

Future Directions for the AHDS

IT IS ALWAYS a pleasure to have good news to convey. I'm particularly pleased to be able to use the Spring Newsletter to report that the AHRB and the JISC have formally approved the AHDS Strategic Plan for 2002-2005 and have agreed to share funding equally for the next three-year cycle.

We are most gratified that the AHRB have agreed to become equal funding partners with the JISC. Over the last three years the AHRB has provided the AHDS with a grant each year



Sheila Anderson, Director, Arts and Humanities Data Service

to enable us to extend our advisory services for data creators and to increase our collections development activities. This commitment provides the AHDS with a stable period of funding in which to implement our Strategic Plan and to plan and prioritise our services and activities in what is a rapidly expanding environment. We are equally grateful to the JISC who have provided continuous support for the AHDS since its inception in 1996 and have agreed to continue to do so for a further three-year period.

The Strategic Plan for 2002-2005 marks an important transitional point in the history of the AHDS. Initially funded as a project, the AHDS responded to the challenge to set up a new service in creative and innovative ways. We experimented with different models and poli-

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In this issue ...

BESIDES the article written by the AHDS Director, Sheila Anderson, on the organisation's future strategies, this edition of the Newsletter looks at the AHDS' work done in association with the New Opportunities Fund (NOF), providing advice to the various digitisation projects funded by NOF to develop digital collections and learning resources for the general public.

The Newsletter also looks at a range of new collections currently being accessioned by AHDS Service Providers for delivery this year, a range of collections that not only gives one an idea of the width of material being created in digital format, but also the enthusiasm for including images within such collections - four of the five collections mentioned have related visual components. Old English poetry, Suffragette artwork, military defences, African drinking trends and contemporary film and video are the five topics that feature.



What's this? Part of a VADS resource on contemporary installation art? A new HDS collection on the history of holiday photography? Find out more on the back page.

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Future Directions for the AHDS

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cies for collecting and managing digital resources and for providing access to them, developed a comprehensive rights management framework, and established a number of relationships and partnerships both within our subject communities and within the information science profession and beyond. Some of our work has been experimental and some has followed tried and tested paths. Much has been successful - significant numbers of high quality collections accessioned; subject-focused resource discovery systems developed and implemented; the publication of the highly-acclaimed Guides to Good Practice series; and the programme of workshops and advice for data creators are just a few examples of the excellent work carried out by my colleagues in the AHDS.

As we move into a more stable period of funding we are now facing that most difficult of challenges - the challenge of moving from project status, where experimentation and the encouragement of innovation and development is quite appropriate, to a fully fledged Service, which requires greater stability and cohesion. The next three years therefore, will be very much about consolidating our efforts, ensuring that the very best practices are applied consistently throughout the service, and most importantly, ensuring that our resources are targeted to deliver the kinds of services, activities and collections that our users demand of us.

But what does this mean in practice? To some extent of course, the process is about internal management practices and procedures - ensuring consistency across the Service, delivering value for money, providing value-added services, monitoring performance and so on - the usual buzzwords that we hear all the time in Higher Education! But it also means that we will be taking a more strategic and focused approach to providing services. Like most

organisations, we have a finite budget and we need to make sure that we deliver the optimum service for each pound spent. To achieve this we have been going through a period of internal review, designed to identify the best and most successful approaches across our range of activities and services and to incorporate these into new and improved services.

A good example of this is the new AHDS data creators workshop series (see <http://ahds.ac.uk/workshops.htm> for more details.) The feedback from these workshops has demonstrated that they are extremely effective in reaching our target audience of potential and actual data creators and providing them with the kind of information they need to start a digital collections creation project. The feedback has also shown us where we might make improvements to the workshops, and how we might build upon them with smaller, more focused and subject-oriented training days. As part of an integrated communications strategy we are also reviewing the enormously successful Guides to Good Practice series and thinking about how we might extend our publications series, not only with more and updated Guides, but also with a series of smaller, more tightly focused Information Papers, targeted at particular audiences.

We are looking to refine our collections development policies to ensure that we accession and preserve collections that will be of long-term use to the arts and humanities research and teaching communities, and that will encourage the integration of ICT into research and teaching practice. We will also be reviewing the presentation and delivery of AHDS collections with a view to ensuring full exploitation of their potential, thus helping to achieve value for money for public funding spent on data creation projects. For example, many of our collections have significant multi-disciplinary potential and the AHDS is thinking very carefully about how we might best present discovery and delivery mechanisms for these collections so as to gain increased use across a range of disciplines. The Arts and Humanities Portal Project, described in a previous edition of the

Thus far, the arts and humanities community has only scratched the surface of the potential for ICT in research and teaching.

