

# Digital Humanities Centre Blogs as a Form of Scholarly Communication

A Multi-Case Study and Content Analysis

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## Abstract

Digital Humanities Centres (DHCs) are a crucial part of the Digital Humanities (DH) community, providing support in digital scholarship and scholarly communication. These centres are typically located at (university) libraries and have strong web presences. This paper was written in connection to an internship at KU Leuven's Artes Libraries with the aim of providing useful insights reflecting standard practice to set up this web presence for KU Leuven's own DHC: the DH Commons. The paper itself focussed on the use of DHC blogs as a form of scholarly communication. While studies on academic blogs have already been done, few have focussed on blogs not written by individual researchers let alone on such collaborative efforts as DHC blogs.

The research was conducted as a case study combined with document review and content analysis methods to examine a corpus of five American DHC websites and blogs, all affiliated to a public university's library. These criteria provided a situation similar to that of the DH Commons, yet in a country where DH and DHCs have a longer, better-established tradition. The corpus analysis focussed primarily on the content of the DHC blog pages. Results of this analysis show trends in the type of content these pages provided (e.g. research coverage, events announcements, etc.). Thus, demonstrating that – despite academics' hesitance at accepting blogs as mainstream forms of scholarly communication – these blogs offer the kind of dissemination of academic discourse typically expected from other (more accepted) forms of scholarly communication.

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## List of Acronyms

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
<b>DH</b>	Digital Humanities
<b>DH COMMONS</b>	Digital Humanities Commons, the Digital Humanities initiative at KU Leuven Libraries Artes
<b>DH@UVA</b>	The Digital Humanities Centre at the University of Virginia
<b>DHC</b>	Digital Humanities Centre
<b>DORA</b>	Declaration of Research Assessment
<b>IDRH</b>	Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities, the Digital Humanities Centre at the University of Kansas
<b>ISI INDEX</b>	The Information Science Institute index
<b>KU</b>	The University of Kansas
<b>MITH</b>	Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities
<b>OST INDEX</b>	The Observatoire des Sciences et Techniques index
<b>PI</b>	Principle Investigator
<b>REF</b>	Research Excellence Framework
<b>UI</b>	University of Iowa
<b>UIUC</b>	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
<b>UMD</b>	University of Maryland
<b>UVA</b>	University of Virginia

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## 1. Introduction

Digital Humanities Centres (DHCs) are a crucial part of the Digital Humanities (DH) community, providing support in digital scholarship and scholarly communication. These centres are typically located at (university) libraries and have strong web presences. For a DHC one of the most common ways to partake in scholarly communication is through their website and, more specifically, through their blog. However, academic blogs are rarely considered as valid forms of scholarly communication and the question of their value and impact has been a debate among the academic community for years (Batts, Anthis & Smith, 2008; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017; Anderson, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Moreover, this debate is part of a larger discussion on the need to reform the way in which academic publications are valorised in the tenure-track application process and other types of academic promotion (Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara, Eatman & Petersen, 2015; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018).

This paper was written in combination with an internship at KU Leuven Libraries Artes. The purpose of the internship was to help set up a web presence for The Digital Humanities Commons (DH Commons), a new DH initiative within KU Leuven Libraries. The paper itself will investigate the following research question:

How and why could DHC blogs be considered as valuable forms of scholarly communication?

To explore this question, this paper will provide evidence as to how DHC blogs are organised, who their authors are, and what content they publish. This was relevant to the internship as we wanted to create an academic blog for the DH Commons as well.

The research was conducted as a case study using document review and content analysis methods to analyse a corpus of five American DHC websites and blogs, all affiliated to a public university's library. These criteria ensured that the DHCs in the corpus would be in a similar situation to that of the DH Commons, which is affiliated to KU Leuven Libraries Artes, has limited staff, and no specifically designated funding or physical space. The choice to focus on America and not Europe was made as the United States is a country where Digital Humanities and DHCs have a longer and better-established tradition (Fiormonte, 2014; O'Donnell, Walter, Gil & Fraistat, 2016; Edmond, 2019). The centres and blogs in question were the University of Maryland's Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH); the University of Iowa's Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Scholarly Commons; the University of Kansas's Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities (IDRH); and Temple University's Loretta C. Ducksworth Scholars Studio, respectively.

