

# White Paper

## RECOVERY HUB *for* AMERICAN WOMEN *Writers!*



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
EDWARDSVILLE

Iris

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE HUMANITIES

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## Our Mission

The Recovery Hub for American Women Writers supports projects recovering the work of women writers by providing digital access to forgotten or neglected texts and/or extending them with network mapping, spatial analysis, multimedia storytelling, innovative contextualization, and the distant reading of massive datasets.

The Recovery Hub explores the intersecting relationships between feminist practice, content, and technical specifications with an awareness of the ways that the design and implementation of technology can exclude and objectify people. Though there are notable exceptions, the digital humanities is not often geared in content or design toward addressing, attracting, or educating women or people of color.

## Our Purpose

The Recovery Hub offers hands-on consultation to navigate project management, quality control, sustainability, and peer review in order to increase the quantity and quality of recovery projects focused on American women writers. The Recovery Hub fosters collaboration, mentorship, and community-building among women working in the digital humanities while seeking feminist and decolonial approaches to the creation, curation, design, sharing, and archiving of digital content.



# Summary of Accomplishments

## 1

### **Launch of Editorial Framework and supporting documentation**

Members of the core team from UNL continued testing the Jekyll templates for the editorial framework with Recovery Hub Partners. They have fully launched their templates, a sample site, and extensive documentation for users. The site can accommodate texts encoded in Markdown or TEI and has templates for multiple genres, including novels, poetry, correspondence, and paratexts.

## 3

### **Implementation of pedagogical peer review process**

The team hired two graduate fellows, Alice Martin and Tracy Fernandez Rysavy. To complete their work on the resource library, they developed a peer review model for pedagogical materials that honors the work of faculty in developing quality classroom content and supporting digital recovery through their teaching practices and methods.

## 2

### **Network integration of *Legacy* and SSAWW sites**

Members of the core team from SIUE collaborated with leadership from the Society for the Study of American Women Writers and the journal *Legacy* to develop branding that affiliates all three organizations. Margaret Smith developed corresponding site designs for all three organizations that draw together content, encourage collaboration, and foster a unified scholarly community.

## 4

### **Simplification of workflow for cultivation and peer review**

Dr. Kristen Lillvis continued assessing processes for peer review and cultivation by conducting focus groups and exit interviews. Through that process we simplified our MOU for cultivation, developed replicable tutorials for the support we offer, and standardized our peer review model. We also cultivated four new projects and showcased three new projects.



# Our Team



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Project Director



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Southern Illinois  
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Director of Consultation



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Documentation  
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Technical Designer



**Nicole Gray**

University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln  
Programmer

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) and University Nebraska-Lincoln have served as the infrastuctural homes for the Recovery Hub for American Women Writers. SIUE provides the server space for the Recovery Hub's website and the SIUE Foundation manages donations and membership for so all contributions are tax-deductible.

# Graduate Fellows

The graduate fellowship was advertised in an open call and shared widely on social media and listservs. The team reviewed six applicants for the year-long position. The fellows participated in a two-day onboarding.

The primary goal for the graduate fellows was to build a library of quality-controlled resources including bibliographies, tutorials, and teaching materials. Early conversations expanded this goal to include widening and strengthening the community of practitioners who regularly engage with the Recovery Hub. The fellows completed work in four categories: Pedagogical Peer Review, Resource Library Development, Social Media and Newsletter Presence, and the Tech Hours Series.

## Alice Martin



Martin is a PhD candidate in the English Department at Rutgers University, studying nineteenth century American women's manuscript culture. She has presented her work at the Modern Language Association, C-19, and the American Literature Association. Her dissertation project is on the ways in which women writers in nineteenth-century America turned toward manuscript-based writing to develop scales of limited social publics that complicate the binary of public/private and conceptualize writing itself as a form of social mediation.

