

Proposal for a ELO Project

ELC (Electronic Literature Collection)

An Annual Disc and Web Publication to Broaden Access to E-Lit

The Electronic Literature Collection (ELC, pronounced "Elk") would found an annual publication that would collect current and older electronic literature, and that would provide this literature in a form suited to individuals, public libraries, and classrooms. The publication would exist as a website and as a packaged, cross-platform CD-ROM or CD-ROMs (perhaps later as a DVD-ROM or in some other physical media format), in a case that is suitable for library processing, marking, and distribution. The whole CD (and website) will be offered under a Creative Commons license to allow people to duplicate or install works from a borrowed disk, facilitating e-lit reading by library users and by people in other contexts, such as students.

The disc and website will collect a variety of e-lit of interest, a broad selection of quality work rather than a handful of major and well-known projects. Some works could be featured, and the publication could be coordinated with a renewed ELO awards program. Note that the awards themselves would be significantly less costly than they were in 2001, with perhaps a \$1,000 first prize. The winners would be featured on the disc cover and on the website. The judge's comments and introductions, would be included on the website and disc. The works by the winner and those short-listed (or runners-up) would be published on the disc.

In addition to serving as a way to effectively commission new work, the ELC would make available and disseminate more widely notable electronic literature from the past. Authors who agree to offer their work to the Creative Commons (for noncommercial distribution of the unmodified work, with attribution) will make their work eligible for inclusion in the annual. A rotating group of editors can select works each year and be responsible for preparing them.

The publication will provide an opportunity to work with public libraries and will allow the ELO to introduce literary uses of the computer into a context where the reading of literature is common and computer use is common, but the two have seldom intersected. By creating a publication that appeals to libraries and satisfies their criteria for circulating materials, the ELO will have an opportunity to foster electronic literature reading and writing in new community contexts. A side benefit and/or additional related grant might be to work with librarians to develop LOC information and cataloging standards for electronic literature. The publication of the annual might also be tied in with other grantable promotion activities, such as readings and presentations at libraries.

Although grant support for the production of the project should be secured, the disc can be sold to individuals and libraries. They will be free to duplicate it themselves, but a pressed and silkscreened disc is preferable to both groups and will be worth some cost. A professor might buy a single disc for classroom use in a situation where assigning a class to purchase a CD-ROM is not feasible. Although the revenue opportunity should be assessed, the important thing is clearly to broaden access to and awareness of e-lit through the publication. Whether the disc is donated or sold to libraries is not so important; what matters most is that libraries include it in their collection and see the disc as an opportunity to create a place for literary reading on the computer.

The annual, along with other ELO publications, should serve as premiums for renewed ELO membership contributions.

This project is considerably scalable. While we anticipate applying for a fairly large grant (\$50-\$100,000) to fund aspects of the project for 2-3 years, a smaller grant, perhaps one as small as \$5,000, would be enough to get the production and distribution of the first disc accomplished. This is also the type of project which could be built modularly and which could generate further grant opportunities as the project progresses.