

British Library Labs Experiment with our Digital Collections

Getting Started: A 2016 Digital Humanities Guide

Getting Started - A BL Labs Digital Humanities Guide 2016

Introduction

Digital Humanities. *'The humanities done digitally'* (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

Click on Jason Heplers innovative site, ['What is Digital Humanities?'](#), hit the refresh button and each time a new definition of this evolving realm will appear. Emerging from Roberto Busa's 30 year project, the 1946 [Index Thomisticus](#), the expanding field of digital humanities has become an exciting, much discussed and even notorious topic. Be it discipline or method, the synergy of technology and scholarly research at scale includes, *'not only the computational modelling and analysis of humanities information but also the cultural study of digital technologies, their creative possibilities, and their social impact'* ([Schreibman et al., 2016](#)).

This guide has been created to help interested parties wishing to engage with the British Library Digital Collections. You may be a seasoned scholar needing up to date links to information relevant to both British Library Labs and the digital humanities field or an enthusiastic novice, inspired by the possibilities of big data, wishing to know more about the context in which Labs exist and work, looking to grasp whether or not this opportunity is viable for you as a beginner in the field.

Included are a range of links to popular literature, organisations, project repositories, people lists, tools, lectures, courses and content created by the Labs team with easy click to view start points to navigate at speed. Alternately use the space bar to walk through each page. The order of resources reflect in some ways the workflow of research and with the exception of some books, all content is accessible online. As per the nature of this rapidly moving field, this guide is by no means definitive, but attempts to offer some essential and robust national and international points of reference for our potential audiences.

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Existing Guides in the Digital Humanities and Scholarship Domain

The following web and book based guides were selected as the most relevant and active on which to build this 2016 snapshot. Most resources naturally cross reference each other. This guide attempts to check working links, assess and lift all relevant resources for re-organisation into a user friendly, effective, manageable document for enthusiastic, digitally acquainted beginners. However, the reason for their inclusion here is to offer a contrast of styles and content for those who may want to investigate further.

Web Guides The following online guides are currently supported.

[DH Toychest: Digital Humanities Resources for Project Building](#) (2016) A vast, active wiki that includes the tools, tutorials, and resources from Professor Alan Liu, University of California.

[University of Connecticut \(UConn\) Libraries Digital Scholarship Guide](#) (2015) This LibGuide was developed alongside digital scholarship workshops for the library staff at the University of Connecticut Libraries. It has a manageable, sectioned layout across the Humanities and Scholarship landscape.

[Digital Humanities in Libraries \(American Libraries Special Report\)](#) (2016) An academic libraries survey and focus on the evolving provision for DH and a very handy 'at a glance' resource column guide mid-way in the article under 'Additional Resources.'

[History Online](#) An easy to use, searchable database for literature, projects and digital tools from The Institute of Historical Research, UK.

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Archive Web Guides The following links are regularly cited as they are both accessible and great for newcomers but are now unsupported. Please note that the much cited art-humanities.net is no longer available.

[Digital Humanities Where to start](#) (2012) A potted history of the time from Jennifer L. Adams and Kevin B. Gunn, with a resource list related to digital humanities and again, more broadly, digital scholarship.

[The CUNY Digital Humanities Resource Guide](#) (2010) A comprehensive and well organised set of wiki pages by the City University of New York.

[Getting Started in Digital Humanities](#) (2011) [Lisa Spiro](#)'s list of resources and suggestions are down to earth and motivating. Links may be older but they are still very valid for inspiring momentum for newcomers such as the excellent [Digital History](#) 2005 online text.

Printed Guides

[A New Companion to Digital Humanities](#), (2016) Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth (Ed)
ISBN: 978-1118-680599 The latest revised and restructured volume to the original 2004 edition below. This new collection aims to give multiple insights to contemporary issues within topics, technology and current practice from an international team of domain leaders.

[A Companion to Digital Humanities](#) (2004) Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth (Ed)
ISBN: 978-1405103213 The original 'textbook' that was popularly assigned to DH courses and later made available freely online. It's structured, scholarly style includes a chronology of the relationship between digital and traditional humanities and domain developments in principles and practice via multiple authors.

