



HathiTrust User Support Annual Report

June 2021 - June 2022

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Fall 2022

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HathiTrust User Support Overview

The HathiTrust User Support (HTUS) team has existed since 2011, when it was created out of a need to address a growing volume of user requests and feedback. The users mentioned in this report refer to both users that are associated with member libraries and users that are not associated with member libraries, unless otherwise noted.

The HTUS team is composed of members that contribute staff time and energy to this effort without any compensation from HathiTrust. Activities of the group are overseen by the HathiTrust User Support Specialist. To date, there have been 97 individuals from HathiTrust member institutions who have served on the team, representing 64 different institutions. Many members stay on the team for longer than the initial one year term commitment.

The HTUS team is composed of three subgroups. The General Support subgroup triages tickets and sends initial responses. Sometimes, they assign tickets to the other HTUS subgroups or to other HathiTrust staff. The Bibliographic Corrections Group (BCG) handles all tickets that require a cataloging correction. The BCG investigates reported problems and communicates with contributing institutions to try to get corrected records back into HathiTrust. The BCG was created in September 2013 as a result of the transition in management of bibliographic records in HathiTrust from University of Michigan to the California Digital Library. The Digital Objects Quality Corrections (DOQC) handles all tickets that require a correction to the digital scans of the books in the collection. The DOQC team investigates reported problems and communicates

with digitization vendors and contributing institutions to try to get corrected scans back into HathiTrust.

HTUS team members handle an average of 5,500 user requests each year. Each ticket can generate multiple emails back and forth, and can involve communications with the original patron as well as other individuals at member libraries or Google. The HTUS team collectively handles between 300-500 tickets per month on average.

2021-2022 Activity

Highlights

In February 2022, Val Waldron was hired in HathiTrust's newly created position of User Support Specialist, taking over many of the user support responsibilities formerly held by Ange Zaytsev. Val began serving as chair of HTUS in March 2022.

Lynn Bostwick and Sarah Cairns also began serving as the co-chairs of the Digital Objects Quality Corrections (DOQC) Group starting in February 2022, replacing Timothy Provenzano, who had been serving on the team since September 2018. Responsibilities as DOQC chair are now divided between the two of them as they alternate weeks on the schedule as chair.

The biggest change for HTUS was the migration of the ticketing system used by HTUS to communicate with our users. Due to technical support ending for Jira's server-based products starting in September 2022 (including Service Desk, which was the ticketing system being used by HTUS), 64,311 tickets were migrated to Jira Service Management in the Cloud. The migration process was a significant endeavor, coordinating the training of over 50 stakeholders and taking about 2 weeks to complete. Training of HathiTrust staff and the HTUS team, as well as work on outstanding problems and changes in workflows continued throughout the Summer.

Trends and Statistics

The following numbers capture the time period from June 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This time period is used because we gathered user statistics in June 2022 before transitioning to the new ticketing system.

We received 5,461 new requests during this time period, split out across 11 different categories of requests. The most common category by far (about 49%) was "Access and Use," which covers copyright questions, reading, downloading and printing materials, and reusing HathiTrust content in other exhibits and publications. Two other common categories were general questions about HathiTrust, and questions about the website, such as troubleshooting login issues. Lastly, tickets in which the user reported a quality issue with either the catalog record or digital scans of a book were also fairly common.

General Support Tickets

The most common subcategories of tickets for the General Support group were questions about permissions agreements from copyright holders (which encompassed about 33% of total questions), reports of a content quality problem, requests from users who would like to receive a PDF of a particular book, questions related to Collection Administration Access (CAA) or the Accessible Text Request Service (ATRS), as well as reports of a problem using our website, a problem logging in, or a feature that they would like to see on our website.

UC Davis Licensing Dissertations Project

The reason why permissions agreements encompass so many of the total General Support tickets is largely due to a project that the University of California - Davis is working on, which involves reaching out to their alumni who have written dissertations in the past to see if they would be willing to send HathiTrust a permissions agreement that would open their dissertation to be viewed according to the terms of a Creative Commons license.

The work of evaluating and opening these works was led by Kristina Hall, HathiTrust's Copyright Review Program Manager. Kristina then hired student assistant Margaret Grumeretz as a result of this project, who contributed 6-8 hours/week to support a workflow that HathiTrust did not plan or initiate. It was a staffing need for user support that HathiTrust staff had not planned for and were fortunate to have funds available to quickly accommodate.

Lessons Learned from the project

This project is a great example of a project that has been fruitful because it is member-led. It also highlights the impacts of offering a higher level of service for a member initiated project. We are limited in our support capacity in HathiTrust User Support and among HathiTrust staff, and have to consider that in our overall service scope -- both in terms of one-off projects with members and in future service development. However, there is opportunity for our capacity to grow with the right opportunities and the right amount of interest in maintaining and/or expanding member support on the HTUS team.

