

For Consideration: Our MTA Digital Future

A. Introduction:

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Digitization at MTA has been meeting for the past year. That group has just been renamed the Ad Hoc Working Group on MTA's Digital Future. Members of the group and their email addresses are: Amanda Cockshutt <acockshu@mta.ca>; Elizabeth Stregger <estregger@mta.ca>; Lauren Beck <lbeck@mta.ca>; Geoffrey Cruttwell <gcruttwell@mta.ca>; Christopher Forstall <cforstall@mta.ca>; Rosemary Polegato <rpolegat@mta.ca>; Laurie Ricker <lricker@mta.ca>; Toni Roberts <troberts@mta.ca>; 'Noah Fry, MASU VP Academic Affairs 2018-19' <masuacademic@mta.ca>; Liam Keliher <lkelihier@mta.ca>; Bruce Robertson broberts@mta.ca; Sandy MacIver <smaciver@mta.ca>; Marc Truitt <mtruitt@mta.ca>.

The working group has decided to proceed on two fronts in order to combine the best of 'action' and 'thoughtfulness.' The action part is the short part below. It is intended to prepare us to take specific actions in the coming academic year. Members of the group expressed a strong desire for action, lest we otherwise "continue just to discuss without moving forward." The action part involves subcommittee meetings to propose immediate and important actions in the context of community discussions to date. The thoughtful long term part is the green paper portion (page 2 onward), which poses ideas and questions emerging from our recent community input process.

B. Moving forward together

After terrific input at our May and September community-wide digitization meetings, we are getting ready to move forward. Our working group intends to proceed simultaneously on two fronts:

1. To receive input concerning the appended "green paper" from the university community. To do so please address comments, opinions, readings etc. to Marc Truitt.
2. To keep things moving we have set up three sub-groups that will develop recommendations in three areas. Those three groups will consider and incorporate input as part of their process. The three areas are:
 - a. Identifying learning outcomes to ensure digital literacy
 - b. Re-tooling existing course offerings and establishing new courses around digitization methods
 - c. Reviewing the ethical, social, and societal issues of digitization

Members interested in presenting to any one of these subgroups should notify Amanda Cockshutt

In our last working group meeting, we talked about how in the digitization area we may be living the Silicon Valley idiom: "We're kind of flying the plane while we're building it." Our committee believes that we have no choice but to move ahead on possible specific policies and proposals at the same time as we review ideas, possibilities and thought-provoking questions about MTA's overall digital future. As several participants noted in the open community sessions: "we are not going to be finished digitization anytime soon—we have to continue to review what we're doing. Thus, at the same time as we proceed on these two fronts we will consider ideas for process for the future (e.g. more Open Spaces work, a one

day symposium, a reading discussion group, etc. Anyone interested in participating should contact Sandy Maclver.)

For Consideration: A Green Paper on Our Digital Future

A. Introduction:

What this paper is about: A green paper is a policy/action preparation document/a "first step" towards policy. It examines possibilities and issues but does not take a firm policy stand on any of those issues. It asks lots of questions!

This green paper is full of queries, propositions and statements that came from excellent community participation of more than fifty people in our two MTA summits (in May and September).

Our starting point in this process, in early 2018, was stating a desire for a university wide perspective/conversation in our Provost Group and then in the Ad Hoc Committee on Digitization (which has been renamed the Ad Hoc Committee on MTA's Digital Future. Members of the community were selected for the ad hoc group based on their knowledge and/or demonstrated interest. That desire, stated in general terms, was to figure out the needs and capacities necessary for a collective digital future, understand the digital competencies needed to go forward in the future, determine what we need to provide and the potential impact on faculty teaching/the teaching process. Once we got into the summits, that desire expanded considerably in terms of breadth of scope and in specifics to be solved. Key summit results from the group work done by eleven groups at the two summits are included below. Members of groups self-selected which group they were in. They did so based on common interests (note: this was done using Open Spaces technology). Pictures of flip chart sheets are also appended to this document. Some end-of-meeting comments etc. are included as well. Once again, all of them are typed up in the appendices.

