

Digital Arts and Humanities Strategy

Five Strategic Themes:

The College of Arts & Humanities Digital Strategy for 2021-26 is articulated around 5 Key themes, each with a specific rationale & vision, aim, and a concrete set of approaches which can be tailored to varying levels of investment.

1. Driving Digital Literacy
2. Nurturing Hybrid Humanists
3. Intelligent analysis of documents, artefacts and environment
4. Telling New Stories with Data
5. Addressing the Impacts of Digitized Culture

Driving Digital Literacy

Rationale & Vision: Employers and students have identified a growing gap between current humanities curricula and the essential data and digital literacy skills needed for the modern workplace/academy. The College must become a leader among its peer institutions by integrating key digital concepts meaningfully within existing course content, across all curricula and at a stage that allows students to capitalise on them in their careers and/or further studies.

Aim: Embed broad digital literacy training as part of all UG and PG degrees, encompassing both basic skills and ethics/philosophies of digital and digitized information. This will include critical responses to the digital society, as well as basic principles and methods for using and assessing digital resources. It will also guide students in how to communicate to potential employers the skills they have developed.

Approach:

- Identify and articulate a list of essential digital competencies for all humanities graduates;
- Review, and where necessary develop or revise, mandatory modules in all taught programmes to ensure essential data and digital literacy skills are covered;
- Build capacity through cross-department skills-sharing, the DH Lab affiliate scheme, and targeted training of staff in digital skills;
- Extend the implementation of the *Humanities in a Digital World* Education Incubator project across departments with the help of DLDs and Director of Online Learning;
- Use Digital Humanities themes and topics as a mechanism for delivering key skills within a humanities context and beyond;
- Review the syllabus of the Data Strand of the PGR Researcher Development Programme to ensure it meets the needs of contemporary humanities research methods;
- Include skills provision as a key component of the College's marketing to prospective students.

Nurturing Hybrid Humanists

Rationale & Vision: As UK industry and government investment pivot towards the digital economy and automation and AI increasingly reconfigure the labour market, there is an increasing demand for 'digital hybrids': employees and researchers who can bridge computational and domain specialisms. The College can play a vital role in ensuring that human and ethical considerations are front and

centre of technological innovation, both through its research impact, and by training a new generation of graduates with a deep familiarity of both fields.

Aim 1: Support humanities students who wish to make digital methods central to their career trajectories in acquiring key employment skills and capabilities through departmentally-run UG and PGT programmes.

Aim 2: Establish a generation of ‘hybrid humanist’ researchers at Exeter, able to bring domain-specific humanities expertise into multi-partner digitally-focused research and increase grant capture, by identifying new and emergent training needs, establishing supportive fora and conducting intermediate and advanced digital humanities skills training.

Approach:

- Develop a PGT programme in alignment with other offerings from IDSAI, Q-Step and IICE, with appropriate staffing based on associated business case.
- Promote uptake of digital modules developed for Liberal Arts DH Major across all UG humanities programmes and the wider university.
- Build on current and new E&R and DH Lab staff expertise to offer specialist and technical modules targeted at humanities students (i.e. without numeracy pre-requisites);
- Develop a strategic research pipeline for digital activity within the College;
- Extend the volunteer program in the DH Lab, to provide a low-barrier experience of DH and opportunity for longer-term commitment alongside the current internship scheme;
- Share skills in DH Lab team and free up capacity to enable further work supporting digitally-inclined academic staff to develop their skills and seek more ambitious DH-centred funding applications;
- Offer staff support and advocacy for this type of role through seminars, workshops and training opportunities;
- Pool and broaden our capabilities across the College and university through the DH Affiliation Scheme’s thematic Interest Groups;
- Active engagement with key national and international organisations (Turing, UK-Ireland, DARIAH, EADH, ADHO) to develop better networks of collaboration for large multi-partner grants.

