University of
Southampton

SOUTHAMPTON DIGITAL HUMANITIES

BROADENING AND DEEPENING OUR IMPACT

In our previous annual report I said that 2022–23 was a year of consolidation. Having done that work, 2023–24 was characterised by a broadening and deepening of our impact.

Our team grew with the arrivals of Kristen, Ammandeep, and Laurisa, and our capacity for novel thinking was enhanced by the arrival of Dounya, Joash, and Sharon on fixed term roles. We expanded our range of Digital Humanities elective offerings to include modules in Corpus Linguistics and in Data, Culture, and Justice, and we taught across fifteen modules in the School of Humanities. We received approval for a new programme: MSc in Digital Humanities (Data Science). We refined the structures that manage and report on our work in research, education, knowledge exchange, and enterprise. We welcomed twelve interns from History, Politics, Archaeology, Computer Science, English, Biomedical Sciences, and Film. We won and operated grants funded by the AHRC, ESRC, UKRI, CHEP, and the British Council, we formalised four new research facilities, and we began building up Digital Preservation Southampton, our flagship enterprise unit. Furthermore, we produced original, innovative, and remarkable research that tests and expands the boundaries of the Digital Humanities, creates the basis for platform grants, and leverages knowledge exchange and enterprise opportunities.

Together we are making ambitious plans to build a Digital Humanities unit that explores society and culture through queer identities and creativities, the infrastructures that organise knowledge, power, and our biosphere, and the capture, representation, and preservation of landscapes, places, and objects. At face value these may appear to be divergent pursuits. But what makes Southampton Digital Humanities distinctive is our pursuit of this work in parallel, how we draw together our perspectives, interests, and priorities to create new agendas for Digital Humanities research, education, and enterprise.

This report draws together the range of activities that have characterised our work in the last year. It recognises the collective effort required to delivering a mission to entangle humanities education and research with digital and computational approaches, and to do so in ways that respond to things that matter: knowledge creation, justice, belonging, our biosphere. It is a big task, and – once again – I extend my heartfelt and sincere thanks to all who've supported, encouraged, and challenged us over the last year. Roll on year four!

Professor James Baker
Director of Digital Humanities

OUR PEOPLE

People are at the very heart of Southampton Digital Humanities, and this academic year our team changed in various ways. Kristen Schuster joined us as a Lecturer in Digital Humanities. Ammandeep K. Mahal became our Digital Preservation Enterprise Fellow. Later in the year Laurisa Sastoque Pabon joined us as a Digital Preservation Training Officer. Whilst we said a sad goodbye to Grace Di Meo, we are delighted to be welcoming Steven Gamble as Lecturer in Digital Humanities during the 2024/25 academic year. And we have begun the process of recruiting a Lecturer in Humanities Data Science to lead our new MSc in Digital Humanities (Data Science).

Expanding our team has broadened our expertise: we are a group of linguists, technicians, historians, information scientists, digital humanists, archaeologists, gender scholars, preservation professionals, musicologists, art historians, creative practitioners, and data scientists who take digital and computational approaches to humanities work. Expanding our team has also enabled us to deepen our connections with Galleries/Gardens, Libraries, Archives and Museums (e.g. a new Doctoral Partnership with Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew), with sectoral bodies (e.g. the UK–Ireland Digital Humanities Association), and international researchers (e.g. Stacey Copeland, our Visiting Fellow from the University of Groningen). As our team has grown, so haveour structures, with bespoke groups in place to monitor, advance, and support our work on Education and Student Experience, Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Enterprise, Digital Preservation Southampton, and creating a cross–school Digital Humanities culture. For their contributions in these and other fora we would like to extend our particular thanks to James Jordan, Helen Spurling, James Minney, Alison Porter, Bonnie Latimer, Fraser Sturt, Lorna Leverett, Wendy White, Matt Philips, Alexandra Karamitrou, James Allen, Claire Knowles, Jo Taylor, Hannah Ley, Emma Button, Hirah Azhar, Giulia Champion, Tia Thorpe, Lois Clark, Katie Bizley, Lian Patston, Kendrick Oliver, Katie Power, Lucy Briggs, Elija Cassidy, Alistair Pike, Anisa Hawes, Ben Chambers, Simon Wilson, Peter Webster, Maria Varela, Joely Fake, Catherine Polley, Maria Hayward, Eryn Rigley, Teresa Ardani, Suzanne Tatham, Alexandra Krendel, Eleanor Quince, Malcolm Cook, Natalia Himowicz, Nicky Clarkson, Dan Boyce, Phoebe Meade, Jackie Ward, Maddie Fine, and Siddharth Soni for their contributions across the year.

Once again 2023/24 saw us welcome a diverse group of Digital Humanities Interns who – coordinated by Kristen Schuster – led a variety of projects that gave them subject adjacent work experience. Pascal built a VR environment designed for hosting documented heritage objects. Tushita tagged texts to enable distant reading across languages. Iona helped us to embed accessibility into our workshop delivery. Sofia designed our annual equipment needs survey. Amber explored feminist interpretations of smart devices. Billy created a playful polling platform. Gavin and Kirsten created a short film about our extended reality equipment. Eva, Holly, Maddie, and Taylor joined the AHRC–funded Beyond Notability project, extending the range of data and stories the project was able to assemble about women's work in history and heritage during the late–nineteenth and early–twentieth centuries. And all contributed to the intellectual, creative, and day–to–day life of Southampton Digital Humanities.

"SINCE TECH IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF MOST INDUSTRIES, WHAT I HAVE LEARNED WILL BE A VITAL SKILL FOR MANY COMPANIES."
AMBER
BA MODERN HISTORY AND POLITICS

"PAYING ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND ANALYSING A LARGE TEXT ON A MINUTE SCALE HAS BEEN A VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ME"
TUSHITA
MA ENGLISH LITERARY STUDIES

"THE FACT THAT I'M HELPING ON A RESEARCH PROJECT IS VERY EXCITING"
TAYLOR
BA HISTORY

DH Team

Alice Wilson
Senior Research Associate

Ammandeep K. Mahal
Digital Preservation
Enterprise Fellow

Claire Wilkins
Project Coordinator

Dounya Boumaza
Research Assistant

Ellie Wakefield
Administrative Officer

Grace Di Meo
Teaching Fellow
(until November 2023)

James Baker
Director

Joash Johnson
Commercialisation Project
Officer

Kristen Schuster
Lecturer

Laurisa Sastoque Pabon
Digital Preservation
Training Officer

Lexi Webster
Deputy Director

Luke Aspland
Technician

Sam Pegg
Technician &
Knowledge Exchange Fellow

Sharon Howard
Research Fellow

DH Interns

Amber Rosewarne
History and Politics

Billy Phillips
Archaeology

Eva Alexander
Archaeology

Gavin Lin
History

Iona Bateman
Allied Health Professionals

Holly Russell
Archaeology

Kirsten Hutchison
History

Madelaine Watson
History and Politics

Pascal Jones
Electronics and Computer
Science

Sofia Rossi
Biological Sciences

Taylor Thompson
History

Tushita Choudhary
English

DH Advisory Group

Alexandra Reynolds
Centre for Higher
Education Practice

Claire Knowles
Leeds (external member)

Eryn Rigley
Philosophy

Emma Button
Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Fraser Sturt
Archaeology

James Allen
Digital Learning

James Jordan
English

Joanne Taylor
Manchester
(external member)

Nicky Marsh
English

Suzanne Tatham
Library

DH Education and Student Experience Committee

Alexandra Krendel
Languages, Cultures &
Linguistics

Carmen Martin De Leon
Languages, Cultures &
Linguistics

Elija Cassidy
Film

James Minney
Languages, Cultures &
Linguistics

Javier Mármol Queraltó
Digital Learning

Kendrick Oliver
History

Laura Diaz Cobo
Library

Lian Patston
English

Zubair Shafiq
Digital Learning

DH Research, Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise Committee

Alexandra Krendel
Languages, Cultures &
Linguistics

Alison Porter
Languages, Cultures &
Linguistics

Elija Cassidy
Film

Fraser Sturt
Archaeology

Giulia Champion
English

**Hirah Azhar**
History

Peter Webster
Library

OUR SPACE

The Digital Humanities Hub comprises of six rooms on the north side of Building 65. Opened in September 2021 and run by the Digital Humanities team, it has gone through gradual iterations to meet the needs of our community. In the last year these iterations have focused on making the Digital Humanities Hub accessible to staff and students. We have created clear routes through the space for users with low mobility, designated seating areas for people who use wheelchairs and mobility scooters, more flexibility for group working, and – supported by our intern Iona Bateman – embedded EDI considerations through our workshop planning. We have created more options for mobile and offsite capture of audio and video, developed templates for producing content for complex immersive technologies, and – with our intern Sofia Rossi – sought feedback from the community on their equipment and training needs.

Specialist users have also made good use of our technical estate. The AHRC–funded Diverse Capacities project, which sought to develop and sustain new connections between local government officers, creative communities, and creative industry professionals across sectors in the Solent region, used our Igloo (a 360° immersive environment) to generate new forms of creative practice. Rebecca Fereirra, a PhD student in Archaeology, used our Reflectance Transformation Imaging technologies to examine bone tool surfaces for evidence of wear. Students on our Data, Culture, and Justice module used our film production and editing capacity to produce an interpretative dance on 'The Matilda Effect', the tendency for women's achievements in technology and science to be hidden and forgotten. And our intern Pascal Jones has developed a platform for presenting and interacting with scanned 3d assets in a virtual reality environment.

**SCAN THE QR CODE
TO WATCH 'THE MATILDA EFFECT'
INTERPRETATIVE DANCE**
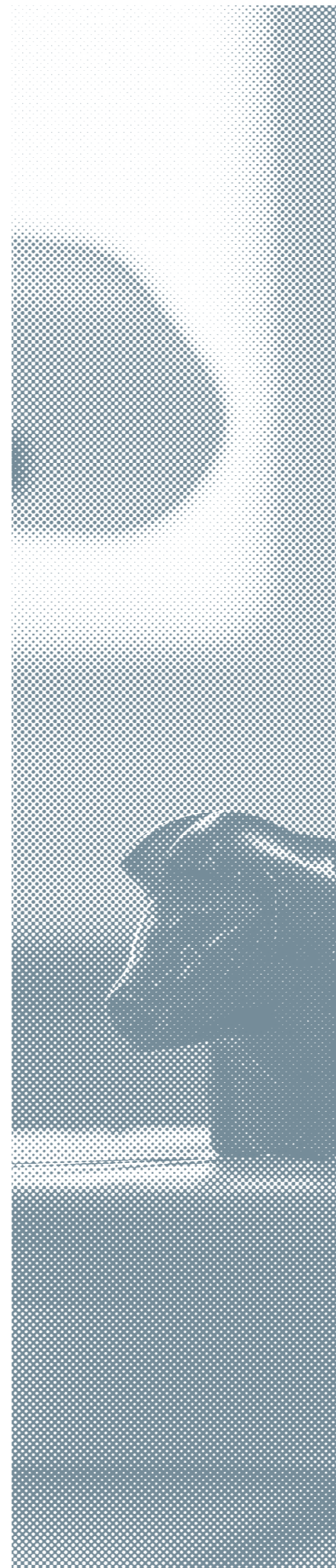
OUR NUMBERS

301
ATTENDEES AT DH SKILLS
WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

189
LENGTH IN SECONDS OF
'THE MATILDA EFFECT',
A STUDENT MADE
INTERPRETIVE DANCE

£1.7M
VALUE OF NEW EXTERNAL
GRANTS INVOLVING SOUTHAMPTON
DH INVESTIGATORS

2,907
NEW STATEMENTS ADDED
TO THE BEYOND NOTABILITY
WIKIBASE.

VIEW
HERE:

26

ACTIVE USERS OF DIGIPRES, OUR AI-BASED MULTI-AGENT DIGITAL PRESERVATION ASSISTANT

OUR STORIES

How might queer joy help us reimagine online spaces? This was the central question asked by the ESRC–funded 'Queer Joy as a Digital Good' project, led by Lexi Webster, that brought together a team of academics, artists and user communities to explore forms of digital practice that resisted resisting, refused to fix, and eschewed responsibility. This phase of work culminated with Stacey Copeland joining Digital Humanities for a SIAH–funded Visiting Fellowship that challenged us to queer our interactions with digitally–mediated archives of queer experience, to deploy speculative strategies borne out of necessity given what is not said in the archive, not produced by the archival process. These urgent questions, imaginings, and troublings are now a pillar of our ongoing work at Southampton Digital Humanities.

And this pillar overlaps with a more longstanding concern: producing resilient archival traces. This year that work focused attention on the people tasked with the long term stewarding of digital assets that capture aspects of our shared heritage. AHRC research commercialisation funding was used to enable James Baker and Joash Johnson to visit museums, archives, and libraries to better understand the challenges faced by these professionals. British Academy funding was used to support partners at the University of Duhok with capturing and maintaining their intangible cultural heritage. And Higher Education Innovative Funding supported a new collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, with work aimed at building shared understandings of plants records as data and at unlocking their potential to enable access to complex histories of people, trans–continental and longitudinal networks of science, and colonial access to land and natural resources.

There are many other stories we could tell. Our 2022/23 intern Anoushka Alexander–Rose presented their computational analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's literary works at the 'Nabokov from Novel Perspectives' symposium hosted by UC Santa Barbara. We opened the Digital Humanities Hub to the public – and many intrigued children – for the University's Hands on Humanities Day. We worked with the Southampton Research Software Group to enable Hirah Azhar, a PhD History candidate, to extract and cluster data from a complex collection of media imagery. Carly Schuster visited us from Australian National University to discuss the intersections of climate finance and monitoring technologies in Paraguayan farming. These might seem divergent pursuits. But what hangs these stories together is our commitment to a form of Digital Humanities that is situated in a broad ange of humanistic questions, problems, and perspective. This breadth is our strength.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE PLANT HISTORIES, RECORDS,AND MOBILITIES SHARED PERSPECTIVES WEBINAR
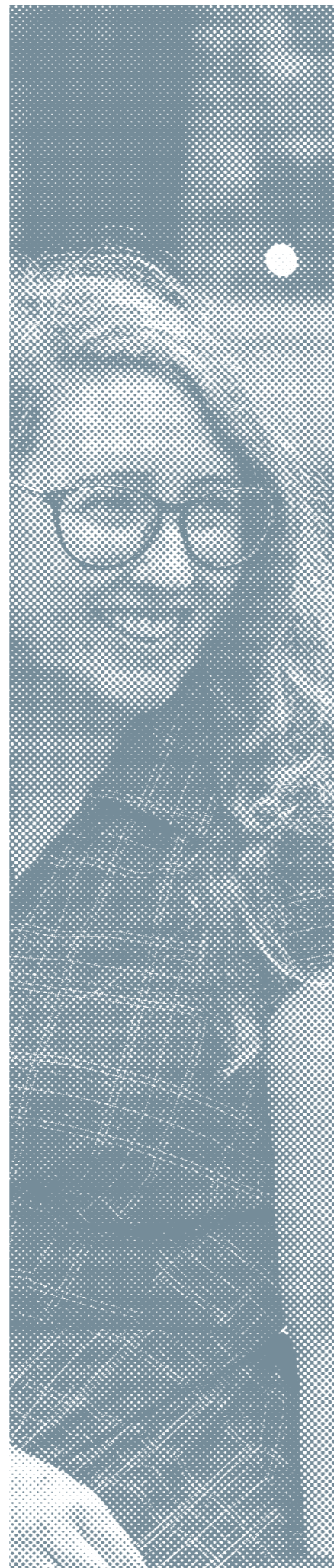
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PROJECTS

PUBLISHED OUTPUTS

Lexi Webster, '"We are detective": transvestigations, conspiracy and inauthenticity in 'gender critical' social media discourses', *ELAD–SILDA* (2024).

James Baker, '"Providing a layman's guide to the scheme": museum computing, professional personas and documentary labour in the United Kingdom, 1967–1983, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (2024).

Lexi Webster, 'How to select participants from LGBTQIA+ and trans communities using social media', in *SAGE Research Methods: Diversifying and Decolonizing Research* (2024).

Gemma Derrick, Simon Hettrick, **James Baker,** Emma Karoune, Simon Kerridge, Georgina Fletcher, Neil Chue Hong, Lyndsey Ballantyne, Judith Fransmann, and Tony Roche, *Shaping the future of research evaluation. Insights from The Festival of Hidden REF* (2024).

Lexi Webster, '"What have I done to deserve this?": personal, professional, and political representations in Smash Hits during the 'Imperial phase' (1986–1988)', in Bodie A. Ashton (ed.), *The Pet Shop Boys and the Political: Queerness, Culture, Identity and Society* (2024).

