CHASE DIGITAL HUMANITIES NETWORK MEETING, 17 JULY 2015

Attendees

Helen Barlow	The Open University
Francesca Benatti	The Open University
David Berry	University of Sussex
Tom Brugmans	The Open University (via Skype)
Kathleen Christian	The Open University
Leah Clark	The Open University
Paul Gooding	University of East Anglia
Sandip Hazareesingh	The Open University
Gill Perry	The Open University
Matthew Sillence	University of East Anglia
Alban Webb	University of Sussex
Aylish Wood	University of Kent

Apologies

Benjamin Vis	University of Kent
Amanda Wilkinson	University of Essex

Debate: strengths, weaknesses and opportunities

After brief introductions from all participants, explaining interest in Digital Humanities and disciplinary background, the meeting shifted to a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) debate focused on collaborations in Digital Humanities within CHASE.

Among the **strengths** identified were the wealth of combined experience within the consortium, the interdisciplinary approaches prevalent within CHASE and the existence and success of the Arts and Humanities in the Digital Age programme.

Among the **weaknesses**, the debate highlighted especially the reliance of the existing Digital Humanities programme on individual effort rather than on a systematic relationship with senior management within institutions and the difficulties in acquiring a fuller picture of expertise within the CHASE institutions.

These were balanced by numerous **opportunities**, such as the potential to develop collaborations in Digital Humanities beyond offering studentships and extending to co-supervision of students in Digital Humanities across CHASE institutions. In particular, the opportunity to embed Digital Humanities in the academic practice of CHASE institutions was highlighted as particularly significant.

The main **threat** to Digital Humanities collaboration within CHASE was found in the limited duration of the CHASE partnership, with only 18 months remaining. Another one was workload allocation within institutions.

Map of DH capabilities

The group agreed to address one of the weaknesses identified in the SWOT debate by providing a map of the Digital Humanities skills and infrastructures available in each of the participants' institutions. While not exhaustive, the map indicates the network's main areas of potential collaboration.

The Open University

Research and Teaching Infrastructure
- Digital Humanities Research Associate: Francesca Benatti
- Centre for Public Engagement with the Humanities (launching late 2015)
- Digital Humanities at The Open University Network
- MOOCs: Futurelearn
- Online teaching expertise
- Open Arts Archive
- Open Educational Resources (OERs): OpenLearn

Key research collaborations
- BBC
- British Library
- National Library of Wales
- National Library of Scotland
- National Gallery
- Tate
- Yorkshire Sculpture Park
- MK Gallery
- OU Knowledge Media Institute (KMi)

Key academic strengths (in alphabetical order)
- Crowdsourcing
- Digital Musicology
- Digital Methods for Art History
- Environmental history/geography
- Linked open data (with KMi)
- Public engagement with research
- Spatial approaches to Classical Studies
- Textual analysis of Literature

University of East Anglia

Eastern ARC
- Digital Humanities Fellow: Paul Gooding
- 2 PGR students
- Core academic interest
- Academics and PGRs doing DH-related work: "coalition of the willing"
- Thematic lead

- Virtual past

UEA Media Suite
- 20-seat computer lab
- Breakout space
- Digitisation suite
- Scheduled time for DH
- Learning technologists

Possible relationships
- Norfolk Record Office
- Norfolk Museums
- Norfolk Library Servies
- East Anglian Film Archive
- UEA IT Services
- UEA Library Services
- Virtual Past
- Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts
- SyncNorwich (SME start-up network)

Key academic strengths
- Landscape history
- 3d visualisation
- Digital archives and curatorship
- Community digitisation and crowdsourcing

University of Kent

- Eastern ARC Digital Humanities Fellow: Benjamin Vis
- Digital Humanities Forum
- Big Data Network
- Expertise in GIS
- Mapping and modelling for archaeology and early modern studies
- Spatial mapping for architecture
- Software Studies
- MA in Computational Humanities: joint supervision between Computer Science and Humanities

