

SOUTHAMPTON DIGITAL HUMANITIES

DIVERSIFYING OUR APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES

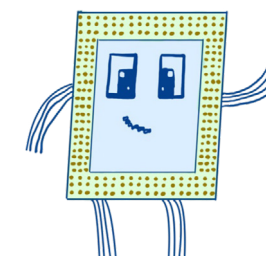
In our last annual report, I characterised 2023-24 as a year in which Southampton Digital Humanities broadened and deepened our impact. Building on that work, 2024-25 was a year in which we diversified our approaches and perspectives.

Our team grew with the arrivals of Arantza, Delphine, James, Nathan, Steven, and Vicky. Our Digital Humanities elective modules continued to be popular with our students, and we added a new module called ‘Queering the Digital’, for which our students produced a range of innovative public-facing assessed work that explore the entanglements between queerness and digital technologies. We won new grants which position us to drive real change to how research outputs are assessed and to career pathways for research technical professionals. We partnered with Archaeology, Engineering, and SMMI to launch the RICHES-funded ‘Coastal and Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility’, a national infrastructure that seeks to secure heritage assets made vulnerable by rapid environmental changes, development, and tourism. We made significant contributions to the development of international community groups including the UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Association, the Music and Online Cultures Research Network, and the Digital Humanities Climate Coalition, and local initiatives such as the Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities and the Web Science Institute. We launched Digital Preservation Southampton, a new enterprise unit dedicated to stewarding digital assets in the long term. We conducted innovative research on a diverse range of topics including more-than-human masculinities, linked data knowledge infrastructures, transvestigations, curatorial practice, and online music cultures. And we gained a mascot, Chip, thanks to the efforts and creativity of one of our eight student interns.

As we look back, we also look forward. The launch in 2025-26 of our new MSc in Digital Humanities (Data Science) is a defining moment that will expand our community once again, enriching our culture with the perspectives, interests, and challenges faced by a cohort of students dedicated to computational research in the humanities. As we put the pieces in place needed to run this new programme, this year also seemed an ideal moment to refresh our statement of purpose. So, we wrote a new one that better represents our diversified approaches and perspectives to guide us over the next few years. We hope you like it. As we hope you enjoy the report, which provides an overview of a tremendous collective effort to entangle humanities education, research, knowledge exchange, and enterprise with digital and computational approaches. As we enter our fifth year, I couldn’t be more proud of what we’ve built, and extend once more my heartfelt thanks to all who’ve supported, encouraged, and challenged us over the last year.

Professor James Baker
Director of Digital Humanities

Southampton Digital Humanities explores society and culture through queer identities and creativities; the infrastructures that organise knowledge, power, and our biosphere; the capture, representation, and preservation of landscapes, places, and objects; and a commitment to developing approaches to computing culture that emerge from Humanities questions, problems, and perspectives. This breadth is our strength. As linguists, technicians, historians, information scientists, digital humanists, archaeologists, gender scholars, preservation professionals, musicologists, media theorists, internet scholars, art historians, creative practitioners, data scientists, and so much more, we entangle our shared perspectives to create new agendas for Digital Humanities research, education, and enterprise. In so doing, we enrich the life and reputation of the University, place the Humanities at the heart of solutions to contemporary challenges, and envisage a Digital Humanities that is underpinned by critically informed computational humanities.



OUR PEOPLE

Southampton Digital Humanities is about its people. This year we lost our indomitable project coordinator Claire Wilkins to a wonderful new role with AI @ Southampton. Claire was with Southampton Digital Humanities from the very start, was decisive in shaping what we are today, and brought an infectious enthusiasm that has left an indelible mark on our culture. We miss her greatly. Softening the blow was that this year also saw us welcome some wonderful new people to our team. In October, two new doctoral researchers joined us: Nathan Cornish, working on a collaborative PhD on plant histories with Kew Gardens and the University of Exeter; and Vicky Hill who is researching responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in the Mass Observation Project Archive. Steven Gamble joined us in December as Lecturer in Digital Humanities, bringing new perspectives on music, media, and digital technology. In January, Arantza Novelo Franco and James Macdonell joined us as Digital Humanities Technicians, replacing Sam Pegg who moved across to the Film department as their new Digital Media Technician. And in August, we welcomed Delphine Demelas as our new Lecturer in Humanities Data Science.