Newsletter, is central to our thinking in this area.

Despite the need for consolidation, innovation and development will not cease - without it the AHDS would very soon fail to provide the kind of services that users have come to expect. And there is a huge amount to do. Thus far the arts and humanities community has only scratched the surface of the potential for ICT in

There is much for the AHDS to do to contribute to a research and development programme that will see ICT and digital collections fully embedded into research, teaching and learning in the arts and humanities.

research and teaching. We need to investigate new methodological approaches for both the creation and use of digital collections. We need to think about and properly define the concept of an e-publication and determine the rightful place of the digital collection within such publications. We need to explore how we might add value to digital collections, both to

realise their potential within research but also to repurpose them for use within teaching and learning. We need to know a great deal more about how people approach the discovery and use of digital collections and what that means for how they are presented and the kinds of finding aids that are provided.

The AHDS does not propose to undertake all of this work itself - that would not be possible even for our dedicated and enthusiastic staff! It requires a far wider effort and a research and development environment that can bring together researchers, lecturers, data creators and data users, information professionals, computing scientists and technical specialists, and professional digital collections managers such as AHDS staff members.

I have real hope that this can happen. The JISC strategy for the development of the Information Environment outlines a number of development areas that will provide answers to some of our research questions. The AHRB recently held a seminar on Research and ICT, the results of which will feed into the development of their Research and ICT Strategy, and we may yet see a funding stream that would allow the arts and humanities to contribute to the Research

Grid. I have no doubt that these initiatives, alongside the work of colleagues in organisations such as Resource and the British Library, will provide the necessary R&D framework within which the AHDS can make a valuable contribution.

There is much for the AHDS to do, both to improve our core services and to contribute to a research and development programme that will see ICT and digital collections fully embedded into research, teaching and learning within the arts and humanities. I'm certainly looking forward to working with my colleagues in the AHDS to ensure that we play a central role in these developments and trust that you will enjoy reading about our work in the Newsletter and elsewhere. I have no doubt that we will have a great deal to report - so watch this space.

Sheila Anderson, Director, AHDS

The AHDS and the New Opportunities Fund

AS THE progress of the Internet continues apace, information professionals have been quick to point out the technological inequalities that accompany such progress. A significant proportion of the population does not have access to Internet terminals and resources. And so as the Internet accelerates and becomes a more necessary part of contemporary life, so the inequalities widen. The AHDS has been playing a significant role in one government programme aimed at reducing this inequality.



August 1999 saw the establishment of the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) Digitisation of Learning Materials programme <<http://www.nof.org.uk/tem-pdigit/index.htm>>. The programme has allocated a significant tranche of money to parties from the community and voluntary sectors, local authorities, libraries and archives, museums, further and higher education and the private sector. The £50 million fund is earmarked for projects that are designed to support lifelong learning under one of three broad themes: cultural enrichment, citizenship, and re-skilling. The majority of projects are achieving this through the digitisation of a wide range of materials, many drawn from the collections belonging to these organisations, and the development of these digital objects into learning packages, accessible for free on

the Internet. The NOF-digitise programme will, in turn, feed into a larger strategy, the £170 million People's Network <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk>, which is aiming to provide both the national infrastructure and the training in order to make these resources discoverable via terminals at public libraries across the United Kingdom, thus going to some way to rectify the problem outlined above.

After the initial bidding process, 152 projects, often working in consortia, were offered NOF-digitise grants, and they have now commenced their projects to digitise and deliver previously inaccessible or underused cultural material. The scope of the collections chosen by NOF for digitisation is deliberately wide - resources are being created which relate to, for example, history, the environment, health issues, sport, and the visual and performing arts.

The tribulations suffered by previous public digitisation projects alerted the New Opportunities Fund to the potential problems in failing to prepare a coherent, future-proof technical platform for the projects to operate on. The tale of the Digital Domesday Book, a national digitisation project promoted by the BBC in the 1980s but almost lost to the 21st century because of the obsolescence of the original hardware, has become something of a forceful allegory of what can happen to digital projects instigated without sufficient care for their long-term existence. Thus the New Opportunities Fund established a technical advisory service to develop a set of technical standards for the digitisation and delivery of the NOF-digitise collection, and to provide a coherent body of advice for every grantholder to consult before, during and after the lifespan of their project.

