "messy" condition that can't be neatly excised from questions of labor, affect, and even embodiment: these bodies and minds can become depleted, particularly in the second year when management responsibilities at the press compound the pressures of a full course load and extra-academic jobs that pay the bills.

It's unconventional in DH scholarship to valorize post-graduate employability, but at our R-2 where students typically fund their own degrees, it's a vital context. We consider it ethical to insist, in a moment of pervasive and debilitating student debt, that employability is a relevant dimension of the training our program provides.

- 88% of "Oolies" secure employment within six months of graduation that allows them to "use their publishing skills in a meaningful way."
- 76% find such work within three months of graduation,
- 35% find such work within thirty days of graduation.
- 73% of alumni report that connections made while students in Portland's independent publishing scene helped them land those first jobs.

But employability is just one piece of the picture. The applied work of making books refines intellectual inquiry and research. Original research using data, thematic coding, and cultural studies features in 46 student essays published open access using the BePress tool via the Portland State University PDXScholar repository. At time of writing, more than 10,000 copies of student research have been downloaded. This itself is a significant contribution to book publishing studies and digital humanities.

Figure 2. More than 10,000 downloads of 46 essays by PSU Book Publishing master's students' have enriched scholarship of book publishing. The essays are housed in the open access BePress repository PDX Scholar.

A sample of recent essay titles:

- "A Cover is Worth 1000 Words: Visibility and Racial Diversity in Young Adult Cover Design"
- "Coding LGBTQ Content: BISACs, Fanfiction, and Searchability in the Digital Age"
- "Beyond BookScan: How Publishers Can Use Alternative Data To Supplement Traditional Sales Metrics for Genre Fiction"
- "Tools for Nonfiction Developmental Editors"
- "This Is Your Brain on Editing: How Digital Tools Affect the Cognitive Processes Behind Copyediting"
- "Approaches to Contested In-Group Terminology for Mindful Editors"[5]

Situatedness

Book publishing master's candidates aren't just classmates; they're also colleagues running and managing a business in an industry that runs on relationships and sells objects that are very expensive to fix if something goes wrong. Printed books cannot be easily changed, adapted, or modified once they have been solidified into a print object. A second edition might come out once the print run has been exhausted (this has happened only once in Ooligan's nineteen-year history); otherwise, the print object is a fixed thing. Print's fixity adds pressure and risk to the process. If the design of the cover is off by half an inch, then the entire print run includes covers that don't line up with the spine. If there is a major editorial oversight in a chapter, that oversight appears in every copy of the print run. It's a real-world scenario in which the stakes are high in economic, social, and symbolic terms. This fixed, one-shot opportunity to get the final product right affectively influences all those involved in the press in a way that would be difficult to replicate without Ooligan's real-world uncertainties, and the pressure of knowing that Ooligan must remain budget-neutral in order to survive.

The love of books first brings students together in the graduate program; loyalty, trust, understanding, and mutual dependence prompts the students to tattoo their bodies with the Ooligan Press logo, start new presses and freelance agencies together, engage in a myriad of personal and extracurricular activities together, and put in extra time and effort (particularly for press managers) to develop a sense of community and deep relationships. 98% of our graduates stay connected to the book publishing program via our mailing list and through our Facebook group (a private group is not limited exclusively to alumni). In an alumni survey, 70% of respondents said they felt connected to the graduate program in book publishing, in contrast to only 12% who felt connected to the English department in which book publishing is housed and 30% who felt connected to PSU as a whole. This sense of community, facilitated largely by Ooligan Press, contributes to why 91% of book publishing alumni feel that the graduate degree was a good investment of their time and money [Survey 2015].

Conclusion: "Applied Humanities"

Ooligan Press gives book publishing master's program students digital humanities lab experience that trains them ethically, technically and emotionally in time-pressured and constrained real-world settings. Publishing books that the public buys is an extra-academic context in which to measure technical skills and rising confidence. Steven Lubar, the public humanist at Brown University asks: "How do the humanities change when we take engaged public scholarship seriously?" Rather than a plea for the more conservative, less socially engaged work Erwin Steinberg called for in his 1974 article "Applied Humanities", we think "applied humanities" is a term that modifies "digital humanities" in a useful way, by suggesting that humanities work is always situated in particular communities who are served–or not–by that work.

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There are two salient aspects of Ooligan Press as a digital humanities lab that this essay has contextualized. The first is Ooligan as a not-for-profit business that sustains experiential learning and extends digital humanities pedagogical approaches beyond R-1s. The second is feminism, and an ethic of care that makes space for student autonomy and press ownership.

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Notes

[1] Ooligan Press: https://ooligan.pdx.edu/. Portland State Master's in Book Publishing program: https://publishing.pdx.edu/.

[2] The Book Lab: https://www.english.umd.edu/BookLab; Huskiana Press: https://cssh.northeastern.edu/huskiana/; Rutgers Initiative for the Book: https://sites.rutgers.edu/ru-book-initiative/new-rib-postcards/.

[3] Flanders, "Building Otherwise", in *Bodies of Information* (eds. Wernimont and Losh) 292.

[4] Overarching questions remain about "the significance of the cultural, intellectual, and social conditions that shaped the earliest work in digital humanities" by female punch card operators trained to work on Father Busa's *Index Thomisticus*. "Although further research is needed to uncover the role and responsibilities of women in this project, Busa certainly depended on their input, and our work is to write them back into the historical record," declare Terras and Nyhan (2016).

[5] https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/eng_bookpubpaper/

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