To: Dean Mara Saule  
From: The *ad hoc* committee on the creation of electronic text at UVM  
Date: December 3, 2000  
RE: Final Report  

The Bailey/Howe Library's *ad hoc* committee on the creation of electronic text (etext) at UVM hereby submits its final report.

The library represents the natural center for bibliographic control and access to electronic text, regardless of place of origin, and is well placed to advocate for and demonstrate standards in etext production. Therefore, the committee has sought to walk a narrow path between unbridled enthusiasm which might encourage thoughtless and poorly planned projects and an overly detailed and rigorous set of guidelines which might discouraging everyone from undertaking this challenging and exciting work. We intend the report to encourage successful etext production by defining the basics of successful projects. We have written it in the spirit of vagueness so it may last more than a few months. Further, we have deliberately tied it to the philosophy and language of existing documents so it will reinforce rather than conflict with related policies and procedures.

The report actually has two parts. The first looks at the general policy issues around etext and the second provides a specific evaluation criteria that apply to proposed projects. We have written this with the assumption that an ERCC is in place and we have made no effort to discuss its organization, structure, function, or polity.

While we considered creating a second, university-applicable document, in the end we drew back. We see that such a document exists within the one we're submitting, but simply ran out of time to consider it as fully as we thought we should.

Elizabeth H. Dow, Chair  
Karl Bridges  
Karen Matthews  
Lyman Ross  
Peter Spitzform  
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Electronic Resources Collection Committee *ad hoc*
Subcommittee on Electronic Texts and Online Access to
Local Collections: Final Report

The University of Vermont Libraries have the potential to become a major resource for the
development of etext at UVM.\(^1\) As the repository of the university’s holdings of unique collections,
the library stands as the most obvious source of documents for electronic publication. In addition,
the library has a full complement of hardware and the software needed for electronic publishing,
and the staff embodies a wide variety of technical skills and perspectives which relate to etext
production, making it a potential partner in any etext effort undertaken on campus.

Therefore, the library will actively seek to publish etext documents for individual projects
initiated by any UVM affiliate, library staff, or as part of collaborative projects. There are limits,
evertheless. As with all library holdings, etext projects will be limited to initiatives that advance
the mission of the university through their scholarly content. The library’s collection development
policy will serve as a guide for what creates a desirable project. Further, in light of UVM’s role
as a public institution, the committee assumes access to etext publications will be open to anyone
with the technology to use it, and will, in so far as possible, conform to standards developed to
support the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Since etext publishing can involve a large amount of personnel time and other resources,
the library reserves the right to request full- or partial-funding for projects from outside the
library. The library will, of course, fund its own initiatives. Such funding could come from money
the library has budgeted for a particular program or from so-called “soft money” raised to support
the project. If it seems warranted, in the future the library might consider developing an endowed
fund or similar devices to support etext initiatives.

A variety of technologies contribute to the production of etext, and they range in cost from
the inexpensive to the very costly. In deciding which technology to use, the library will choose the
technology justified by the value or requirements of the project. In addition to cost factors the
library will consider the probability of needing to migrate a publication to another hardware or
software platform, the ease of archiving the publication, and other preservation issues.

Lacking unlimited resources, however, the library will give priority to etext projects on the
basis of the audiences addressed and the technology proposed.

**Audience:** The library will identify the audiences for library-supported etext projects as
congruent with the audience for other library acquisitions, which is to say the UVM

\(^1\)For purposes of this report, the Electronic Resources Collection Committee’s (ERCC) subcommittee
on etext has defined electronic text (etext) to mean those substantive documents published on a server for retrieval
and use through the World Wide Web.
constituency, followed by the citizens of the state of Vermont, followed by the rest of the world.

**Technology:** While recognizing the value of experimentation for the advancement of knowledge, the library will encourage etext projects that can be created in "production mode" using widely adopted industry standards.

**Developing an etext project:**

The ERCC will both welcome and seek collaborative projects which meet the collection development criteria set forth above. Collaboration among etext developers brings skills and perspectives to a project that the library may not find among its staff. It enhances the library's involvement with the teaching and research units of the university as well as with content providers outside the university setting. It spreads the cost of developing etext resources. Collaboration can take many forms and levels from complete involvement with all aspects of a project to minor involvement with a single area. Using the *Electronic Document Evaluation Guidelines for The UVM Libraries* the ERCC will evaluate the needs of each project on its own merits and assess the degree to which it does or does not want to become involved. In addition to the standard evaluative criteria, the ERCC will look closely to the partnering unit for a long-term commitment to the collaboration or products developed through it.

If the ERCC supports the project, the committee will pull together a Project Advisory Committee to help clarify the project, help organize it, and provide feedback on its progress until its completion. The committee will include people with the specific skills and knowledge the project will need for a successful conclusion.

From time to time all etext offerings will be reviewed to confirm their continuing adherence to the collection development goals. Projects that no longer support those goals will be subject to potential weeding. This sub-committee suggests that the ERCC develop a weeding process, which includes an appeals process for the project developers.

