Creative Forms of Open Social Scholarship in the Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences Commons: Case Studies

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The Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Commons is an in-development community space for academics, research partners and stakeholders, students, and interested members of the public (hsscommons.ca). Hosted on Canadian servers but open to members from around the world, the HSS Commons is based on HUBzero, an open source platform developed at Purdue University.[1] Serving as a hub for open social scholarship, it combines elements of social networking sites, tools for collaboration, and institutional repositories, allowing researchers to freely share, access, re-purpose, and develop scholarly projects, publications, educational resources, data, and tools.

This paper includes highlights from the project's *Building Digital Communities in the Humanities and Social Sciences* event series (May & June 2023), where we showcased the HSS commons, as well as our ongoing community-building efforts nationally and internationally. In line with the program theme for Creative Approaches to Open Social Scholarship, the paper concludes with a brief overview of some of the ways that members of the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) Partnership community have begun to use the HSS Commons in both expected and unexpected ways as a tool for open social scholarship.

Building Digital Communities in the Humanities and Social Sciences
In the process of developing the HSS Commons, we have benefited greatly from many community consultations and partnerships in Canada, Australia, and the United States— including with the Canadian-Australian Partnership for Open Scholarship, the Australasian Association for Digital Humanities, the University of Newcastle, Western Sydney University, the University of Victoria, the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, CANARIE, the Canadian Research Knowledge Network, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, the Humanities Commons, and others.

With these partners, we have been improving the HSS Commons and organizing a number of related community-building initiatives. Most recently, working with the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences and Érudit, we hosted the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Connection Grant-funded *Building Digital Communities in the Humanities and Social Sciences* event series. The workshops, talks, and onboarding training that we offered in May and of June 2023 for this event series built organically on existing community-building initiatives. Additionally, these efforts have positively informed our current community-building work with the Federation, which is supported by a SSHRC

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[1] Our modifications to the original HUBzero code are freely available on GitHUb at https://github.com/etcluvic/hsscommons.

Partnership Engage Grant and will involve community outreach to academic societies and the Federation's constituency of 90,000+ HSS researchers.

Case Study #1: Iter Canada

Our ongoing collaborations with members of the INKE Partnership and our broader scholarly networks, both at the *Building Digital Communities* events and beyond, have made evident the many forms of unexpected or "creative" forms of open social scholarship that are possible through the HSS Commons. Alongside Iter Canada, for example, we completed a large-scale migration of open access back-issues from scholarly journals or book series operated by Iter, including *Renaissance and Reformation*, *Confraternitas*, *Early Modern Digital Review*, *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, and others. As a result, we have now published over 6,000 journal articles and reviews in the HSS Commons repository via the "Iter Community" group and its sub-projects (https://hsscommons.ca/groups/itercommunity).

After aggregating and cleaning publication metadata in OpenRefine, we batch imported all publication PDFs using a custom python script written by one of our developers, Archie To, and exported relevant metadata to XML in OpenRefine using a custom transformation written in XML and GREL.[2] The resulting XML file was then batch imported to the HSS Commons repository via the site's administrative back-end interface. Thanks to Archie's customization of the PHP code governing HUBzero's batch ingestion process, we were also able to automatically publish the articles and reviews in the HSS Commons repository—a creative technical intervention that saved us from having to manually confirm and publish each of the 6,000+ articles and reviews (since the default batch ingestion function in HUBzero saves items with a status of "Draft" rather than "Published").

While this migration has resulted in a significant number of new publications in our repository, we are also hopeful that our work with Iter—as well as the resulting workflows and documentation produced by Sajib Ghosh and other team members during the course of this collaboration—can serve as a valuable model for others who may be interested in importing materials to the HSS Commons at scale, for instance, or even using the HSS Commons as a journal landing page and publication venue for new and old materials.

Case Study #2: Digital Humanities Summer Institute

In June 2023, for this year's Digital Humanities Summer Institute (dhsi.org), we were able to use the HSS Commons for another form of open scholarship and community building. During and leading up to this large-scale event featuring hundreds of registrants, the HSS Commons allowed us to communicate with participants and instructors as well as provide access to sub-projects within the larger DHSI 2023 group, which hosted materials for 61 courses, 6 aligned events, and a lecture series.

Beyond serving simply as a repository or digital communication space, though, the HSS Commons successfully accommodated DHSI's unique needs regarding group permissions and

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[2] GREL stands for "General Refine Expression Language."

security, participant roles, and project management. For instance, while all DHSI registrants needed to be added to the larger DHSI group *as well as* to any projects associated with the multiple courses or aligned events for which they had registered (e.g., to securely access presentation materials and course materials), we were able to take advantage of HUBzero's built-in features to automatically add all registrants to the lecture and coursepack sub-projects. For future iterations of DHSI or large-scale events of this kind, we were also able to customize HUBzero to further streamline how group and project managers add new members, search for materials, and change members' roles.

Next Steps
As these examples suggest, we are interested not only in continuing to study the theoretical underpinnings of digital research commons, but also in testing and documenting our own experiments in open social scholarship of various kinds (e.g., journal publishing and archiving, event organization, and content management involving complex access and file-sharing scenarios). By sharing these experiments with the larger communities to which we belong—both in Canada and abroad—we hope to contribute to ongoing as well as nascent conversations about how open digital research infrastructure and tools can be leveraged to redefine HSS research and its possible applications.