

Community Interest Group (CIG) Proposal Template

Working Group Name:

Digital Humanities Climate Coalition

Coordinators:

Dr James Baker, University of Southampton: [REDACTED]

Dr Christopher Ohge, School of Advanced Study, University of London:

[REDACTED]

Dr Lisa Otty, University of Edinburgh: [REDACTED]

Dr Jo Walton, University of Sussex: [REDACTED]

Potential participants:

Climate change is a universal concern and we would therefore expect this CIG to attract participation from a wide cross-section of the community. The Digital Humanities Climate Coalition was set up in late 2021 as a vehicle for collaborative activity and discussion on climate justice in relation to digital research practices. We have held two well-attended community workshops, with upwards of 30 participants each time, and currently have 64 people on our mailing list: participants from UK, Ireland and Northern Europe have represented a wide range of career stages and roles, including researchers, RSEs, GLAM professionals and funding organisations. Our network includes colleagues from the National University of Galway, University College Cork and the Royal Irish Academy, but we recognise the need to expand membership of the CIG to include and ensure leadership from Irish colleagues, and we commit to doing so. Likewise, while our current network includes non-HE colleagues from organisations such as the National Archives, British Library and The Leverhulme Trust, this could also be expanded significantly. Becoming a CIG within the UK-EIRE DH Association would give DHCC the platform to grow its membership: the CIG will be open to any interested member, and we will encourage broad engagement and work to make clear the relevance of the CIG and its activities to all members of the Association and the DH community.

Abstract (250 words):

The Digital Humanities Climate Coalition focuses on understanding and minimising the environmental impact of DH research. In response to the ongoing climate emergency, and considering its wider climate justice implications. We aim to: develop a clearer picture of the resource implications of digital humanities research; create resources that help researchers to make informed decisions about the impact of their work; support our institutions to adapt the services, processes, policies on which our research depends; influence funders and other key players to ensure climate responsibility is a key consideration in project planning. In 2022, the DHCC published '[A Researcher Guide to Writing a Climate Justice-Oriented Data Management Plan](#)' and the [Digital Humanities](#)

[Climate Coalition Toolkit](#), which collects resources to support researchers in trying to lower their carbon footprint and resource use.

The DHCC Community Interest Group supports these aims by holding workshops, events and a discussion forum to explore the environmental aspects of DH research practice. Through these community-led conversations the CIG will identify appropriate activities and support short term working groups to expand the toolkit and develop complementary materials, raise awareness of the need for climate conscious research practices, and build up a knowledge base of relevant resources for the Association's wider membership. We aim to be as open and inclusive a community group as possible, and we welcome contact from anyone with an interest in our activities. Please get in touch by writing to us at cdcs@ed.ac.uk.

Relevance (500-750 words):

"The digital is material. As digital humanists, every project we create, every software application we use, every piece of hardware we purchase impacts our environment. [...] As humanities researchers, it is also our role to probe the values, the power structures, and the future imaginaries that underpin sustainable solutions." [Digital Humanities and the Climate Crisis: A Manifesto](#)

The climate crisis is perhaps the one salient issue facing everyone in the 21st Century: no country, no community will remain untouched by the dramatic environmental changes that have been set in motion by human-induced global warming. The narrow window for meeting the international commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, has now all but closed. Digital technologies continue to contribute considerably to carbon emissions, roughly equivalent to the emissions of the aviation industry. Even in an optimistic scenario in which rapid decarbonisation does occur, we can still expect a hotter world with more volatile and extreme weather, sea level rises, and a variety of other impacts on human and Earth systems. In this context, it is critical that people understand the issues and can make informed decisions about their own carbon footprint and the impact of their choices. This includes embedding sustainability within our curricula, both within DH and more broadly. Yet it can be incredibly difficult to get a clear picture of the real impact of our research, our teaching and learning, and our other activities, and it is not easy to grasp the relative benefits of the various changes and adaptations we could make. On one hand digital technology seems to present opportunities to cut carbon costs through virtual spaces and paperless environments, but on the other hand energy consumption and e-waste are growing issues, and the supply chains on which hardware production depends are obscure. Decarbonising the digital gives rise not only to technical questions, but also political and ethical ones, and the DH community—at the intersection of digital technology and critical humanistic enquiry—is well-placed to contribute to research and debates around these issues.