The draft definition of digitization that we worked with and put forward from the ad hoc committee was as follows:

- infrastructure-related digitization - digitizing material culture for research and analysis
- course/research-related digital skills/capabilities and related analysis
- basic digital skills development (using and manipulating tools such as software and hardware)
- the development and programming of tools to be used for the above

Discussion themes put forward for the summits included:

- Our Digital communities
- Digital literacy
- Digital citizenship

A supposition connected with literacy that was advanced in one of the sessions is that we need to do more than we are doing right now to succeed in the arena of digitization. That appeared to be widely agreed to by participants.

One group defined digital citizenship as:

- shared core values and skill sets
- thinking critically, creatively and in terms of humanity
- belonging to culture to create comfort and openness, rights and responsibilities
- figuring out how to manage the digital and communications saturation

It was also noted that we need to “accept... there is some level of fear of technology”, an important idea that is repeated below.

A second group noted that there should be “no separation... between digital and citizenship”. The group noted the importance of wellness and preparing “healthy educated citizens for the world”. They further noted that knowledge pathways are a consideration; i.e. “where is knowledge coming from?”

Questions:

Right at the get-go, we questioned the basics above and put these questions in front of the summits:

- Was our starting point the right starting point? Did we miss something important?
- Is our definition the right definition?

B. Big themes/ideas/challenges from the Summits

Fundamental questions asked at the sessions echoed some of the work of the ad hoc committee:

- What is digitization? Why does it matter?
- Are we serious about this?
- What is our role and responsibility? What do students [today and in the future] need to know?
- Can we use digitization to create, not to isolate?
- What is the role of the state?

One of the many astute definitional observations at the summits was that “digitization is fluid and expansive”. A second suggestion was that “we need a guiding principle before we start building solutions”. It was also stated by one group that “digitization is a community of common experiences”.

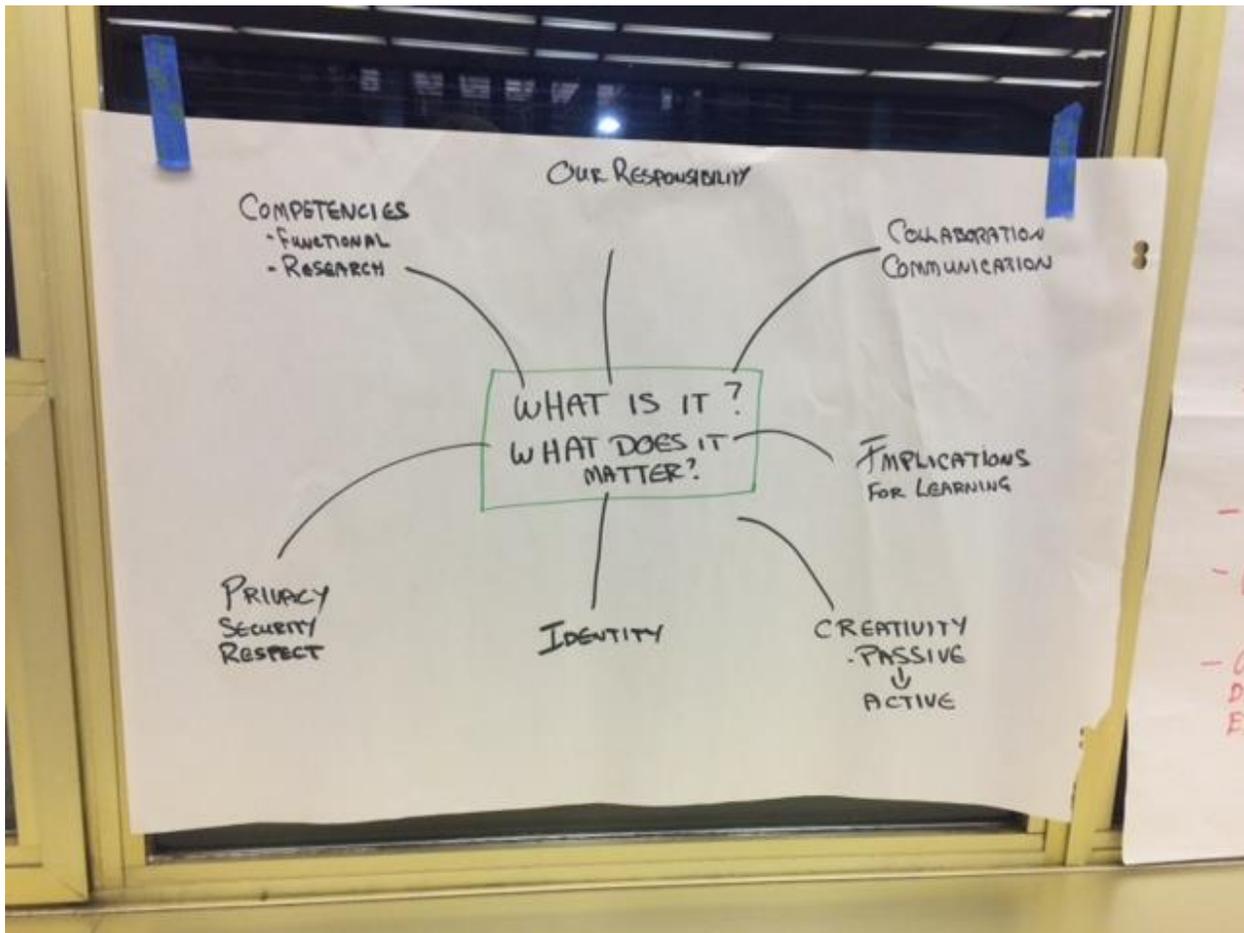
Overarching statements put forward included:

