Why the Web-based Monograph?

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Dangerous Citizens will ultimately take the form of both a print publication and a digital product. The latter will not be just a twin of the former—or even a descendent. *Dangerous Citizens* online will be a living resource, exploiting the functionality of a digital environment to integrate textual content with images, audio, film, and source material.

In other words, the author, the Press, and our team at the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship are taking the print monograph beyond the electronic PDF and several steps further into digital accessibility. This certainly isn't a brand new idea, but the world of Web-based monographs is far from being well-established—or even easily described. (To my knowledge, we haven't yet adopted some pithy word along the lines of "blog" or "wiki" for the concept, but if you've heard something or have an idea, feel free to raise it in a comment on this post!) There is, however, an expanding discussion on these "scholarly products of the future," as well as a growing consensus on their advantages, potential, and reasons-for-being, some of which I'll list here.

1) Scholars and scholarship are going online (as pretty much everything/everyone is). That's why universities like Columbia are creating centers like ours, and increasingly engaging with cyberinfrastructure, e-research, open access, etc.

2) Publishing scholarship online creates the opportunity to increase access to, sharing and re-use of, and other forms of involvement with content.

3) Web-based monographs allow relatively inexpensive incorporation of media (whether images, video, audio, datasets, simulations, etc.), and therefore can help these materials play a much larger role in scholarly discourse.

4) A digital monograph can encourage nonlinear entry and discovery. As the Coalition for Networked Information's Clifford Lynch puts it, "Monographs that capture more of the character of an encyclopedia than of a linear critical thesis or argument fit better into the current web model. This has substantial implications for the authoring of works in fields, such as history, biography, criticism, and area studies. It also suggests that it may be easier to find and reuse information contained in these works." (Read Lynch's full article here).

5) Web-based monographs also open the door to easy and continual updating of content, while print publications are revised infrequently.

6) The production of Web-based monographs—and the product, itself—can inspire new relationships among scholarly authors, publishers, libraries, archives, museums, and, of course, the monograph's readers off and online. (Our Scholarly Communication Program is helping the Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition to index some of these new partnerships on campuses). As *Dangerous Citizens* exemplifies, an author might team up with Web

developers, a university press, and other scholars to build the digital product, which can, in turn, inspire and allow virtual conversations between the author and end users via commenting and other tools.

For these reasons and more, we're pretty excited to be part of this project—as well as several others taking scholarship online. If you're interested in reading more about projects like *Dangerous Citizens*, give "digital monograph" a Google.

—Diana Price, Communications Coordinator @ CDRS

Tags: campus-based publishing partnerships, CDRS, open access, scholarly communication, Web-based monograph