## Tracy Fernandez Rysavy



Fernandez Rysavy is a Ph.D. candidate in Literature and Criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on contemporary multiethnic women's literature, especially gothic literature, through race, feminist, and postcolonial critical lenses. She is also an associate teaching professor in English literature; creative writing; and women's, gender, & sexuality studies at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. She co-hosts a student-led podcast, *Let's Not Do That: Microaggressions on College Campuses*.

# Community of Practice

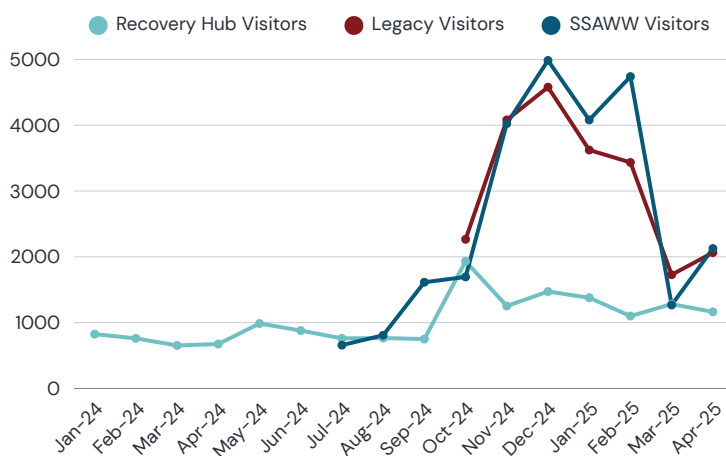
## Growing Our Consultant Network

Using membership funds, in Spring 2024, the Recovery Hub issued a call for consultants and selected ten applicants with a wide range of backgrounds, technical skills, and content area knowledge, including graduate students, librarians, independent scholars, and faculty. We developed a two-day program that introduced consultants to principles of project design and management, feminist digital praxis, recovery scholarship, and common consultation questions like tool choice.

The consultants expressed interest in continued community-building, so we created a Slack channel for professional development opportunities, questions that might benefit from group perspectives, and resource-sharing. We'll continue to host virtual events for consultants to engage in professional development.

## Building Infrastructure for Digital Collaboration

**Cross-site integrations with partner organizations have driven traffic across all three platforms and provide infrastructure for digital publications and collaborations.**



To facilitate deeper and more sustainable collaborations with the Hub's partner organizations, *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* and the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, Smith and DeSpain built new websites for both organizations modeled on the Hub's design and functionality. Both new sites are self-hosted WordPress multisites that can host digital projects. All three sites cross-link and are set up to begin sharing featured content.



**LEGACY**  
A JOURNAL OF AMERICAN  
WOMEN WRITERS

The grant supported a branding redesign for both affiliated organizations that conjoined the identity of the three groups using the pen nib as a unifying theme.



# Expanding the Network

To expand and strengthen the network of scholar-educators involved in the Hub, fellow Tracy Fernandez Rysavy increased the Hub's presence on social media, particularly Instagram, Facebook, and BlueSky. She also launched a quarterly e-newsletter.

These venues feature regular posts about the Hub's services, calls, and featured sites, with links and original graphics to engage followers. The Hub's social media coverage also highlights the work of our affiliates through cultivation, showcases, or event promotion. The recognition of our community members strengthens the Hub's expanding partnerships.



## Growth in Engagement

In 2024, our Facebook followers grew by 34 percent, adding 49 new followers for a total of 145 and increasing the reach of Hub posts, with 1,408 impressions in the fall 2024 quarter alone and more than 2,400 cumulatively over the past year. "Reach" includes direct engagement with Hub posts, as well as tags, shares, and page or post visits and views. The most popular posts were those that mentioned Hub resources for classroom instruction. Also popular are those that mentioned partner organizations.

Growth on Instagram continues to be slow, as followers who engage with the Hub on Facebook and Instagram appear to want to keep their Instagram accounts private. The Hub account grew by about 45 percent, from 30 to 55 followers in the past year. Reach on Instagram mirrored that of Facebook, however, increasing by 2,400 impressions over the past year, contrasting to 9 impressions at the start of the year.