- Interdisciplinarity is at the heart of digitization
- A core skill/outcome for all students is the capacity for self-learning/teaching
- Digitization should involve a community of common experiences
- Connect digitization to experiential learning/problem-based learning
- Connecting digitization to theory will make us different from the colleges
- Encourage anonymous, safe, on-line participation
- Use the technology to leverage different teaching and learning experiences
- The promotion of what is happening here [is important]
- Teach core skills [such as] building the capacity for self-learning and teaching
- We should be using digitization to have our students “think critically, creatively and in terms of humanity”

- We need to examine the possible risks and benefits of sharing information, using tools, including open access/open source issues of copyright, capitalism and ethics

Two of the groups (one each in May and September) examined the digitization issue from very broad perspectives. The charts of the two groups are included below.

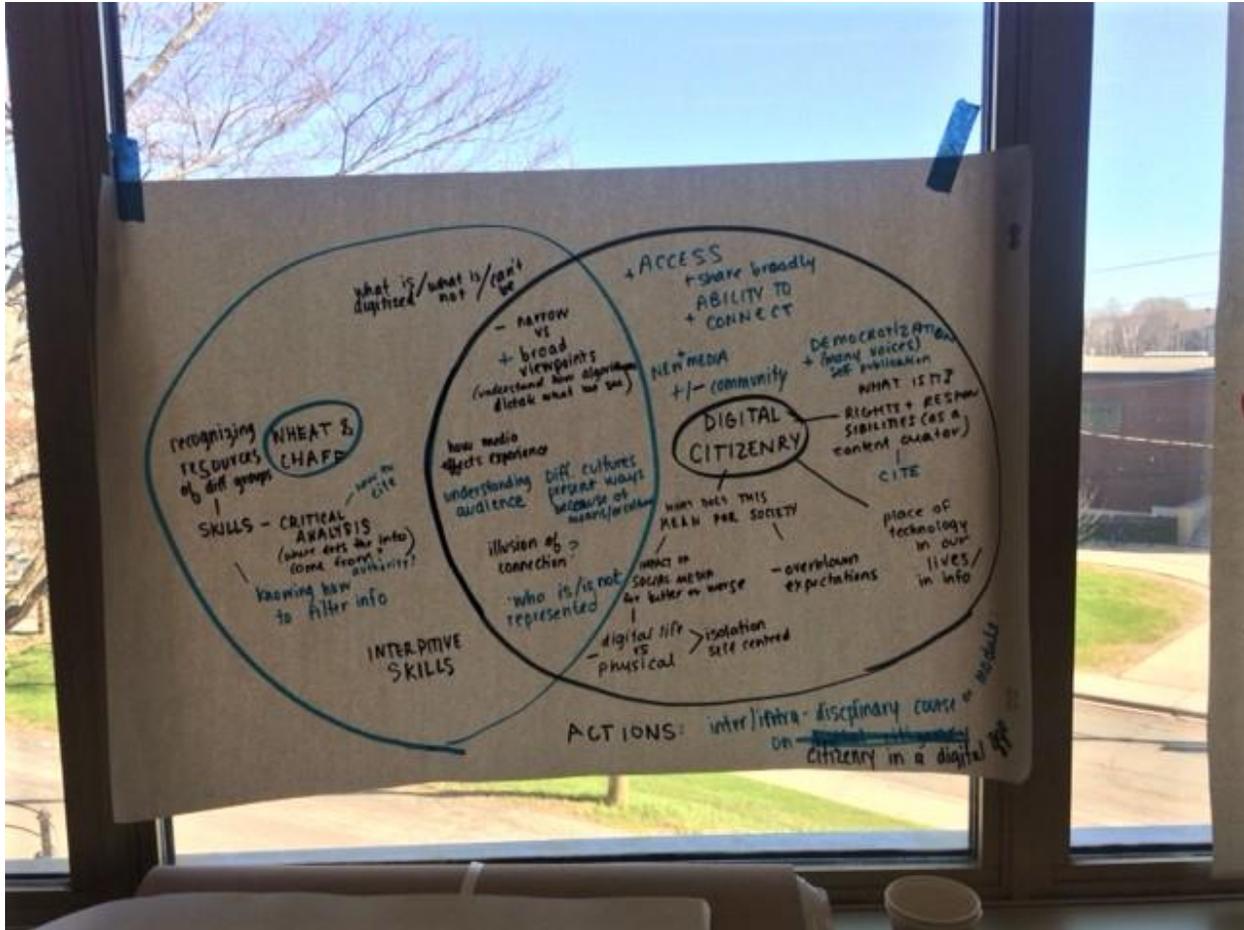
One chart (see photo #1 below) started with the idea of MTA responsibility and asked, "What is it? What (or why) does it matter?"



