Digital Library Program
Project Proposal Form

Date Submitted: _____

Please e-mail this form with all supporting documents to DLP_PROJECTS-L@INDIANA.EDU

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Department/Campus: SALC/Bloomington

Project Name: Victorian Women Writers Project: Women Writing Humor

1.   Please describe your project.

    The proposed digital collection will be a sub-set of the Victorian Women Writers Project (VWWP). Overseen by Angela Courtney and her staff, this group of texts will act as a training tool for those graduate students (and even faculty members) in the humanities who are interested in revamping this project and becoming more actively involved with Digital Humanities, Scholarly Editing, and Textual Studies.

    The proposed material, works by 19th-century women humorists, would mark the first cohesive digital collection focusing on this topic. We chose this theme because it recognizes the shift in the Victorian Studies program at IU as it expands to embrace the "long 19th century" which extends the Victorian Period temporally from the French Revolution to the beginning of the First World War and geographically to include the footprint of the British Empire. With a special interest in international and popular culture texts, this venture can mark a new era in the life of VWWP after a lengthy period of dormancy. Women humorists represent a new set of texts for the archive, and introduce the concept of discrete collections of genres to the VWWP.

    These texts will be produced in conjunction with the English Department, which has expressed interest in revamping and re-establishing VWWP as a significant Digital Humanities project. In light of impending changes within the Victorian Studies Program—the newly proposed shift to a long 19th-century model and a broadened focus within the program emphasizing the necessity of training graduate students to interact with and produce digital scholarship, we feel that the best way to go forward with VWWP is through active involvement by graduate students and faculty within this program. By active involvement, we mean more than merely choosing the texts to be

digitized. We believe that VWWP can provide a unique opportunity for hands on involvement in the editorial and mark up process. This pilot will help us work out procedures for a production oriented program that presents the Library with is a unique opportunity to train potential digital humanities scholars, enabling them to provide access to obscure 19th century works that they see as important for the future of 19th century studies. This model will provide them with an opportunity to participate in digital humanities scholarship and textual editing by gaining experience that would not be available to them elsewhere, giving them the edge in the job market. This also gives us the opportunity to train a group of scholars in editing this material, insuring the high quality transcription for which VWWP is known.

2.   Describe the significance of this project to the IU community and beyond. Will this complement or enhance other digital resources?

VWWP is one of the earliest digital humanities projects of its size and scope, but has not been substantially updated in since 2004. Google Books and other similar digitization projects have provided PDF or JPEG versions of many of the texts in VWWP—a double edged sword that gives researchers access to images, but that also gives the VWWP an outdated appearance. While there is a good argument to be made for the necessity of edited texts despite available images, in the case of VWWP, providing access has always been the prime objective and should remain the prime objective.

Because women writing in either genres or diverse subject areas such as science or law are not as frequently recognized or republished as their more canonical counterparts, they do not enjoy the same coverage by Google Books and other digital collections. By focusing on these women writing, and especially women writing in English throughout the former British Empire (Americas, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, India, etc.) the VWWP can continue to provide access to rare or hard to obtain books in support of classroom use and scholarship. To begin, we have chosen women writing humor in America because we this is an increasingly important field of study, both in scholarship and the classroom, one which we feel will benefit greatly from a full-text body of works.

This shift would be significant because it would represent a reasoned repurposing of an already extensive digital project, allowing it to maintain pace with shifts in scholarship and technology, an activity that is not common in a field dominated by large and somewhat general primary source databases and single author, location or event projects. For 19th-century scholars who are restricted in their classroom use of and research into available texts, VWWP would be a significant resource once again. For members of the digital humanities field, this new step would be a leader in remediating projects that have seemingly gone dormant.