Bluesky does not offer analytics, though the Hub account grew from a handful of followers and no posts to 85 followers and 87 posts.

The fall issue of the e-newsletter had 68 subscribers and a 68 percent open rate, compared to an industry standard of 35 percent. The click rate, was 9.1 percent, compared to an industry standard of 2.65 percent.



# Resource Library

## Pedagogical Resources

The graduate fellows' main goal has been to build out teaching materials for the resource library.

The fellows designed and implemented a peer-review process for teaching materials and a platform to share them. The process:

- Increases the use of digital scholarly editions in humanities classrooms by providing resources for how instructors can responsibly engage students in digital recovery; and
- Acknowledges the scholarly value of teaching labor alongside research

The Hub's approach is unique due to the development of a peer-review process that encourages collaborations among scholar-educators and offers scholarly vetting and legitimacy. To standardize the teaching materials, the fellows designed a teaching materials template. This template adapts assignments to a Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) framework to ensure accessibility; transparency; and thoughtful, student-centered pedagogical design for each lesson plan.

The fellows launched an open call for scholar-educators to submit lesson plans and assignments related to Hub-supported digital projects or digital recovery more broadly. They received fourteen submissions. Twelve were accepted and posted on the Resource Library's Teaching Resources page. The Teaching Resources page now also includes pedagogical materials provided by the teams behind showcased projects.

## Bibliographies

Fellow Alice Martin developed bibliographies for critical topics related to the Recovery Hub's mission. Each bibliography includes an introduction and a searchable database of sources and terms.

### Feminist and DH Pedagogy

Includes resources based on the intersection of digital pedagogy and feminist pedagogy.

### Feminist Practice and the Digital Humanities

Considers resources for feminist approaches to the digital humanities. Concerns include equitable transparency, access, labor, embodiment, and sustainability

### Recovery Theory and Methods

Explores what "recovery" means and the variety of theories and methods scholars have advanced to address it

### Digital and Scholarly Editing

Considers how scholarly editing practices need to adjust to digital composition and circulation, online workflows, digital design concerns, etc.



**CHECK OUT OUR BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

The Recovery Hub's bibliographies offer scholarly resources on the following:

- Recovery Theory & Methods
- Feminist and Digital Humanities (DH) Pedagogy
- Feminist Practice in DH
- Digital & Scholarly Editing
- Foundational Projects

<https://recoveryhub.siue.edu/bibliographies/>

# Tech Hour Series

In addition to an initial get-to-know-us hour, the graduate fellows organized two formal tech hours in Spring 2024 with the goal of expanding the network and increasing usership of pedagogical resources.

## Using Digital Archives in the Classroom February 27, 2024

This panel discussion focused on strategies and tips for using digital archives of neglected women writers of the Americas in the classroom.

Moderator: Alice Martin

Panelists included:

- Dr. Mary Chapman (UBC) of *The Winnifred Eaton Archive*.
- Sydney Lines (UBC) of *The Winnifred Eaton Archive*.
- Dr. Suzanne Edwards (Lehigh) of *The Gloria Naylor Archive*.

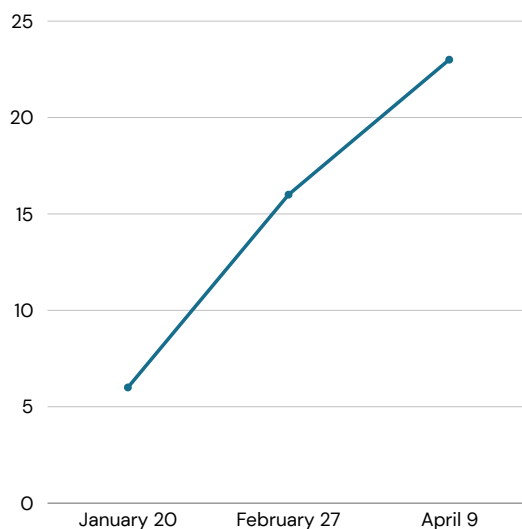
## Engaging Students in Recovery Work April 9, 2024

This panel discussion focused on strategies and tips for engaging in recovering or studying neglected American women's literature with students.

