

REPORT

**NeDimah 2012 Steering Committee Meeting
and Public Event: “New Methods/New Perspectives on Humanities Scholarship:
A NeDiMAH Workshop”
26th-27th November 2012
Trinity Long Room Hub
Trinity College Dublin**

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1) Summary

The NeDiMAH Steering Committee Meeting and workshop took place over two days - 26th and 27th November. The Steering Committee met on 26th for a day-long meeting to discuss current projects, progress within the work packages, and future strategy within the Network.

On 27th November, the Steering Committee and Trinity Long Room Hub hosted a day-long research workshop exploring methods of digital scholarship that are currently being used within the field, along with its impact on individual researcher scholarship. Speakers not only included work package leaders, but also early-stage researchers working in the Digital Humanities.

Breakout sessions in the afternoon enabled workshop participants (many of them early-stage researchers) to interact and work closely with more experienced scholars to discuss methodological practices.

Twitter was used during the morning sessions to interact with the participants and gather further input and feedback on the speakers. These were then compiled using 'Storify' (further details below).

2) Description of the scientific content of and discussion at the event

Day 1 - Steering Committee

The Steering Committee held a day-long meeting to discuss the ongoing strategy of the group.

Day 2 - Research Workshop

There were approximately 60 participants for Day 2 with the majority as early stage researchers coming from a wide variety of backgrounds. The network took advantage of the Steering Committee meeting being held in Dublin to hold a public event. The event was very well received with excellent feedback both during and afterwards.

The general purpose of the workshop on Day 2 of the meeting was to introduce a general audience to the work of NeDiMAH. This was divided into the key work-packages with brief talks from representatives, and then went on to explore how techniques and methods designed or discussed within each work-package are used by researchers. There was much discussion over what constitutes 'publication' in the digital age. With social media outlets so easily accessible, the notion of 'Twitter' as a means for academic peer review was not considered legitimate, however a blog was more favourable. Some groups felt that the constantly changing times are 'over-taking the sceptics'.

Online publication also brings with it the issues of copyright and intellectual property, and many groups felt there was a need for a standardisation of preservation techniques that can enable the results of projects and work to be viewed in years to come.

Session One: Introducing NeDiMAH Working Groups (Chair, Michael Stoltz, U. of Bern)

Since all the NeDimah WGs have held at least one meeting before this event, each presenter was able to report on the outcomes of the meetings, as well as on future activities.

1. *Scholarly Digital Editions, Matthew Driscoll (U. of Copenhagen)*

This working group seeks to promote the use of digital technologies in the production and dissemination of scholarly editions – of whatever size and shape – bringing together experts from a wide variety of disciplines and time-periods to establish the state of the art and recommend a set of best practices in order to ensure maximum interoperability and long-term preservation of, and access to, digital data.

2. *Workgroup 3: Linked Data and Ontological Methods, Christian-Emil Ore (U. of Oslo)*

The Focus of WorkGroup 3 is to To investigate current practice in the areas of ontological methods, particularly as it relates to linked data. This WG also sees as part of its mandate to co-reference resolution issues. Additionally, it is investigating Schema mapping and methods for ontological analysis.

3. *Taxonomy, Lorna Hughes (U. of Wales)*

The Taxonomy working group is one of two of NeDimah's cross-cutting work groups. This group aims to provide evidence of the use of digital resources for scholarship to support visibility and sustainability of digital collections and scholarship; enable the critical evaluation of digital humanities: projects that are transparent, well-documented and reviewable across disciplines; make visible multi-disciplinary, multi-technology projects, nationally and internationally while documenting partnerships across disciplines and organisations: building collaborative, scholarly infrastructures as well as technical infrastructures

4. *Using Large-Scale Collections for Research, Rene Van Horik (DANS)*

ICT tools and methods, such as information retrieval and extraction methods can reveal new knowledge from large amounts of textual data, extracting hidden patterns, analyzing the results and summarizing them in a useful format. This working group is examining practices in this area, building on the work of corpus linguistics and related disciplines to develop a greater understanding of how large-scale text collections can be used for research.

5. *Scholarly Publication, Susan Schreibman (TCD)*

This WG is the second of NeDimah's cross-cutting WGs. It is assembling an authoritative body of knowledge regarding best practice as defined to date in the evaluation of digital scholarship and its outputs, and through this, advance knowledge, a policy position, and/or at least a best practice resource for institutions to use in supporting scholars seeking to include digital outputs in their portfolio of scholarship.

