

ahds

arts and humanities data service

# Newsletter

Spring  
2004

## The AHDS evolution

The AHDS centres have been renamed and the new, integrated website now includes a cross-search catalogue.

Since its establishment in 1995, the AHDS has had a significant impact on the development and exploitation of digital resources in the arts and humanities. It is continually developing its services to meet the current needs of the arts and humanities communities.

The AHDS evolved from a project funded solely by the Joint Information Systems Committee to a full service funded equally by the Arts and Humanities Research Board and the JISC. The AHDS has not only influenced the arts and humanities but has also made a major contribution to the digital library and digital archive agenda.

As well as acquiring, disseminating and preserving a wide variety of research collections developed in and outside UK Higher Education, the

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**Special feature on page 6: David Robey on the AHRB's strategy for ICT in the arts and humanities.**

AHDS has contributed to and implemented research into standards and best practice in the creation and preservation of digital resources.

The future will see a continuing process of evolution as the AHDS seeks to meet the needs and requirements of its subject communities for digital resources, and to meet the challenges of digital preservation. Part of that evolutionary process is to reflect better the scholarly communities it serves by enhancing the subject specific

**“The AHDS has made a major contribution to the digital archive agenda.”**

nature of much of its work, and exploiting the cross disciplinary potential of many of the AHDS' digital resources, *Guides to Good Practice* and other materials.

The five centres of the Arts and Humanities Data Service are now named:

ahds archaeology

Hosted by the  
Archaeology Data  
Service, University of York

ahds history

(formerly the History Data  
Service) - hosted by the  
University of Essex

ahds performing arts

(formerly Performing  
Arts Data Service)- host-  
ed by the University of  
Glasgow

ahds visual arts

(formerly the Visual Arts  
Data Service) - hosted by  
The Surrey Institute of Art &  
Design, University College

ahds literature, languages and linguistics

Hosted by the Oxford Text Archive, University of Oxford

## Stop Press: AHDS Executive change of address

The AHDS Executive team has moved to a new address. We have left our offices at 75-79 York Road and our new details are:

Arts and Humanities Data Service Executive  
King's College London  
26-29 Drury Lane (3rd Floor)  
London WC2B 5RL

Tel: 020 7848 1988  
Fax: 020 7848 1989

Email: [info@ahds.ac.uk](mailto:info@ahds.ac.uk)

## Digital research resources in TV & radio

**Matt Holland (Bournemouth University) & Eileen Maitland (AHDS Performing Arts) discuss developments in digital resources for those working in media studies**

**A**HDS Performing Arts has been involved with the development of two important collections from AHRB-funded projects undertaken at Bournemouth University.

The *Independent Local Radio Programme Sharing Scheme Digitisation Project* transferred an archive of speech-based local radio programming made between c.1980-90 from 1,000 quarter inch analogue audio tapes to CD ROM. The project was supported by the National Sound Archive and funded by the AHRB.

The origins of the archive lie in the history of commercial radio in Britain. Before the 1990 Broadcasting Act, the Independent Broadcasting Authority created strict rules dictating the amount of 'meaningful speech' broadcast on each commercial station; religious programming and community content were seen as important and vital elements of the way stations served their respective areas. Current affairs, drama and features producers within commercial radio sought to attain high standards in their attempt to rival the BBC.

To share the output of Independent Radio around the country a sharing scheme was organised, and programmes were copied and distributed to interested stations. The scheme continued until 1990 when the archive of programmes that had been built up was passed to the National

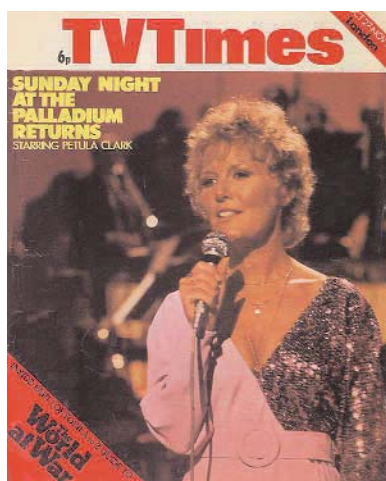
Sound Archive.

