

Open Letter

In Support of the Digital Humanities Studio Space at Butler Library

Life in the library increasingly requires the use of communal, unstructured space. Hackathons, THATcamps, meetups, workshops, and open labs--these emerging models of **getting together, sharing knowledge, and getting things done** have their local constituency, which up until now exists as a vibrant but fractured (and homeless) community on Columbia's Morningside campus.

We believe that the library collections are the natural playground for digital humanists, computational social scientists, open-source advocates, library activists, close and distant readers. As catalog and periodical reading rooms are phased out in favor of Google groups and computer labs, we think it is important to preserve a **neutral, flexible space for experimentation in the humanities**. Just as the leading academic libraries have always cultivated the solitary critical experience, they are increasingly beginning to support the social and collaborative research activity of groups and collectives.

For models of how such an environment can be organized, we look towards the artist's studio, the science lab, the maker space, and the startup loft. These are characterized by **open, grass-roots architecture**, a variety of working surfaces, the presence of projectors and whiteboards--**requirements that are inexpensive** to maintain in the long term and that complement the existing support services provided by the Digital Humanities Center.

The **Studio at Butler Library**, as we imagine it, will host mix of scheduled events loosely related to digital humanities, along with providing an unstructured, community-driven workspace for all those interested in the applied aspects of book culture, data curation, knowledge design, big history, complex social systems, experimental philosophy and criticism, cultural analytics, network analysis, computational modeling, text mining, data visualization, and critical making.

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