Questions:

Are we willing to assume responsibility? Does this chart hit the right main themes of responsibility?

A second chart examined the idea of separation of the “wheat from the chaff” in regards to digital citizenry, through a Venn diagram that showed some overlap as well;



Questions:

Is the chart complete?

Are the right areas put in the right parts of the diagram?

How could this chart be expanded or replicated to cover digital literacy and communities?

An end of meeting post-it at one of the sessions also put the ‘big picture’ in formulaic terms:

Documenting (talks, performance, lectures)	To share between (departments, communities, institutions)	Leads to increased accessibility and new voices	= Expanded, more diverse community
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Other big Ideas/issues were contributed throughout the process. Among them were the following:
We should:

- accept that there is some fear of the technology
- continue the dialogues
- build a community of learners
- ask: is it all about lifelong learners?
- empower students
- determine what goals to prioritize
- construct a way to define digitization that is truly distinct
- take the following steps: define digitization, pilot it, fund it, own it

C. Challenges and opportunities?

Stated as propositions and questions, here are some of the big challenges and opportunities that come out of the two sessions (note: some of these are repeated elsewhere in this document):

- solving our identity crisis in digitization, including determining where we fit in terms of remediation to excellence/competitiveness
- prioritizing wellness: building healthy, educated citizens for the world
- identifying knowledge pathways and accessibility
- dealing with fear of technology
- communications saturate [our world]
- accumulation of ongoing and constantly expanding issues of security, privacy and ethics connected with the collection, manipulation and use of the data
- [before we get too far down this path] we need to identify the risks and benefits of sharing digital information, using digital tools etc.
- determining: what are our barriers to innovation? Equality, tension, time and resources
- digitization provides opportunities for collaboration, partnering, dissemination of research, finding resources, accessibility, promotion of what is happening here and “making Sackville the center of the world” (Note: the specific focus of the group was on digitization of live performances but it was stated by members of the larger group that these concepts/ideas had broader potential application)

D. Specific topics, means and methods discussed by two or more groups:

A warning issued in one of the summits re. specifics: “We have discussed ways to ‘solve digitization’. We may not yet be at the root of the problem”. Along similar lines, one participant reminded us of the familiar educator’s refrain “I didn’t know what I didn’t know”.