Expanding our team is changing what we do, how we work, and what we care about. Our refreshed statement of purpose is testament to that. As are the smaller but no less significant community activities: our regular code clubs at which we work through issues setting up something computational, provide support in writing code, or just share our frustrations with tech; setting up hot desks to host interns, placement students, and visiting fellows; or our induction sessions that help new students and staff understand what we do, know more about how they can get involved, and ask questions about internship opportunities, how to access equipment, and the ways we can support their research or education activities. As a community there are so many people across the School, Faculty, and University whose contributions have enriched the life of Southampton Digital Humanities and made our work possible.

This year we extend our particular thanks to Helen Spurling, Alison Porter, Fraser Sturt, Lorna Leverett, Suzanne Tatham, Matt Philips, Alexandra Karamitrou, James Allen, Claire Knowles, Jo Taylor, Hannah Ley, Emma Button, Garth Wenman-James, Chris Buckingham, Holly Bennette, Miguel Mera, Hirah Azhar, Giulia Champion, Tia Thorpe, James Ryan, Lois Clark, Neda Genova, Zubair Shafiq, Lian Patston, Kendrick Oliver, Rafael Mestre, Nyle Bevan-Clark, James Minney, Shelley Cobb, Toby Litt, Megen de Bruin-Molé, Katie Power, Lucy Briggs, Elija Cassidy, Felix Pedrotti, Lucas Trumpiel, Ben Chambers, Peter Webster, Maria Varela, Reem Douhmak, Alison Gascoigne, Catherine Polley, Maria Hayward, James Aplin, Teresa Ardani, Debbie Webber, Drew Crawford, Lucy Briggs, Lyndsey Ballantine, Giulia Champion, Alexandra Krendel, Malcolm Cook, Petar Markov, Nicky Clarkson, Simon Hettrick, Dan Boyce, Maddie Fine, Laura Diez Cobo, and Siddharth Soni for their contributions across the year.

“MY INTERNSHIP GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO BE CREATIVE, AND TO FEEL A SENSE OF AUTONOMY AND OWNERSHIP OVER MY WORK”

LAURA
BA FILM

“THE INTERNSHIP HAS GIVEN ME CONFIDENCE IN UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING ARCHIVES AND HAS BEEN AN INCREDIBLY EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE”

KIRSTEN
BA HISTORY

“I HAVE LEARNT A LOT ABOUT DIGITAL SUSTAINABILITY, WHICH I WILL CONTINUE TO BE CONSCIOUS OF AND MAKE CHANGES WHERE I CAN”

HANNAH
BA MODERN HISTORY AND POLITICS

Digital Humanities Team

Ammandeep K. Mahal

Digital Preservation Enterprise Fellow

Arantza Novelo Franco

Technician

Claire Wilkins

Project Coordinator

Delphine Demelas

Lecturer

Ellie Wakefield

Project Coordinator

James Baker

Director

James Macdonell

Technician

Kristen Schuster

Lecturer

Laurisa Sastoque Pabon

Digital Preservation Training Officer

Lexi Webster

Deputy Director

Luke Aspland

Technician

Nathan Cornish

Postgraduate Researcher

Sam Pegg

Technician & Postgraduate Researcher

Scott Feher

Administrator

Sharon Howard

Research Fellow

Steven Gamble

Lecturer

Vicky Hill

Postgraduate Researcher

Digital Humanities Interns

Hannah Little

Modern History and Politics

Isobel Hayes

Modern History and Politics

Jay McGowan-Gardener

Archaeology

Kirsten Hutchison

History

Laura Mitchell

Film

Omar Yussuf

Arts and Media Technology

Soup Bourva

History

Stephanie Barter

Ancient History

**Digital Humanities
Committee Members**

Alexandra Karamitrou

Archaeology

Alexandra Krendel

Languages, Cultures & Linguistics

Alexandra Reynolds

Centre for Higher Education Practice

Alison Porter

Languages, Cultures & Linguistics

Carmen Martin De Leon

Languages, Cultures & Linguistics

Claire Knowles

Leeds (external member)

Elija Cassidy

Film

Fraser Sturt

Archaeology

Giulia Champion

English

Hirah Azhar

History

James Allen

Digital Learning

James Minney

Languages, Cultures & Linguistics

Joanne Taylor

Manchester (external member)