The DHCC CIG will form a space in which the DH community in the UK and Ireland can come together to consider their work and activities in the light of the climate crisis, to support one another in learning about the issues, considering our responsibilities, and understanding how to act as change agents within our discipline, our institutions and our sector. It will support the digital humanities community to develop climate responsible practices, through gathering and making accessible relevant resources and through advocating for consideration of the issues by university administration, funders, and research partners.

Aims & Activities (500-750 words):

Since its outset the DHCC has been a community-guided initiative, with an open and inclusive ethos: we are trying to raise awareness, stimulate engagement and generate action across the DH community so the more openly we can work, and the more people that we can engage, the better. In this sense the foundational aims and activities of the DHCC CIG align well with the core values of the Association.

CIG Aims & Activities:

- Offer a space for community discussion and reflection on the issues

The DHCC has an email list and an informal open meeting which both provide opportunities to gather views, discuss issues and explore ideas, as well as spaces to share knowledge and experiences across career stages, projects, institutions and sectors. We have also held community workshops where we have generated ideas, and identified priorities and potential activities. Through these mechanisms the DHCC is able to identify the priorities and needs of the community and focus energy on the activities and resources that are most important to its members. As a CIG, we will advertise these events to the Association members and encourage sign up to our mailing list. These activities do not require much resource: meetings have been online, and ad hoc support has provided by the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Data, Culture & Society and the Sussex Humanities Lab so far. We envisage an optional time commitment of about 1hr per month from CIG members.

- Investigate ecological impact and develop resources for research and pedagogy

The DHCC has already developed open access publications to pool and share information and ideas on various ways in which researchers can consider environmental issues as a part of their work. A key primary activity of the CIG would be to expand and develop the DHCC resources, focusing in the first instance on the DHCC Tool Kit. At a recent community meeting, several potential avenues for tool kit development were discussed including decision trees and resources for teaching and we would expect the CIG members to be contributing to and supporting this work. Such work could go in many directions, and we would expect it to be led by the specific interests of individuals members of the CIG. At our last meeting, there was particular interest in exploring the pedagogical potential of DHCC resources and this is something we would be keen to explore within the CIG. This is likely to be the most resource intensive activity of the CIG, and we would hope to enlist volunteers

from CIG membership as well as taking advantage of opportunities for internships and short term project opportunities which present themselves to members via their institutions and organisations. We would hope to work with the Association to offer work around this activity as a development opportunity for early career researchers. A recently submitted UKRI HEIF bid, if successful, will also provide opportunities for ECRs to develop DHCC resources on a funded basis and in collaboration with partners within the sustainable IT consulting sector.

- Raise awareness, build partnerships and advocate for climate-justice oriented project planning

As well as supporting researchers and research groups, DHCC aims to develop a conversation around climate responsible research with institutions and fundings bodies, who have a strong influence on research norms and behaviour. We have established a connection with the UKRI Net Zero project, and the Leverhulme Trust and the AHRC have shown an interest in our work. As a CIG, we will try to deepen these connections and forge new ones, leveraging our relationship with the Association and its network to do so. The parameters of this work will again be guided by the CIG membership.

- Establish a sustainable and inclusive working model

We hope that becoming a CIG will encourage a broader membership and help us to enlist more volunteers and active participants to ensure the longer term sustainability of DHCC. With sustainability and inclusivity in mind, our first action as a CIG will be to develop a constitution document that sets out clearly how the CIG will be managed, and offers clear channels for others to take on leadership capacity.