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Key Texts – Books

[Debates in the Digital Humanities](#) (2016) Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Ed), ISBN: 978-0816699537 A very much awaited update on the original 2012 print and open access edition. A multi-author dialogue through the many issues and opinions in a developing and often controversial domain. Also due for open access publication by May 2016.

[Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader](#) (2013) Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan, Edward Vanhoutte ISBN: 978-1409469636 Choice blogs, essays and conference talks on the nature of digital humanities with a further informative website and reading list.

[Understanding Digital Humanities](#) (2012) David M. Berry (Ed), ISBN: 978-0230292659 Discusses computational methods such as algorithmic techniques and ongoing traditional versus technological issues.

[Digital Humanities](#) (2012) Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner and Jeffrey Schnapp, ISBN: 978-0262018470 (open access version also available) Five US authors attempt a collaborative work on the value of digital methods in a contemporary presentation. Mixed reviews but well worth checking out.

[Digital Humanities in Practice](#) (2012) Claire Warwick, Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan, ISBN: 978-1856047661 A popular text for newcomers presenting a range of topics and project case studies from the University College London's Centre for Digital Humanities (UCLDH). Includes focus on user studies and social media.

[Humanities Computing](#) (2005) Willard McCarty, ISBN 978-1137440426 Popular but not for the faint-hearted, McCarthy provides a scholarly, philosophical argument as to the validity of technology within the humanities.

[Practical Digital Preservation: A how-to guide for organizations of any size](#) (2013) Adrian Brown, ISBN 978-1856047555 An accessible taster to these undoubtedly essential practices.

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Key Texts – Online

[Debates in the Digital Humanities](#) (2012) Matthew K. Gold's 2016 precursor, 42 authors engage in academic, dynamic conversations on the contemporary arguments within the domain, including Matthew Kirschenbaum's 'What Is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in English Departments?'. A great online reading platform with collective annotations.

[Digital Humanities in Libraries: New Models for Scholarly Engagement](#) (2013) A collated set of articles by the Journal of Library Administration concerning the implications evolving within digital humanities and scholarship in relationship to research libraries. Individually accessible online, or access a number of links and author [Micah Vandegriff's publishing story](#)

Journals

Digital Humanities journal publications are predominantly online with the exception of 'DSH: Digital Scholarship in the Humanities' which is both in print and online.

Both the [Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations](#) (ADHO) and [Association for Computers and the Humanities](#) (ACH) fund, publish or are affiliated to the following set of peer reviewed open access academic journals

[Digital Humanities Quarterly](#) (2007 -). ACH's open-access journal of digital humanities, supported by ACH and ADHO membership fees. Scholarly articles, opinion and reviews of literature, media and tools.

[DSH: Digital Scholarship in the Humanities](#) (1986 -) Formerly known as Literary & Linguistic Computing (LLC), this is the ADHO flagship journal, published by Oxford University Press. A focus on research project description, results and evaluation.

[Digital Studies/Le champ numérique](#): The multilingual, open-access journal from the Canadian Society of Digital Humanities.

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Journals continued

[DHCommons](#) An online international journal from [centerNet](#), focussing on peer reviewing projects that are in progress to aid transparency and improve access to knowledge on theories and methods in DH work. Also links to recent evaluation frameworks concerning digital scholarship and the issues generated.

[Frontiers in Digital Humanities](#) A 'community-run' open access journal hosted by Frontiers, a Swiss publishing enterprise, Frontiers in DH is the newest of their 12 titles.

[Digital Humanities Now](#) A contemporary publishing model aggregating open access scholarly content, including 'gray literature' such as research reports, essays and presentations.

[The Journal of Digital Humanities](#) has operated since 2012 by sifting content from the "Editors' Choice" pieces selected for the [Digital Humanities Now](#) aggregator of online open access scholarship. Currently, content activity appears to have ceased.

[Journal of the Text Encoding Initiative](#) Publishing papers from the annual [TEI Conference and Members' Meeting](#) with occasional has special issues based around contemporary themes.

[Journal of Digital and Media Literacy](#) Publishing research articles, opinion and digital project and tool reviews.

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Project Repositories Projects will be dispersed throughout institutional websites, however the following provides a taster list.

[DH Commons](#) A popular, expansive registry of projects and collaborators on a user friendly, CenterNet site.

