AHRC ICT Methods Network Expert Seminar

EVIDENCE OF VALUE: ICT IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), University of Cambridge,

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ABSTRACTS

Session 1: Digital repositories: valued resources or data tombs?

Abstract

Much public money has been spent on the creation of digital repositories as a means of promoting access to resources in the Arts and Humanities. For stakeholders they are an easy m eans of assessing value for money and counting things deposited. But arguably, repository projects have met with limited success. Despite considerable effort and investment, to date there are very few active user communities and the goal of the development of a 'knowledge economy' has yet to materialise. The discussion aims to explore whether repositories are a dead end, the product of a technological determinism in which knowledge is held to be a cumulative resource and value is perceived to be intrinsic to materials? What might a resource such as a repository look like if it was reconceptualised as a means of facilitating collaboration, of generating relationships, rather than an end in itself?

Session 2: Knowledge on the move: What is transferable about 'knowledge' and what does this imply?

Abstract

Funding for academic research in the arts and humanities places increasing emphasis on 'knowledge transfer', including practical outcomes of the research outside
the academic sphere. Should academic research benefit the cultural sector, quality of life, or other means of delivering 'public value' from public funding? Do new technologies, including social networks, knowledge archives, digital civic spaces or on-demand content delivery have any relevance to research and public policy, and are they an important component of the creative economy? Models of knowledge that underpin the conception of 'knowledge transfer' often ignore the sociality of knowledge production and use. Dissemination of knowledge is held to be of value by stakeholders, but should there be a greater emphasis on facilitating engagement with 'non-academic' users of resources. What kinds of 'communities' might be created in the wake of knowledge on its travels (Strathern 2004).

Session 3: Public Value: Who are the 'public' and what might 'they' value?

Abstract

How is the increasing use of ICT in the arts and humanities of value to public life? Should it be? While publicly funded, do academics have a role to engage with 'non-academic; communities, whoever these

might be. How, if at all, has the nature of this engagement changed with the advent of new technologies? Should the value of cultural projects be measured in accordance with particular social or economic outcomes? Do stakeholder priorities ensure that only those projects that are accountable in terms of their perceived instrumental value receive funding? What of the subversive potential of new technologies and the ways in their public use might develop in unexpected and unforeseen ways?

Session 4: Does innovative technology lead to, or depend on, innovative arts research in the creative economy?

Abstract

How might ICT facilitate collaboration as a means of achieving value for parties involved in creative projects? How, for example, might artists contribute to the research process in ways other than merely as the clients of technologists (Biggs and Blackwell 2006). Do stakeholders and recipients of funding see themselves see themselves as collaborators? Where do 'non academic' communities figure in this collaborative relationship. Innovation itself is often touted as a desirable project outcome or deliverable. How might one assess if a project is 'innovative'? If the value of innovation lies in the introduction of the new, then how might we even begin to think about implementing uniform means of evaluation that are anything beyond the banal affirmation of their being new or not?