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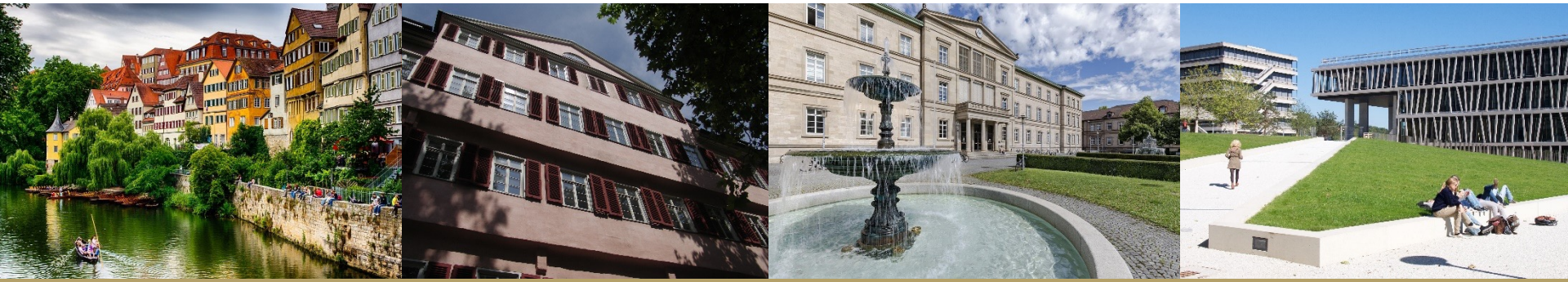

Open Access to the Humanities – an Open and Shut Case?

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The Humanities in the 21st century: Opportunities

- Offering *orientation* through high level of *reflexivity*
- In demand to *reflect* on the ethical and legal implications and consequences of technological progress; to *provide* non-technological requirements
- In a geopolitically volatile world *knowledge diplomacy* (beyond science diplomacy) offers a third way of intercultural exchange (complementing political and economic interaction)
- Digital *and* Public Humanities

Humanities and Publishing

- Monograph still widely regarded as gold standard
- High book processing charges
- Open access has caused shift of production costs from reader to author (DEAL-contracts with Springer, Wiley, Elsevier increasingly expensive)
- Shift to not-for-profit, publicly funded open access publication infrastructure with Diamond open access as the way forward?

Implications

- Cost vs quality control
- Socially fair vs export control issues
- Digital publication vs hard copy
- Editorial services: basic vs copy-editing
- Stronger collaboration between University presses and other publishing houses and dissemination structures?

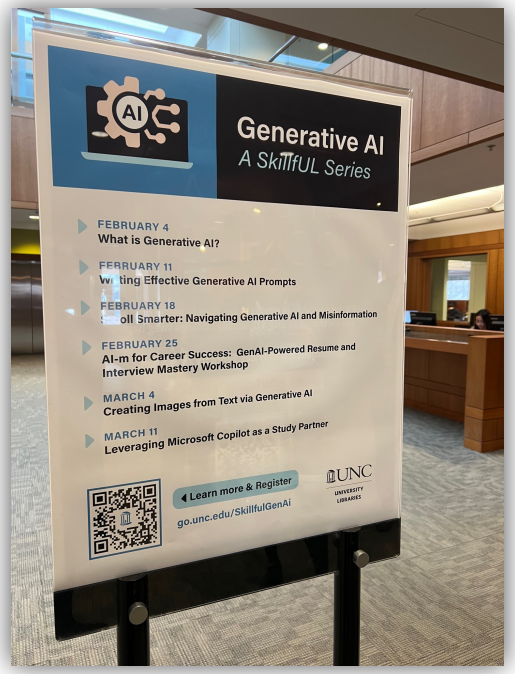
Widening Functions of Academic Libraries

- As information hubs for research processes and academic communication:
  - Scholarly publication platforms for e-books, electronic journals, research data and other open-access materials
  - Manage open-access publication funds
  - Provide services related to the preparation, archiving, and accessibility of research data in collaboration with other campus departments.
- Making a significant contribution to the digital sovereignty of research in a democratic society by offering open and tracking-free infrastructures for research results beyond commercial distribution intentions.

