



Newsletter

Summer 2006 - Issue 2

Launch

Over one hundred people attended the launch of the AHRC ICT Methods Network on Thursday 9th March. The event took place at Trinity House in London (which is the headquarters for the lighthouse service). David Robey, Head of the AHRC ICT Programme, introduced the five speakers; the first was Dr Marilyn Deegan, Director of Research at the Centre for Computing in the Humanities (CCH) at King's College. Dr Deegan emphasized that the Network, which has its administrative base at King's College, London, is a partnership between academics at three institutions. Professor Harold Short, Director of CCH, then highlighted some of the Methods Network's events and planned activities.

This was followed by AHRC's Chief Executive, Professor Philip Esler, who drew an amusing analogy between Trinity House (and its associations with the maritime) and the Methods Network - both being suitable places for a "launch". Professor Rick Trainor, Principal of King's College London, then spoke about the Centre for Computing in the Humanities and how proud he is that the Methods Network is located at King's College London. The final speaker was Natalie Ceeney, Chief

Executive of the National Archives, who highlighted the importance of technology in scholarship and archives and libraries, and its role in networking communities.

By Lorna Gibson, AHRC ICT Methods Network

Expert Seminar on Music

Royal Holloway, University of London, Friday 3rd March 2006.

The second Methods Network Expert Seminar, Modern Methods for Musicology: Prospects, Proposals and Realities, was organized and co-chaired by Tim Crawford (Goldsmiths College, University of London), and Andrew Wathey (Royal Holloway and Methods Network Associate Director). The Seminar was a one day event with eight speakers, a small invited audience (of fourteen people), and a Rapporteur (David Meredith, Goldsmiths College, University of London). For details of the Programme and the Rapporteur's report, see <http://www.methodsnetwork.ac.uk/activities/seminars.html>



(left to right) - Prof. David Robey (AHRC ICT Programme), Prof. Harold Short (CCH, King's College London), Natalie Ceeney (National Archives).



David Meredith
- Music Expert Seminar

There were, broadly speaking, two aims of the Expert Seminar; firstly to allow a selection of musicologists and technologists (two disciplines which typically do not engage with one another) the opportunity to discuss the issues that are important to them, and secondly to assess the current state of play of ICT within musicology. It is intended that the Methods Network will continue to promote this sort of dialogue between musicologists and computer scientists in their forthcoming activities and a follow-up workshop has been proposed.

For musicologists, the Seminar highlighted the importance of training postgraduate students in ICT, and the need to need to engage with computer scientists in order know what tools are being created, how they work, and what questions need to be asked. For computer scientists, the Seminar revealed the importance of presenting technical information that that does not isolate musicologists but rather entices them into using new technology, as well as the need to develop tools that fit the needs of the musicological community. Other key themes which were discussed include the importance of dealing with Intellectual Property issues, and the role of the web in music-making of the future.

Lorna Gibson, AHRC ICT Methods Network

Bursaries for Postgraduate Students

The Methods Network is committed to building a community of scholars who use advanced ICT methods in research in the arts and humanities, and has developed a bursary initiative to support students who wish to present papers at the Digital Resources in the Humanities and Arts (DRHA) Conference or to attend the Computers and the History of Art (CHArt) Conference.

Bursary winners in 2005, the first year of the scheme, felt that they had gained tremendously from being able to attend conferences which they otherwise could not afford. Most importantly, attending conferences such as CHArt and DRHA provides students with the opportunity to make contact with academics and practitioners in a focused environment where developing ideas might be discussed and advanced.

To be eligible to apply for a Methods Network bursary, you must be a postgraduate student engaged in full or part-time

study at a British academic institution. Further information and an online application form are available on the Methods Network website.

The Methods Network is prepared to consider extending the bursary initiative, so if you have suggestions for other conferences that we might extend this scheme to, please do get in touch.