Anna–Maria Sichani, **James Baker,** Alice Eldridge, Tim Hitchcock, Ben Roberts, Suzanne Tatham, Amelia Wakeford, Jo Walton, Sharon Webb, and the SHL Team, 'How to Avoid Being a DH Lab: The Stories of the Sussex Humanities Lab', in Urszula Pawlicka–Deger and Christopher Thomson (eds.), *Digital Humanities and Laboratories: Perspectives on Knowledge, Infrastructure and Culture* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

FUNDED PROJECTS

Coastal and Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility
AHRC, £1,449,057 (2024–2026)

Queer Joy as a Digital Good
ESRC Digital Good Network, £49,525 (2023–2024)

Our Interlocked Universe: Sociohistorical Network Analysis; Methods, Applications, and New Directions
ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, £2,700 (2023–2024)

Critical Cataloguing For Digital Preservation: A Research Commercialisation Follow–on Project
AHRC, £49,954 (2023–2024)

Developing a virtual reality interface for institutional digital archives (PI Stephen Gray, University of Bristol)
AHRC and Research Libraries UK Professional Practice Fellowship Scheme for academic and research libraries, £25,000 (2023–2024)

Middle East People's Culture Conservation Collective (PI Mariz Tadros, Institute for Development Studies)
British Council, £700,000 (2023–2025)

Attitudes, aptitudes, and applications of AI–enhanced assessment in Humanities curricula at Southampton
Centre for Higher Education Practice, £4713 (2023–2024)

Beyond Notability: Re–evaluating Women's Work in Archaeology, History, and Heritage in Britain, 1870 – 1950
AHRC, £929,729 (2021–2024)

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES WEBPAGE

HIGHLIGHT ON AI ENHANCED ASSESSMENT PROJECT

In 2023/24, Southampton Digital Humanities was successful in bidding for internal funding from the University's Centre for Higher Education Practice. The team (Lexi, Kristen, Ammandeep, Sam, Grace) were awarded £4,712 to explore colleagues' and students' thoughts on AI–enhanced assessments in the School of Humanities. We were also pleased to welcome Dounya Boumaza (PhD researcher, LCL) as a Research Assistant on the project, who made an exceptional contribution.

Our work contributed to the fast–growing debate on generative AI and its place in higher education by specifically contextualising possible applications of AI in assessment throughout the School of Humanities. Exploring attitudes, aptitudes, and applications – both real and imagined – among staff and students, we sought to answer one overarching question:

"What are the barriers to and opportunities for embedding AI–enhanced assessment in Humanities curricula at the University of Southampton?"

Through the lens of 'AI literacies', we examined how colleagues and students reported their own beliefs about generative AI, their own competencies in using such tools, and how these beliefs and competencies might interact with assessments in higher education.

Findings indicated a prevalence of 'threat' narratives, with staff and students alike indicating attitudes that generative AI is a threat to higher education, its purpose, and academic integrity. There was also significant variability in self–reported knowledge of and confidence using generative AI tools among both staff and students. The different literacies reflected in the findings pose challenges for the deployment and employment of generative AI in assessment practices. The findings also provide food for thought beyond the project's initial brief. That is, they not only help us to consider the potential role of AI–enhanced assessment in discipline–specific pedagogical practice. They also help us to consider the very purpose of assessment (i.e. for, as, and of learning) in humanities curricula within higher education contexts.

Sam Pegg presented the work at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2024 conference in Manchester; the findings were particularly well received and have already led to the development of new networks of practice at the University of Southampton and beyond to explore future pedagogical research in the area.

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

2023/24 was about broadening and deepening our impact. Next year is about establishing our processes and forging a distinctive vision for a computationally rich Digital Humanities that entangles queer creativities, critical infrastructure, and the preservation of complex cultural assets.

In education, we will be working towards the launch of a new MSc in Digital Humanities (Data Science). This programme will transform our offer to and interactions with learners at Southampton, and – with the arrival of a new Lecturer in Humanities Data Science to lead the programme – reshape our team once more.

In research, next year will mark the start major new projects. We are a partner on Coastal and Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility, a RICHeS–funded infrastructure that will build capacity to understand and preserve the significant and vulnerable heritage assets that are found in the UK's rivers, lakes, coastlines and seas. And our new TRAC–listed facilities come online – Humanities Fabrication & Printing; Humanities Object Capture; Humanities Extended Reality; Igloo Immersive Space – enabling researchers at and beyond Southampton to cost these facilities into their grants and gain access to our technical expertise.

In enterprise, Digital Preservation Southampton will launch, with a remit to accelerate the adoption of mature and responsible digital preservation practices across all sectors by providing outstanding services to clients and partners seeking digital preservation services, education, and solutions. Ahead of this, we have launched DigiPres, an innovative multi–agent digital preservation assistant that is tailored to solving digital preservation problems.