Moderator: Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

Panelists included:

- Dr. Tisha Brooks, author of *Spirit Deep: Recovering the Sacred in Black Women's Travel*
- Dr. Kate Adams, Jacquelyne Howard, and Julia Creson from *This Beautiful Sisterhood of Books*
- Dr. Cindy Damon-Bach from the *Catharine Maria Sedgwick Online Letters / Sedgwick Stories*



Tech Hour Attendance

# Peer Review Showcases

The Recovery Hub's peer review and showcase model remains fairly unique in digital humanities spaces. As project teams have remarked in their assessment interviews, the combination of private, actionable feedback and public engagement offers two valuable mechanisms for rendering digital projects legible as scholarship. In this grant period, we have completed a showcase of *This Beautiful Sisterhood of Books*, and two more projects currently making their way through the process: *The Women's Literary Club of Baltimore* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: A Critical Edition*.

Project teams have repeatedly remarked on how valuable it is to have such a review process available. Like many publications, however, the Recovery Hub has struggled post-pandemic to find reviewers with enough bandwidth to take on extra work. Updating our language and documentation following reviewer feedback has mitigated that challenge somewhat, and as we move into the next phase, we are restructuring showcase management to include multiple editors who can provide support. A community of practice has begun to emerge as well, with project directors whose work has been reviewed offering reviews in turn.



**Project showcases have increased readership and reuse of digital recovery projects, getting the Hub and its featured projects into classrooms, resource lists, and other spaces.**

The Hub's website and social media have made tangible impacts on the discoverability and reuse of digital recovery projects, driving site traffic. By articulating projects' humanistic and technical interventions, project showcases open up new opportunities for projects to circulate in spaces beyond the Recovery Hub. For instance, site traffic data from Deanna M. Stover's *The Yellow Wall-Paper Digital Edition* show that following the 2023 project showcase, the Recovery Hub's digital platforms drove over 50% of site visitors. Stover attributes much of the site's traffic since then (thanks to the site's inclusion in syllabi, LibGuides, and other resources) to the Hub as well.



**Visit Showcases**



# Cultivation Year 1

A primary goal of the grant was to streamline the cultivation process by developing online tutorials, bibliographies, and documentation. The Fellows developed a list of Recommended Tools and Tutorials as well as glossaries to support this work.

The Recovery Hub cultivated four projects during the grant period with variable goals and outcomes. Kristen Lillvis and the Fellows led exit interviews with both previous and current cultivated projects to garner feedback and learn more about outcomes. What we learned is that there is no replacement for the one-on-one attention that is so central to the feminist, human-centered aims of cultivation.

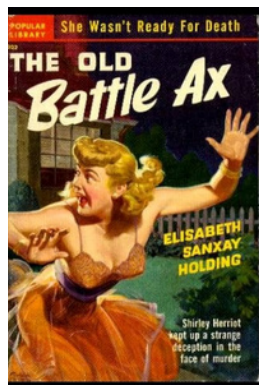
## The bell hooks Digital Archive



In 2015, bell hooks, cultural critic, feminist, and insurgent Black intellectual, donated her papers to the Hutchins Library at Berea College. The bell hooks print archive includes correspondence, academic work, writings and video

recordings. The Digital Archive is an open-access, searchable platform that houses select artifacts from hooks' papers. The archive is as a repository of information and resources. The methodologies informing the curation/creation of resources are grounded in the scholarship of digital and public humanities and Black feminist studies. Assistant Professor Dr. Megan Feifer and Digital Librarian Abby Houston lead the project.

