

Working Group Name:

Please choose a name for your group that reflects its aims.

Protecting the Investigator in Traumatic Research Areas (PETRA)

Coordinators:

*In order to ensure groups are sustainable, we ask that each proposal name at least two (and no more than four) coordinators. Please include their **name, institution (if applicable), and email address**. These people will be the main point of contact for the group.*

We encourage applications that reflect the geographic and institutional diversity of DH in the UK and Ireland – applications that include coordinators from both Ireland and the UK will be viewed favourably.

Vicky Garnett (Trinity College Dublin / DARIAH-EU), [REDACTED]
Kristen Schuster (King's College London) [REDACTED]

Potential participants:

Who do you think will be interested in participating in this group? Some ways to think about who might be interested include: people at particular career stages (graduate students, early career researchers), people working in particular institutions (universities, start-ups, GLAM), or people working in particular roles (research software engineers, exhibit designers, project managers). You could also consider who might be interested in the question or issue the group addresses.

This community interest group will recruit participants who are active in digital humanities research and practice as well as GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector practitioners. Over an initial eighteen month period, we will aim to facilitate networking and collaboration in order to develop sustainable good practices for conducting research in traumatic and sensitive subject matter. We envision working with colleagues across DH areas (e.g. spatial humanities, text editing, digital editions, minimal computing etc.) and a range of collections managers, curators and data managers working across GLAM organisations such as archives, special collections and museums. Researchers from Trinity College Dublin and King's College London have been approached and expressed interest, and contacts have been initiated with colleagues in the Digital Repository of Ireland. The Co-chairs will also approach their contacts in Universities in Ireland and the UK to invite participation. Furthermore, list-servs within the Digital Humanities sector in the UK and Ireland are to be used to disseminate information and recruit CIG participants. As a group we will do more than review existing ethical standards developed in more traditional GLAM and Humanities settings. Our goal is to leverage interdisciplinary practices that make DH unique, and connect these practices with the complexities of documents, media and methods that affect approaches to research and scholarly communication that depend on GLAM collections and (born) digital content. The outputs would be useful to those at management level within a research team (project managers, Principal Investigators, PhD supervisors) to help them recognise potential areas of trauma to members of their

team, as well as symptoms of trauma, and take appropriate steps to mitigate and assist where appropriate.

Abstract (250 words):

Please provide a short summary of the group. Think about the text that would go on the 'About' page of the group's website.

The '*Protecting the Investigator in Traumatic Research Areas*' working group (PETRA) focuses on the development, dissemination and adoption of universal best practice guidelines to support researchers working in areas of Digital Humanities where there is potential for secondary trauma, such as (but not limited to) genocide studies, issues around hate-crimes, and historical or contemporary discrimination or persecution. Over an 18-month period, the working group aims to facilitate collaborative strategies for ethical and introspective research with colleagues across a range of disciplines and sectors in the UK and Ireland that engage in DH work and research (e.g. spatial humanities, text editing, digital editions, minimal computing etc.). This will also include a range of collections managers, curators and data managers working across GLAM organisations such as archives, special collections and museums. As a community interest group, we will review current practices in place to address mental health needs among researchers and practitioners at all career levels, and identify any gaps in the sector regarding knowledge of the phenomenon among those that may be impacted by it. We will achieve this through a combination of desk research, consultation exercises, and a workshop where researchers and practitioners can share experiences and strategies for working in fields where secondary trauma is a possibility. Ultimately, our aim is to determine a set of Best Practice Guidelines that can be made available and disseminated among those working in DH in the UK and Ireland, with a further option for developing training resources to support their adoption and implementation.

Relevance (500-750 words):

Please explain the reasons behind forming this group. What community of practice, research question or salient issue does it address? How do you see it contributing to the digital humanities community in Ireland and the UK?

PLEASE NOTE: while the details of some of the studies discussed here are not fully disclosed within this section, some of the references cited do relate to domestic violence, sexual abuse, victims of suicide and victims of violent acts.

"The importance of imagination creates a double bind for the historian: The more fervent, precise, or visionary their reconstructions of the past, and the more completely they immerse themselves, the more harshly they may be wounded by what they study." (Robins, 2021).