This paper attempts to fill an important gap in the research: while studies on academic blogs exist, they have tended to be solely focussed on blogs by individual researchers. Research on blogs created by research groups is still largely lacking and none focussed specifically on DHC blogs (Kjellberg, 2014; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter will first provide necessary background information on what Digital Humanities Centres are before outlining some common areas of focus for library affiliated centres. These include digitisation and preservation projects as well as scholarly communication.

### 2.1 Digital Humanities Centres

The website of the University of Chicago's Digital Scholarship Centre defines digital scholarship as “the use of technology or digital methodology to explore, acquire, create, manage, analyze, preserve, and/or share research or other scholarly outputs, like data” (*Center for Digital Scholarship*, n.d.). Digital scholarship forms an important part of Digital Humanities (DH) research (Mandell, 2012; Zhang, Liu & Matthews, 2015; Risam, 2016) and a large part of the activities performed by DHC staff include aspects of scholarly communication, i.e. the “lifecycle documenting the steps involved in the creation, publication, dissemination and discovery of a piece of scholarly research” (*Scholarly Communication Overview*, 2016).

The terminology used to name these centres is a common issue and has been an ongoing a topic of discussion among the DH community for several years (Scholes & Wulfman, 2008; Kirschenbaum, 2012; Svensson, 2016). Many variants in naming can be found, such as Digital Humanities Centre (DHC), Digital Scholarship Centre (DHC), Digital Humanities Lab, Humanities/Scholarly Commons, etc. This variety stems from the process that goes into choosing a name for these centres, which can take many different things into consideration. A different name might be chosen depending on factors such as the governing organisation's goals, its target audience, whether the centre is a specific, overarching organisation that incorporates aspects of DH, or whether there is controlled vocabulary at the institution in question. Thus, while there are important distinctions between the types of centres, for the sake of simplicity, the umbrella term 'DHC' will be used throughout this paper.

Digital Humanities Centres are often departments located within a library (Montoya, 2017, p. 216), and typically within a library affiliated with a university (Lucky & Harkema, 2018, p. 188). While academic staff play an important role in Digital Humanities research, library staff are equally important to the development of Digital Humanities projects, and the collaboration between academic and library staff is a growing area of discourse within the digital scholarship community (Siemens, Cunningham, Duff & Warwick, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015; Montoya, 2017).

Common problems that DHCs – and especially those associated with a library – face include funding and the perception by faculty staff. Getting sufficient funds is an issue most libraries have to confront when setting up a new initiative (Allen & Dickie, 2007; Womack, 2016; Roh, 2019). Library staff often do not have the same access to research funding opportunities that faculty members enjoy (Allen & Dickie, 2007; Womack, 2016).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is common for grant-funding organizations to require a Principle Investigator (PI) with an academic rather than a library-based position, even if the library staff in question also possess the same higher education

Consequently, it becomes more difficult for library staff, including library-based DHC staff, to get the necessary financial support for their work. Furthermore, there is a common misconception of what people in the field of DH and especially those working as DHC staff in libraries do (Nowviskie, 2011; Muñoz, 2012; Morgan, 2016). Many faculty members believe that DHC staff are there to provide a service to the faculties, and do not realise that DHC staff do not simply support faculty but often have their own research agendas, projects, and areas of expertise (Nowviskie, 2011; Muñoz, 2012; Morgan, 2016). This misconception has led to a devaluation of work performed by library-based DHC staff as not being valid scholarship (Morgan, 2016). Moreover, the fact that Digital Humanities work involves new, innovative methods and more collaborative working relationships means that it represents a change in power relations at research institutions, which has caused a great apprehension towards it from other scholars (Morgan, 2016; Posner, 2016). As Posner (2016, para. 9) recommended, DHC staff needs to be aware of this fear to “address [...] people’s concerns.”

While a general consensus in the academic community portrays humanities research as the result of solo efforts by academic researchers, or at most, small-scale collaborations within the same department or faculty, the Digital Humanities has brought with it a seismic shift, where collaboration can be distributed across multiple faculties and indeed across multiple universities, thus allowing for the consideration of more complex research questions (Siemens et al., 2011; Siemens, 2015; Giannetti, 2017). This is most notable in the proliferation of Digital Humanities projects (Siemens et al., 2011), which are “undertaken for a specific purpose or goal” (Siemens, 2016, p. 345) and have been defined as “a single, manageable unit, for which separate resources may be found, and which can be completed in a predictable time” (Robinson, 2016, p. 876).