## Elizabeth Sanxay Holding



Dr. Margaret Toth from Manhattan College is creating a digital edition of the short fiction of Elizabeth Sanxay Holding (1899–1955). Sanxay Holding was a prolific author, penning 23 novels and over 200 short stories. While she began her career as a writer of romance fiction, she shifted to suspense after WWII and earned a reputation in that genre, along with praise from Raymond Chandler and Alfred Hitchcock. Toth has been working to recover over 70 short stories by Sanxay Holding that were originally published in popular magazines, including McCall's, Redbook, and Street and Smith's Detective Fiction.

"[The Recovery Hub team members] weren't just guiding us. They felt as invested in our project as we were. We developed a strong professional relationship of care, and that felt really unique. That speaks to feminist practices and actual feminist praxis. I felt like we finally got some momentum."

--Dr. Megan Feifer

"I would absolutely recommend it because of the technical support. I came into this not knowing much at all. Now I feel like I have tools that I didn't have before. It would be good for anyone, but particularly good for someone who is a novice when it comes to working with these kinds of platforms."

--Dr. Margaret Toth



# Cultivation Year 2

## The US Latina Writers published by Arte Público Press Digital Collection / Las escritoras latinas de EE.UU. publicadas por Arte Público Press Colección Digital



The US Latina Writers aims to establish and promote a digital archive housing the literary output of Latin American female authors residing in the United States, as published by Arte Público Press over the past four decades (1984 – 2024). The primary objective is to disseminate their literary legacy and facilitate scholarly exploration into the content, themes, and contemporary reception of their works. The authors and titles featured in this digital collection are a digital adaptation of printed books by Arte Público Press, a publishing house renowned since its inception in 1979 for curating an extensive bibliography of Hispanic cultural documents within the United States. Project directors include Drs. Monika Dabrowska, Gabriela Baeza Ventura, and Carolina Villaroel.

## Emma Frances Dawson



Project director Dr. Lawrence Mullen will contextualize and edit the supernatural, gothic, and horror writings of Emma Frances Dawson (1839–1926).

Dawson was born in New England, but eventually moved to California. This project aims to bridge gaps in Dawson's biography by searching the archive for familial and geographic evidence. Though Dawson is well known among Gothic and horror studies circles, she is often forgotten as a prolific west-coast woman writer. Though the project is still undergoing cultivation, Mullen has worked with the Recovery Hub to choose a platform, learn about best editorial principles, and begin to amass textual witnesses of Dawson's works.

"It's easy to slap the name feminist onto a workspace or on an environment and it not be feminist in practice. I think this is honestly one of the first professional experiences in what felt like a truly feminist work environment."

--Abby Houston

# Editorial Framework

Many recovery practitioners are new to digital editing and need a simple solution to publish editions and curate data for the long term. The editorial framework provides a suite of tools, templates, and documentation that guides users through the process of choosing an encoding method, editing their texts, and publishing them on the web. The team at UNL designed this easy-to-use framework for those who are just developing technical skills, while also ensuring that the data behind their editions are well-formed and transferable for future use.

## Editorial Affordances

Jekyll, the static site generator used by GitHub pages, transforms Markdown-encoded files (with or without YAML front matter) to HTML for display on the web. The Recovery Hub has also made publication of TEI-encoded files possible with the template by including a Javascript library called CETElcean.

The template supports several textual genres with the ability to display metadata and include annotations: books (with paginated chapters), periodicals, poems, correspondence, and paratextual content such as essays and documentation. Texts can also be accompanied by images displayed in-page or as a gallery using jQuery Fancybox.



[Visit Sample Site](#)

## Digital Edition Template

The Digital Edition Template serves as the technical end of the framework and is built entirely on free, open source tools. GitHub provides free online storage of files and—most importantly—allows scholars to copy the template repository to their own account, add and modify encoded texts, images, and edition information, and then publish their edition to the web with just a few clicks thanks to GitHub pages.

The documentation guides scholars through transcribing scanned texts using OCR, naming and organizing files on GitHub, encoding texts in Markdown or TEI, recording metadata for Markdown files in Jekyll's YAML front matter, and configuring the site for publication.