The Arts and Humanities Data Service, along with UKOLN (the UK Office for Library Networking, <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk>), form the technical advisory service for the NOF-digitise programme. The AHDS' experience in creating and managing digital collections is complemented by UKOLN's knowledge in fields such as metadata and web access. The service is also aided by Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, who are advising the New Opportunities Fund on the establishment of the Peoples Network as a whole.

Besides a workshop programme, the service has produced resources relating to various topics: a detailed list of FAQs, a series of information papers and a programme manual have all been built up.

UKOLN have taken the lead on issues relating to the discovery and delivery of digital resources; the AHDS have dealt with creation and management issues. The AHDS component of the service has included workshops on information architectures and virtual reality, and information papers on digital preservation and procurement and tendering. The AHDS Guides to Good Practice, and case studies have also been referred to as important sources of information.

The contact with such a large number of public projects is also proving useful in revealing, on a national level, which elements of the digitisation chain are being easily negotiated and which are causing problems. Such information is handy for the AHDS, showing in what areas constructive targeted information and resources can be provided. While the full picture will only become apparent once the programme is nearer completion, it seems that there is general acceptance of the open standards (uncompressed TIFF for images, for instance, or XML or HTML for text) that the programme stipulated. However, many of the projects, prompted by an understandable need to attract and capture the often short attention spans of visitors, have chosen to make use of Macromedia Flash. While this piece of software has obvious advantages (its ability to provide animated graphics and its relative ease of use), some of the projects have been unaware of the access and preservation issues that accompany the creation of data in a proprietary formats such as this. The AHDS can help in the task of providing further information on such topics.

But this problem is, in the context of a digitisation programme of immense size, a relatively small matter. Through the length and breadth of the country, there is a growing understanding of the technical issues involved in digitisation. This understanding not only helps to safeguard the resources being developed under the NOF-digitise banner, but creates a network of knowledge which will serve the nation well in future digitisation schemes.

The resources developed by the technical advisory service are publicly available from the UKOLN website at <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/nof/support/>. Each project is scheduled to have their websites up and running by December 2002. A database of these projects can be found at <http://www.nof.org.uk/tempdigit/grants.cfm>

*Alastair Dunning,
AHDS*

Home Brewing with the History Data Service

RESOURCES recently released by the History Data Service reflect the variety of data currently being generated by research historians in the UK. They differ widely in period covered, geographical focus and subject matter, and they indicate an increasingly sophisticated use of IT in the method of recreating sources electronically. Historians are adopting methods of analysis and source capture which are enabling them to produce more complex digital resources with a greater degree of re-usability than had previously been the case.

An example of this can be seen in the development of custom software to improve the reusability of data. One of the most heavily re-used resources in the HDS collection is the 1881 Census for England and Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and its counterpart for Scotland (Study Numbers 4177 and 4178). Various scholars have made attempts to enrich the raw data, and the current 'enhanced' version incorporates the improvements made by historians from the University of Essex. The same group, including Kevin Schurer and Matthew Woollard, are currently working to aug-



"Making torunkana in the province of Kajiado, 1998: adding yeast". *Torunkana is an alcoholic drink, often made from processed sugar, popular amongst the Maasai tribe of East Africa. This image is part of the 'Social History of Alcohol in East Africa' dataset.*

ment the 30 million records of the 1881 Census with a program that reformats the input data; performs a wide range of consistency checks on the data and adjusts the results accordingly; and adds a number of enriched variables, mainly relating to household structure. A 5% random national sample of this enriched version of the data will soon be released by the HDS (as Study Number 4375).

Other recent HDS releases reflect an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to

historical subjects, leading to new approaches to the

creation of historical datasets. Social science surveying techniques have been employed in a number of projects, such as that considering the Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1998 (Study Number 4169) conducted by Dr Justin Willis of the University of Durham. This involved a number of anthropological methods of capturing data, resulting in a dataset with a variety of data formats: tabulated coded data (statistical analysis of questionnaire responses); full text transcriptions (research journals); and images.

Mark Merry,
History Data Service

The York-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of English Poetry

IN THE past few months the majority of resources accessioned by the Oxford Text Archive has been linguistics corpora. One resource which we think will be of interest to the arts and humanities community is the York-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of English Poetry. This corpus is an annotated version of the poetic texts taken from the Old English section of the Helsinki Corpus, which is also available from the OTA. The corpus is the result of an ESRC-funded research project led by Susan Pintzuk and Leendert Plug, at the Department of Language and Linguistic Science, University of York. The York-Helsinki Corpus of Old English Poetry is a selection of poetic texts from the Old English section of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts, annotated to facilitate searches on syntactic structure and lexical items. It is intended for the use of students and scholars of the history of the English language. The corpus contains 71,490 words of Old English text; the samples from the longer texts are 4,000 to 17,000 words in length, and is approximately 2.5 megabytes in size. The texts represent a range of dates of composition and authors.