From this original archive, the Bournemouth project has produced a catalogue and two sets of CDs; the catalogue is now preserved via the AHDS and this will be followed by the digital audio. A licence has been agreed with the copyright holders for academic use of the material in UK higher and further education. We are grateful for the support of the Commercial Radio Companies Association who liaised with the rights holders on behalf of the project. Access for the HE/FE sector

for the London edition and create a database of its schedules for the period from 1956-1985. The *TV Times Project* is one of four AHRB-funded projects looking at independent broadcasting, a series of projects that will further discussions about quality, advertising, programming and the impact of independent television on the BBC.

Dates from the schedules, descriptions, staff and cast lists are an obvious starting point for any researcher. As the programme "metadata", schedules record what has been broadcast even when the programmes themselves do not survive. The difficulty in accessing printed copies of the *TV Times* (with only one publicly available print set of both Regional and London Editions surviving at the British Library) has until now greatly limited the extent to which researchers in this field can exploit it.

The *TV Times* (London Edition) collection comprises the several thousand images which represent the project's output. The *TV Times* Schedules database is due to be completed in October 2004. We are indebted to IPC Media, the rights holders, who have agreed a licence to enable academic use of the material in UK HE/FE. The database will be made accessible to academic users through the BUFVC in 2005.



Front Cover of *TV Times* (27 Oct - 2 Nov 1973). Copyright IPC Media.

will be enabled through the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC).

The *TV Times Digitisation Project* aims to microfilm the *TV Times London* and regional editions, and subsequently digitise the microfilm

# A united front: new AHDS cross search catalogue available online

**The AHDS has recently launched a new cross-search catalogue. Alastair Dunning looks into what this catalogue sets out to achieve, how it works and what you can get out of it.**

**T**he Arts and Humanities Data Service draws together incredibly diverse digital collections. Where else could you find images of landmarks in twentieth-century design, the philosophical works of Jeremy Bentham, photographs of contemporary Shakespearian performance, details of Celtic inscribed stones from the Middle Ages, and the plays of Euripides? It's an incredibly rich suite of resources. Not only is it the task of the AHDS to collect and preserve such resources, but also to disseminate them in a way which is as fruitful as possible.

Previously, many of the collections could only be located via the subject-based parts of the AHDS. Thus AHDS Performing Arts serves up AHDS collections relating to subjects such as theatre, television and music. And AHDS History make datasets available that have been created by those working in all aspects of history. However, many of the collections deposited with the AHDS are interdisciplinary, with the content being of potential interest to a broad range of subject communities.

**“Many collections deposited with the AHDS are interdisciplinary, with the content being of potential interest to a broad range of subject communities.”**

In order to deal with this issue the AHDS have been developing a cross-search catalogue which permits users to search through descriptions of all the AHDS col-

lections, pointing them in the right direction to permit further investigation of each particular collection. This function makes it easier to find collections which may be inter-disciplinary, such as the Imperial War Museum's Spanish Civil War Poster Collection.



No need to hunt through hundreds of books; the AHDS cross-search catalogue gives you easy access to hundreds of resources online. Knowledge at your fingertips!

Researchers from fields such as literature, history and politics (amongst others) may take an interest in this collection of 80 posters. Previously this collection could only be located through the

Visual Arts catalogue, but with the new cross-search catalogue users are able to locate this collection whatever their subject focus is.

The cross-search catalogue is now available online to use at <http://ahds.ac.uk/collections>, and readers of the newsletter are invited to have a go. There are no registration or subscription requirements to use the feature. The catalogue is very much a work in progress, so we would greatly appreciate feedback.

In the coming months the plan is to make the cross search catalogue more functional with more tools and options. This will include refining the results of the various search options and significantly developing the user interface. Records describing each collection to be shared with other interested organisations such as Humbul, who you can find online at <http://www.humbul.ac.uk>.

The final aim, planned for late 2005, is to provide users with a catalogue that not only searches through each the AHDS collections, but also through the individual items within each collection. Thus not only descriptions of collections will be searchable, but the texts, images and databases that form the entire AHDS collection.