# Planning for the Future

## Succession Planning

**Because the Recovery Hub relies on human resources, we have put careful thought into a structure that will ensure its sustainable future. In addition, it has been important to maintain the collective nature of the Recovery Hub with no one person maintaining centrality for its success or continuation.**

In Fall 2024, the Recovery Hub sent queries to its advisory board, held meetings of the core team, and researched egalitarian organizational structures. The team devised a set of roles that would be assigned for three-year, renewable terms so that new people would frequently be involved in the Hub's directions and operations. A [call](#) was posted in the newsletter, on social media and on relevant listservs to attract new leadership, who will begin their roles this summer.

## Funding

The Recovery Hub's structure is extremely reliant on grant funds. The Recovery Hub accepts donations. Everyone has access to one free consultation per year, but we also offer a membership model for scholars or practitioners who would like up to five consultations each year. Our hope is that more established scholars will support early-career scholars. At this stage, it has been difficult to increase and maintain membership or donations. Now that the editorial framework and basic workflows are established, that will ease the financial burden, but the Recovery Hub will need to pay consultants. In addition, the graduate fellowships were valuable for extending the mission of the organization and for supporting early-career scholars. We would like to offer fellowships each year, if we can support them. This would require an on-going budget of \$10,000 a year. New fundraising efforts will help us reach this goal.

Showcase Editor

Technology Coordinator

Organizational Coordinator

Assessment Coordinator

Consultant Coordinator

Network Coordinator

# Talks and Publications

Dalziel, Karin, Jessica DeSpain, Jina DuVernay, Melissa Homestead, Kristen Lillvis, Kezia Miller, Emily Rau, and Margaret Smith, "The Recovery Hub for American Women Writers: Supporting Feminist Recovery Projects in the Digital Age." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2023, pp. 203–204.

DeSpain Jessica, abstract accepted to special issue of *Digital Humanities Quarterly* on digital discovery and project longevity. Due to editors September 2025.

---. "404 File Not Found: Deleted, Discarded, and Defunct Projects in the Digital and Data Humanities." Roundtable, Modern Language Association, New Orleans, 2025.

---. "The View from the Recovery Hub of American Women Writers." *The Futures of American Women's Literary Studies*. American Literature Association, Chicago, 2024.

---. "The Recovery Hub for American Women Writers." Modern Language Association, Philadelphia, 2024.

Despain, Jessica and Sydney Lines. "The Basics of Digital Editing." Workshop, Society for the Study of American Women Writers, Upcoming Philadelphia. November 2026.

Homestead, Melissa. "The Recovery Hub for American Women Writers as a Resource for Recovery and Republication," American Literature Association, Chicago, 2024.

Martin, Alice and Tracy Fernandez Rysavy. "Building Community-Based Digital Projects," Roundtable, American Literature Association, Chicago, 2024.

---. "Digital Recovery in the Classroom" Panel, Society for the Study of American Women Writers, Upcoming Philadelphia. November 2026.

---. "Secondary Trauma in Archival Research," curated forum, *Legacy: Journal of American Women Writers*, Forthcoming Winter 2026.

---. *Special Issue. "Teaching Digital Recovery in the Classroom."* *Feminist Pedagogy Journal*. Forthcoming October 2025.

Smith, Margaret. "Creating Ethical and Sustainable Collaborations in Digital Recovery." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2023, pp. 215–222, <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.2023.a917944>.



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and support over the  
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**Land Acknowledgement**

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville exists in and serves a region that includes the lands of the Kiikaapoi (treaty in Edwardsville, 1819); The Illinois Confederacy, including the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Cahokia, and Tamaroa (treaty in Edwardsville, 1818); Dhegiha Siouan peoples; and others. We affirm their contemporary and ancestral ties to the land and their contributions to this place. In alignment with the academic mission of the institution, we are committed to building responsible relationships with indigenous communities through the development of educational pathways and opportunities for indigenous students and the advancement of research and knowledge about indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories.