

# Research Portals in the Arts and Humanities (RPAH)

## *Minutes from the Project Board Meeting*

19-01-2006

### **Present:**

- Professor Mark Greengrass (RPAH Project Director) – M.G.
- Professor Stephen Brown (RPAH Project Co-Director) – S.B.
- Jayne Burgess (Manager of Artifact) – Jayne B.
- Alastair Dunning (AHDS Communications Manager) – A.D.
- Alun Edwards (Humbul Service Manager) – A.E.
- Robb Ross (Project Manager) – R.R.

### **Apologies from:**

- Claire Warwick. – C.W.
- Jared Bryson. – Jared.B.
- Dave Gerrard. – D.G.

### **1: Minutes from last meeting**

These were agreed.

### **2: Matters arising and to report**

The AHDS are currently undertaking detailed log analysis of their centres and have identified a number of issues that may impact upon the RePAH project: the data from Performing Arts and History have two separate problems associated with them. The data obtained from the History sector will be difficult to use due to data protection issues. This can be overcome by disaggregating the sensitive data which, although creating an artificial boundary, will still provide enough evidence of usage for our needs. The extra work necessary to disaggregate the data may be supported by project funds. The Performing Arts data is currently difficult to access due to a lack of technical expertise from staff turnover, but as the AHDS is currently centralising its data it may be possible to access some data but the timeframes may not be concurrent with other areas. It was agreed that although this may not give a complete picture the data can be extrapolated in order to provide useful information. The AHDS will endeavour to collect as much data as possible for our purposes.

It was noted that smaller scale, 'impressionistic data' of usage, such as website comments or emails, could also provide useful information. AD stated that there is no central repository of this particular kind of data, but he would provide contact details for each AHDS centre who may be able to access this kind of information.

**Action:** AD to investigate the possibility of disaggregating the data and emailing RR with the details.

**Action:** AD to provide contact details for each AHDS centre and send it to Jared B.

**Action:** Jared B to contact AHDS centres to obtain details of 'impressionistic data' for analysis.

### **3: RePAH Questionnaire – Progress report.**

There are currently 73 completed responses to the questionnaire which was considered good, but it would be preferable to have a larger number and in order to achieve this a higher profile needs to be developed. Details of the questionnaire have been sent out in the Artifact newsletter but the lead in time for the AHDS newsletter is such that the questionnaire will be over before it is distributed. There is a link to the questionnaire on the Humbul site, but not on Artifact or AHDS. It was agreed that a link would be provided but supportive copy (approx a paragraph and include details of LARIAH) is needed and RR will provide this. It was agreed that the JISC Bibliographic Society (JBS) should be approached concerning the questionnaire. Also David Robey should be approached and asked to contact the Research Centres to promote the questionnaire within their organisations. It was noted that there was no information with regard to subject areas that were not being covered by the questionnaire responses and that this would be helpful in identifying where more effort needs to be centred to ensure comprehensive coverage within the final report.

**Action:** RR to provide copy on the project and send it to Jayne B and AD by the end of next week.

**Action:** Jayne B and AD to put link on their respective sites to the RePAH questionnaire and email RR when done.

**Action:** AE to contact the JBS.

**Action:** MG to contact David Robey concerning promotion of the questionnaire within the Research Centres.

**Action:** RR to do preliminary analysis of the data to identify respondent numbers from each individual subject area.

### **4: Project awareness and connections to other user analysis research.**

Although the remit of the project was specifically aimed at portal usage, it was agreed that recent technological developments, especially within the area of Virtual Research Environments (VREs) were relevant to the project aims and objectives. Work on VREs was identified as taking place at Bristol, Oxford and Lancaster and it was agreed that communication with this work would be beneficial to the project.

Jayne B sits on the panel of the Bristol VRE project and will open up a dialogue with the possibility of one of the RePAH team members attending a management meeting or a member of their team attending one of ours.

AE will ask Mike Fraser if there will be any evaluation of the Oxford VRE work and if so when; if it is within the timeframe of our work could access be gained to the results for use by RePAH.

No one in the project has any connections or information concerning the Lancaster VRE work. We need to know: is there any humanities involvement; will any evaluation take place, if so when and could the project have access to the results.

It was noted that the British Library are doing some user behaviour analysis and that it may be relevant to our project. Jared B to follow up this line of enquiry.

There is currently some work being done within De Montfort University concerning immersive environments in research collaboration for the performing arts. RR to follow up on this to see if it has any relevance to RePAH.

Work is being done on VREs within Archaeology at Reading and East Anglia: MG is on the panel of the work at East Anglia and will self evaluate the work carried out; he will also follow up the work at Reading.

Work has been done by British Art History online that may be of interest to the project. AE is on the technical panel and may be able to obtain some relevant information. AE/Jared B to follow up this line of enquiry.

There is also work done by the AHDS on digital pictures although it is very broad. SB to obtain the report from this project.

There is also work being done overseas such as the New Performance Framework (NPF). AD will do some desktop research to see what information he can find that may be of use to the project. Lorna Hughes may also know of some relevant work; MG will approach her for any details she may have.

The HERA project may also have information that will be of benefit to RePAH. AE to try and obtain their questionnaire and any results they may have published. Stuart Dunne was involved with this project and Jared B will contact him to see if any relevant information can be obtained.

**Action:** Jayne B to open up dialogue with Bristol VRE project with a view to one of the RePAH team attending a management meeting or one of their team attending ours.