[The National Endowment for the Humanities](#) (NEH) A repository of digital projects and content by one of the largest funding organisations in the US.

[BL Labs Competition Pages](#) Don't forget BL Labs' own list of past and present competition entries for ideas in getting started.

[UCLDH Research Portfolio](#) A list of past and present projects from UCL.

[Digital Humanities Network](#) Digital ventures to browse via theme, people or project.

[Digging into Data](#) The Digging into Data Awards program has a huge list of data repositories and a report on projects and methods.

[British Library Digital Collections](#) A summary and links from the BL Labs webpage.

Project Knowledge

['What Digital Humanists Do'](#) (2013) An excellent, straightforward description of project types and examples of each given by [Paige Morgan](#), co-founder of the support site 'Demystifying Digital Humanities.'

['How to get a digital humanities project off the ground'](#) (2014) Also by Paige Morgan, with some handy advice for newcomers in terms of avoiding pitfalls and understanding the trickier parts of project management.

['How Did They Make That?'](#) (2013) In tandem with Paige's beginner project guides, [Miriam Posner](#)'s blog post effectively deconstructs projects in a reverse process to help understand component parts. Also view the related [field guide](#) video.

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Project Knowledge continued

[LAIRAH checklist](#) (2013) UCL's at-a-glance reminder of best practice principles on ensuring rigour and quality during the ideas process.

[TaDiRAH: Building Capacity for Integrated Access](#) (2014) Also helpful here is the article by [dh+lib](#) on the taxonomy developed by Digital Research Infrastructure for Arts and Humanities (DARIAH-DE) and DiRT Directory (DiRT). This Taxonomy aims to introduce a user friendly, standard to DH project description and accessibility online. The lists of activities, objects, and techniques can be explored via GitHub [here](#).

[TEI: Text Encoding Initiative](#) TEI is a consortium which collectively develops and maintains a standard for the representation of encoded, machine readable texts. An Open Access text by TEI Editor Lou Burnard [here](#).

Tool Directories

[Digital Research Tools \(DiRT\) Directory](#) The DiRT Directory is a highly regarded, registry and aggregation service of digital research tools, widely supported within the international DH community. Originally developed from Lisa Spiro's DiRT wiki into [Project Bamboo](#) and "Bamboo DiRT," the DiRT Directory's ongoing popularity arises from detailed, granularly searchable tool profiles and a user friendly, 'research activity filter' approach developed from TaDiRAH.. Anyone can create an account and add new tools to DiRT. One small thing to note is that the Directory's filter boxes refresh on each selection so user flow can sometimes feel a little jolted.

[TAPoR v 2.5](#) (2014) TAPoR is a database of just under 500 tools used in text analysis and retrieval, tagged by activity. Currently TAPoR is migrating to a newer version, [TAPoR 3.0](#) aiming for a more dynamic feel and granular search, consequently parts of this site are still under construction.

[The Digital Methods Initiative](#) A multi-funded Internet Studies group creating tools for repurposing device platforms such as Twitter and Google.

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BL Labs Toolkit

In addition to searching the tool directories and in homage to the taxonomy from TaDiRAH, Labs have compiled some summarising links for familiar methods and software commonly used by the projects and researchers. This will be reviewed regularly.

Capture

[Digital Humanities at Berkeley](#) The latter half of this Berkeley DH webpage sums up some common OCR and conversion tools for these activities.

[Pandoc](#) A versatile, supported universal document converter.

[‘Scraping the web’](#) An excellent document by [Chris Hanretty](#), University of East Anglia.

[Audacity](#) A free, multi-language, audio editor and recorder with [great reviews](#).

Creation

[Omeka](#) A free, well supported, user friendly content management system with documentation and plug-ins, enabling professional curation and presentation.

[Google Drive](#) (& Google Docs) Create, manage, convert and store content with Google’s easy, free cloud platform.

Enrichment

[OpenRefine](#) A top, versatile tool to clean up messy data and transforming format. Entry level guides from Owen Stephens and Thomas Padilla’s [here](#).

[Zotero](#) Collect, manage references and add media attachments to build searchable research collections on this popular open source, free software.

[TEI Boilerplate](#) A simple tool to produce TEI XML described content, compatible with Omeka.