**Links:** AHDS Catalogue  
<http://ahds.ac.uk/collections>

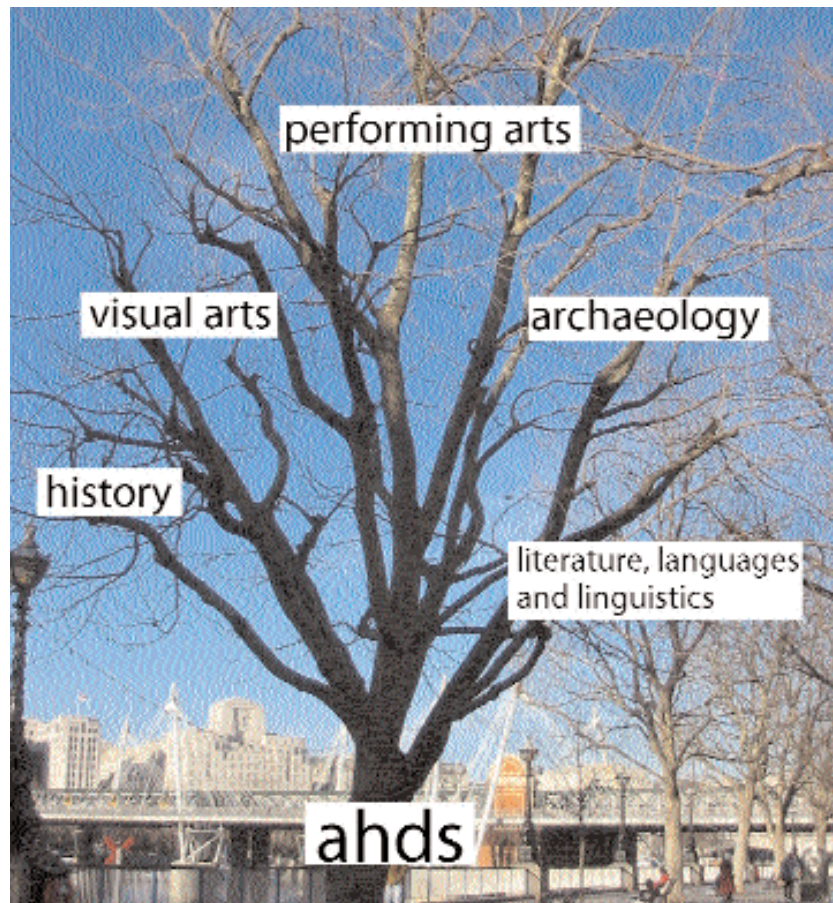
**A**s Alastair Dunning explains elsewhere within this issue, the new AHDS cross-search catalogue permits users to search through descriptions of collections across all five AHDS Centres. Behind the scenes, the shared catalogue works because of the new common metadata framework that the AHDS has developed to handle the divergent metadata requirements of our five Centres.

Several of our Centres pre-dated the formation of the AHDS and each had adopted the metadata structure and thesauri most suitable for its own subject area. The resultant array of somewhat incompatible metadata standards included the Text Encoding Initiative's TEI header, the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI), the RSLP Collection Description Schema that arose out of the Research Support Libraries Programme, and the Visual Resources Association's VRA Core 3.0. AHDS Archaeology had its own in-house schema. No two Centres used the same subject terminologies either! Other problems complicating the sharing of metadata were the inherently dynamic nature of digital resources, the varying granularity of descriptions between Centres and differences between subject areas as to what information is regarded as important.

