Structuring successful collaborations

This document distills insights from two workshops on Models for Humanities Collaborations, held on November 19 and 30, 2015. Many thanks to our panelists: Kelly Askew, Kerstin Barndt, Martha Jones, Christopher Ratté, Sidonie Smith, and Robin Queen.

Reasons to collaborate:
- Collaboration is energizing!
- Collaboration can make projects possible by offering opportunities to meld strengths.
- Diverse perspectives and expertise in multiple areas allow for richer questions and more complex results.
- The support of a team allows for personal risk-taking; you can do something you might not try on your own.
- Collaboration in writing can make projects better, at the sentence level as at the conceptual level.
- Particularly in relation to technology, collaboration means you don't have to learn everything yourself.
- Balancing collaboration in relation to other projects can be difficult, but collaborative work can feed back into solitary work, and vice-versa.

How do you find collaborators?
- Be attentive to possibilities and just ask! Somebody has to initiate the collaboration.
- Get recommendations from trusted colleagues. Seek out people whose ideas you find exciting.
- Choose partners who have some kind of collaborative experience. Such experience could include working with GSIs, co-authorship, co-editorship, etc.
- Technical expertise can be important both for the research and for the presentation of the results: do you need technical collaborators or support in your project?

Advice to collaborators:
- Work together to define a clear vision of what team members want to take away from the collaborative project. What are the end goals? What will success look like?
- Schedule regular, consistent meetings to evaluate the collaboration itself. Is everything getting done? Is everyone contributing?
- Agree on publication protocols from the beginning. How will you determine authorship/credit? Who will be first author?
- Consider an MOU outlining the terms of the collaboration.
- Get good technical advice from the beginning to be sure you are using platforms that can be updated and transferred.
- Always have a Plan B. Sometimes projects don't work, or you need to change course. Be open to evaluation and revision.