These activities will require new forms of infrastructure. Our estate will continue to adapt in response to student and staff need. Our structures will evolve to ensure we develop strong connections with new methodologically aligned posts in Archaeology, English, Film, and Linguistics. And our new vision will be complemented by a new delivery plan, taking us through to the end of the decade.

These then, are exciting times. To keep us in check our KPIs – which you'll see over the pages that follow – have been designed to guide us as we deliver a balanced portfolio of research, education, knowledge exchange, and enterprise. Whilst we cannot control external forces, we can think big and seek to inspire the remarkable, to strive for equity, and to address complex global challenges. That is the flavour of Digital Humanities we seek to be.

2023/24: KPIs

Benefits Register Realisation KPIs

DH1: Improvement in student experience by enriching student learning and student research activities by utilising 'Digital Humanities' approaches and facilities.

- 7/7 SoH disciplines utilize DH (target 7).
- Continued growth in degree programs that use DH, with MSc Digital Humanities (Data Science) launching in 2025/26.
- NSS scores as positive, with FAH outperforming UoS average.

DH2: Generation of student recruitment – enhanced Digital Humanities provision will lead to an increase in our attractiveness to prospective students.

- New DH vision responding to plan to grow student numbers by 2030.
- MSc Digital Humanities (Data Science) supports programme diversification.
- UoS QS rank improving.

DH3: Enhancement in academic reputation of the UOS Humanities department.

- DH enabling new collaborations with computationally rich areas and institutions.
- DH staff recognised for sector leading academic reputation, e.g. roles on regional and international bodies.
- DH embedded in UoS offer to prospective students.
- DH worked with DUX and FOS to deliver bespoke online content.

DH4: Increased research and enterprise funding success as well as knowledge–exchange activities

- From a small staff base, DH continues to make a strong contribution to FEC grant capture and bidding.
- DH is diversifying grant capture.
- DH leading on a new flagship enterprise project: Digital Preservation Southampton.

DH5: Improvement in student employability by developing digital skills of our students.

- DH delivered 21 events – 14 skills workshops, 4 community meetings, and 3 open sessions – aimed at staff and students.
  (target: at least 20 per annum).
- 12 students gained hands–on DH experience as DH interns.
- DH elective modules delivered, with further expansion planned for 2024/25.

DH6: League Table Rankings – planned growth in student numbers will also mean a more competitive offer, which will attract more highly qualified students and improve the University's position in the League Table.

- Too early to measure impact of DH on UCAS tariffs in SoH.

DH7: Distinctiveness of School of Humanities.

- 7/7 SoH disciplines utilize DH (target: 7)
- Continued growth in degree programs that use DH, with plans for MSc Digital Humanities (Data Science) and PhD Digital Humanities.
- DH embedded in UoS offer to prospective students.
- DH contributing to civic offer via AHRC IAA activities, Hands on Humanities, HEIF projects, and external partnerships with local and regional bodies.

DH8: Quality of Estate – improve the quality and relevance of the Estate, in terms of relevance to students and staff.

- DH Hub making strong contributions to UoS student experience and research activity, including responsive investments in new technical estate.
- Strategy for maintaining DH estate in place through SoH DH Embedding Group and investments in DH Technicians.
- DH making proactive contributions to future UoS estate strategy.

FAH Budget KPIs

Skills Development

- 301 event attendees (target: 100).
- Good balance of event attendees across the School of Humanities.
- Good evidence of attendance from beyond Humanities.

Climate Crisis

- Work on the Digital Humanities Climate Coalition is being leveraged into a refreshed approach to equipment purchasing and technical estate.

Community Development

- DH Community Meetings were retired, having achieved their purpose. Proposed new model involves community engagement working through an extended group of aligned colleagues in SoH whose work is intellectually and methodologically aligned with Digital Humanities, and who provide the basis for a supportive and rich DH education and research culture in the SoH.

Events

- DH delivered 15 skills–oriented events (including 14 DH Workshops) aimed at staff and students (target: at least 15).

Student Internships

- 10 students joined the DH Internship programme (target: 10) of which 75% were SoH students (target: at least 70%).

Supporting Research

- 6 large research grants (>£100k) proposals submitted (target: 2 per annum by 2024/25), 3 of which were successful.
- Received funds for 1 ~£50k grant and 3 small grants (<£25k).

SEE YOU AGAIN NEXT YEAR!

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