

DLF Fall Forum 2004 Proposal (presentation)

Engaging the User: The *Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert: Collaborative Translation Project* and New Scholarly Paradigms

Kevin Hawkins (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Jason Kuznicki (Johns Hopkins University)

The *Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert: Collaborative Translation Project* is building an online, freely available English-language edition of the *Encyclopédie*, originally published from 1751 to 1777 and containing more than 70,000 articles. The project directors seek copyright permission to republish articles that have been previously translated and assign articles to volunteer translators based on their expressed interests. Submissions are reviewed by the project directors, but translators retain copyright to their text. The Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan University Library publishes the articles using the DLXS Middleware with the XPAT search engine.

While the project has broken with the traditional publishing model by making the content freely available and allowing individual contributors to retain copyright, it has yet to adopt Creative Commons-type licenses or establish a framework for truly collaborative translation and editing, such as fostered by Wikimedia Foundation projects. As will be explained in more detail, limited resources and institutional caution have slowed the adoption of an alternative intellectual property scheme and delivery system, respectively.

Nevertheless, the Diderot project grows based on its community of users and encourages them to contribute content. The project blurs the line between user and creator of content (reader and writer): for example, people use the website and then decide to contribute, and in the classroom it can be used not only as a source of assigned texts but also as the basis of an assignment (“do your own translation”). While not quite the NPR model gaining popularity among libraries and similar projects (such as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy), the project directors are confident that they can continue to encourage contributions from faculty, grad students, undergrads, and amateurs while not endangering the academic integrity of the project.

As time allows, we will also discuss recent cooperation with the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (which presents the entire French original online through a subscription model) to create a bilingual controlled vocabulary for use by both projects.