Session Two: The Paradigm Shift: Four Case Studies (Chair: Paolo Teodoro de Matos, U. Nova of Lisbon)

The second session featured talks from DH researchers. We particularly wanted to feature early stage researchers in this session to highlight how these new methods and perspectives on digital humanities research can be used at all stages in a research career.

- *The Challenges of Corpus-Based Literary History*, Fotis Janidis (University of Würzburg)
- *Reconstructing the Courtown Estate*, Rachel Murphy (University College Cork)
- *Reading Medieval Manuscripts Through XML*, Roman Bleier, (TCD)
- *Notes From the Dustheap: An Overview of Digital Archives*, Vinayak das Gupta (TCD)

Session Three: *Breakout Session*

In the afternoon, the group was divided into three breakout sessions in order to get input from researchers about how the NeDimah network could serve new audiences.

Questions for discussion

- 1 What would you like from a network like NeDimah?
- 2 What keeps you from using digital methods and what can NeDimah do to support you?
- 3 What difficulties have you experienced?

Their responses are summarised in section 3 below.

3) Assessment of the results and impact of the event on the future direction of the field

This event proved extremely useful to attendees at all research levels, but particularly to early stage researchers, many of whom are in postgraduate degrees (PhD and MPhil levels) in digital humanities, as well as other disciplines. For many this was the first exposure to digital scholarly methods and the format allowed for those new to the field not to be overwhelmed. But those registered on DH courses equally found the event useful and many have put the methods discussed at the workshop to use in their coursework. Additionally, many academic staff attended from across the disciplines. This particular format worked extremely well as an introduction to the field and to NeDimah activities.

After an introduction to the WGs and their goals, four researchers (three early stage) described how they used methods in their research practice. Being able to hear (and see) how researchers were actually utilising these new methods proved to be eye-opening for many who attended and may account for the overwhelming interest in follow-up training events in specific methods.

This event was structured to be an introductory, and to this end it served its purpose extremely well. By introducing scholars to digital humanities via the methods that relate to their non-digital concerns is an ideal way to expose new researchers to digital methods. The breakout sessions that followed in the afternoon gave participants an opportunity to respond to what they had heard during the day and give voice to the community in the future direction of some of NeDimah's activities.

a) *Breakout group session feedback*

1. What would you like from a network like NeDimah?

Not surprisingly, all three breakout sessions indicated that targeted training and outreach Podcasts/workshops (multidisciplinary) were what was most needed. NeDimah is ideally positioned to help fulfill this goal through its outreach events. Moreover, respondents felt that Digital Humanity training should be available as a module for all PostGraduates as well as for undergraduates in their first year, and possibly also for students in secondary schools

Participants also urged the NeDimah network to establish itself as an authority on Digital Humanities tools and methods. This NeDimah is poised to do through its WGs and database. One group felt there was a need for researchers to have access to best practice in the area of standards and how to create sustainable digital objects. Participants requested that there be a map of DH tools and methods. This has already been discussed in the NeDimah Steering Committee.

There was also a desire to have access to DH events at which individuals could not attend via twitter archives and videos. This is certainly something the NeDimah SC can consider. Suggestions were also made for an annotated bibliography on DH methods.

2. What keeps you from using these methods and what can NeDimah do to support you?

Feedback from the groups indicated that they would like to see NeDiMAH giving insight into examples of best practice in repositories and text formatting. These indicated best practices would publicise case studies, and champion good projects, practices, teams and institutions. In addition to providing these, links to examples of best practice, the group also wanted to see evaluations and critiques of the methodologies used by these champions.

The groups also indicated a need for collaboration, and hoped that NeDiMAH would be able to foster links with potential for collaborative work. A networking space was suggested that would allow greater awareness of existing projects. This might also allow for a FAQ Panel or Forum, which might create a point of contact for a researcher looking for someone with expertise. The European aspect of NeDiMAH was considered a strong point, and it was suggested that more should be made of this to allow greater access and collaboration between projects. Podcasts, events and TED-type talks would also create an opportunity for networking, and would be able to make terminology and tools more familiar.

Open-Source options may lag behind in terms of technology, but they could be revived. The UK Open Data initiatives could serve as an example. It was suggested that a catalogue of validated and citable sources should be established, and an updated bibliography could be developed to accompany this.