Bibliographic Corrections Tickets

The BCG was able to correct 104 tickets and was unable to correct 163 tickets during this time period, with 134 tickets still being unresolved at the end of June 2022. HathiTrust does not have a process to correct its own records; instead it relies on the institution(s) that contributed a particular record to make corrections and then resubmit them through [Zephir](#). Some BCG tickets were associated with contributing institutions that were actively making and submitting catalog corrections for at least part of this time period, while other contributing institutions had indicated to us that they are not currently responding to requests for record corrections, whether due to having more pressing priorities, lack of capacity to make corrections, or lack of a proper workflow or training for their staff.

The institutions that were able to correct records during this time period are listed below, with both University of Michigan and University of California correcting over twice as many as any others. This is due to the fact that both institutions have [contributed more volumes than any other institution to date](#), and they both have pretty extensive resources to correct and resubmit records to HathiTrust. Other institutions that have submitted corrections include:

- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Ohio State University
- Penn State University
- University of Alberta
- University of California
- University of Illinois
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota
- University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
- University of Virginia
- University of Wisconsin

The BCG tracks which kind of problem(s) were reported in each ticket. The most common type of errors reported during this time period were requests in which there is a problem with the date or the volume numbers in the enum/chron fields (at the item record level). For example, the volume number might say v.14 instead of v.15, or might be missing altogether. If there is no date present in the enum/chron fields, this can also have an impact on whether individual volumes will be automatically opened based on when they enter the public domain.

The next most common type of errors reported were typos, often in the title or amongst the authors of a particular book. These types of errors often affect the discoverability of books within the HathiTrust collection. For example, the title might be incorrectly labeled “Natural Laws in Piano Technic” instead of “Natural Laws in Piano Teaching,” so a search for the correct title may not bring up the corresponding title in the search results.

The most difficult requests to fix were requests in which the wrong OCLC number has been added to the record, often resulting in incorrect clustering during record loading processes. How this manifests is an item being attached to a record for a completely different item because the OCLC number in the first item matches the OCLC number for a different primary record. For example, a volume of historical baseball statistics from 1962, otherwise properly cataloged, being found on a record for a volume of Creative and Inspirational Gardening Practices from 1956, where the only thing that links the two items is that the record for each item contains the same OCLC number in, probably, the 035 MARC field. A mix-up like this is usually attributed to local edits prior to submission, or to a cataloging error by another institution further upstream.

Digital Objects Quality Corrections Group

The DOQC group was able to correct 143 tickets and was unable to correct 126 tickets during this time period, with 112 tickets still being unresolved at the end of June 2022. HathiTrust does

not have a process to correct its own digital scans; instead it relies on the institution(s) that contributed them to make corrections and then resubmit them through vendors like Google or the Internet Archive, or to submit them directly to HathiTrust through local workflows. Some DOQC tickets were associated with contributing institutions that were actively making and submitting content corrections for at least part of this time period, while other contributing institutions had indicated to us that they are not currently responding to requests for content corrections, whether due to having more pressing priorities, lack of capacity to make corrections, or lack of a proper workflow or training for their institution.

The DOQC group only contacts contributing institutions after a certain point in their workflow, after exhausting all possible remediation options with the digitization vendor (Google in most cases). Although DOQC members have notified 70 institutions of problems with their volumes, only 4 institutions have been able to successfully address those errors (in 13 tickets total). This is partially due to the difficulty of fixing volumes that have been scanned by an external vendor.

The institutions that were able to correct at least some records during this time period are listed below, with University of Michigan correcting over four times as many as any others. This is due to the fact that University of Michigan has [contributed more volumes than any other institution to date](#), and it has extensive resources and robust workflows to correct and resubmit digital scans to HathiTrust. Other institutions that have submitted corrections include:

- Purdue University
- University of California: Northern Regional Library Facility (NRLF)
- University of California: Riverside

The DOQC group tracks which kind of problem(s) were reported in each ticket. The most common type of quality problem reported during this time period was books that contain missing pages. This can be caused either by the scanning process or by missing pages in the original print volume, and aside from the book missing potentially important information for the user, it can be problematic if the title or copyright page is missing, making it difficult to do a manual copyright review on the book if it is ever needed.

Issues that had the most successful fixes are books with [missing pages](#), [cropped pages](#), and obstructed pages. If pages are poorly cropped or obstructed (such as by the hand of the person who scanned it), part of the page may be missing or unreadable. Fortunately, vendors can usually fix these problems digitally without needing to consult the physical book.

Issues with [unscanned foldout](#) pages (such as maps or charts) were very common, since they historically had not been scanned along with the books until more recent years. They were also among the most challenging to fix, since the physical book (in many cases) had to be sent to the vendor a second time before they could be remediated. However, there have also been an increasing number of successful fixes due to the excellent work of the teams at the University of Michigan and the University of California in rescanning and resubmitting these foldouts locally.

The DOQC group also had 794 tickets in its backlog in June 2022. Backlog tickets most often accumulate when someone leaves the team and they have unresolved tickets. Because of the

steps involved and the time it takes to hear back from vendors and contributing institutions, it can take a year (or sometimes longer) to fully resolve a ticket. Five members left the DOQC group in 2022 and only three members joined the team, so the drop in team members also made it difficult to work through the backlog, in addition to covering all new tickets that came in. However, the team has started working on about 100 tickets from the backlog during Fall 2022.