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BL Labs Tool Basics continued

Analysis

[Voyant Tools](#) Voyant Tools is a web-based reading and analysis environment for digital texts.

[GEPHI - The Open Graph Viz Platform](#) Gephi is an interactive visualization and exploration platform for all kinds of networks and complex systems, dynamic and hierarchical graphs. Well supported with tutorials, plug-ins and a user forum.

[Timemapper](#) is a javascript tool which produces beautiful timelines using various data sources

[Google Chart Tools](#) Easily adaptable from entry level to advanced needs.

[Neatline](#) A free suite of add-on tools for Omeka that allows users to tell stories with maps and timelines.

Interpretation

[MALLET](#) Topic modelling software for large corpora providing a means of 'distant reading' analysis by attempting to identify patterns or topics in word usage. Shawn Graham, Scott Weingart and Ian Milligan's introduction lesson can be found [here](#)

Dissemination

[Storify](#) A platform from which to pull content from multiple social media sites to build an engaging narrative.

[Crowdcrafting](#) is a tool for crowdsourcing tasks, e.g. image classification, transcription, geo-coding to name a few.

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BL Labs Resources

In addition to the main website, the following range of links give a taste of useful content built up by Labs since 2013.

Slideshare

The latest presentations from [2016 roadshows](#) promoting the competition, detailing [individual projects](#) and further information on the [Library's engagement with digital scholarship](#) generally.

Labs YouTube Playlist

Footage from the annual [Labs Symposium](#) featuring presentations from the competition and award winners plus some useful lecture shorts on digital tools from visiting experts including:

- [Sam Leon](#), formerly of [Open Knowledge Foundation](#) on [OpenGLAM Culture Lab](#) using Crowdcrafting, Timemapper and Pundit.
- [Tony Hirst](#), Open University on [working with datasets](#) using Open Refine, RStudio, Google Chart Tools and Gephi. Plus access to his [slideshare](#)

In addition, there are an interesting range of BL User profile shorts on [Made with the British Library](#) and a number of case study shorts of researchers, including competition winners from the BL Labs YouTube channel.

GitHub and Mini-NAS Storage

The Labs project generates a number of software tools and development and these are hosted on the [Labs Github](#) site. For Lab's portable big data onsite or on location, the [Mini-NAS guide](#) describes the range of datasets and access instructions.

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Organisations

[Arts and Humanities Research Council](#) A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills public body funding peer reviewed research applications.

[Andrew Mellon Foundation](#) Funding research and supporting excellent practice in it's mission to promote access to cultural knowledge and heritage for the enrichment of all.

[Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes](#) (CHCI) An extensive, global network for the collaborative development of knowledge and best practice within humanities centres and institutes. The Digital Humanities Network is one of 6 groups in the membership, for which the site holds a [useful directory](#) that can be filtered by region.

[School of Advanced Study](#) The University of London's community of 9 institutions to form a national centre for the promotion of humanities research, providing events, digital resources, networks and education.

[Cambridge Digital Humanities Network](#) Part of CHCI consortium of research institutions hosted by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH)

[UCL Centre for Digital Humanities](#) UCL's Centre has been supporting research, projects, communities and engagement since 2010. Their 2012 infographic [Quantifying Digital Humanities](#) is great for newcomers.

[Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations](#) ADHO promotes and supports digital research and teaching across all arts and humanities disciplines, acting as a community-based advisory force, and supporting excellence in research, publication, collaboration and training.

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Support and Engagement continued

Organisations

[Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory](#) The HASTAC alliance of more than 13,000 interdisciplinary academics work together to 'transform the future of learning'.

[H-Net Commons Humanities and Social Sciences Online](#) H-Net is an international Digital Humanities Hub developing the educational potential of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Networks, peer reviewed essays, multimedia resources and forums.

[CenterNet](#) An international network of digital humanities centres for sharing expertise and rigour, underpinned by the [DHCommons](#) platform plus a focus on supporting more isolated projects with initiatives such as [Day\(s\) of DH](#). UK centres are UCL, King's College and Oxford University.

Communities

[Digital Humanities Questions & Answers](#) [ACH's](#) active, community-based forum, very receptive to newcomer's.