However, despite Robinson’s simplified description of Digital Humanities projects, they also confront researchers with new and complex working relationships, data structures, and methods of communication. Within the context of digital scholarship, an ecosystem of actors including library, academic, technical, and administrative staff and students frequently join forces on such collaborative projects (Siemens et al., 2011; Siemens, 2016; Giannetti, 2017; Montoya, 2017). This can create friction as different communities and their respective approaches and methods come together (Siemens et al., 2011). A balance between all actors involved is needed to reach overall goals and ensure that all project members get their rightful recognition (Siemens et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2015; Giannetti, 2017; Montoya, 2017; Lucky & Harkema, 2018; Martinez, 2019). Moreover, for digital projects there is an added layer of technical issues. Most commonly these projects face problems with changing, insecure, or unsupported technology (Butler, Shepherd, Visconti & Work, 2019). As they are inherently collaboration-oriented initiatives and are involved with digital scholarship, DHCs provide an ideal space and structure for working out these collaborative and project specific issues.

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qualifications. Thus, even if library staff have an idea for a project, they must first find a PI from a faculty to support their application.

## 2.2 Common Areas of Focus in Library-Based DHCs

This section will highlight some of the most common areas of focus for library-based DHCs. It will first briefly discuss more general topics of interest before moving on to the main focus of this paper: scholarly communication.

### 2.2.1 Digitisation and Preservation

A common digital activity for library-based DHCs is digitisation. This term can be interpreted in two ways. It may refer to the reorientation from performing research work with physical tools, to the digital tools (e.g. the shift from writing with pen and paper to writing on a computer). The sense in which the word is used in this paper is “the conversion of analogue data [...] into digital form” (‘Digitisation’, n.d.).

Originally, this latter type of digitisation is a library process that long predates the creation of DH Centres yet is now (in some cases) being repackaged as a DHC task. The digitisation of analogue materials is a complicated process, as not all materials can be digitised, and the maintenance and preservation of digitised materials requires considerable effort and specific expertise. Moreover, performing digitisation brings up potential copyright issues. Copyright law is a highly complicated area of law varying greatly from country to country (Dillen & Neyt, 2016), and hurdles associated with copyright occasionally result in digital or digitised data that is inaccessible to potential users (Terras, 2015, p. 734; Martinez & Terras, 2019).

Another key issue in digital scholarship activities typically associated with libraries is long term preservation and data management, which is concerned with the “organization, storage, preservation, and sharing of research data created and used during a research project” (Lucky & Harkema, 2018; Hart, 2019). Preserving research data is a crucial part of digital scholarship as “[w]ell-managed and accessible data allows others to validate and replicate findings” and “can lead to valuable discoveries by others” (Hart, 2019, n.p.). Yet, this poses “a significant challenge” to DHCs as the necessary infrastructure and expertise is not always available to prevent digital material from being lost (Lucky & Harkema, 2018, p. 191). Moreover, the online presence of this type of material and the digital tools that are needed to preserve them are highly fragile (Meneses & Furuta, 2019). This situation, combined with the fact that operating systems and digital environments are constantly changing, means that continuous efforts are needed to manage the loss of crucial research data and collections (Kretzschmar & Gray Potter, 2010; Meneses & Furuta, 2019). If these efforts are not made, studies have shown that the average ‘lifespan’ for digital sources is about five years (Meneses & Furuta, 2019). To prevent abandonment, library staff – including staff of library-based DHCs – continually develop strategies to navigate the preservation of digital resources (Kretzschmar & Gray Potter, 2010; Moulaison & Million, 2015; Montoya, 2017; Lucky & Harkema, 2018). Often, such strategies need to be developed for finished projects that are handed over to libraries by faculties, without previous discussions about data formats and data management taking place. This poses its own challenges and is a common cause of friction between faculty and library staff.

## 2.2.2 Scholarly Communication

As mentioned above, an important activity for DHC staff is scholarly communication which is concerned with anything related to the dissemination of scholarly research (*Scholarly Communication Overview*, 2016). Common forms of scholarly communication include monographs, research reports, preliminary versions of articles, white papers, position papers, conference papers or proceedings, theses and dissertations, and data sets (Anderson, 2018, pp. 5–11). These forms of scholarly communication can be published in a variety of ways. This section will focus on those most relevant to this research: Open Access and digital publishing.