A number of specific topics were raised in the course of the summits. They include skills, courses and programs, and ethics

1. Key digital skills

One group said that key skills should be tied to:

- perceived need and just-in-time training

- higher order thinking—e.g. research skills, critical thinking and writing skills

As noted above, another group said: A core skill/outcome for all students in the capacity for self-learning/teaching

2. Courses and programs

The number one topic that was debated at the sessions was “what and how should we teach” and “what specific courses should be offered?” The summits yielded numerous ideas, questions and options:

- We need to figure out curriculum, faculty time, resources, student time, other resources
- We should:
 - Ask the question: “what is a course?”
 - Have a for-credit problem-solving course with modules on line tied to problem-based learning and with students required to complete by end of second year
 - Have a foundation course (digital citizenship, leadership, competencies, democracy) offered over four years
 - Develop algorithmic thinking
 - Issue badges or have modules through Moodle
 - Build digital collaboration and partnerships
 - Have anything from “digital skills that are tied to perceived needs/just in time training” to digitization tied to higher order thinking/critical thinking/research and writing skills
 - Use technology to leverage different teaching and learning experiences
 - Establish connections between digital (and other) literacies and experiential learning; note the importance of reflection and translating learning
 - In terms of data analysis one group asked the question “do students need to know the guts”/how to operate in R? That same group suggested an integrated data analysis class. Key tools, the group suggested, included writing papers, writing lab reports and data manipulation
 - Have a course/education in algorithmic thinking; dealing with encryption and security, privacy; metadata: organizing and describing information; analyzing and assessing the quality of data; with regards to citation, knowing what are the parts and why does that matter
 - Have a foundation course on media knowledge distributed over four years
- We should operate through integrated labs and classes with labs and meetings on the same day; leading in to a second year course on writing and data manipulation
- We need to have a resource centre in the library [which could be tied to that concept of community building being connected to digitization]
- We should teach students how to answer the question “how do I do this?”; answers include exploring menus, “Google it” and “ask someone”

Other possible contributions of digitization, depending on how we use, manage and expand it include:

- Software to encourage anonymous, safe, on line participation in class

3. Ethics

Ethical propositions/questions were posed by three groups. They were also identified as critical in a number of final comments in the first summit.

One was in relation to health information, Indigenous knowledge

Another group suggested that ethics involves context, analysis, understanding, authenticity, judgment...

A third group said that we need to have students understand the ethical questions associated with the collection, use and manipulation of data

4. Questions that follow include:

Are there more options to be considered?

Could two or more options be combined?

What are the pros and cons of the options?

How should we decide?

How should we keep this current and topical?

E. Processes going forward

The possible processes that we discussed were many. They included how to make sure that we had ethical practices and processes. They also raised the issue re how should we as a community continue to examine future new directions often enough to be current and to provide our students with the learning outcomes and competences that they will need for a digital world but not so often as to be engaging in "in the weeds navel-gazing".

F. Conclusion and call for further input

We should determine how to invite the campus community to submit further questions, comments and recommended solutions to the revised document.

Appendices

The appendices include:

- The final comments by participants in the two sessions.
- All flip charts prepared and presented in the two summits

*Notes compiled from Ad Hoc Committee and Summit documents by Sandy MacIver. November 15, 2018.
Minor corrections of typos and paring down of section F on January 16, 2019.*

Digitization Summit final remarks, MTA. May 8, 2018

When asked to say something about take-aways/a summary comment/a message to Jeff Ollerhead participants said the following (Note: no names are used; each bullet point denotes a new person)

- This summit was like a community of practice session, with people interested in teaching and learning about digitization getting together—we need to have this conversation keep happening
- We need to get students interested in digitization. We want them to come here wanting to learn how to learn in the field of digitization. We want them to want to have the skills that we teach them
- We should be continuing this dialogue. We will need to have this dialogue at least once a year because it will change every year. So, this summit should become a regular thing.
- What is remarkable is how fast things are changing in this field. Some people pick up on this knowledge/learning faster than others. We need to have a resource centre for digitization/technology here in the library. Making a class in digitization mandatory will have a stigma attached to it.
- We have reached the time where digitization has reached/become: just in time/a pain point/self-learning. It has all come together. We should have a community of learners in this area. We all have to do continuous learning in digitization.
- We should have badges or modules distributed through Moodle rather than through a course. We must have an ethics portion of what we teach and a discussion leader in that area.
- We need to take an interdisciplinary approach to digital ethics and citizenship
- I think the Venn diagram [on the flip chart sheet] is important. Without this session, people from different areas/disciplines would not have talked to each other. We need to get out of our silos to succeed in digitization. Students will have to do learning in digitization and some of them may be the teachers.
- Interdisciplinarity is important. We should use the digital realm as a tool to connect.
- I like the interdisciplinarity. Imagine having real opportunities that go across different faculties and involve librarians. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. This summit was a great experience and an opportunity to build community.
- We need to focus on interdisciplinarity and intradisciplinarity. The stories that were told in my group about 'R' vs. 'SPSS' were important. The librarians opened my eyes. I didn't know what I didn't know [prior to this session]
- We had a recent Senate meeting where we talked about students doing peer teaching. This could be built in a similar way.
- Today we discussed ways to solve [digitization]. We may not yet be at the root of the problem. We should be talking to employers who could tell us about the development of employability skills. Only they can identify those. We need to have innovative teaching in teaching something new.
- This is about lifelong learning for university students.
- My group talked about functioning in a digital world involving research, commerce and community. We need to increase people's comfort level and comfort with digitization methods. We need to talk about both values and competencies—we should mentor, model and teach
- Everything that we talked about today requires resources and will take time [to implement]. I hope we can talk about this in subsequent sessions. We need to understand different areas (I'm a GIS guy) and prepare students for a digital future.