There is an abundance of research on vicarious trauma in the social science and clinical practice fields (see e.g. Bell et al., 2003; Branson, 2019; Kadambi & Ennis, 2004) and, increasingly, other fields of research have acknowledged and taken steps to support

researchers and practitioners working with traumatic materials in either historical or contemporary contexts. Traditionally, the humanities is one such field, especially those working with items related to traumatic events such as genocide and colonial histories. Studies and publications about vicarious or secondary trauma are frequently self-reflective and based in personal experience (see e.g. Astill, 2018; Calgaro, 2015; Dominey-Howes, 2015; Drozdowski, 2015; Russell, 2018) or take a more objective approach, recognising the experiences of others (e.g. Goldenberg, 2002; Robins, 2021). Since the 1970s, guidelines for research good practices and codes of conduct like the Belmont Report (1978) have established the impetus for academic disciplines to develop discipline tailored standards for ethical research; however, such standards do not emphasise the complexities of interdisciplinary collaborations and potential international scope of digital infrastructures. As an inherently interdisciplinary field the digital humanities (DH) is a space where researchers and practitioners can revisit traditional humanities disciplinary standards for ethics, and expand upon forms of research so they are inclusive, ethical and sustainable. As a community interest group we will focus on understanding forms of trauma that may emerge during research that uses DH methods. We will encourage a range of research areas that include practice-based work from a variety of institutional and academic perspectives. For instance, we would reach out to colleagues working in archives such as King's College London Special Collections, The National Archives and the Weiner Holocaust Library because they have strong ties with DH infrastructures and projects that examine historical records on colonialism, forced migration and slavery. We would invite recommendations on scoping and networking with additional archives, DH research initiatives and teaching programmes. This would ensure that we develop a professional network that would develop insights on the strategies and methods used to manage day-to-day encounters with complex and fraught data and also encourage discussions about engaging with users to provide context and support for researchers working with these collections.

It is known that GLAM sector practitioners also run the risk of suffering secondary trauma when handling and managing difficult data (e.g. Laurent & Wright, 2020; Regehr et al., 2023). In addition to historical trauma, ongoing work into social subjects can have the potential to trigger trauma, or have other negative impacts. A notable example includes the 'Gamergate' research conducted around the issue of abuse and hate-speech, particularly towards women, via online social media platforms, which in turn had a negative impact on those researching the data (Suomela et al., 2019). Within Ireland, the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) holds collections relating to digital campaigns on websites, news sites and social media surrounding the Referendum on the 8th Amendment, held in 2018 to determine whether or not to change the Irish Constitution to enable legislation that would allow legal abortion in the Republic of Ireland. The discussion and debates in traditional and digital media, particularly social media, in the lead up to the referendum were passionate and highly emotional. The DRI's 'Archiving the 8th' project (<https://www.dri.ie/archiving-reproductive-health>) captures and archives these digital campaign materials from websites and social media. As part of this project, the research team recognised that the materials they were collecting had potential to cause both primary and secondary trauma, particularly given the very strong feelings expressed on social media during the campaign. As a result,

the team developed research protocols (Digital Repository of Ireland, 2022) that included ensuring self-care and recognising physical and mental symptoms of trauma, and how to both prevent and tackle them. The development of these protocols is very important, but it is very project-specific, thus highlighting the dearth of supportive resources available to cultural heritage practitioners and researchers using digital cultural heritage materials within difficult or traumatic subject areas that have the potential to cause harm.

Approaches and methods have been proposed in order to address and prevent secondary trauma among those working with challenging and traumatic materials (e.g. Bober & Regehr, 2006; Hummel & Kurd, 2021). Steps proposed for those working in the counselling and therapy sector include peer support, work-load management and some manner of escapism through non-violent feel-good entertainment (e.g. Astin, 1997; Iliffe & Steed, 2000). Knowledge of such techniques among researchers working in academic settings, however, is not so widespread, particularly among early-career researchers, and can rely on ad hoc training events rather than an integrated approach as part of a wider discussion of methodological practices.

To support inclusive and sustainable research about identities, histories and politics, this community interest group will investigate good practices for acknowledging and negotiating research and work that may cause secondary trauma. Our aim is to facilitate collaborative strategies for ethical and introspective research across a range of disciplines and sectors in the UK and Ireland that engage in DH work and research. As a community interest group, we will review current practices in place to address mental health needs among researchers and practitioners at all career levels, and identify any gaps in the sector regarding knowledge of the phenomenon among those that may be impacted by it. Ultimately, our aim is to determine a set of Best Practice Guidelines that can be made available and disseminated among those working in DH in the UK and Ireland.

We will prioritise disseminating guidelines developed during the first eighteen months of community interest group activity. At the same time, we will remain open to scoping and member-driven initiatives for continued work on good practice guidelines and resources for research. This therefore opens up the possibility to expand the community interest group and potentially develop a more long-term working group that draws in expertise not only from the UK and Ireland, but also from Europe. Here we would plan to take advantage of Ireland's existing membership, and the UK's potential (at the time of this application) members of DARIAH to develop an official DARIAH Working Group to both disseminate the UK/IE guidelines, ensure their continued accuracy and relevance, and of course ensure their sustainability.

