URC Recommendations Regarding Digital Scholarship
Joint Provost-Academic Senate University Research Committee, **April 25, 2013**

The University Research Committee recognizes that research in the contemporary university is now expanding to encompass new methodologies and outcomes. Such changes are reflected in the increasing relevance of digital scholarship as well as in some emerging forms of collaborative research. Foundations, government organizations, and scholarly societies are embracing these shifts as well, moving from a language of discrete publication to a broader notion of scholarly communication that includes the building of tools, databases, infrastructure, and more. Notable support for these shifts is found, for instance, in the new January 2013 National Science Foundation (NSF) grant proposal guide. The new guide outlines a key restructuring of the NSF biographical sketch to include "products" rather than "publications." These products can include publications but also datasets, software, and other scholarly (and digital) outcomes that heretofore have not been part of the evaluation process. These shifts, as well as an increasing focus on grand challenges and complex research problems, often demand collaborative research teams. Along with UCAPT, we understand that digital research takes many forms, and we are committed to the fair and rigorous evaluation of these increasingly important modes of scholarship.

UCAPT has taken important steps in this regard, including guidelines for the evaluation of digital and collaborative scholarship within the most recent version of the UCAPT Manual. This represents a valuable first step in ensuring that emerging forms of scholarship are recognized and properly assessed. We are now concerned with the implementation of these guidelines across the university at large and thus offer the following recommendations.

1. Create a more precise set of guidelines and a repository of guidelines for the evaluation of digital and collaborative scholarship.

Scholarly societies, professional organizations, and other universities are increasingly creating guidelines for the evaluation of digital and collaborative scholarship within specific fields and subfields. Both the URC and UCAPT have consulted such guidelines in formulating the language of the UCAPT Manual. It would be useful to have such resources available on USC's website to aid individual scholars and departments as they prepare dossiers. Additionally, this committee has drafted a proposed set of expanded guidelines for use at USC.

2. Hold informational meetings for candidates, personnel committee members, and chairs.

Over the past decade, UCAPT has developed a successful series of information sessions intended to help candidates and departments better prepare for the tenure and promotion process. Additional meetings might be offered to address the particular issues that emerge in relation to the dossiers of candidates whose scholarship is digital. Meetings will likely need to be held on both campuses.

3. Ensure that UCAPT includes members versed in digital scholarship.

The evaluation of collaborative and/or digital scholarship poses particular challenges for UCAPT. Such challenges will best be addressed by including on UCAPT scholars familiar with various aspects of these emerging forms of research. Ideally, such scholars will have produced digital scholarship themselves.