Publication of work was discussed extensively. The groups felt that NeDiMAH should address the desire of researchers to take the more traditional route to publication but wanted to see a funding path for dual publishing - i.e creating digital scholarly editions that are more appropriate to the discipline and reflect the increased use of digital methodologies within academia. However, the complications of dual-publishing were highlighted: for example, how would these be reconciled with co-authored paper? How would these be cited if there is a digital and paper edition?

The difficulties of maintenance of digitally-published works was raised, as well as the need to ensure good practice, particularly for preservation purposes. The groups recognised the need for 'training the trainers'. Training again was raised as a key point: what do researchers need to know about new digital methods? How do different communities reconcile different methods within academia? The different approaches and ethos of different institutions may impact on how and what is preserved.

3. What difficulties have you experienced?

Many of the problems that the group members seemed to be encountering in their research revolve around a lack of understanding in some institutions of the importance and value in dedicating time to learning new techniques and methods. Some reported an endemic resistance to all digital involvement and a lack of clarity as to what 'digital methods' actually are. Typically academics are not trained to preserve their peripheral research or background material, and don't feel they have the time to train and acquire basic technical knowledge. The general feeling is why spend time on something that will not get augment one's publication record or even worse, not be valued at all. A research question can often be off-putting because it requires too much groundwork to determine the methodologies for use in the research.

It was asked whether libraries should have a greater responsibility for gathering and maintaining digital assets. Many already do, but when collaboration is involved it can lead to a problem of unifying large collections. Many of the researchers in the groups said that collaboration was often discouraged between universities, perhaps for these reasons. Gathering and maintaining large collections also bring with them the problems of copyright and online usage, as well as jurisdictional duties and cross-border use. The internet is by its very nature a global phenomenon, yet copyright of materials does not reflect this.

While the desire for a 'dual-publishing system' was voiced, the difficulties of online publication were also raised. Academia maintains the importance of peer review when it comes to private academic publishing. For example, Twitter is not peer reviewed, whereas the '9s project' peer review and publish digital scholarly projects.

The private sector has made huge leaps in terms of providing digital assets. Google has made many papers and books accessible through GoogleBooks and GoogleScholar, but there was concern as to the limit of these technologies and what they are able to tell us. One group then questioned what the private sector involvement in education in this realm will lead to, and how will it help or hinder the [digital] humanist?

b) Wider Impact of the Workshop

The impact of social media for the event was measured using Twitter and Storify. A 'hashtag' (#newmethods2012) was set up on the 27th Nov for use during the research workshop, and was used in conjunction with pre-existing hashtags '#nedimah' and '#dariah'. These were compiled by 'DH@TCD', the Digital Humanities group at Trinity College Dublin, and can be found here:

<http://storify.com/DigHumanTCD/new-methods-new-perspectives-on-humanities-scholar>

4) Final programme of the meeting

***New Methods/New Perspectives on Humanities Scholarship:
A NeDimah/DARIAH Workshop***

**Tuesday 27 November
Trinity Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin**

9.00-9.15	Registration
9.15-9.30	Welcome and Official Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Juergen Barkhoff, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub· Susan Schreibman, Long Room Hub Associate Professor in Digital Humanities· Lorna Hughes, University of Wales Chair in Digital Collections
9.30-10.30	Introducing Several NeDimah Workgroups <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Scholarly Editions</i> (Matthew Driscoll, University of Copenhagen)2. <i>Linked Data and Ontological Methods</i> (Christian Emil Ore, University of Oslo)3. <i>Taxonomy</i> (Lorna Hughes, University of Wales)4. Rene Von Horik, DANS5. <i>Scholarly Publication</i> (Jennifer Edmond, Trinity College Dublin)
10.30-11.00	Coffee Break
11.00-12.00	The Paradigm Shift: Four Case Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none">· <i>The Challenges of Corpus-Based Literary History</i>, Fotis Janidis (University of Würzburg)· <i>Reconstructing the Courtyard Estate</i>, Rachel Murphy (University College Cork)· <i>Reading Medieval Manuscripts Through XML</i>, Roman Bleier, (TCD)· <i>Notes From the Dustheap: An Overview of Digital Archives</i>, Vinayak das Gupta (TCD)
12.00-12.45	Lunch (provided)
12.45-2.15	Breakout Sessions: An opportunity to influence the future work of the network
2.15-3.00	Reporting on breakout sessions & close