- Thanks to everyone for sharing their thoughts. We need to have more discussion because there is lots to explore.
- It seems like the different groups discussed many of the same ideas from different angles. We may be dealing with a progression here from people who are employment oriented to those who are into self-learning and the crusty Liberal arts. There is more to talk about.
- There are high-level ideas that we were discussing today like problem solving, systematic thinking and algorithmic thinking. We also discussed the management of data and digital citizenship. We need to have further discussion about the implications of all of this. If we create something out of this session, we must not lose the high-level ideas. We need to talk about more general skills that are applicable elsewhere and higher-level problem solving. We have to make sure this doesn’t get lost [as we go forward].

Notes compiled by Sandy MacIver on May 11, 2018. Note that many people were talking rapidly so some important thoughts/ideas etc. may have been missed because of that.

Digitization Summit final remarks, MTA. September 10, 2018

When asked to write on a post-it something about take-aways/a summary comment/questions, participants wrote the following (Note: no names are used; each bullet point denotes a new person):

- Empowering students through increasing their knowledge, analysis, understanding and judgment re the digital world (perhaps via a Foundation Course)
- Are we attempting to differentiate MTA through digitization or to keep up with the other universities?
- The response to digitization requires flexibility
- What goals relating to ‘digital’ literacy or ‘digitization’ do we prioritize for our students and how do we put resources in place to achieve it?
- Creating a digital virtual community as diverse and welcoming as “walking the halls”; we can’t walk across the campus without knowing someone
- Responsibility and identity: if we can agree on what it is and that it is good, perhaps we can use digital literacy and digital citizenship to construct a way to define ourselves that is truly distinct
- We need to help foster the self-resiliency of students to help them grow and while recognizing the ways in which students build these skills are outside the classroom
- Digital literacy and digitization: define it, pilot it, fund it, own it through development and a foundation course stewarded across all disciplines, aiming for community of common experience
- If we’re serious about this, we need to engage, consult and support the experts and evidence on what works; and ensure adequate resourcing—time, money, space—plus slack for innovation and it needs to be connected embedded in broader teaching and research
- Digitization is fluid and expansive. We need to be thoughtful and intentional about how to engage with it to best teaching and learning purposes
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting (talks, performance, lectures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share between (departments, communities, institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to increased accessibility and new voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • = Expanded, more diverse community
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- How we teach digital literacy depends on what we have to work with (student/faculty knowledge and also resources) and what role we think we fill in society. Need to elicit honest reflection from stakeholders... but isn't that just what we're doing here?
- Loosen up, MTA! We made room for women by reducing male content/voices from our community and we can do the same here by incorporating "the digital" into our community
- This was a thought-provoking conversation across disciplinary boundaries. The direction for MTA should also be informed by the literature as some of the questions have been well-considered by experts across disciplines as well
- We need a guiding principle before we start building solutions, so we know we are going in the right direction
- Digitation should be used to create, not to substitute or isolate
- What is digital literacy and how does that help identify what digital literacy might be?
- It would be beneficial if there is studio/video editor to help faculty and students to create digital content which can bring conversations to the community
- What is our role/responsibility?
- There is a need for common experiences shared by faculty, staff and students without using significant time and financial resources. Idea: share essays/tutorials/videos for the whole campus to view

Subject to review and editing.