Call for Proposals for Activities

Deadline 31 December 2006

The Methods Network invites the arts and humanities Higher Education community in the UK to submit proposals for Methods Network activities. Activities may include Workshops, Seminars, postgraduate training events, publications, and other activities.

Workshops are intended to provide training in advanced methods and will also engage with issues such as: formal methods in analysis of source data and the creation of technical models, working with multiple technologies, and other matters of vital practical interest to the community. Funds available up to £5000.

Seminars are envisaged as discussion sessions. They may concentrate on highly-defined topics of interest to the community or may have a more general focus. Identifying problem areas in the advanced uses of ICT in the arts and humanities is also encouraged. The Methods Network is keen to support both single and cross-disciplinary proposals and those which encourage new collaborative frameworks between technical specialists and arts and humanities scholars. The primary emphasis is on the use and reuse of digital resources. Potential themes could include ways in which collaborative practice might advance scholarly achievement or issues around employing multiple technologies and approaches to their application. Funds available up to £2000.

If you have a proposal for an alternative activity or for a publication that could be supported as a Methods Network activity, we would be pleased to consider this.

For further information see the Call for Proposals <http://www.methodsnetwork.ac.uk/activities/proposals.html> page on the Methods Network website or contact Neil Grindley (neil.grindley@kcl.ac.uk).

Symposium on Making 3D Visual Research Outcomes Transparent

This symposium took place at the British Academy on 23rd - 25th February, and was co-sponsored by EPOCH, PIN, Prato, Italy/and the Methods Network. It involved around 40 participants from the UK, Italy and the USA. The event featured both presentations and discussion sessions on the subject of research issues in the field of 3D visualization, specifically focusing on the question of "paradata"; the accumulated information that records the process of developing 3D visualizations in order to make their research outcomes transparent. A major outcome of this event was the development of a first draft of a proposed International Standard for Documentation of 3D Visualisation-based Cultural Heritage Projects. The document is being referred to as 'The London Charter' and will be widely circulated within the 3D Visualisation and Standards communities as it is developed further.

A copy of this document can be obtained from the following URL:

http://www.methodsnetwork.ac.uk/redist/pdf/London_Charter.pdf. For more information about 'The London Charter', please e mail julie.tolmie@kcl.ac.uk.

By Lorna Hughes, AHRC ICT Methods Network

AHRC ICT Methods Network

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Forthcoming workshops

Digital Restoration for Damaged Documents

organised by Julia Craig-McFeely, DIAMM (29 June 2006) and to be held at Oxford University Computing Services. Registration is now closed.

Development of Skills in Advanced Text Encoding with TEI P5

organised by Lou Burnard, James Cummings and Sebastian Rahtz for the TEI at the Oxford University Computer Services, under the auspices of the Research Technologies Service (18-20 September 2006). Open registration
<http://tei.oucs.ox.ac.uk/Oxford/2006-09-methNet/>

The Future of Information Technology in Music Research and Practice

organized by David Meredith, Goldsmiths College, University of London (8 September 2006). Invitation only.

Technical Innovation in Art Historical Research: Opportunities and Problems

organized by Anne Bentowska-Kafel, King's College London (date to be confirmed). Open registration

Theoretical Approaches to Virtual Representations of Past Environments

organized by Kate Devlin, Goldsmiths College, University of London (date to be confirmed). Open registration

Blue Skies and Singing Rings'; Digital Technologies and Jewellery of the Future

Expert Seminar on practice-based arts, The Dana Centre Studio, London, 26 October 2006. Hosted by Sandra Kemp and David Humphrey, Royal College of Arts. Invitation only.

available on the workshop webpage:

<http://www.ahds.ac.uk/litlangling/events/approaches/home.htm>.

This workshop brought together people and expertise from several key national and international organizations, such as Arts and Humanities Data Service, Oxford Text Archive, and Poetics and Linguistics Association. The workshop itself only lasted two days, by the aspiration is that it will be the beginning of future fruitful collaboration and exchange of ideas. Among the possible initiatives that were suggested was a special group for new post-graduates in the field. Anyone interested in issues related to corpus stylistics is welcome to join the Corpus-style email list (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/corpus-style.html>).