Academic Libraries as Training Centers

- Open Educational Resources (OER), e.g. open textbooks and encyclopedias, interactive training tools on a broad variety of issues from Old French to Planetary Boundaries
- Information literacy, data literacy, text and data mining
- Training of next generation of scholars in methods and academic integrity: critical approach to information, when disinformation poses a threat to democracy and to society at large

UNC Chapel Hill University Library



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

Digital Humanities and Humane Digitization

- **FAIR** data principles ensure research data are publicly **F**indable, **A**ccessible, **I**nteroperable, and **R**eusable
- Moreover, the complexity of Humanities data requires careful curation and preservation. Ethical concerns, particularly regarding privacy and cultural sensitivity, must be addressed when sharing data openly: **CARE** principles (**C**ollective benefit, **A**uthority to control, **R**esponsibility, and **E**thics) as important initiative in general (e.g. in ethnological research engaging in rights and interests of indigenous peoples)

OER – Pros and Cons

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- published under open licences permitting no-cost access, reuse, repurposing, adaptation, and redistribution by others
- can help reduce the cost of textbooks and other learning materials, benefiting students and educators alike
- encourage collaborative learning, as students and instructors can modify and rearrange content to suit specific needs
- extend opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing the broader public to access high-quality educational resources

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- quality and long-term maintenance of OER materials pose challenges, requiring means of assessing and certifying the quality of the materials, ensuring that the content is well-researched, accurate, and in line with academic standards
- long-term availability and accessibility of OERs: since these resources are often offered through in-house platforms or websites, a lack of long-term financial backing and ownership may put OER at risk of becoming inaccessible
- creating OER or transforming traditional learning material to OER is resource-intensive, and educators might be hesitant to invest significant time while OER remains a negligible factor in many academic hiring and promotion processes

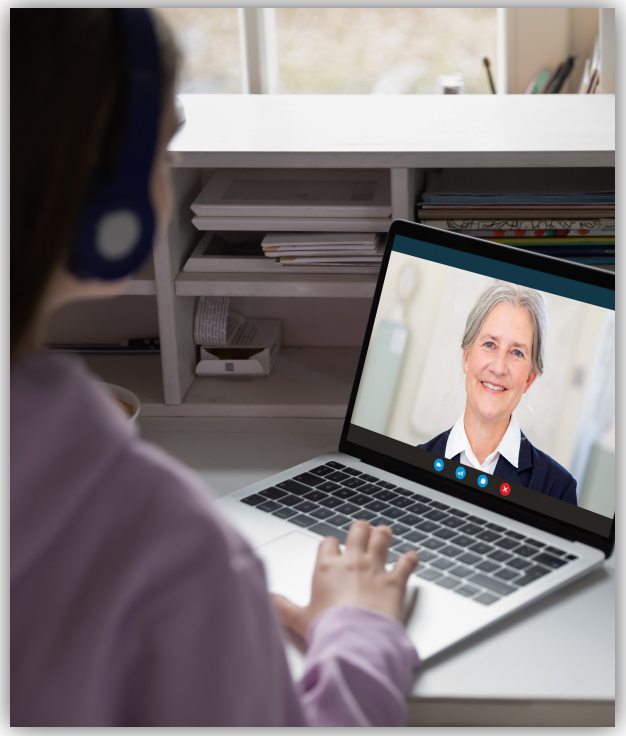
Research Data Management in the Humanities

- „Data“ in the Humanities: texts, inscriptions, artifacts, archaeological objects
- To be preserved and broadly accessible as evidence of cultural and historical heritage: translation into digital form and into large data corpora is continuously evolving, opening up new research fields and methodologies
- AI and Large Language Models: e.g. Optical Character Recognition (OCR), Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR), Natural Language Processing (NLP)
- Proportion of "born-digital" open-access works in the Humanities only slowly increasing, because
  - commercial digital collections often only accessible through proprietary authentication systems
  - texts scattered across repositories worldwide due to numerous digitization projects
  - provided without or with only limited usage licenses
- The open-access share across all disciplines and publication types 48%, while Humanities disciplines at around 20% (source: Web of Science Core Collection)

… the more traditional way

Democratization of Knowledge

- More care needed to ‚target' audiences appropriately: differentiated engagement, co-creation, citizens' councils, citizen scientists, Public Humanities
- No simple accessibility issue
- Curation of knowledge *and* of language
- How open do we have to be?
  - ➢ Intellectual property
  - ➢ At which point does work-in-progress have to be made public
  - ➢ How far does transparency regarding collection and evaluation of data have to go



Thank You! Any Questions?