Team Feedback

In June 2022, HTUS team members responded to a survey sent out by the HTUS chair. The goals of the survey included learning about:

- Team member satisfaction,
- Gaps in knowledge,
- Additional training needs following the Jira migration,
- Commitments for next year.

Team members indicated high satisfaction rates overall, with 76% of responses indicating that they are “very satisfied” with their experience.

The survey also revealed some areas of improvement and opportunities for follow up, including the following:

- About 35% of team members indicated that they are struggling with understanding some HathiTrust policies and procedures.
- Regarding workload, two team members indicated a desire to receive and work on more tickets.

In addition, the free-text questions provided additional information about gaps in knowledge, and some suggestions for ways to improve HTUS operations.

Thanks to HTUS Members

Many thanks to our current team members, including those who have recently left the team and those who are joining it this year. Our team continues to function because of your contributions!

Several members of the User Support team ended their time serving with us in June-July 2022:

Andrea Kohashi, Virginia Commonwealth University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)

Brenda-Lee Kahler, University of Manitoba (General Support)

David Frank, University of Pittsburgh (Bibliographic Corrections)

Emily Holmes, Columbia University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)

Lynne Serviss, McMaster University (General Support)

Maria Aghazarian, Swarthmore College (Bibliographic Corrections)

Melde Rutledge, Wake Forest University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Mira Basara, Cornell University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Rhonda Fleming-Cortes, University of California, San Diego (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)

Several people joined the User Support team in August 2022:

Aaron Sandoval, Wesleyan University (General Support)
Amanda Levine, The Ohio State University (General Support)
Antoinette Yost, University of Delaware (General Support)
Brianna Gormly, Columbia University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Hillary Arieux, Virginia Commonwealth University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Katie Compton, McMaster University (General Support)
Kevin O'Brien, University of Illinois-Chicago (General Support)
Ngoc-My Guidarelli, Virginia Commonwealth University (Bibliographic Corrections)
Paul Fogel, University of California (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Sandy Shiefer, University of Missouri (General Support)
Seth Huber, University of Missouri-Columbia (Bibliographic Corrections)

Continuing team members:

Brandon Katzir, Oklahoma State University (Bibliographic Corrections)
Chad Deets, Arizona State University Library (Bibliographic Corrections)
Chad Pearson, Texas A&M University (General Support)
Colleen Fedewa, Case Western Reserve University (Bibliographic Corrections)
Craig Keeney, University of South Carolina (Bibliographic Corrections)
Earline Antosch, The Ohio State University (Bibliographic Corrections)
Elizabeth Miraglia, University of California, San Diego (Bibliographic Corrections)
Fred Rascoe, Georgia Institute of Technology (General Support)
Jackson Huang, University of Michigan (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Leigh Billings, University of Michigan (Bibliographic Corrections)
Lisa Nachreiner, University of Wisconsin-Madison (Bibliographic Corrections)
Lynn Bostwick, Texas State University (Co-Chair of Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
M. Constance Fleischer, University of Chicago (General Support)
Maggie Halterman-Dess, University of Iowa (General Support)
Nicholas Wolf, New York University (Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Norman Howe, University of Manitoba (General Support)
Rebecca Culbertson, University of California, San Diego (Bibliographic Corrections)
Sarah Cairns, McMaster University (Co-Chair of Digital Objects Quality Corrections)
Tamara Ozdemir, McMaster University (Bibliographic Corrections)
Terri Artemchik, Loyola University Chicago (General Support)

Comments of appreciation from our users

Occasionally, our users take the time to express appreciation for the HathiTrust applications, the collection, and the work of the HTUS team. Here are some comments from 2022:

Regarding HathiTrust applications

“I want to submit a sincere expression of gratitude to you. It's thanks to your expansive website and wonderful 'Advanced Search' feature that I have been able to discover antiquated literature and poetry I would NEVER have been able to otherwise. Thank you. Air hugs.”

Regarding the HathiTrust collection

“My cousin just found my family's genealogy book on your website. I am just overjoyed to see you have taken all the time and effort to scan this book! My cousins all know about the big red book and many of us still have a copy of the original book. I had no idea this had been scanned until today. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the work involved with this project.”

“Just wanted you to know that the cover model [on this magazine issue] is my grandmother... We actually have an original of the catalog and I decided to Google to find an electronic copy and there you all are! Thank you.”

“Best application I have come across for archived printed material. Well done.”

“Thoroughly enjoyed reading [these] letters..love the history. Thank you for my finding them.”

Regarding the HTUS team

“I cannot thank you enough for your suggestions and the time you took to look into my query. It is so refreshing to receive such fabulous service and interest in assisting me. It is wonderful to have this site as I am a 74-year old music student, currently working on my Level 8 Piano for the Royal Conservatory of Music and also studying Theory. These publications... will be an important asset in my studies.”

“I want to thank you so much for getting back to me. I am very impressed and pleased with the timely manner in which I received a reply.”