Specifically, women in humor will represent a pilot addition of works to VWWP,

which is significant in its own right. This will be the first time in several years this project has been expanded. It will also compliment other resource housed at IU and elsewhere within 19th-century digital scholarship—such as UVA's digital project that centers around Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Indeed, some of the women we propose to digitize were on close terms with Stowe, as well as Mark Twain, Susan B. Anthony, and other important and prominent figures. As a result, these texts work as both secondary and primary sources—in addition to being worthy literature in their own right, they also comment on and inform many contemporary events in the 19th-century, including, quite wittily at times, suffrage movements across continents, colonial discourses, and the Reign of Queen Victoria. So too, as a training tool, the diverse humorists we have chosen provide a fairly accurate cross section of issues future editors may face when working in this field.

This project will also represent a new model for looking at library and humanities collaboration in a digital age. By actively working with the English department to produce new texts for VWWP, the library will participate in the training of young scholars through a program that is both exciting and fresh. The English Department will gain an important pedagogical and experiential resource that will help insure it graduates students well qualified to work in the changing field of humanities. This working collaboration would be a pilot in its own right, a new way of looking at the relationship between traditional humanities and digital libraries. This relationship will be somewhat unique in the world of DH scholarship, and will begin to answer as many questions as it poses.

Most importantly perhaps, we will all gain a new lease on life for VWWP as both a scholarly resource and a pedagogical utility.

3. Describe current and potential users. Is there faculty, library, or departmental interest and support for digitizing these materials for either research or teaching purposes?

The English Department has expressed interest in both revamping VWWP and finding opportunities for students to participate actively in new and continuing digital projects within the 19th-century. There is also anecdotal evidence that many Victorian Scholars at diverse institutions across the country would like to see this project revamped with a broader focus. There is support within the IU library system for adding to this project and finding sustainable models for keeping it fresh and invigorated over an extended period of time.

Adding a humor component to this collection will also serve a wide array of scholars. Many of these works satirize important events, significant political or literary figures, or prominent literary forms, such as poetry, etiquette guides or speech writing. As "popular writing," they take part in an important discourse with "high" culture, and offer a counterpoint to more canonical texts housed in other resources, a fact that becomes far clearer when they are viewed together as a unit or movement of writers.

They are also largely out of print, some of them prohibitively unavailable to the classroom or general reader, despite the fact that in the last ten years, humor writing has gained increased attention from scholars, including Nancy Walker and Regina Barreca.

Furthermore, adding a "genre collection" as the pilot expansion to VWWP may well broaden the type of user to which VWWP appeals. As a "deep" anthology that provides full text access to many different writers, VWWP has the opportunity to serve users by both providing these texts and also clustering them. Some of the most useful anthologies available in print succeed because they provide access to groups of minor writers who may interest a reader that enjoys mystery, romance, or humor, or a scholar who wishes to complete a broad survey of the topic. By combining writers in this way and exposing readers to texts that may not be familiar, anthologies serve an important role in both classroom pedagogy and faculty research. The newly envisioned user for VWWP, from the beginning student to the advanced scholar, would be able to use VWWP's humor collection, and provided this pilot goes well, the site in general, to navigate through full text resources written by minor women writers, across continents and genres. This will make the website more efficient for use in the classroom. Because, as it was conceive, VWWP was always envisioned as an anthological source, piloting this humor focused collection will take this type of use to a new level.

In the future, this genre model can be expanded into any number of disciplines. For instance, women writing about science in the 19th-century, such as Almira Phelps, or other diverse disciplines, could be added to the benefit of scholars working in discipline specific areas in the 19th.

Lastly, the mission of this pilot as a teaching tool will insure that it is used by students here at IU to further their educational and professional goals. This type of use is uniquely active and beneficial to the University as a whole and to the Library and the English Department in particular.

4. Describe types of materials to be digitized and number of each (i.e.: 6 books with a total of 700 pages, 600 black and while photographs). Include format, condition, and any special handling requirements.