Kendrick Oliver

History

Laura Diez Cobo

Library

Lian Patson

English

Neda Genova

Film

Peter Webster

Library

Rafael Mestre

Electronics and Computer Science

Sam Pegg

English/Film

Sarah Pearce

History

Siddharth Soni

English

Suzanne Tatham

Library

Zubair Shafiq

Digital Learning



OUR SPACE

Southampton Digital Humanities operates a substantial technical estate. Our team of expert technicians leverage that estate to create a facilitated, supportive, and collaborative environment through which our staff, students, and partners can capture, create, and compute with technology, whether working within the Digital Humanities Hub or off-campus. This year we worked with MA Global Challenges students to produce policy outputs that sought to influence and change behaviours about topics ranging from conflict and sustainability to migration and the preservation of human rights. We developed our capability to capture data from damaged and degraded optical media. Our podcast facilities were used to support public understanding of the lives of ancient humans (Helen Farr and Erich Fisher, 'Before Us'), the lived experience of mental health difficulties (Poppy Hulbert and Tess Maguire, 'Psyched'), and visual narratives of war (Hirah Azhar, 'The War We See'). Computer vision models were deployed to support the extraction of handwritten text from archival collections managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Over 250 people participated in 20 Digital Humanities workshops on topics ranging from geospatial storytelling and making interactive digital exhibits to large-scale text analysis and ethical data-centred research. We worked with the Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities and the housing association Abri to digitise collections as part of the centenary of Southampton's Mansbridge estate. New workflows were implemented for 3D printing and fabrication that enable us to recycle previously discarded waste materials into new, usable, and high-quality filament. Colleagues in Music used our motion capture equipment to turn movement into audio-visual outputs. Students in Archaeology used our fabrication technologies to analyse 3D models of skulls of people affected to varying degrees by leprosy in Medieval Winchester. And with the launch of the RICHeS-funded 'Coastal and Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility' we expanded our technical estate to include a new dedicated imaging lab space on Avenue Campus.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LISTEN TO 'THE WAR WE SEE' PODCAST



3D prints exhibited at Southampton's Tudor House and Garden.

OUR NUMBERS

253

ATTENDEES AT OUR DIGITAL HUMANITIES WORKSHOPS

6,942

ONLINE VIEWS OF STEVEN GAMBLE'S BOOK *DIGITAL FLOWS: ONLINE HIP HOP MUSIC AND CULTURE* IN THE FIRST YEAR OF PUBLICATION

3,000

METADATA RECORDS CLEANED BY
PARTICIPANTS IN DIGITAL PRESERVATION
SOUTHAMPTON'S PIONEER WORKSHOP
*MASTERING METADATA FOR DIGITAL
PRESERVATION*

510,000

'SPLATS' IN A 3D MODEL OF A SLED FROM GILBERT WHITE'S HOUSE IN SELBORNE, HAMPSHIRE

429

HOURS OF PODCAST STUDIO TIME IN THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES HUB IN THE YEAR TO SEPTEMBER 2025

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT
THE DIGITAL PRESERVATION
SOUTHAMPTON WEBSITE



OUR STORIES

How can digital humanities researchers provide research leadership at a time of ecological degradation and climate change? This was the question at the heart of the 'Interpreting UKRI Environmental Sustainability Guidance for the Digital Humanities', a resource published this year – as a collaboration between Southampton Digital Humanities and the Digital Humanities Climate Coalition – that provides researchers in the digital humanities with practical advice on operationalising sustainable practice in their research. Led by two Digital Humanities Interns – Hannah Little and Isobel Hayes – the resource makes the case for responding proactively to policy guidance and seeks to give researchers confidence in intersectional environmental approaches to project design and operation.

This was not the only story of student creativity we celebrated this year. Students on our undergraduate 'Data, Culture, and Justice' module continued to create provocative public-facing interventions that examine the ways the datafication of culture underpins predictive systems that police us, structures that define us, and products that simulate us. Among those was a feminist zine, designed and created by Brooke Sanders and Grace Haselden, that explored the intersections between identity, beauty, and classification through the lens of the cosmetics industry. In other work, our public engagement intern Stephanie Barter explored different ways to gamify contested cultural heritage objects. Using a combination of riddles and puzzles, she developed a series of boxes that, when unlocked, provide objects that facilitate conversations about the Parthenon frieze. And Hirah Azhar, a postgraduate researcher in History, used their skills development placement with us to create a new podcast – The War We See – that explores the history of war imagery and how it shapes people's understanding of war. Through conversations with a wide range of guests including academics, curators, photographers, editors, journalists, and documentary filmmakers, Hirah's podcast offers listeners multiple perspectives on a subject that has broad appeal but remains little understood.