We needed to establish a common metadata structure into which collection descriptions from the five AHDS Centres could be converted for cross searching. The RSLP Collection Description Schema - the emerging, DCMI-accepted, application of Dublin Core designed specifically for collection-level description - was considered for this role. However, Dublin Core is like a 'metadata pidgin for digital tourists'. Schemas based upon it facilitate interoperability by reducing diverse metadata to a lowest common denominator - fifteen shared data elements in the case of simple Dublin Core and around 40 for the RSLP Schema. It was

# One way of looking at things

**Malcolm Polfreman looks into the issues in creating one common metadata structure for a number of different subject areas.**



*The AHDS tree: providing a single base for numerous branches of the arts and humanities.*

eventually concluded that the conversion of data from the five rich schemas into the RSLP structure would involve too much loss of detail (although exporting to RSLP remains a possibility that we will support in the future in order to share basic metadata with other

**“Conversion of data into the RSLP structure would involve too much loss of detail.”**

organisations). For instance, the RSLP elements "Accumulation Date" and "Contents Date" seemed adequate to describe the origin of the hard-copy version of the

Imperial War Museum's Concise Art Collection - a body of art that was created from 1914 onwards (contents date) and was first brought together by Sir Muirhead Bone in 1916 (accumulation date). But the two RSLP date elements were found to be insufficient to describe the additional stages of creation that are peculiar to digital resources - for instance, the date that digitisation occurred, the date of being deposited at the AHDS (both 1999 in this case), and, very often, the date of first public issue (2000) and of any subsequent modifications of the resource. The solution was for the AHDS to develop an in-house metadata

structure that has come to be known as the Common Metadata Framework (CMF). The five legacy metadata schemas were analysed and a CMF element was created for each distinct data concept found. Various named and tagged elements from rival schemas were mapped to a single CMF element wherever they held exactly the same kind of data. For instance, AHDS Archaeology's DATE\_DC Type (Accessioned) and AHDS History's DDI element <depDate> were equivalents because both described the date the resource was deposited with the AHDS. The DDI element <distDate>, however, required a new CMF element because it related to a different concept - namely the date of first release of the resource. This approach allows the CMF to reduce the five hundred or more Legacy elements to approximately one hundred cross-searchable XML tags and does so in a way that retains the richness of the former. Moreover, the straight 1:1 match-up between each legacy

metadata element and its equivalent in CMF allows for precise forward and backward mappings between the two. AHDS Literature, Languages and Linguistics should therefore be able to continue providing TEI headers even if newly accessioned resources in the

**“The AHDS shared catalogue is an innovative piece of work.”**

future come to be catalogued straight into CMF. This is an important constraint, because the CMF is intended only to be an internal AHDS format and not to replace recognised standards such as the TEI header. Similarly, AHDS History records created in the CMF could be converted to DDI for use with the UK Data Archive (UKDA) catalogue. CMF can also be mapped to looser metadata structures such as Dublin Core or the RSLP Collection Description schema for OAI harvesting by other organisations.

The new AHDS shared catalogue

is a considerable achievement, successfully incorporating the varied approaches to the creation of metadata that represent best practice across the subject areas supported by the AHDS. Moreover, by displaying metadata from the five Centres via a single interface, the shared catalogue throws into sharper focus the sheer myriad of relationships that can exist between the electronic resources of the five Centres and the analogue source(s) upon which they are often based. An attempt has been made to describe these relationships more clearly and consistently than before but this is an area that will require much future work from the wider digital community.

Over all, the AHDS shared catalogue is an innovative piece of work. Other portals have faced many of the above issues individually but it is difficult to think of one that has faced them all simultaneously!

## Digital Resources in the Humanities - Newcastle 04



The annual Digital Resources in the Humanities conference is due to take place in Newcastle from 5th September to 8th September 2004.

The conference is a major forum for those interested in the digitisation of the common cultural heritage. Scholars, archivists, teachers, publishers, curators, librarians, computer or information scientists all have a stake in the development of digital resources, and the conference's presentations, roundtable discussions and keynote speeches will be of interest to all of them.

Particular themes to be addressed in this year's conference include methods in humanities computing; cross-sectoral exchange between

heritage organisations, national and local government, and education bodies; mechanisms for broadening the humanities computing base; and new forms of scholarly publication.



*The Angel Of The North. Image copyright SINE Project, Museum of Antiquities, University of Newcastle. You can find out more about the Structural Images in the North East (SINE) project at <<http://sine.ncl.ac.uk>>*

Additionally, the DRH organisers are very keen to see postgraduate contributions at the conference. Small bursaries are being offered by the AHDS and the AHC to fund the postgraduate attendance at DRH.