### 2.2.2.1 *Open Access*

Open Access (OA) is a growing area of research and implementation that extends beyond DH to academia as a whole (Jubb, 2013; Gorman & Rowley, 2015; Pinfield, 2015). Today, the Open Access Movement (OAM) advocates for “the provision of unrestricted access to peer-reviewed scholarly research” (Terras, 2015, p. 733) and encourages the spread of publications, making it easier for scholars to access sources for research while also granting authors greater distribution of their work (Lewis, 2012; Gorman & Rowley, 2015; Terras, 2015; Verbeke & Mesotten, 2018; Verbeke, 2020). Consequently, it is rapidly becoming standard practice within academia (Pinfield, 2015; Terras, 2015; Dillen & Neyt, 2016).

Yet, OA is not welcomed by all. There are those who see it as “a disruptive innovation” complicating the production and publication process of scholarly communication (Lewis, 2012; Jubb, 2013; Gorman & Rowley, 2015, para. 2). Furthermore, Open Access does not come without its challenges (Pinfield, 2015). While it does encourage the spread of publications, the OAM is also “dependent on [...] open licensing,” (Terras, 2015, p. 734) and still struggles with copyright limitations (Dillen & Neyt, 2016). In many cases it is also the library which is expected to bear the brunt of the costs for OA initiatives (Lara, 2015; Hampson & Stregger, 2017; Reinsfelder & Pike, 2018; Click & Borchardt, 2019). For an institution which, as explained above, already struggles with funding issues this introduces an added drain on already limited financial and staff resources.

### 2.2.2.2 *Digital Publication*

Scholarly publishing and digital publications, i.e. publications “in a digital or electronic format,” are also highly relevant topics linked to scholarly communication (‘E-Publishing’, n.d.). Digital publishing is a new area of concern and innovation for libraries and many are now beginning to act as ‘library publishers’ often dealing with both print and digital publications (Kim Wu & McCullough, 2015; Martinez, 2019; Senseney, Bonn, Maden, Swatscheno, Velez, Green & Fenlon, 2019; Dwyer, 2020). This allows the library to act as its own publisher and consequently gives library staff much more control over the publication process (Kim Wu & McCullough, 2015). Yet, especially for OA digital publications, the issue of copyright needs to be considered. Nevertheless, libraries are moving from solely being spaces of collecting and storing information to creating, publishing, and spreading information themselves. In a DH context, this creation and dissemination can be performed in many different forms (e.g. e-journals, etc.), including through academic blogs.

As Luzón (2017, p. 444) pointed out, an academic or science blog is a type of blog “written by people affiliated with a research institution” and dedicated to the dissemination of information and research (Batts et al., 2008; Luzón, 2017; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014). There is no general consensus about what exactly constitutes an academic blog, as there are several subgenres of blogs, considerable variety among them, and conflicting discourse on what can be ‘counted’ as academic content (Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017). Nevertheless, there are some conventions the literature does agree upon. Typical for this blog format are “frequent postings,” “linking activity,” “space for discussion,” and multimodality through the combination of formats, such as text and images (Kjellberg, 2014, pp. 42–43; Luzón, 2017, p. 444).

Academic blogs are deemed an important tool for stimulating publicly accessible academic conversation (Batts et al., 2008; Kjellberg, 2014; Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017; Anderson, 2018). Particularly since blogs can “provide a unique educational bridge between academia and the public” (Batts et al., 2008, p. 1837) by informing the general public and offering academics “a new mode of communication” (Luzón, 2017, p. 445). Moreover, as with many of the digital formats of scholarly communication (e.g. e-journals), blogs “play an increasingly significant role in discussions about the future of academic discourse” (Puschmann, 2014, p. 92).

Yet, while blogs may be counted as a form of scholarly communication they differ greatly from what is typically expected in this genre (Kjellberg, 2014, p. 37). This is most notable in their style of communication: while other forms of scholarly communication typically adhere to scientific or academic jargon, blogs often use a more conversational style (Kjellberg, 2014). Additionally, a common feature of the blog format (as mentioned above) is their interactivity with the audience by creating room for discussion (Kjellberg, 2014; Luzón, 2017), something that has only recently been adopted by a small number of online journals (see for example *Liber Quarterly*) yet, could be particularly valuable in an academic context as it “[provides] a quick forum for public peer review of research” (Batts et al., 2008).<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, while the research supports the idea of blogs as scholarly communication, their use remains a highly controversial topic in academia and they are rarely considered in tenure-track appointments (Anderson, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Instead blogs are mostly seen as a way of self-promotion by academics (Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017). Yet, as Anderson (2018, p. 11) pointed out, while academic blogs may be considered controversial, the mere fact that the discussion of their academic merit exists points to their rise in importance.