The texts are syntactically and morphologically annotated. The syntactic annotations enable the user to pose and answer questions about word order, constituent order, abstract structure, and syntactic and morphological characteristics of the texts in this corpus. The annotations are general-purpose and as theory-neutral as possible, while still incorporating the insights of modern linguistic theory; they can be used by scholars with widely varying research interests.

The research project from which this corpus arose had four main objectives:

1. To produce the corpus to serve as a tool for the proposed research and as a permanent resource for scholars in linguistics and literature.
2. To provide an analysis of the syntax of Old English poetry.
3. To compare the syntax of the poetry to the syntax of the prose, in order to determine to what extent the two genres differ qualitatively.
4. To measure the variation in word order and structure in the poetic texts and compare the results to quantitative studies of prose texts, in order to determine whether the two genres exhibit the same quantitative patterns.

Although no software tools are supplied, the creators of the corpus recommend CorpusSearch, a search engine developed specifically for corpora annotated in this format, as the best search tool for this corpus. Unfortunately, CorpusSearch is not free, but can be ordered for \$50 from the Department of Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania <<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/mideng>>.

Alan Morrison
Oxford Text Archive

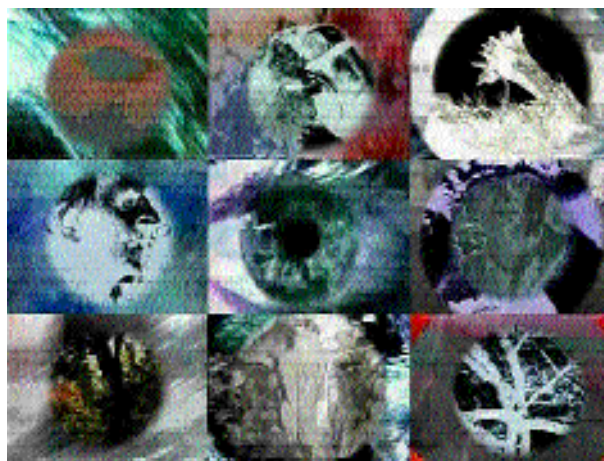
Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words?

FUNDING from the Arts and Humanities Research Board has allowed Central St Martins to develop a unique study collection and database, dedicated to the work of British film and video artists. These research tools and associated publishing and exhibition projects form part of the AHRB British Cinema and Television Study Centre, a five-year programme of research involving seven UK Higher Education institutions and the British Film Institute.

The Study Collection at Central St Martins contains copies of artists' films and tapes and associated paper documentation, and is available for research use by post-graduate students, curators and other writers on film on a limited basis. The database of artists' films and videos made in Britain between 1920-2000 will be on-line at the PADS

<<http://www.pads.ahds.ac.uk>> from the end of May 2002.

A loan-agreement with the Arts Council of England (ACE) means that the study collection will include tapes of many of the works funded by ACE between 1970 and 2000. Additionally, individual artists are loaning copies of their films/tapes and documentation to the collection, to ensure that it is fully representative of the range of British work - much of which was not publicly funded. One key research project is intending to trace and document important 'missing' works from the past. It has also been agreed that there should be a close link between this project and the Lux OnLine initiative - the Lux Holding Company's NOF-supported project to digitise parts of its collections of artists' films/videos, and to make them available on-line.



"Even Cyclops pays the Ferryman", Still from a recent film by Malcolm LeGrice, Central St Martins. The film is documented in the collection to be deposited with PADS.

In addition to artists' films and videos, the study collection includes documentation of installations and 'expanded cinema', including records of re-staged works. The paper documentation contains artists' proposals for films and the drawings, diagrams and storyboards that preceded their works; the manifestoes and statements that helped shape artists' thinking, and the reviews and critical essays that followed exhibition of the works. Film-stills, posters and screening announcements and documentation of key artist-run film/video organisations - such as the London Film Makers Co-op, London Video Arts and Circles - also form part of the collection.

The study collection is working closely with the BFI's National Film and Television Archive, firstly to ensure that any artists' original film/video materials that are at risk are preserved for future generations and restored where necessary, and secondly to

bring neglected works from the past back into circulation.