By Ylva Berglund, Oxford Text Archive

Workgroup on digital tools development for the arts and humanities

On 15th June 2006, a workgroup met at King's College London to address the challenges involved in developing tools to analyse and interpret digital materials in the arts and humanities. The group consisted of experts from the UK, Europe and the USA, all experienced practitioners with many years experience in digital tools development, and with very strong opinions on the subject! The group discussed existing tools, and also examined some of the roadblocks that have inhibited this sort of development. Project managers with responsibility for the development of the TAPOR suite of text analysis tools, the LEADERS project, and the Armadillo data mining tool were all able to speak of their considerable experience. The discussion was informed by looking at a number of resources, including the report of the ACLS "Commission on Cyberinfrastructure in the Humanities and Social Sciences", as well as considering how the e-Science agenda might help shape an arts and humanities approach to the topic. Some of the challenges addressed by the group included questions of how this sort of work should be funded; how to support the type of collaborative work that is essential to the development of useful resources; and the "grand challenges" in the arts and humanities. The focus was on the strategic issues, rather than technical development, and a report will soon be issued that will summarize the discussion and make recommendations for ways in which this important agenda can be taken forward.

By Lorna Hughes, AHRC ICT Methods Network

Expert Seminar on Virtual History and Archaeology

The AHRC ICT Methods Network Expert Seminar on History and Archaeology took place at the University of Sheffield, 19-21 April 2006, hosted by Mark Greengrass, Executive Director, Humanities Research Institute, Sheffield University, and AHRC ICT Methods Network Associate Director.

The scope of this event - the representation of place and time; text; and objects and events - was sufficiently broad to justify an event that took place over three days. With speakers from both archaeology and history, the event was truly interdisciplinary. It was an important opportunity for the two communities to learn from each other, explore in detail the challenges of the digital representation of primary source materials, and examine ways in which digital research methods facilitate work that cannot be done through traditional means. Given the extensive focus, there were a number of Rapporteurs for different sections, including Kate Devlin (University of Bristol), Matthew Wollard (AHDS History) and Lorna Hughes (AHRC ICT Methods Network).

The section on place and time examined the representation of spatial and temporal analysis in historical and archaeological data, with a focus on GIS and VR techniques developed by archaeologists and historians. Conclusions from this section included the question of standards development, as well as whether or not tools can be developed and applied which adequately recover the ways in which senses of time and space are historically and archaeologically understood.

The papers and discussion addressing virtual representation of text also focused on textual artifacts. The discussion turned to the application of advanced mark-up in historical and archaeological environments, the use of specific mark-up for particular historical and archaeological domains, and techniques developed in other, especially literary, environments. There was a discussion of the experience and potential for data-mining in historical and archaeological environments, and the challenge in building the appropriate ontologies. These were also explored, along with "paradata", as a basis for developing reliable scholarly environments for the virtual representation of objects.

A particular highlight of the event was an Access Grid link up with delegates at the Computer Applications in Archaeology Conference in Fargo, North Dakota. The technology worked exactly as planned, and a lively transatlantic debate ensued, facilitated by Seamus Ross (University of Glasgow), who served as Rapporteur for this session.

By Lorna Hughes, AHRC ICT Methods Network

AHeSSC News



As expected, a close synergy has emerged between the Arts and Humanities e-Science Support Centre and the AHDS e-Science Scoping Study. The Scoping Study, which is compiling a knowledge base of e-Science projects and tools to assess their potential relevance to the arts and humanities, is conducting a series of invitation-only Expert Seminars in a number of academic fields, the first of which, on Library and Information Studies, was held on May 17th.