According to Batts et al. (2008), the lack of objective assessment methods for blogs together with the great differences in format is causing this hesitance to accept blogs as a genuine form of scholarly communication. Moreover, some academics have raised “[doubts] about the impact” of this type of blogs on academia since – as Mahrt and Puschmann (2014, p. 2) pointed out – there is a lack of research on academic blogs beyond “a few highly

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.liberquarterly.eu/>

publicized cases.” Lastly, “the lack of peer review” of what appears on a blog is often cited as a reason for being sceptical towards them (Puschmann, 2014, p. 102). This again stems from the fact that blogs differ from standard practice in scholarly publication, since – normally – “scholarly content [...] must be valorized by the judgement of others” to be considered “a genuine scholarly publication” (Puschmann, 2014, p. 103).

As this valorisation process is particularly important when it comes to applications for academic promotion, many academic blog authors have sought ways around the lack of value assigned to blogs by republishing their post in different formats – e.g. in journals, or as book chapters, such as those found in *Debates in Digital Humanities* (Gold, 2012) – which are considered in the assignment of tenure-track positions. As Schimanski and Alperin (2018) stated, these positions are typically awarded based on “measures of performance,” most notably publications (not including blogs). Publications considered in tenure-track appointment and other promotion processes must be valued on peer review, impact, and significance (Piwowar, 2013; O’Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Yet, there has been much criticism levied against this valorisation system, especially against the potentially biased peer feedback system and the use of oversimplified impact measurement systems such as Journal Impact Factors (Piwowar, 2013; O’Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018).

Efforts have been made to change the way in which researchers’ work is measured both in general and for academic promotions. For instance, in 2012, the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) was created by journal editors and publishers of the American Society for Cell Biology (Cagan, 2013; Curry, 2018). The authors of DORA advocated against the use of Journal Impact Factors and proposed that content should instead be valued higher than publication metrics (Cagan, 2013; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). While declarations such as DORA and others like it have had some impact, there is still a long way to go and different, alternative measures (i.e. altmetrics) as well as more awareness for researchers’ work beyond their publications (including teaching, services, Digital Humanities projects, and other forms of research dissemination such as social media) are needed (Priem, Taraborelli, Groth & Neylon, 2010; Piwowar, 2013; O’Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018).

### 3. Methodology

After performing the literature review on typical activities of DHCs and the discussion surrounding the appraisal of academic blogs, this chapter describes the methodology that I developed for the investigation of a corpus of DHC websites and blogs.

#### 3.1 Creating the Corpus

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper was written with the purpose of setting up the DH Commons website and blog based on standard practices aggregated from DHCs in similar situations. Currently, the DH Commons only has limited staff and no funding or physical space.

For this paper I chose to focus on universities in the United States rather than Europe for the corpus research because the DHC tradition is better established in northern America (Fiormonte, 2014; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Edmond, 2019). Consequently, there are more DHCs in the United States and several have existed for longer than their European counterparts (O'Donnell et al., 2016). As a result, the staff of the DHCs under review have developed a project workflow and collaborative infrastructure that is based on several years' experience.

KU Leuven is an independent university that is not tied to the Belgian government, but which still relies primarily on research funding from the Flemish government (*Basic Info Legal Entity KU Leuven*, n.d.; *Interne fondsen*, n.d.). As the American university system works differently from that in Belgium, but a similar situation to that of the DH Commons had to be ensured, I made the decision to set the criterion that DHCs included in the corpus had to be affiliated with a public university, as this type of university also mainly relies on federal and state funding. Another of the criteria for selecting the DHCs in this corpus was their affiliation with their respective university libraries, so that they would represent a similar context to that of the DH Commons at KU Leuven Libraries Artes. A final criterion was that the DHCs utilised a blog as one method of scholarly communication.