We propose to digitize 15-20 books between 200 and 500 pages each. Predominantly, these books are under 300 pages. None of them are currently in print. Only five of them are currently covered by Google Books. These five selections were chosen because they represent the most important or popular works by the authors, and are not currently available in print. This was done in order to lend unity and cohesion to the collection by showcasing one of the major works by the author along with some of those which are lesser known. Similarly, Whitcher and Hamilton have been chosen so that this collection is fully representational. Carolyn Wells's edition of *Mother Goose*, though children's humor, was also included because data that suggests the children's verse and story content in VWWP is the most frequently used. All of these books are in

fair to very good condition for their age, and require the same handling as any other rare book undergoing digitization. A few of these are paperback (not issued in hardback), and require particular care.

Eventually, we would like to expand this list to include women writers from other parts of the Empire. We have started with American Women writing humor because we believe they are of greatest interest currently to scholars, but writers from a broad range of countries, including Canada, Australia, India and Ireland would fit well into this collection.

Sarah P. McLean Greene

Cape Cod Folks: A novel, 1881—Lilly (?)
Leon Pontifex, 1890—Lilly (?)
Winslow Plain, 1902—Private Collection
The Moral Imbeciles, 1898—Private Collection

Ann Stephens

High life in New York : a series of letters to Mr. Zephariah Slick,
Justice of the Peace, and Deacon of the church over to Weathersfield
in the state of Connecticut, 1873—Lilly (?)
Fashion and Famine, 1854—Wells

Gail Hamilton

Red-Letter Days in Applethorpe, 1866—ALF
A New Atmosphere, 1865—ALF
Gala-Days, 1864—ALF

Frances Miriam Berry Whitcher

The Widow Bedott Papers, 1867—Private Collection

Marietta Holley

Samantha at Saratoga, or Racin' after Fashion, 1887—Wells
The Widder Doodle's Courtship, and Other Sketches, 1890—Private Collection
The Widder Doodle's Love Affair and Other Stories, 1893—Private Collection
Josiah's Alarm, and Abel Perry's Funeral, 1895—ALF
Tirzah Ann's Summer Trip: And Other Sketches, 1892—Private Collection
Samantha at Coney Island, 1911—Wells
Around the World with Josia Allen's Wife, 1905—Wells

Wells, Carolyn

The Jingle Book, 1899—Private Collection
The Book of Humorous Verse, 1920—Wells
Such Nonsense! An Anthology, 1918—Wells
A Whimsey Anthology, 1906—ALF

5.   Do you have any existing descriptive information that could be used for searching these materials? In what form does this descriptive information exist (on paper, in a Word document, in an Excel file, etc.)

        Most of these materials are listed on IUCAT. The others exist in a private collection which has not been cataloged, but descriptive information can be made available upon request.

6.   How do you envision people accessing your materials? Are their similar resources that you could give as examples?

        Through the VWWP interface under a Humor heading and via the standard searching or browsing mechanism built into VWWP at the time of completion.

7.   Describe the contribution you and your staff can make to this project. Please name the project manager for your project.

        The staff is extremely excited about the prospect of this project. It includes individuals with knowledge about 19th-century women's humor.

8. Are you expecting to receive external funding for this project? Do you have funding sources in mind? What is the date for submission for these opportunities?

        Because this is a relatively small "teaching collection" produced in conjunction with an already extant project, we do not anticipate outside funding.

9. Other general comments, issues or concerns.

10. Copyright Status
        Please refer to the Copyright Management Center at http://
        www.copyright.iupui.edu/quickguide.htm for information to help you determine the

copyright status of your materials. Below, please explain your understanding of the copyright status of the material.

___X___ Public domain

___X___ Owned and controlled by Indiana University

___X___ Owned by someone else, but permission secured

_____ Situation unknown or unclear

Copyright explanation:

All of these works were published before January 1923, and are within the public domain. The library owns most of them, but those that are not owned by the library are available for digitization from a private collector who has consented to the use of these books for this project.

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