University of Sussex

Digital methods/tools
- Sussex Humanities Lab
- Centre for Social Media
- Collaboration with British Library Labs and BBC R&D
- Media practice

Cultural critique
- Critical Digital Humanities

- Software Studies
- Centre for Cultural Studies
- Centre for Social and Political Thought
- Media and Cultural Studies
- Digital Public Space

Knowledge representation
- Archival expertise
- Digital history
- Spatial history
- Databases
- GIS
- Digital materiality
- Media history lab
- Software studies
- Centre for Intellectual History

Research infrastructure
- Extensive £2.9m investment in Digital Humanities, with numerous new appointments
- Sussex Humanities Lab
- Centre for Digital Materiality
- Media History Lab
- Mass Observation Archive
- Centre for History and Biography
- The Keep
- Newton Project
- Old Bailey Online

Collaboration proposal

The participants, evaluating the SWOT debate, proposed to develop a funding application that would develop a Digital Humanities curriculum, with a syllabus based on CHASE Digital Humanities capacities and best international practice. The module could be offered to students at CHASE universities regardless of funding status.

The network would focus on the development of a core skillset in Digital Humanities, based on interdisciplinary principles and critical self-reflection, analysis, emphasising transferrable skills.

Such a module could exploit the online teaching platforms developed by The Open University and benefit from the extensive investment in Digital Humanities infrastructures and personnel recently undertaken by several CHASE members, such as the Sussex Humanities Lab, the UEA Media Suite and recent staff appointments in Digital Humanities at Essex, Kent, The Open University, Sussex and UEA.

Potential outcomes of the network could include:

- a credit-bearing module for CHASE students

- Open Educational Resources (OERs) hosted on The Open University's OpenLearn platform
- potentially MOOCs run on The Open University-owned platform Futurelearn.

Funding opportunities

Several funding sources were mentioned during the discussion, among them:

- Marie Curie
- Leverhulme
- Mellon
- Horizon 2020 Reflect
- COST action networks
- AHRC Digital Transformations and Connected Communities

The need to submit application before the end of the life of the CHASE consortium was particularly highlighted.

AHDA 2015/16 provision

The next priority was agreed to be the planning of a revised and improved **AHDA programme for 2015/16**.

In particular, the group debated the lessons learned from the 2014/15 presentation. The debate focuses on possible measures to mitigate against the problems of non-attendance that touched upon all the AHDA events. The group decided to present the following recommendations to the CHASE Training and Development group:

1. Achieve better coordination between AHDA and the other CHASE training programmes, to minimise scheduling clashes

2. Develop a shared calendar of CHASE activities that can be downloaded into common calendar applications. The current Events page on the CHASE website was found to be difficult to locate and can be consulted only on the CHASE website.

3. Enforce penalties for non-attendance at training events. One proposal was to require a deposit of £20 per event, refundable through the CHASE expenses system in case of attendance.

The group proposed to adopt the following outline structure for the 2015/16 AHDA programme, subject to approval from the CHASE Training and Development group and availability of resources.

1. A three-day intensive course (lunchtime on day 1 to lunchtime on day 3), held in a London location and focusing on basic Digital Humanities methods and on the principles of digital cultural critique

2. A number of one-day workshops, based in various CHASE institutions, focusing on specific disciplinary perspectives and/or methods. Examples include
   a. Text mining

b. Big data
c. Open access publishing
d. Image analysis
e. Sound analysis
f. Practice-based research in digital arts
g. Spatial humanities (unless it is run as separate programme)

Next steps

The next aim of the Digital Humanities network is to establish what each institution can offer in terms of Digital Humanities capabilities, the potential content of the joint networking application, and agree on a timetable.

The group proposed the creation of a Facebook group to share ideas, comments and documents. Francesca Benatti created this on 31 July 2015 and invited all attendees to the 17 July meeting and all trainers who participated in the AHDA programme in 2014/15. Due to the summer holidays, it may be September before the full membership of the group is established and engaged.

Action point: Francesca Benatti, Paul Gooding and Matthew Sillence to arrange a **follow-up online meeting** in early September.