Two of the plenary speakers have already agreed attendance. The first is Chris Patten, European Commissioner, and a keen advocate of cross-boundary and cross-sectoral partnerships. The second is David Robey, the director of the AHRB's ICT in Arts and Humanities Research Programme.

**You can find out more about DRH 2004 online at <<http://drh2004.ncl.ac.uk>>. Registration will be open from late May.**

# Engaging new methods : the AHRB's plans for research in ICT

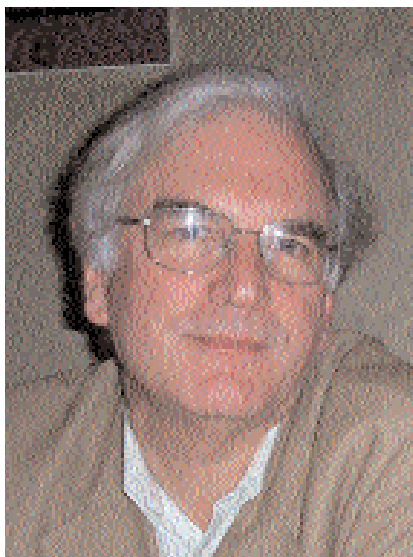
**The AHRB's ICT in Arts and Humanities Research Programme is going to be an important and effective factor in developing and supporting ICT for the arts and humanities, writes the programme director David Robey.**

Launched by the AHRB in October 2003, with funding of £2.5m, the ICT in Arts and Humanities Research Programme is a major new strategic project that will run until 2007. Its aim is to encourage, support and enhance the use of ICT in the conduct of research in all areas of the arts and humanities, the development and use of digital research resources and tools, and the exploitation of ICT in disseminating and making available the results of research. This very broad remit will in practice operate at two levels. The programme will help the AHRB to develop its ICT strategy, to monitor the overall implementation of the strategy and to coordinate the activities funded under it, including the AHDS and Humbul. It will also fund a range of projects and/or services that will complement the AHDS and Humbul, and others, such as the JISC-funded Artifact, funded by other national bodies.

The programme management is based in the School of Modern Languages at the University of Reading, and consists of myself, seconded half-time from my job as Professor of Italian at the University, and a research assistant, Stuart Dunn. For further details, see the programme home page at <http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/ict>

We have issued the call for bids for the largest single activity to be funded by the Programme, the AHRB ICT Methods Network. This will be a UK-wide service for arts and humanities researchers with more than a basic knowledge of ICT resources. The Network will

focus on new developments and advanced methodologies, on research processes, questions, and methods, and on uses of data, rather than on (as in the case of the AHDS) data creation and preservation or (as in the case of Humbul and Artifact) access to resources.



David Robey, the Director of the AHRB's ICT in the Arts and Humanities Research Programme.

site. The Network will therefore have a single Director, who will report to a management committee that will be a sub-group of the Programme Steering Committee, chaired by the Programme Director.

The Methods Network will provide a national forum for the discussion, exchange and dissemination of ICT methods in Arts and Humanities research, bringing together academic researchers in different domains and ICT specialists: its emphasis will thus be strongly interdisciplinary and inter-professional. It will also provide advanced postgraduate and post-doctoral research training, develop a website, documentation, reference resources, run workshops, seminars, discussion lists, and possibly conferences, and other related activities.

All of this will be closely related and complementary to the work of the AHDS, whose Director is a member of the Programme Steering Committee, and of Humbul and Artifact. Effective col-

**“The Methods Network will provide a national forum for the discussion, exchange and dissemination of ICT methods in Arts and Humanities research.”**

The term 'network' is used in the hope that leading specialists from a number of UK centres will contribute to its work in return for a share of the funding. At the same time, we shall need to strike a balance between this virtual, distributed aspect, and the need for overall managerial direction and control, with, probably, the majority of support staff located in a single

laboration between these bodies will be vital to the success of the Programme. The Network will be funded to a maximum of £1m for a period of three years from 1 October next year (the outcome of the call for bids will be announced in early June). There is no commitment whatever to continuing the service as such. The AHRB will conduct a review of all its ICT-sup-

port activities towards the end of the funding period, one outcome of which could be an enhanced AHDS, perhaps with a different name, incorporating the Network's activities.