The LIS seminar, held at UCL, was Chaired by Melissa Terras. There was a wide-ranging discussion which considered an e-Science agenda for LIS, and the role that librarians and other information professionals can play in making e-Science 'provide access to the human record'. A morning discussion session focussed on identifying 'grand challenges'. These included the need for an evidence base to identify user behaviour, whether the volume and (or) complexity of humanities data really justifies an e-Science approach; the need to engage with the commercial sector; and the relative importance of representation versus annotation of digital objects. This was followed by a presentation from the AHDS e-Science Scoping Survey introducing and contextualizing what e-Science means for the arts and humanities, and two presentations from AHeSSC staff presenting case studies of relevant research projects and tools. Melissa Terras then gave an overview of the 'realities and considerations' of e-Science and LIS, focusing on the capacity of grid computing to analyse, process and share data.

The programme of Scoping Survey Expert Seminars will continue through the summer, with colloquia focusing on the fields of literary and textual studies, archaeology, history, the visual arts, the performing arts and linguistics. Each will be Chaired by an expert in the field, and will guide the creation of the knowledge base for e-Science which the Scoping Survey is building up across the arts and humanities disciplines. AHeSSC will continue to collaborate closely with the Survey in this throughout the project's lifetime.

Meanwhile, the AHRC has announced funding for six e-Science research workshops. These will produce reports that explore issues and/or develop schemes relating to the applications of e-Science in the arts and humanities. They address a wide range of issues: user requirements, GIS, performance, Access Grid and the analysis of census data. In conjunction with the AHRC workshops, the EPSRC has announced three demonstrator projects in the field of arts and humanities e-Science. Two of these focus on the theme of virtual workspaces, one bringing together fragmentary digital data on ancient texts, and one giving scholars remote access to high quality digitized manuscript folios via a 'virtual

workspace'. The third in concerned with motion capture for the performing arts. A full listing is available at <http://www.ahrcict.rdg.ac.uk/activities/e-science/announcement.html>, and more details can be found at <http://www.ahessc.ac.uk>.

Finally, AHeSSC continues its programme of outreach with workshop and panel events planned at the NCeSS conference (28th June), DRHA 2006 and the e-Science All Hands Meeting (both in September).

By Stuart Dunn, AHeSSC

The LAIRAH Workshop on Neglected Digital Resources in the Humanities

The LAIRAH project (www.ucl.ac.uk/SLAIS/LAIRAH) is funded by the AHRC ICT Strategy Scheme to conduct research into the use of digital resources in the humanities. As part of our work we ran a workshop in collaboration with the Methods Network, the aim of which was to gather user feedback on a range of digital resources. We wanted to know if users could distinguish between those that are repeatedly accessed by users of the AHDS and Humbul portal sites and those that appear to be neglected. We were also keen to find out if users could suggest factors that might predispose a resource to be used or neglected. We deliberately did not tell our users which resources were neglected, since we did not want them to assume that if a resource was not often accessed, it must be of poor quality.

Participants were selected from a range of humanities disciplines, and included lecturers and digital humanities professionals. We chose a sample of eleven resources from various humanities domains, and asked participants to spend about ten minutes exploring each resource. We then held discussion sessions, where participants could discuss their views at more length.

The most surprising result was that the users not only correctly identified the neglected projects, but also thought that three of the used projects might also be neglected. Participants also offered thoughtful critiques of the resources and their quality both in terms of content and interface.

Once analysed, the data will form part of the LAIRAH study which will report at the end of September 2006. We will also be writing a more detailed report for the Methods Network website and will be giving papers about the project at the Digital Humanities 2006 and DRHA 2006 conferences.

The workshop was extremely valuable to the project, and we would like to thank everyone who took part, and of course the Methods Network for their invaluable help with planning, hosting and organisation.

By Claire Warwick, Principal Investigator of LAIRAH, UCL

Expert Seminar on the Visual Arts

From Pigments to Pixels was the fourth Methods Network funded Expert Seminar and the first to address issues relating to the visual arts. Mike Pringle of AHDS Visual Arts, organised and Chaired the seminar whilst Rapporteur duties were undertaken by Chris Bailey (University of Northumbria). More than twenty other participants from all over the UK represented a range of organisations that included a number of academics from various organisations involved with art, design and media, commercial consultancy, galleries, and HE and funding agencies.

