



THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS

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Overview and History

Introduction

In *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination*, Jaroslav Pelikan identified four core functions of higher education: research, teaching, the dissemination of knowledge through publication, and the preservation of and access to the scholarly record in libraries. The latter two functions refer to the life cycle of scholarly resources that are produced and used in teaching and research and are the objects of scholarly communications. As part of its support for higher education, the Foundation has a long-standing interest in scholarly communications.

History

Throughout its history of support in this area, the Foundation has been interested in the applications of technology in the development of scholarly resources. The Foundation played an instrumental role during the 1970s, for example, in the development OCLC and its regional networks and the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and its Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). More recently, it has explored how emerging digital technologies could be applied principally in the humanities and social sciences to help scholars make more effective uses of primary sources and to improve the ways that secondary sources in the form of journal and monographic publications are produced and disseminated.

Distinctiveness of the Scholarly Communications Program

The distinctiveness of the scholarly communications program, however, lies not only in its technological focus, but also in the ways in which it supports and complements (not replaces or supplants) the traditional concerns of the Foundation in supporting leading institutions in higher education, the arts and the performing arts, population, and ecology. Staff formulate their technology initiatives based on an essential principle: technology is merely a tool, a means of production and distribution, and digital technologies are increasingly the tools of choice.

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If used wisely and effectively, these tools can improve quality, lower costs, speed up work, open new perspectives, or make work possible that is otherwise difficult or impossible. If not used wisely or seen as an end in itself, technology may be nothing more than an expensive drag on research and teaching.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the scholarly communications program is its comprehensive attention to all stages in the life cycle of scholarly resources. Complementing fellowship and other kinds of support for research and teaching at research universities, liberal arts colleges, independent research centers, libraries, and museums, the Foundation also supports the development of scholarly resources from their creation, to their dissemination through various forms of publication, as well as their accessibility through cataloging and other means and their preservation for future generations.

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Current Program

Categories of support

The primary objective of the Foundation's interest in scholarly communications is to promote the cost-effective creation, dissemination, accessibility, and preservation of high-quality scholarly resources in humanistic studies broadly defined. Within the scholarly communications program, grantmaking occurs principally in these four main categories: new methods of creating scholarly resources, innovations in scholarly publication, cataloging and other forms of intellectual access, and preservation.

Restrictions

The Foundation does not make grants to individuals or primarily local organizations, nor does it support capital campaigns. Grants within the program do not cover overhead or indirect costs, or graduate student tuition.

Inquiries

Letters of inquiry regarding ideas that fall within the program described above are welcome and reviewed throughout the year. However, because the Foundation is rarely able to respond positively to unsolicited requests, prospective applicants are encouraged to explore their ideas informally with Foundation staff in a short letter or email describing the project and budget before submitting formal proposals.

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