In the next few months the Programme will also be holding a series of expert seminars on (i) E-Science in the arts and humanities; (ii) The ICT needs of practice-based research in the creative and performing arts; (iii) ICT needs of researchers in the humanities. Alongside this we will continue the meetings of the existing AHRB E-Publishing Round Table. These meetings, which may continue after this first series, will have two purposes: to contribute to the development of the AHRB's ICT strategy, and to produce proposals

wide range of subjects, not, with the possible exception of exemplary or transferable projects, to fund academic research directly.

Finally, for the present, we have recently put a funding proposal to JISC for an Arts and Humanities

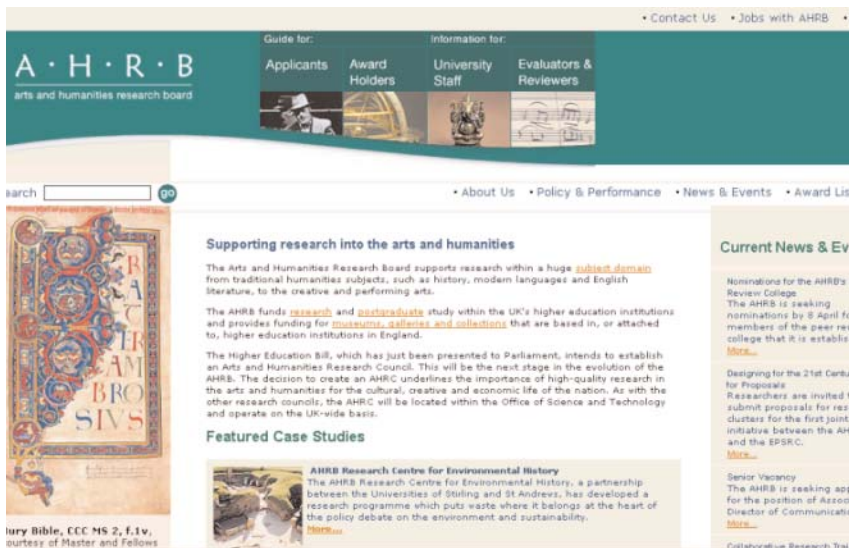
**“The Awareness Programme will help universities to respond to the AHRB’s increasing emphasis on generic research training.”**

ICT Awareness and Training Programme. This has now been agreed, and a call for bids will soon be launched for total funding of up to £100k over a period of two years. This programme will be aimed at a lower level than the Methods Network, for researchers with only basic ICT competence.

ly available on-line resources to meet this need. Most universities provide generic training for students and staff in the use of, for instance, spreadsheets and databases. Very few have the facilities to provide dedicated arts and humanities training in the use of

ICT. Yet dedicated training resources are needed if the majority of researchers are to be persuaded to use the new technologies: to show them not just how to use them, but what the benefits of using them can be. The Awareness Programme will therefore provide a broad overview of relevant ICT tools and resources, illustrations of their use via case studies and other means, and help in learning how to use them. The online resources produced by the programme will be published on a website jointly developed with the AHDS, hosted and publicised by it, and maintained by it after the end of the funding period.

The Awareness Programme will also help universities to respond to the AHRB's increasing emphasis on generic research training in both MA and doctoral degrees, by providing a range of training-resources in the use of ICT that most institutions cannot provide on their own. Equally importantly, it will help considerably in sharpening the focus of the Methods Network on more advanced users, avoiding the risk of its having to undertake too broad a range of activities.



Screen shot of the AHRB website home page at <<http://www.ahrb.ac.uk>>

for further projects to be funded by the ICT Programme, for which at total of some £1m remains available. It should be made clear, however, that the purpose of the programme is not to fund research just because it is ICT-based. The AHRB's research panels already fund a great deal of such research: at a rough calculation, approximately 40% of all funded projects since the AHRB's inception, to a total value of some £45m. The point of the Programme is to fund activities that will support, promote and develop research across a

Virtually all arts and humanities researchers can now word-process, use email, and browse the web, but few can do much more. At the same time, in some subjects and some institutions, a lot of exciting and innovative use of ICT is being made by a minority of arts and humanities researchers: these will be catered for by the Methods Network. Their less advanced colleagues will be supported by the Awareness Programme.