The first session was concerned with distributing and accessing visual information in the digital realm and Tom Morgan from the National Portrait Gallery talked about strategies for image metadata, with particular reference to practice in the picture library industry. He was followed by Stuart Jeffrey from ADS/AHDS Archaeology, University of York, who used his experience as User Service Manager to talk about issues surrounding non-passive user engagement with complex data structures. After the break, Kirk Martinez addressed the notion of improving access to collections and talked about the various possibilities for image retrieval using principles such as content, colour, texture and shape to carry out identification and matching processes. This led onto a discussion of text based methods of describing resources, principally in the context of the 'semantic web', and this focus on text and context was continued with Mike Pringle's investigation into the 'perfect representation of Paris'. This initially baffling small red square eventually resolved into being the symbolic representation of Paris on a large scale map and strongly made the point that the information value of an image relies on the 'textual view' of it.

The papers given in the afternoon took up the theme of using technology for art research and what this actually meant in practice, including the perspectives of funding, presentation and definition of the digital image. Jonathan Woodham included a historical reference to the Charles and Ray Eames related project, 'A Rough Sketch of a Sample Lesson of a Hypothetical Course' to illustrate the constancy of the challenge to adapt to new methods of working in both teaching and research. Related to this, both Roger Wilson and Charlie Gere partly concerned themselves with contemplating the challenges of evaluating work in a field where (according to Wilson) it was entirely feasible that a student's entire final show output would be encapsulated on a mobile phone display.

Chris Bailey's summation of the day's proceedings appropriately enough took the form of a number of questions and these included references to ongoing and difficult topics such as: definitions of practice-led research; and sustainability in the context of funding and resource creation. All attendees at the seminar were then invited to comment and meditate on the issues raised and a number of useful contributions were made from a variety of perspectives, all of which added value to an engaging and relevant event.

By Neil Grindley, AHRC ICT Methods Network

Expert Seminar on Literature

The Literature Expert Seminar was organised by the Co-Directors of the Methods Network, Dr Marilyn Deegan and Professor Harold Short of CCH, and Chaired by Professor Short (morning session) and Professor Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford University) (afternoon session).

In broad terms this seminar addressed issues around the use and value of advanced ICT methods in the preparation and presentation of textual editions, a debate which continues to attract a great deal of interest. It is generally recognised that there are huge benefits in the use of computational methods in text editing, and also in the presentation of complex editions in digital form, but there is still some way to go in establishing methods which will enable scholars to derive maximum benefit from such advances.

Ideas explored by individual presenters included suggestions for enhancing the functionality of text representation and digital editions; the possibility of integrating text markup more fully into editorial practice in order to enhance understanding of the structure and meaning of texts; issues faced in working with materials such as writers' working documents – which are text but not 'texts'; the stability and durability of a codex juxtaposed with (the ideal of) the fluidity and flexibility of an electronic edition; and vitally, the importance of maintaining a critical stance!

Eight leading scholars in the field of textual scholarship addressed particular issues in relation to their own work. The question of what exactly constitutes a text was considered, the role of the book (codex) was reappraised, and the relationship between a text edition and the more fluid but impermanent digital edition was analysed, all alongside a critical examination of a range of advanced methods for the preparation and production of electronic editions.

The summing up of the events of the day by the Seminar Rapporteur, Dr Sharon Ragaz (Oxford University), took the form of a series of questions cataloguing the main concerns of the day, each point followed by a short discussion. A number of questions were expressed in terms of juxtaposed opposites: acceptance / resistance, authority / uncertainty and tradition / innovation. Others had a more definite practical focus, such as the importance of tools development, identifying the real needs of users of electronic editions and whether existing paradigms for developing critical editions are changing to reflect the increasing use of digital tools and methodologies (and whether this is desirable). Many of the above could and no doubt will form the basis of follow-on Methods Network activities.