[Humanist](#): Running since 1987, a listserv style international discussion group edited by Willard McCarty.

[dh+lib](#) Rather like the 'news' publishing model used by 'Digital Humanities Now,' dh+lib represent the ideas and collaboration of digital research and libraries in all their endeavours.

[TEI Discussion List](#) An active listserv forum from the TEI site. Subscription on the main TEI site

[Digital Medievalist](#) An example of a more specialised, successful community with a busy events calendar and journal.

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Blogs and Social Media

[Day of Digital Humanities](#) An international publication project to bring the DH community together to share personal definitions of digital humanities and document activities bringing individual blogging to one website.

The following of humanities professionals, organisations and groups are blog sites on which any social media links will be apparent. This is just a small slice of the wealth of expertise and support available for the domain.

[‘The DH network on Twitter’](#) Martin Grandjean’s useful blogpost on DH twitter scene.

| National | | International | |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Melissa Terras | James Baker | Trevor Owens | Miriam Posner |
| Mia Ridge | Tim Hitchcock | Dan Cohen | Kathleen Fitzpatrick |
| Ben O’Steen | Mahendra Mahey | Lisa Spiro | ADHO |
| Andrew Prescott | Open University | Geoffrey Rockwell | NEH |
| BL Digital Scholarship | UCLDH | DH List | NYPL Labs |
| CRASSH | Charles Beagrie | DHNow | DHLab |
| Sussex Labs | Edinburgh Labs | Frederick Kaplan | Martin Grandjean |

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Conferences and Competitions

[BL Labs Competition and Awards](#) All practical details for the annual competition and awards from the BL Labs homepage.

[Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities \(CRASSH\)](#) Cambridge University's conference listing and events link.

[Digital Humanities](#) ADHO's annual conference listing.

[THATCamp](#) With UK and European dates alongside many in the US, the Humanities and Technology Camp's well known 'unconference' is a hands-on, informal meet up of DH enthusiasts seeking and providing expertise, in a collaborative working and building environment.

[Digging into Data Challenge](#) Focussing on 'Big Data,' this internationally funded awards competition has been running since 2009. Compiled resources include a comprehensive data repository listing and a 2012 report documenting the projects and methods regarding large corpora, to support future research models.

[DH Awards](#) An annual, community commendation on set categories of work within the domain, stewarded by an international committee.

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Links for Learning

[The Programming Historian](#) A peer reviewed set of technology related 'walk-through' lessons covering common topics for the newcomer with content from BL's Digital Scholarship network.

[The Geospatial Historian](#) A sister site to The Programming Historian, the Geospatial Historian covers digital mapping and GIS skills.

[Coursera](#) An online course hosting platform with a diverse range of subjects including many computer/ data science topics from respectable academic sources. Courses are free in return for peer review participation with certification offered for a fee.

[An Introduction to Digital Humanities](#) For those looking for an online textbook, UCLA's 2014 resource from their original course led by Jonanna Druker is thoroughly structured and available as a [PDF download](#).

[Beyond Digital Humanities: Skills, Application and Collaboration](#) Melissa Terras' lecture reflecting on her recent keynotes and getting started in DH from DH2014, Oxford University Summer School podcasts.

[University of Oxford Podcasts](#) A valuable set of digital humanities lectures can be accessed from this site.

[Text Encoding Initiative \(TEI\)](#) The TEI website link for a training events calendar and free online learning resources including understanding XML.

[Codecademy](#) A versatile, popular site aiming to make learning code interactive and inclusive. Free tutorials cover coding and mark up languages to equip users in creating websites, apps, animation and games.

[Institute of Historical Research Courses](#) The IHR offers a wide variety of free face to face and online courses (via SAS) for digital research skills.

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Data Management

[Data Management](#) Cambridge University has produced a straight forward resource covering the more pedantic but necessary procedures for maintaining a high quality, sustainable project before, during and after development.

[Digital Preservation Handbook](#) The Digital Preservation Coalition's (DPC) handbook gives further insight and guidance to help make '*our digital memory accessible tomorrow.*' Compiled by Neil Beagrie and Maggie Jones in 2001 and maintained and updated by the DPC.

[Digital Project Life Cycle and Workflow](#) A combined infographic and best practice action plan resource from Indiana University.

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