AI was an inescapable theme of our year, and so we were delighted to host an interdisciplinary workshop series run by Sam Pegg, a PhD candidate in English, and funded by the English ECC and PGR Research Culture Development Fund. The 'Reframing GenAI' series was a collaborative effort between the Department of English, the Centre for Modern and Contemporary Writing, and Digital Humanities that sought to reframe creative-critical dialogues around GenAI in research. The series facilitated explorations of topics including emotional responses to GenAI, threats and opportunities of embedding GenAI in research, and methods towards GenAI collaboration/co-creation in research. Elsewhere in our continuing partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Nathan Cornish – a SWWDTP-funded PhD candidate co-supervised between Southampton Digital Humanities, Kew, and the University of Exeter – worked with our team to test and deploy the vision-language model Qwen2-VL for extracting data on the scale and energy of plant exchange through Kew in the long nineteenth century.

**SCAN THE QR CODE TO
VIEW THE 'INTERPRETING
UKRI ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY GUIDANCE
FOR THE DIGITAL
HUMANITIES' REPORT**

digital humanities climate coalition



Among many other stories we could tell, the publication of Steven Gamble's new book *Digital Flows: Online Hip Hop Music and Culture* stands out. *Digital Flows* provides an urgent study of modern hip hop, one closely intertwined with the networked cultural flows of the internet. Using a methodological approach that combines music and cultural analysis, ethnography, and web data analysis, the book explores what happens when a cultural form born on the streets thrives on transformative technologies of global reach. In addition to launching *Digital Flows*, since joining us in December Steven has also completed work on his Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship 'Live From The Internet: Online Popular Music Performance', co-convened an international conference on 'music and online cultures in a changing platform ecosystem', and hosted our first visiting PhD student: Pau Aguilera Martínez from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Steven's arrival has also connected us with the Music and Online Cultures Research Network (mocren.org), founded and led by Steven and a small group of early career colleagues. This summer MOCReN hosted an international conference at Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Nova University Lisbon. 'music and online cultures in a changing platform ecosystem' featured over 60 presenters from every inhabited continent, tackling interdisciplinary topics including streaming platforms, fan practices, artist entrepreneurship, music and media production, patronage, online communities, online concerts, generative artificial intelligence, transmedia, digital ethnographies, and digital music economies. In the open roundtable that closed the conference, delegates emphasised the ongoing value of the network, celebrating its inclusivity, anti-hierarchical nature, and opportunities for relationship-building—a set of commitments that echo across the work of Southampton Digital Humanities.



Stephanie Barter's cultural heritage puzzle box.



LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PROJECTS

PUBLISHED OUTPUTS

Christopher Ohge and **Kristen Schuster** (eds.), *New Directions in Digital Textual Studies: Book History, Scholarly Editing and Curation in Conversation* (2025)

Jane Winters, Charlotte Tupman, Jennifer Edmond, Paul Gooding, Justin Tonran, Orla Murphy, Arianna Ciula, Naomi Wells, Lorna Hughes, **Kristen Schuster**, ‘Enhancing research and teaching capacity through collaboration: building a UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Association’, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (2025)

Steven Gamble and Lewis Kennedy, ‘Fragmented and distributed production practices in 21st century metal music: from the studio to the bedroom (and back again?)’, *The Routledge Handbook to Metal Music Composition: Evolution of Structure, Expression, and Production* (2025)

James Baker ‘More Process, Less Product: the making of the Making African Connections Digital Archive’, *Third Text* (2025)

Ian Townend, Denise Baden, **James Baker**, Jan Buermann, Ian Dawson, Wassim Dbouk, John Dearing, Patrick Doncaster, Felix Eigenbrod, Tim Hellmann, Rebecca B. Hoyle, Anotnella Ianni, Hachem Kassem, Konstantinos Katsikopoulos, Martin Kunc, Massimiliano Manfren, Alasdair Marshall, Wonyong Park, Dhritiraj Sengupta, and Vanessa Wanick, ‘Anticipating Futures: Understanding the Fundamental Importance of Narratives Through an Integrative Interdisciplinary Approach’, *Futures* (2025)