**Action:** RR to send Jayne B details of our management meeting dates.

**Action:** AE to approach Mike Fraser concerning details of the VRE at Oxford with the aim of gaining access to any evaluation results.

**Action:** RR to contact VRE at Lancaster to find out details of any humanities involvement and if any evaluation results will be accessible to the project.

**Action:** Jared B to contact British Library to enquire about the user behaviour analysis they have undertaken.

**Action:** RR to investigate the work at DMU on immersive environments for the performing arts to see if any evaluation has or will take place.

**Action:** MG/Jared B to investigate the archaeology VREs at Reading and East Anglia.

**Action:** AE/Jared B to enquire about work done by British Art History online.

**Action: SB to request report on Digital Picture project.**

**Action:** AD to conduct desktop research on work being done overseas, especially the NPF.

**Action:** MG to ask Lorna Hughes for any information she may have on work being done overseas.

**Action:** AD to obtain a copy of the HERA questionnaire and any published results.

**Action:** Jared B to contact Stuart Dunne to enquire about any details of the HERA project that may be relevant to RePAH.

## **5: Deep log analysis report**

Humbul have sent their data to CIBER. Artifact will provide any data required but need a specification. A report by CIBER has already been produced on the information provided by AHDS and RR will study this and report back to the committee on the findings.

**Action:** Jared B to send Jayne B specification of data required for analysis by CIBER.

**Action:** RR to review CIBER report on AHDS data and produce synopsis for RePAH Project Board.

## **6: Focus groups progress report**

Sheffield has had a number of successful focus groups and have already identified different functionalities required by the different subject areas within the Humanities. Further work is continuing.

De Montfort University were to carry out a number of focus groups within the practitioner arts, but have met with little co-operation. The practitioner arts community at Salford

University was also contacted, but a similar lack of response was received. Further investigation revealed that arts practitioners prefer to set up ad hoc, informal structures rather than use the perceived formal structure of a portal environment. It was reported that whilst a lot of ICT work within the practitioner arts was occurring, it was only loosely affiliated to a University and was mostly centred on the Arts Council.

Due to the lack of response from the practitioner arts sector, it was decided that one to one interviews may be more appropriate for the collection of data.

**Action:** RR to identify and interview a selection of practice-based artists.

## **7: Demonstrator development**

It was agreed that the scope of the demonstrator should include the previously discussed areas of VREs and Libraries.

Early indications point to a lack of imagination concerning what a portal can do. This problem may be overcome in the next development phase of the demonstrator by use of a series of scenarios whereby a variety of functions are necessary to complete the task in order to show the flexibility that can be achieved within a portal. This should include support for practice-based arts in the creation of work either individually or via collaboration with others. Currently the log analysis will provide us with indications of what people actually do, the focus groups should tell us what they want to do, the scenarios should show them what can be done and finally the demonstrator will illustrate this graphically.

It was noted that the functionalities required by the various subject areas preclude the development of a single demonstrator. It will be necessary to produce something that is relevant to each audience in order to focus on their particular individual set of functionalities and tested at a representative conference for each AHRB subject panel. This may require the development of something new, or the use of something already available. The feedback from this activity will inform the development of further demonstrators and will influence the development of the main aim of the RePAH project: a portal specification.

It was agreed that the rise in prominence of Google, not just as a search engine, but as a provider of a variety of services including an information gateway, mean that it should be taken into account within the report. A functional analysis of Google should also be undertaken and incorporated into the report.

**Action:** RR to send Jayne B and MG an invitation to obtain a Gmail account so that they can see the current developments that are only accessible via an Google account holder.

**Action:** DG to undertake a functional analysis of Google.

## **8: Delphi Forecasting**

The Delphi forecasting questionnaire will be targeted at a representative individual from each focus group as well as those who have answered the online questionnaire and provided their email addresses. This aspect of the project can only take place after the collections and synthesis of the earlier activities in order to produce a specification for a portal that can be used to elicit some form of iterative consent from the group.

Detailed drafting of the methodology to be employed will be developed at the project management meeting in March.

**Action:** SB to develop Delphi methodology for meeting in March.

## **9: Project outreach**

It was noted that after participation by MG/SB in the AHRB project strategy meeting, the Methods Network were prepared to become involved in our outreach activities.

It was agreed that the project needs to have input into the developments of E-Science and Grid computing within the arts and humanities. Tobias Elanke and Stuart Dunne could help as they are involved in the AHDS E-Science centre.

**Action:** MG to contact Stuart Dunne.

It was agreed that a paper/poster presentation was required for DRH 2006 which will be taking place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> September. Abstracts/Papers are required by the end of March.

**Action:** RR to submit poster proposal. SB and MG to consider paper proposal.

It was noted that JISCdevelopment and the AHDS newsletter can be used as information conduits for further dissemination of the project's results.

## **10: Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2006. It will take place at 11.00am in room 0.17 Portland Building, DMU, Leicester.

## **8: AOB**

It was noted that we do not yet know who had replaced Stuart Dunne.

It was agreed that all members of the Project Board should have access to the project wiki.

It was noted that if anything within the Humbul portlet development project has been produced, it would be of benefit RePAH to have access to it.

**Action:** MG to contact David Robey to enquire who has replaced Stuart Dunne.

**Action:** RR to provide all members of the Project Board with access to the project's wiki.

**Action:** Jayne B to enquire about Humbul portlet developments.