Intelligent analysis of documents, artefacts and environments

Rationale & Vision: Recent and rapid developments in the application of Data Science and AI are increasingly affecting the fundamental source materials and contexts upon which Arts and Humanities research depends. The College will build upon its current specialisms to establish itself as an internationally recognised leader in addressing both the opportunities and risks which these transformative technologies present to the study of human societies and cultures.

Aim: Develop a world-leading profile in the digital analysis and representation of historical documents, material culture and heritage environments, reinforcing our established strengths across the College through techniques including Data Science and Machine Learning.

Approach:

- Deepen the College’s relationship with the Institute for Data Science and AI (IDSAI) through its Theme of Digital Humanities, Heritage and Creative Industries;

- Broaden College expertise into new areas, including Machine Vision and Natural Language Understanding through training and exploring opportunities for new E&R hires.
- Capitalise on and extend existing expertise in the DH Lab team by closely engaging with the new RSE Group and exploring opportunities for new professional services hires;
- Offer and support skills training for DH Lab members and affiliates on key data analysis methods;
- Leverage this profile to attract leading scholars and high-calibre students, and apply for major grants;
- Provide specialist support for, and draw upon expertise in Heritage Innovation, Environmental Humanities, and Special Collections.
- Work with IIB partners to identify industry collaboration opportunities

Telling New Stories with Data

Rationale & Vision: Digital media are now the predominant means through which information is recorded, conveyed and consumed, and its forms, tropes, filters and biases have major impacts on public narratives and understanding. The College will challenge conventional narratives through the interrogation of data and creative presentation of the complex stories therein, in order to inform policy and change minds.

Aim: We will support Exeter staff and students to communicate their research in ways that engage multiple audiences through contemporary methods including data journalism, advanced information visualization, and interactive media, and games.

Approach:

- Broaden College expertise into new areas, including Critical Information Visualization through training and exploring opportunities for new E&R hires;
- Capitalise on and extend existing expertise in the DH Lab team by closely engaging with the new RSE Group and exploring opportunities for new professional services hires;
- Active engagement with artists and creatives through workshops and projects on topics such as immersion, imagination, presence and performance;
- Capitalise on our Connected Arts & Humanities Board and its networks;
- Work with IIB partners to identify industry collaboration opportunities
- Build on our Communications E&R expertise and the new BA in Communications;
- Identify opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement with initiatives around games and gaming culture.

Addressing the Impacts of Digitized Culture

Rationale & Vision: Digital resources and processes cannot be separated from the ethical, environmental and practical implications of their production and use. It is critical for College staff, students and university partners working in the collaborative construction and/or use of digital resources to be engaged with their societal impact.

Aim: We will champion inclusive, ethical and sustainable practices in the digital realm. The DH Lab will lead on best practice in developing inclusive and accessible digital resources. Both educational

and research practices within the College will emphasise the need for holistic approaches to digital resources and digital labour, including (but not limited to) issues of sustainability, accessibility and diversity in representation.

Approach:

- Conduct a reassessment of best practice on sustainable and accessible digital resources and how best to implement these, including an internal audit of published resources, particularly attending to their sustainability over the long term;
- Work with decolonizing initiatives to consider the implications and impacts of digital and online media, building on current work to examine 'decolonised design' in web resources and bringing global partnerships together to inform research grants with an ethical multinational focus;
- Re-examine ethical issues around engagement with partners at risk and in vulnerable groups and encourage the sustainable preservation of digital cultural material;
- Acknowledge and attend to issues of credit and precarity in digital labour (student, collaborators, ECRs, RSEs) and ensure appropriate reward and credit for volunteers, interns and other partners;
- Collaborate with institutional and external partners to determine the energy implications of online and digital activity within the Arts and Humanities;
- Draw upon and contribute to the work of colleagues working in the Environmental Humanities and Heritage Innovation;
- Acknowledge and engage with ethical considerations throughout the full lifecycle of all digital research projects, particularly at the outset.