

UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Association

Identification and Alignment of Sectors Statement

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Version 1

Overview

The UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Association (the Association) aims to further connect the many and varied communities doing and enabling digital scholarship in the arts and humanities within Ireland and the United Kingdom. The Association recognises that such scholarship takes place across many different institutions and sectors, each with their own robust understanding of digital scholarship and the existing infrastructure that supports it. As part of its mission to establish and sustain more effective connections across sectors, the Association will work to facilitate greater cross-sector collaborations, identify issues of shared concern, and ensure that the Association engages with all of the communities involved in digital humanities work.

Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to provide an initial framework for identifying the sectors engaged in digital humanities work – understood inclusively, including where the term 'digital humanities' is not used – within Ireland and the United Kingdom. It will establish goals for better aligning those sectors' digital scholarship efforts, where appropriate, and identify areas where additional work is needed before goals can be set. It will help the Association better facilitate collaboration across sectors, develop a common understanding of language around digital scholarship, and support the Association's work on advocacy and career pathways.

In keeping with the Association's Core Values, this statement and the activities resulting from it will prioritise inclusive engagement, openness, and measurable action.

Identification of Sectors

Drawing on the work of the UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Network (AH/V002163/1 and IRC/V002163/2), we have identified a number of sectors that participate in digital humanities scholarship and practice in some way. This is not a definitive list, but rather a starting point for research and future work. The Association will work with the relevant communities of practice to refine and clarify this list, which will in turn help shape the scope of the Association's work.

- Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) Sector
- Data Analytics
- Software Development/Technology Sector
- Creative Industries, Media and Publishing
- Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) outside of higher education
- Higher Education
- Policy and funding organisations
- Charities, non-governmental organisations, and civil society organisations

The Association will include representatives of these sectors, as well as their related funding bodies where appropriate, on invitations to all Association activities including programme design, events planning, and evidence gathering.

Action Items

Identify and refine understanding of relevant sectors

Digital humanities scholarship takes place in a variety of sectors, each with their particular interests, influence and institutional context. In order to facilitate cross-sector connections and help support digital humanities practitioners wherever they work, the Association needs to develop a more refined understanding of the sectors where digital humanities work happens.

- **Goal:** To identify the sectors involved in digital humanities work of any kind or where digital humanities methods and practices can be applied and contribute and develop a better sense of how the Association can support digital scholarship within and across those sectors.
- **Action:** The Association will convene a 'task and finish' group to prepare a report on the sectors involved in digital humanities work in the UK and Ireland, which will serve as a roadmap for the Association's future efforts in this area. This work will be closely tied to the stakeholder mapping as part of the Advocacy strand.
    - The group will include representatives from all the sectors identified in the section above and any evidence gathering activities will include opportunities for community involvement. Special effort will be made to include the voice of the Creative Industries and GLAM sector, as they are not currently as well represented within the Association.
    - The work of the group will build on existing research in this area, including the outputs from the Digital Humanities Network; the 2017 UK DH Scoping Report; the Landscape of Irish DH dataset; the Mapping the Humanities Project in the UK; the 2021 Digital/ Software Requirements Survey; and the work of other organisations such as DARIAH-EU, the IRC, and EADH.[1]
    - The Association will apply for funding to support the group.
    - The report will feed into efforts within the Association to ensure inclusive representation within governance and programming.

[1] Communicating the Value and Impact of Digital Humanities in Teaching, Research, and Infrastructure Development (2021); Next generation careers in and from Digital Humanities (2021); Digital Humanities Research, Teaching and Practice in the UK – Landscape Report (2017); Introducing the Digital Humanities in Ireland Landscape Report Dataset (2022); Mapping UK Arts & Humanities Research Infrastructure (2023); Report on the AHRC Digital/ Software Requirements Survey 2021: Where is Investment Needed? (2023)

Developing a common understanding of language(s) and culture(s) of digital scholarship

Different professional communities describe and understand digital scholarship in different ways. Collaborating across sectors can often be complicated by ‘language barriers’ and differing cultural expectations about the value and meaning of digital approaches. This multiplicity of perspectives contributes to the digital humanities’ rich interdisciplinarity, but it can also make it difficult for practitioners to move between sectors or build sustainable partnerships.

- **Goal:** To help digital humanities scholars and practitioners better understand the language, culture and values used by their colleagues in other sectors to describe digital scholarship.
- **Action:** The Association will convene a Community Interest Group or ‘task and finish’ group to create a suite of resources aimed at developing a common understanding of language, cultures and values around digital scholarship.
    - The group will include representation from all of the sectors identified by the Association as having an interest in digital humanities work.
    - The resources will be attentive to potential differences between the UK and Irish context.
    - The Association will apply for funding to support the group.
    - The resources will support the work being done by the Association around career pathways. They should help students (and their teachers) better comprehend how different sectors understand digital scholarship, and aid students in presenting their skills in ways that will resonate across sectors and roles.

Identifying areas of shared concern

Rather than replicating the excellent work of existing organisations, the Association aims to further the development of the field by facilitating connections and enabling practitioners and organisations to expand their capacity. One way it intends to do this is by identifying areas of shared interest across sectors, where the Association can draw people together or help share best practices.

- **Goal:** To develop the capacity within the Association to identify and advocate for issues that impact members across different sectors.
- **Action:** The Association will, in the next three years, identify one concrete ‘issue of interest’ across sectors, develop an advocacy plan for that issue that includes evidence gathering, and work towards implementing that plan in both in Ireland and the UK.
    - The Association will look to the work of other scholarly organisations and learned societies to develop best practices around advocacy.

- The Association recognises that many sectors will have individual issues or specific needs which do not translate across sectors. It will remain conscious of those differences when developing any advocacy plan.
- The Association will apply for funding to support the group.
- The Association will retain evidence gathered during this work so that it can respond to government or funder calls for evidence, with a specific focus on digital skills.

Building long-term and sustainable connections

The Association aims to be a hub for the field, helping to build long-term and sustainable connections between people and organisations already actively engaged in digital humanities scholarship and practice.

- **Goal:** To facilitate meaningful and sustainable connections between people and organisations working in different sectors.
- **Action:** The Association will identify existing hub institutions, networks, and professional organisations involved in digital humanities work and develop ongoing relationships with the aim of facilitating cross-sector connections.
    - Based on the results of the identification report, the Association will decide the most appropriate form for this activity. This could include assembling a Community Interest Group, folding this responsibility into the mandate for the future leadership group and/or applying for external funding depending on the scale of the activity.
    - The Association will encourage collaborations built on mutual respect of professional expertise in all sectors and that include genuine knowledge exchange.
    - The Association will identify interventions it can make to support existing activities, which might include facilitating work placements and secondments, developing apprenticeship models, or publishing ‘best practice’ reports.