Rossitza Atanassova and **James Baker**, ‘A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Catalogue Data: Understanding Curatorial Practice Over Time’, in *Library Catalogues as Data: Research, Practice, and Usage* (2025)

Hannah Little, Isobel Hayes, James Baker, Lisa Otty, Jo Lindsay Walton, and Christopher Ohge, *Interpreting UKRI Environmental Sustainability Guidance for the Digital Humanities* (2025)

Kjetil Klette Bøhler, Nick Braae, **Steven Gamble**, Andrei Sora, and Tanja Veverka, ‘Partying and Protesting with tUnE-yArDs’ »Water Fountain«, *Samples: Open Access Journal for Popular Music Studies* (2024)

Sharon Howard and **James Baker**, *Beyond Notability Data Essays* (2025)

Steven Gamble, *Digital Flows: Online Hip Hop Music and Culture* (2024)

James Baker and **Ammandeep K. Mahal**, “‘I have always found the whole area a minefield’: Wikidata, historical lives, and knowledge infrastructure’, *International Journal of Digital Humanities* (2024)

Lexi Webster, ‘Academic freedom and transphobia in UK higher education: two sides of the same coin?’, in *Towards a Very British Version of the “Culture Wars”: Populism, Social Fractures and Political Communication* (2024)

Jason Ng and **Steven Gamble**, ‘Hip-hop music producers’ labour in the digital music economy: self-promotion, social media and platform gatekeeping’, *New Media & Society* (2024)

Madeleine Steeds, Sarah Clinch, Carolina Are, Genvae Brown, Ben Dalton, **Lexi Webster**, Alice Wilson, & Dawn Woolley. 2025, ‘Queer Joy on Social Media: Exploring the Expression and Facilitation of Queer Joy in Online Platforms’, *2025 ACM (Association of Computing Machinery) CHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Yokohama, Japan, 26/04/25–1/05/25*

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PROJECTS

FUNDED PROJECTS

Embedding Trust in Evaluation (E-TIE)

Research England Development Fund, £3,434,643 (2025-2030)

Careers and Skills for Data-driven Research

UKRI Digital Research Technical Professional Skills NetworkPlus, £1,999,449 (2025-2029)

Coastal and Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility

AHRC Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science, £1,449,057 (2024-2026)

Live from the Internet: Online Popular Music Performance

Leverhulme Trust, £56,000 (2022-2025)



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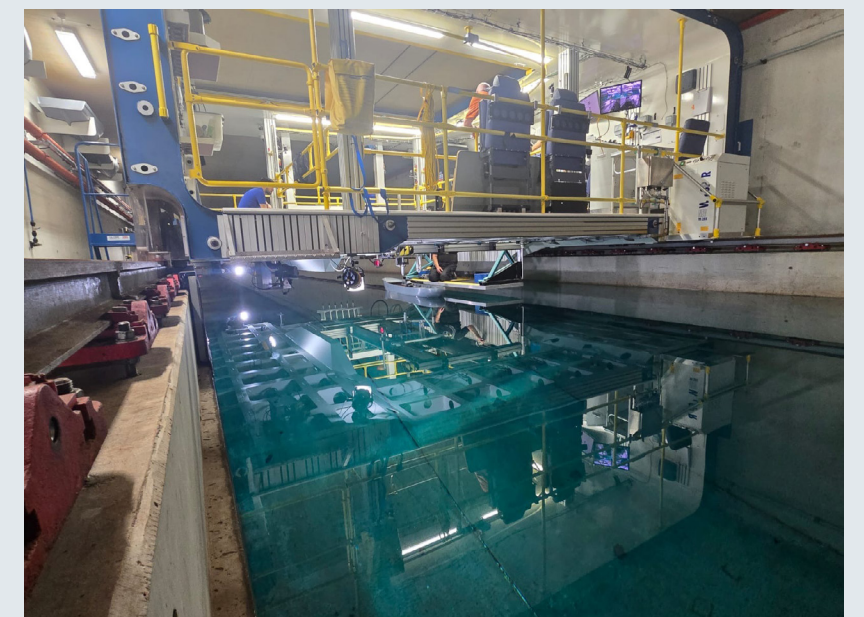
'What the REF?!' a podcast from the Embedding Trust in Evaluation team that attempts to demystify everyone's favourite national research assessment exercise.

