

Dear Chair and Members of Council,

We are writing on behalf of four leading international Digital Arts and Humanities communities in order to register our concerns at the decision to discontinue funding for the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) and to inquire as to the future of several important programmes currently provided by it. The research organisations and communities of practice we represent have a combined membership of over one thousand scholars and practitioners; a large number of our members are based in the UK, and the impact of this change on their work is likely to be significant.

The AHDS's services play a vital role within the Digital Arts and Humanities. They have been a key factor in the development of the UK's strong world-wide reputation in this field, and are often held up as an example by scholars in other countries. Its education programmes have been extremely important in assisting Arts and Humanities researchers as they explore and take up the new technologies. By encouraging best practice in project development and archiving, the Service has also meant that public ICT research money has been spent more wisely and efficiently.

Due to the impending cuts to the AHDS's funding, our members have expressed uncertainty about the long-term viability of essential services, especially in data preservation and dissemination of good practice. We would greatly appreciate any information you can provide as to future AHRC support for the services currently provided by the AHDS so that we can continue to improve the application of digital methods in the Arts and Humanities. In particular, our members would appreciate a response to the following questions:

- What is the future of those digital resources which are currently being hosted by the AHDS, or which have been planned on the basis of being hosted by the AHDS?
- Where will the funding hitherto directed at the application of ICT to the Arts & Humanities via the AHDS be diverted?
- Do you intend to continue support for an independent advisory service on best practice in management of Digital Humanities resources?
- How will you ensure the existence of a visible cross-disciplinary forum through which Humanities and Arts scholars can learn about relevant developments in ICT?

If you could provide us with a statement addressing these issues, we should be happy to pass it on to our respective community forums where the text of this letter is also available.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Gabriel Bodard, Editor, on behalf of the Digital Classicist (www.digitalclassicist.org)

Leif Isaksen, Moderator, on behalf of Antiquist (www.antiquist.org)

Dr. Daniel O'Donnell, Chair and CEO, on behalf of the Text Encoding Initiative (www.tei-c.org) and Director, on behalf of the Digital Medievalist Project (www.digitalmedievalist.org)