Call for Expressions of Interest for Participation in an IRC-AHRC Workshop on UK-Ireland Collaboration in the Digital Humanities

Introduction

The Irish Research Council is pleased to announce a call for participants to attend a workshop on "UK-Ireland Collaboration in the Digital Humanities". Organised in partnership with the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the event will convene experts from both countries to build new partnerships that will enhance the integration of humanities and technology in the Digital Humanities and will build capacity across disciplines.

The workshop will take place in Dublin from 22nd-23rd October 2019 and will launch a new 3-year co-funded programme focused on UK-Ireland collaboration in Digital Humanities research (and for which the AHRC has received funding from the UKRI Fund for International Collaboration). It will play a key role in shaping the thematic priorities to be taken forward through the programme and embedded within future funding calls, and in building the partnerships that will respond to the opportunities and challenges underpinning the programme.

Context

Digital Humanities represents a transformative and rapidly growing field in Ireland and the UK with well-established centres of excellence and innovation in both countries. It uses information and communication technologies to preserve artefacts, to make them more accessible to researchers and the public, and to analyse and mine their information in new and previously impossible ways.

Due to different patterns of funding and disciplinary alignments in the UK and Ireland, Digital Humanities has evolved in contrasting but complementary ways. In the UK, there has been significant investment in digitization projects (with a much larger corpus of digitized material than in Ireland). Due to the fact that much of this funding has come from the AHRC, these projects often do not have the same interdisciplinary infrastructure or access to cross-disciplinary collaborations with Information and Communications Technology that exist in Ireland, where funding has primarily come from the Irish Research Council. Digital Humanities capacity in Ireland has also been more closely aligned with EU frameworks, including DARIAH, whereas the UK infrastructure has mainly been constructed through national frameworks such as AHDS and JISC. These contrasting models allow for

important comparative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of different models of research infrastructure.

The programme being launched by this workshop seeks to exploit these complementary strengths by establishing new research partnerships that will deliver a transformational impact on Digital Humanities research in the UK and Ireland. It is anticipated that enhanced collaboration will achieve a broad range of academic, social and economic impacts: for example, by fostering new partnerships with the creative industries sector; enhancing public access to and engagement with cultural heritage; creating new standards in open access; and supporting new learning, educational and professional skills. More specifically, closer collaboration between Ireland and the UK will yield transformative step-changes in Digital Humanities scholarship including:

- Better integration of humanities and technology development in Digital Humanities, delivering major improvements in human-computer interaction by changing the constraints under which technological innovation is undertaken;
- Creation of more socially embedded and responsive technologies that are able to balance the needs of consumers, citizens and corporations, generating improvements in the comprehensibility and legibility of big data and AI systems;
- Improved integration of AI assisted-text mining methods with traditional critical and interpretative methodologies in the humanities, through exploration of large-scale historical and cultural data sets that will build and strengthen world-class research capacity for interdisciplinary challenge-based research;
- A skills' pipeline that produces data scientists who are able to integrate their work into a humanistic frame of reference and evaluate the ethical or cultural impact of digital technology, as well as digital humanists who are able to work across the humanities and technology sectors.

Workshop Aims

The workshop will be a key early phase activity and will provide an important platform for the delivery of the programme over subsequent years. Specifically, it aims to:

- Officially launch the programme;
- Convene leading researchers from the UK and Ireland in order to build new interdisciplinary partnerships around the vision, aims and objectives of the programme;
- Explore the complementary strengths of the UK and Ireland in the Digital Humanities and the value of working in closer collaboration in order to achieve world-leading standards;
- Identify thematic priorities to be taken forward by the partners and embedded within future funding calls.

Workshop format and themes

The workshop will focus on creating a discursive, open-dialogue environment that is conducive to the generation of new ideas and helps to refine priorities and objectives. Whilst the exact format and agenda will be refined in due course, it is anticipated that this will include networking sessions; plenary

discussions on the key opportunities and challenges; group discussions focused on specific topics; and prioritisation exercises that help to map future priorities to be taken forward by the AHRC and IRC.

It is anticipated that discussions will focus on themes including, but not limited to:

- Contemporary/disruptive approaches in the Digital Humanities: e.g. AI and virtual/augmented reality and legal and ethical issues relating to the digital;
- The creative industries and cultural heritage;
- The digital humanities and societal challenges.

The workshop will reflect the inherently multi-disciplinary nature of Digital Humanities' scholarship, and researchers with appropriate expertise from across the breadth of the arts and humanities are encouraged to submit an EOI to attend. We also welcome applications from other disciplines where a capacity to engage with and enrich the overarching aims of the programme can be demonstrated.

Outputs

It is important to note that this workshop is not intended to be a stand-alone event, rather it is an opportunity to network, form partnerships, share expertise and begin discussions that will foster future collaborative activity in the field. As above, the workshop will play a key role in informing the thematic priorities to be taken forward by the programme and in future collaborative research activity supported by the partners.

It is anticipated that the AHRC and IRC will launch a joint call for Research Networking awards shortly after the workshop in order to consolidate partnerships and refine priorities. Further information on this call will be made available soon.

A report summarising the findings of the workshop and recommending next steps will be prepared jointly by the IRC and the AHRC. This will be a key working document for the partners and serve to shape future activity and joint funding calls.

Call for Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest to participate in the workshop are invited from Ireland-based researchers in research-performing organisations **eligible for Irish Research Council funding**. In addition, researchers in Ireland's cultural institutions are eligible to apply to participate in the workshop. Applicants should have a particular research interest in the topics outlined above and be able to demonstrate both the insights and approaches they would seek to bring to the workshop and what they would seek to gain from it. Applicants who meet the above criteria are not required to be current or former awardees of the Irish Research Council.

Expressions of interest are welcome from researchers at all stages of their careers, including early career researchers. The IRC expects to support the attendance of around 20-30 Ireland-based delegates, with the AHRC identifying a similar number of experts based at UK institutions (researchers based in UK institutions can access the necessary information on the workshop **here**).

Ireland-based researchers who wish to apply to attend should complete and submit the following form via the link below:

[EOI Form](#)

The IRC will process the information you send for the purposes of workshop attendance only, and the information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection legislation and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Deadline for Submission of EoI: Thursday 26th September 2019, 4pm (Irish time)

Expressions of interest will be assessed by the Irish Research Council, against the following criteria:

• 'Fit' to call: the strength of the case made to attend the workshop and ability to support the realisation of its aims;
• Track record: a demonstrable history of research excellence, or equivalent professional experience, appropriate to career setting and stage;
• Development: the potential of the workshop to add value to the research and professional experience of the applicant, including the benefits of engaging with a wider network of individuals and organisations from the UK and Ireland, and the potential for those parties to benefit from the experience and perspectives of the applicant;
• Long-term plans: the ability of the applicant to perceive and articulate the longer-term potential benefits of the workshop, including to their own research, their discipline/field, and in terms of wider activity.

We aim to inform applicants of EoI outcomes by 4th October 2019.

Queries

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