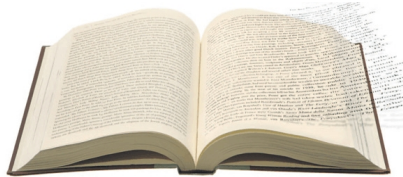


Michael Hancher  
University of Minnesota  
mh@umn.edu

**Large Digital Libraries: Beyond Google Books**  
Special Session, MLA 2012 (January 5–8), Seattle  
Thursday, January 5, 12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., 611 WSCC



ASIDE FROM GOOGLE BOOKS the two principal repositories for digitized books today are the [Open Library](#) and the [HathiTrust Digital Library](#). Launched by the [Internet Archive](#) in 2006, the Open Library provides free access, in a variety of viewing formats, to about one million books in the public domain. (Note, 12/15/11: Original plans were for a representative of the Open Library to participate in this roundtable discussion, but recent changes in the staffing of the Open Library have made that impossible.) The HathiTrust Digital Library is a cooperative project of more than fifty major research libraries. Launched in October 2008, it has assembled about eight million digitized books, some two million of which are in the public domain; and it provides the user with a variety of search and access options.

The [Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA), launched at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University in December 2010, is now in the planning stage, and may become a digitization project on the scale of the Open Library and the HathiTrust Digital Library.

These enterprises are now the Big Three of the noncommercial digital library industry in the United States. Google Books, a commercial project, has attracted much public and scholarly attention, not only for the undeniable revolution in learning that it has brought about, but also for its copyright misadventures and for the sometimes doubtful quality of its digitized images, underlying texts, and metadata. The special qualities of the Open Library and the HathiTrust Digital Library have yet to be assessed by scholars, who stand to benefit from those projects, as they have from Google Books. The prospect of the Digital Library of America enlarges the possibilities to be considered.

What are the merits of these projects? How can they be improved? What role should scholars play in their improvement? These questions will be addressed by a participant in the management of the HathiTrust Digital Library (Jeremy York); by a close observer of the DPLA project (Amanda French); and by two other scholars who are skilled in the application of digital resources to the advancement of learning in the humanities. Andrew Stauffer will critique a recent [OCLC report](#) that recommends the withdrawal of substantial portions of “low-use print collections” from academic research libraries in favor of reliance on the HathiTrust digital surrogates; and Tanya Clement will consider possibilities for graphic representation of prosodic features of digitized texts, for example in the work of Gertrude Stein.

This special session is a kind of sequel to [“The Library of Google: Researching Scanned Books,”](#) which was part of the MLA meeting held in San Francisco in December 2008—soon after the HathiTrust began its work.

**Tanya Clement**, formerly associate director of the [Digital Cultures and Creativity](#) program at the University of Maryland, is an assistant professor in the School of Information, University of Texas–Austin. She has been a program associate at the Maryland Institute for Technologies in the Humanities ([MITH](#)) and a project manager for the [Dickinson Electronic Archives](#).

**Amanda French** coordinates [THATCamp](#) for the Center for History and New Media, George Mason University. The author of articles on French poetry and the digital humanities, she recently gave a keynote presentation, “Imagine a National Digital Library: I Wonder If We Can,” for the Electronic Resources and Libraries conference, University of Texas. She also participated in the MLA special session referenced above, “The Library of Google: Researching Scanned Books.”

**Michael Hancher** is professor of English at the University of Minnesota and past president of the [Dictionary Society of North America](#). His publications include an examination of the documentary qualities of electronic text (in *Studies in Bibliography*, vol. 54), and a recent assessment of LibriVox, the unrestricted online audiobooks project.

**Andrew Stauffer**, associate professor of English at the University of Virginia, is director of [NINES: Nineteenth-century Scholarship Online](#). The author of *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), he has edited two books and written many scholarly articles on Romantic and Victorian literature.

**Jeremy York**, assistant librarian, University of Michigan Library, and project librarian, HathiTrust (one of the digital libraries under discussion), received his MIS degree from the University of Michigan. He has helped manage and coordinate projects for HathiTrust since before it was launched in 2008.