The programme and abstracts for the Literature Expert Seminar are available on the Methods Network website on <http://www.methodsnetwork.ac.uk/activities/programmes.html>

By Hazel Gardiner, AHRC ICT Methods Network

Methods Network Roadshow

As part of the Methods Network's ongoing objective to establish connections across organisations and subject areas, we have conducted a number of visits to universities and H.E support organisations, not only to publicise our aims and objectives but crucially, but also to widen our knowledge of ICT use in research and to disseminate that knowledge around the community. This activity has been christened the 'Methods Network Roadshow', and if you would like it to come to a university near you, anytime soon ... then we would be delighted to hear from you! (Please email: neil.grindley@kcl.ac.uk).

The structure of Roadshow visits have varied from informal one-to-one conversations to events that resemble one-day conferences so we approach the initiative with a great deal of latitude.

One of the barriers to engagement with the Methods Network is a feeling that it is hard to establish what an 'advanced method' is, and what type of project can be said to encapsulate and illustrate this notion. Whilst it is certainly true that we are very interested in finding out who is doing cutting edge research using ICT methods, it is also significant that our remit is to disseminate methods and promote collaboration. To do that we need to establish contacts in departments and faculties where there is potential for more sophisticated ICT usage to develop, based on resources and skill sets that have yet to be fully exploited, and the only really effective way for that to happen is for members of the community to get in touch with us so that we can work out a mutually useful format and agenda for a meeting.

One of the principal objectives of any Methods Network meeting is to explore ways that we can deliver awards and funding to individuals and groups who wish to investigate some aspect of ICT use for research – usually in the form of workshops, seminars and conferences. The funds available per activity go up to £5000 and we are always on the lookout for proposals and initiatives from the community. For more information about this and the Methods Network generally, please go to: <http://www.methodsnetwork.ac.uk>

By Neil Grindley, AHRC ICT Methods Network

Workshop on Corpus Approaches to the Language of Literature



The Corpus Approaches to the Language of Literature workshop took place in Oxford on 17-18th May. The event gathered over 20 participants from different geographical areas, research backgrounds, and subject fields, who over a two-day period attended a series of presentations and practical sessions.

The event started with a short introduction to the area, where it was suggested that this is a relatively new field, a field where corpus linguistic methods meet and mingle with literary analysis and stylistics. The introduction was followed by a practical session where the participants had a chance to explore some key tools and techniques as well as the resources made available. Jonathan Culpepper (Lancaster University) then described how techniques developed in corpus linguistics can be used to produce a new kind of dictionary based on usage. With illustrations from a number of case studies, he showed how he used familiar methods in corpus linguistics, such as collocation, cluster (multiword unit), keyword and grammatical and semantic annotation to examine the language of Shakespeare. Michaela Mahlberg (University of Liverpool) further developed the notion of 'corpus stylistics' as a meeting between corpus linguistics and literary stylistics, stressing that it is not simply the application of corpus linguistic methodology to the study of style. With illustrations from her studies of the language of Dickens', she showed that if we use innovative categories to describe linguistic norms, deviations from these norms will shed new light on the way in which we analyse style in literary texts. The third presentation was by Bill Louw (University of Zimbabwe). In his talk on 'Collocations, corpora and criticism' he provided novel illustrations and inspirational examples of how to look at collocations when examining literary works. He suggested that 'collocation has begun to offer proof of its ability to produce tangible results which exceed the results of close reading and far outstrip approaches fettered by grammar and syntax alone'.

The practical, hands-on sessions were an important part of the workshop. Each presentation was followed by a practical session where the workshop participants were given an opportunity to explore the methods used by each presenter. The sessions were structured to allow a natural progression, from simpler to more complex methods and they were followed by general discussions where problems and success stories were shared. To allow not only the participants to benefit from these, the workshop material (abstracts of presentation, exercises and practical guides) will be made