Aims & Activities (500-750 words):

Please explain a few of the aims you have for the group and the activities you anticipate it will run. Possible aims and activities could include: experimenting with a new technology, creating a set of best practices, or coordinating activism around a specific issue. Goals and activities should be concrete and achievable.

Please make it clear how these aims and activities advance the Core Values of the Association.

Please reflect on issues of sustainability. How much time will be required to reach these aims or deliver these activities? Will these require additional funding or resources? Are there existing organisations that you could partner with to reach the group's goals?

We will discuss strategies researchers and practitioners can deploy to recognise traumatic research themes and topics, and bring the risks and challenges of ethical and sustainable research on these topics and themes. These discussions will help us develop a series of best practice guidelines and tools to support DH and GLAM researchers and practitioners and strategies for communicating with line managers and project leaders.

The outputs of such a group would be made openly available to all those working in the UK and Ireland who wish to use them, as well as being made available further afield as training materials and resources on the DARIAH-Campus platform, thus ensuring long-term sustainability and open access.

Timeline

The work proposed for this CIG requires constant monitoring to ensure best practice, and we propose an 18 month timeline that will balance desk research with discussion, summary and reporting.

- Developing CIG leadership roles (Months 1-3)
Concurrent with initial desk research, we will develop leadership roles that will promote cooperative activity planning and enhance member engagement.
 - Month 1: Develop a call for expressions of interest in the CIG that includes a statement on available leadership roles and also includes a proposed set of activities for the group (e.g. guided readings, CIG networking events, research sharing or methods workshop). Information about the CIG to be sent through the UK/IE list serv, as well as SHARP, SCONUL, UKRI and relevant CILIP list-servs, ARLIS list-servs, DARIAH-IE listservs
 - Month 2: Compile a list of expressions of interest and coordinate a system for developing responsibilities and action items for leadership roles.
 - Month 3: Coordinate a general CIG meeting for introductions and discussions for activity planning and networking
- Ethics approval and risk assessment (Months 1-5)
 - We will scope and develop research risk assessment and ethical approval at our respective institutions (TCD and KCL)
- Desk Research (Months 2-6)
 - A Zotero Library will be built and made publicly available (indeed, the references within this proposal form the genesis of this).

- Anonymous Online Survey (Months 7-9)
 - Coordinate CIG sessions:
 - One session will present the opportunity for CIG members to discuss their research interests and to discuss their contributions to desk research.
 - One session will be a strategic planning session to delegate responsibilities for developing and circulating an anonymous survey that will feed into good practice guidelines the CIG will propose.
 - Draft anonymous survey and circulate for CIG member review and feedback
 - Circulate survey (one month)
 - Analyse responses (one month)
 - Discuss findings amongst CIG members

- Drafting up Best Practice guidelines (Months 9-13)
 - Coordinate CIG session for expressions of interest to lead activities relating to drafting best practices
 - Draft best practice guidelines (2 months)
 - Open draft for feedback by CIG members (1 month)
 - Revise draft (1 month)

- Online Workshop to present on and gain feedback on the draft Best Practice Guidelines (Months 9-13)
 - Coordinate CIG session for expressions of interest to lead activities relating to workshop coordinating
 - Identify dates and platforms for event
 - Develop draft agenda and event structure for review by CIG
 - Develop platform/mechanism for feedback and comments from event participants
 - Circulate information about the event
 - Revise draft (1 month)

- Developing Training and Dissemination (Months 10-17)

In conjunction with the drafting of the best practice guidelines, a training and dissemination strategy will be developed based on responses to the anonymous survey. This will inform the training resources to be developed around the best practice guidelines, and the techniques and paths used to disseminate them to the most appropriate audiences.

 - Identify training needs from survey responses
 - Identify the best pedagogical means to communicate best practices
 - Draft up training materials e.g. leaflets, short videos, recorded webinars / workshops

- Revision and final draft of Best Practice guidelines (Months 14-17)
 - Coordinate CIG session for workshop reflection and expressions of interest to contribute to revision process
 - Revise best practice guidelines (2 months)
 - Open draft for feedback by CIG members (1 month)

- Finalise guidelines (2 months)
- Publishing Guidelines and Training Materials (Month 18)
 - Publish to UK/IE DH Association website
 - Further publish to DARIAH-Campus
- Identifying possible scope for future work (Month 18)
 - Coordinate CIG session for discussion of next steps and future planning

References

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