From the outset, the study collection is encouraging and supporting the publication of articles, monographs and collections of documentation in paper and on-line form, and the organisation of research-based film-programmes and exhibitions. Current collaborations include: 'Shoot Shoot Shoot' (curated by Mark Webber); 'The Frame' a series of video interviews with key artists being produced by Illuminations; 'On General Release - Film 1968-72', an exhibition at the Norwich Gallery; a film programme for 'From Blast to Freeze' for the Wolfsburg Museum, Germany, and a major exhibition project in development with Tate Britain.

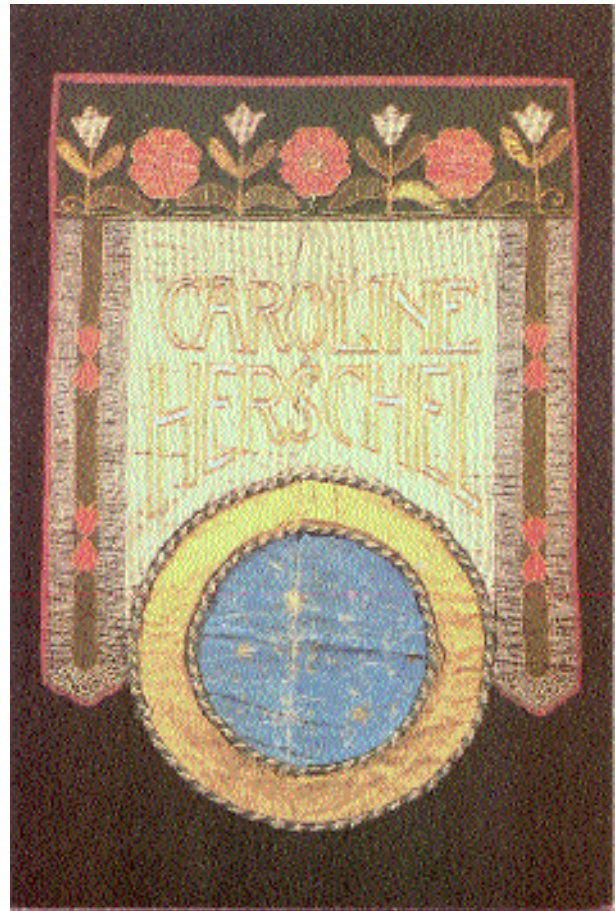
David Curtis,
Senior Research Fellow, Central St Martins

Vote for VADS !

THE RECENT transformation of the Fawcett Library into the Women's Library, aided by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of over £4m, has coincided with the completion of a related digital resource, shortly to be made available via the Visual Arts Data Service. The Suffrage Banners Collection contains over 250 images, including the banners designed and created by those involved in the suffrage movement of the early twentieth century, plus images of the preparatory drawings and related design work. Two groups, The Suffrage Atelier and The Artist's Suffrage League, committed themselves to producing banners, postcards and illustrations and developed an iconography that not only campaigned for women's democratic rights, but a wider array of women's issues. So as well as representing the various regional branches of the Suffragettes, the imagery featured an array of historical characters, such as Boadicea, the Brontë sisters and Florence Nightingale, and some contemporary ones, such as Marie Curie. The banner celebrating Florence Nightingale, over a metre high, was designed by Mary Lowndes, who was one of the chief designers of the banners. Work from Mary Lowndes' collection of drawings is also available in the digital resource.

Designed for being hoisted and carried during public demonstrations, the banners are currently stored in the vaults of the Women's Library. While some of the collection is available for public viewing, the poor condition of many of

the banners means that they have remained protected in the vaults; the satins and velvet from which the banners were woven were not intended to last such a length of time. In many



A banner made in 1908, and designed by Mary Lowndes, to celebrate the astronomer Caroline Herschel. The banner was created from thinly-woven wool, with some added embroidery (the flower motifs) and hand-painted lettering.

cases delicate additions to the original materials, such as silk fringes or appliqué lettering, are beginning to fall off. In others, there is a more general deterioration of the fabric. The digitised collection, created from pre-existing photographs, thus serves a valuable function in preserving and presenting cultural objects otherwise hidden from public view.

The Suffrage Banners will be available, along with other new image resources, from the VADS catalogue <http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/search.htm> in Summer 2002. There are more details on the digitisation of the Banners at <http://ahds.ac.uk/suffrage.htm>

Alastair Dunning,
AHDS

