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SUMMARY RESEARCH PLAN OF WORK

Date Prepared:
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Describe the work to be accomplished during the summer that is to be paid from state appropriated funds:

This digital humanities project is entitled "Jekyll-journal: an open source, lightweight templating system for independent journals."

The project arises out of a need for easily accessible templating systems that cater to the needs of small independent scholarly and para-academic journals. The project addresses three needs for journals not affiliated with established university presses or large grant-funded centers with labor resources:

1) Delivery, not workflow. Many existing large-scale content management systems adapted for journal use (for example, plugins to Drupal, Open Journal Systems, etc.), focus on providing infrastructure for complex back-end workflow and treat the presentation layer simply as a delivery mechanism for pdfs. Such workflow systems often require editors to "change for the machine," so to speak, altering tried-and-tested editorial workflow to adapt to the options they are offered. Jekyll-journal, instead, assumes that editors might have existing workflows that they already undertake and that they would prefer to retain, and that what they desire from an online tool is a simple, structured tool for presentation and delivery of content that might include webtexts, rich media or other features not deliverable via pdf.

2) Security and mantainability. Many small-scale journals (e.g. postmedieval, I love e-Poetry, Blackbird) currently shoehorn their journals into database and templating systems provided by Drupal or Wordpress. Wordpress, especially, is vulnerable to security issues, and a current thread in web development is to move to static templating systems (for example, Jekyll and Bootstrap) that allow for files to stay outside of a database and possibly insecure engines that require constant updating, while still allowing editors to change look-and-feel without having to edit hundreds of pages individually.

3) Easy sharing and adaptation. Jekyll and Bootstrap are open license projects that are easily forkable through Github for customization. Jekyll-journal, itself a fork and adaptation of the bare-bones Jekyll system, will follow this model: it will be available for distribution with no restrictions as a gift to other scholarly journal editors. Additionally, a side-effect of using the Github system is that authors who wish to open up the source material for preview or analysis will have the option to do so.

My plan for the three-month period is to achieve the following:

1) Customize Jekyll's "collections" function and query system for use with the "Volume/Issue" model that most journals follow.
2) Create scripts that will automatically generate issue tables of contents so that if an article is moved, it will automatically be reassigned to the new issue without need to edit the front end.
3) Pilot and troubleshoot the system on the journal I edit, *Hyperrhiz: New Media Cultures*
4) Begin working on a separate, forkable bare system for editors of other journals to download
5) Concurrently, develop documentation for other editors to follow.

#1, #2 and #3 are achievable during the funded period. #4 and #5 will likely extend beyond the summer, but this period will allow me to get a good head start on these tasks. In addition, my future plans are to start working on an optional, adjunct tracking system that can easily be adapted to existing journal workflows without requiring that editors fundamentally change their preferred procedures for peer review and scholarly communication.

Approved: Department Head   Date

Approved: Associate Dean for Research   Date