HIGHLIGHT ON PARTNERSHIPS WITH SOUTHAMPTON MARINE AND MARITIME INSTITUTE

This year Southampton Digital Humanities and Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute have partnered on several key projects, significantly enhancing the reach and impact of our work through the creative use of new technologies. In Tales of Discovery, Bringing Medieval Southampton to Life, and the ongoing Lines of Discovery, Southampton Digital Humanities contributed important expertise in 3D printing materials, virtual reality development, Open Linked Data, narrative creation, and audio recording, showcasing a versatile application of digital tools to regional and national heritage work.

These projects have generated considerable public engagement and media attention. Tales of Discovery digitally reunited the RRS Discovery ship with its artifacts, leading to extensive outreach, including school visits and appearances at major events like the Farnborough International Airshow, Southampton Boat Show, and – most recently – Cowes Week on the Isle of Wight. It also garnered significant media coverage from outlets such as *The Scotsman*, STV News, and the *Daily Echo*. Similarly, Bringing Medieval Southampton to Life utilized laser scanning and augmented reality to bring history closer to local communities, resulting in features on the BBC and the Daily Echo, knowledge exchange events with partners like Historic England, and a major new exhibition at Southampton’s Tudor House and Garden.

These collaborative efforts have not only brought historical and scientific narratives to life but have also forged valuable partnerships with institutions such as the Scott Polar Research Institute and Southampton City Council. The ongoing Lines of Discovery project continues this momentum, having already completed towing tank testing in collaboration with Southampton Ocean and Earth Science and Dundee Heritage Trust. At our knowledge exchange event, we were joined by additional partners, including the National Museum of the Royal Navy, the SS Great Britain Trust, Beckett Rankine, and the newly established Coastal and Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility. This stage of the project involved constructing a 2.5-metre towing tank model of the RRS Discovery to assess its capacity and performance at the University of Southampton Towing Tank, with exhibitions planned for launch next year at Dundee Heritage Trust and the University of Southampton’s Hartley Library.



DELIVERING CHANGE

2025–26 is a big year for Southampton Digital Humanities. We welcome the University of Southampton’s first cohort of students enrolled on a dedicated digital humanities programme. Our particular flavour of postgraduate digital humanities degree responds to the burgeoning field of computational humanities research, and seeks to create a dedicated space for humanities graduates to develop the critical and computational tools needed to make sophisticated arguments with data. This focus on the computational is deliberate and political, based on a conviction that there is an urgent need for graduates able to combine critical humanities thinking with data science skills and methods—graduates who code with care, queer data, thrive on contingency, and embrace green software and minimal computing.

These students will join a research-intensive environment refreshed by new priorities and new collaborations. Careers And Skills For Data-driven Research (CaSDaR) – a collaboration with colleagues in Chemistry, Computer Science, and the Library – will begin working on developing a national infrastructure for recognising and rewarding data stewards and their career development. Our contribution to queer(ed) critiques of data and digital cultures also continues apace. Louise Hallman – funded by the Leverhulme Programme for Interdisciplinary Resilience Studies – will conduct research under the banner of ‘Queer Data and Resilience’ to explore how queer data, methods, and infrastructures can offer unique forms of resilience in an age of digitally-induced polycrisis. Julia Hackler – a PhD candidate funded by the SWWDTP and co-supervised with University of Bristol – will take computational approaches to analysing community and fan practices for queering Russian classics in online contexts. And the Queer Joy Symposium returns for its third year, continuing its impetus for network-building and knowledge exchange among community organisers, activists, artists, and academics to imagine and implement radical futures of queer flourishing amidst an increasingly queerphobic digital mediascape.

Next year will also be a year in which we establish our enterprise offer. Digital Preservation Southampton launched in January 2025. Within 10 months our webinars had attracted over 80 attendees, individuals from seven countries had attended our workshops, and we’d entered partnerships with four collecting organisations. In 2025/26, Digital Preservation Southampton will move from launch to business-as-usual, running regular workshops, deepening our partnerships, and extending our mission to support communities tasked with stewarding fragile digital assets.

Finally, 2025/26 will also be James’s fifth – and last – year as Director of Digital Humanities. As many of you reading this will know, succession planning has been built into Southampton Digital Humanities from the start. And so next year will see the appointment of a new Director, James stepping aside (but not away!), and new leadership stepping in—providing energy that will guide Southampton Digital Humanities to the end of the decade.

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The launch event for Careers And Skills For Data-driven Research.

SEE YOU AGAIN NEXT YEAR!

Digital Humanities

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