This will create a suite of national-

#### Links:

AHRB: <<http://www.ahrb.ac.uk>>

ICT in the Arts and Humanities Research Programme home page: <<http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/ict>>

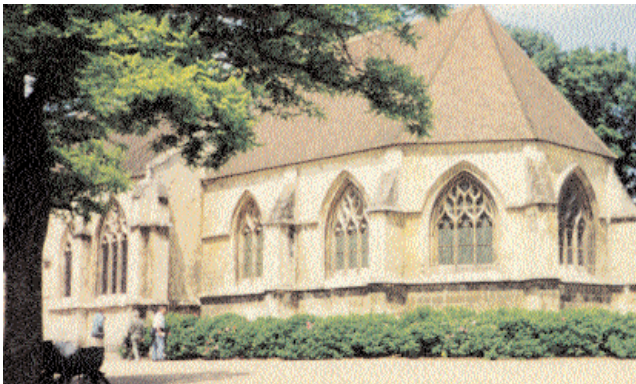
# Mapping humanities computing: two new AHDS projects

**The AHDS has begun two projects that survey user needs for ICT in the arts and humanities, writes Reto Speck.**

In order to be able to achieve its aim of assisting ICT research in the arts and humanities, the AHDS has to be able to gauge and respond to its users' needs. Two new projects, funded by the JISC, began in January 2004 and are part of this work.

## AHDS Subject Extension Feasibility Study

The *AHDS Subject Extension Feasibility Study* project will run for one year. It will seek to define the nature and scope of future AHDS service provisions to those working in the subject areas of ancient history, classics, law, philosophy, and religious studies. While other arts and humanities subjects have long enjoyed a wide range of AHDS services and support via the five specialised centres, these subject communities



The AHDS is looking to provide fuller coverage of subject areas such as ancient history and religious studies.

have, so far, only been served on a "best-effort" basis.

The Subject Extension project recognises that a future extension of AHDS subject coverage must be based on evidence of user needs and requirements. For this reason, a survey of ICT-related research in the uncovered subject areas is taking place. In addition, in-depth interviews with a number of subject specialists and researchers will be undertaken. A final report outlining the project's key findings and recommendations for the future will be published in January 2005.

### For further information you can...

consult the project website at <http://ahds.ac.uk/subject-extension/> or contact Reto Speck at the AHDS Executive, Tel. 020 7848 1974 or email: [reto.speck@ahds.ac.uk](mailto:reto.speck@ahds.ac.uk).

### Join the project email list

Those involved in ICT-related research in a relevant subject area are encouraged to join the project email list.

To join the list send the following email to: [jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk)  
join AHDS-NEWSUBJECTS [your first name]  
[your surname]

## AHDS Methods Database

The *AHDS Methods Database* project will gather and disseminate detailed information on the use of ICT in research across all arts and humanities subjects. Over the course of a year a pilot version of the AHDS Methods Database will be designed. The database will record current or recent research projects, and will provide comprehensive information on ICT-related methodologies, including usage of technologies, data creation methods, employment of metadata standards or usage of formats.

The database is aimed to eventually become publicly available. It will become a valuable resource for the humanities computing community as a whole. In particular, it will assist the AHDS in mediating user requirements in the planning and prioritisation of its support and advice services; act as an important source of information for other bodies such as the JISC and the proposed AHRB ICT Methods Network; and allow researchers to refine their methodologies by drawing on past experience, and to share expertise by locating others using related methods.

### For further information on the AHDS Methods Database you can...

consult the project website at <http://ahds.ac.uk/methods-db/> or contact Reto Speck at the AHDS Executive, Tel. 020 7848 1974 or email: [reto.speck@ahds.ac.uk](mailto:reto.speck@ahds.ac.uk).

The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) is funded by the AHRB and JISC.