As research institutions, UVM and its libraries have a legitimate interest in maintaining archives and a mission to ensure archival access. Therefore, the ERCC should actively pursue technical migration and archiving projects it supports. In keeping with that perspective, project developers should be prepared to discuss archival responsibility and their willingness to permit UVM to make/obtain digital and/or printed copies of content for archiving and for use in perpetuity.

**Recommendations for further action:**

The potential of etext publication has not yet caught the imagination of the vast majority of the faculty and staff who could contribute significantly in its development and use. Though the reasons vary widely from person to person, some causes lie within the power of the university to change.
The university needs to re-examine retention and promotion guidelines. As written now, the
guidelines give etext publications minimal standing as either publications or research
efforts, and that fact serves as a disincentive.

The university needs to devote resources to building understanding and enthusiasm for the
value of etext production and use.

The university needs to devote resources to upgrade current resources and build a greater
infrastructure of tools and support mechanisms.
Electronic Text Document Evaluation Guidelines for
The UVM Libraries

Policy for Electronic Text Production

We base our electronic text production (hereafter "etext") policy at Bailey/Howe Library on several premises.

First and foremost, we will participate in etext projects which comply with the Mission and Goals of the University and the Library. Which is to say that we will support the endeavors of the University by developing, or assisting in the development of, and providing access to information resources at a level equal to the degree granted by the University. Ideally, we provide greater support for a Ph.D. program than for an undergraduate program. The most important issue should be whether the resource meets the needs of the users of the material.

There are limitations to this stance. The decision to champion a project will depend in part on space, cost, quality, project feasibility, and the availability of staff.

Electronic Text Project Evaluation Criteria

Etexit publications originating from the University of Vermont reflect the university, and the ERCC will consciously evaluate the quality of content and presentation of such projects with that in mind. Further, the committee must assume that UVM etexit projects will come to the attention of other institutions which may want to include links to them in their collection of electronic resources. Therefore, the ERCC will require that plans for etexit projects include the following information for its evaluation needs, and will require that similar information be included as part of projects so potential users may evaluate them.

The ERCC will decide to support a project or not based on its review of the following criteria as they apply to the proposal under discussion. Rarely will all selection criteria be met, but all projects must meet some of the following criteria.

Credibility
The developers of the project must have credibility in the content area of the project and include in project the developer's position and contact information for the developers so users may request further information on their work and professional background.

Theoretical Bases
In their application to the ERCC, project developers should indicate/display knowledge of theories, schools of thought, or techniques usually considered

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appropriate to the proposed project. If the developer is using a new theory or
technique as a basis of research, he or she should indicate the limitations of this
new approach. Further, the developers should indicate that similar information will
appear in the project itself.

**Audience and Purpose**
Developers should clearly identify their intended audience or multiple audiences
and the purpose of the project in relation to it/them.

**Accuracy**
The developers should indicate the source of the information they will use and
verify that they have all necessary rights to use it in their project. If they include
original research they must explain to the ERCC and include on the site an
explanation of the data and of the research method(s) used to gather and interpret
the data so a user might duplicate the study. Finally, the site must contain other
sources in a bibliography or included in links to the documents.

**Objectivity**
The ERCC will look for the degree of objectivity in the creation of the project. The
need for objectivity of context, however, may differ from the need for objectivity of
the content of the project in those cases where the intention of the project is to
examine or reveal a significant bias within an era, institution, geographical region,
etc.

**Focus and Comprehensiveness**
The project developers should make clear to the ERCC, and the intended audience,
the focus and degree of comprehensiveness intended by the project both in the
content provided and the links connected to it. If developer’s treatment of the
subject is controversial, they acknowledge it.

In many cases the developers should explain how are they selected and evaluated
the links they include.

**Currency**
Each project proposal must indicate how it intends to maintain and indicate its
currency. Such methods might include a schedule of updates, periodic re-evaluation
of links, etc.

**Structure**
The ERCC should consider the quality of the final product. Project developers
should show evidence of an effort to present text that follows basic rules of
grammar, spelling and literary composition and the use of graphic design elements
that support ease of use and navigation.

Projects should, as far as possible, indicate how they will provide access to users
with disabilities.

If the project will require sending or receiving confidential information over the Internet, the project developers should discuss encryption methods they may use and the degrees of security they will seek to provide.

If audio, video, virtual reality modeling, or other effects are used, the project developers should discuss their purpose and appropriateness.

If there will be a fee for use of or access to any of the information provided at this site, the project developers should indicate how they have arrived at it, how it will be administered, and what use the proceeds will support.

Access
Project developers should indicate realistic expectations concerning UVM's ability to monitor use and discover abuse of etext sites. If legal agreements are required, they should contain consistent business and legal provisions, including, for example, indemnification against third-party copyright infringement liability and permission to use records in personal bibliographic systems.

Copyright
The ownership of the copyrights for etext projects will be established on a case by case basis at the time of publication.

Funding
Developers must show a reasonable budget and reliable source of funding for the work proposed.