To find DHCs to include in the corpus, I consulted centerNet and the research guide of the Virginia Tech library. CenterNet is “an international network of Digital Humanities centers” (*About | centerNet*, n.d.) and highly regarded as a good source on DHCs by the DH community (O'Donnell et al., 2016). It provided a general overview (including the name, location, and website) of many of the DHCs worldwide (cfr. Figure 1). However, the DHC database on the centerNet website is not complete and as this website has not been updated since 2018, some of the information had become outdated and several of the links to DHC websites are now obsolete (Earhart, 2018; Kemman, 2018). The library at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (commonly referred to as Virginia Tech) – a well-established public university that created one of the earliest example of a DHC (Fraistat, 2012) – provides a list of some of the most important, active DHCs in the United States at both public and private universities (*Digital Humanities: Centers*, 2019).

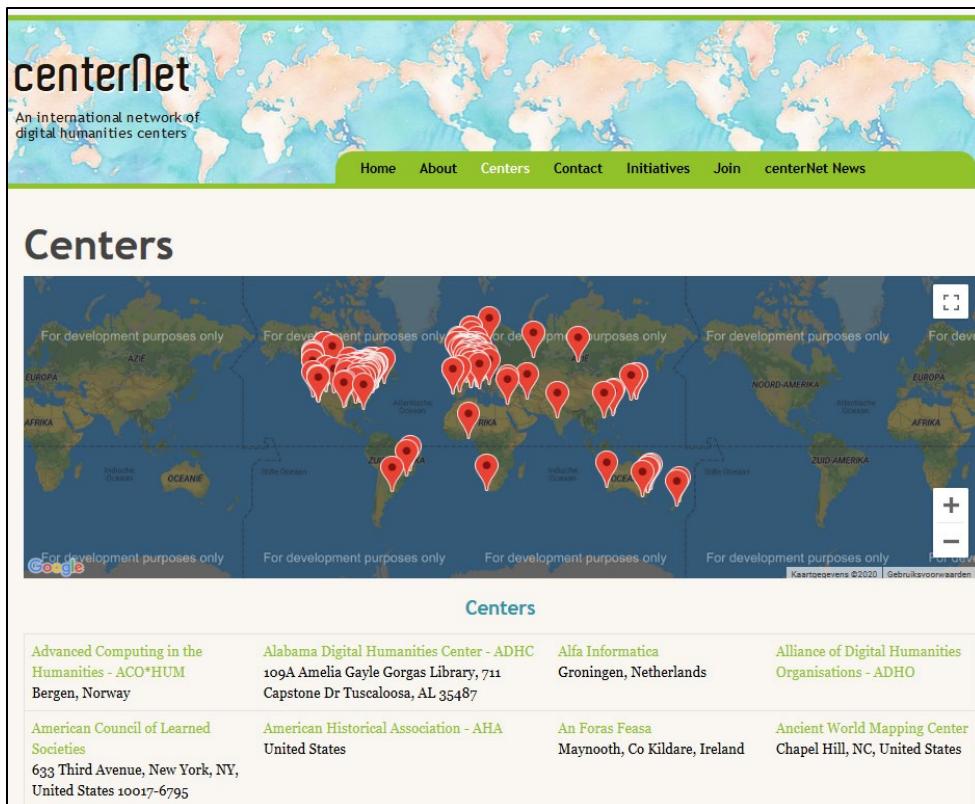


Figure 1. centerNet: overview of DHCs worldwide

Nevertheless, some problems occurred when looking for DHCs to include in the corpus. The most common issue when searching for DHCs is the inconsistent naming since, as mentioned above, there is a great deal of variation when it comes to naming a DHC. Another issue, was the frequent abandonment of DHC projects and the consequent shut down of the websites which resulted in a lot of obsolete links when searching for DHCs, as shown below in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Obsolete DHC Site Linked on centerNet

Lastly, DHCs occasionally change departmental or faculty affiliations. For example, the Wired Humanities Project is an independent DH project at the University of Oregon, and is not associated with their DHC, but the content of the project is similar to those commonly associated with DHCs (*Wired Humanities Projects*, n.d.). This project was initiated at the College of Arts and Sciences then moved to the Knight Library and eventually moved again

to the College of Education. These changes in affiliations are often related to funding issues, such as when funding runs out and a new affiliation is needed, or when a faculty or staff member who was managing the project moves to a different position in the institution and takes a project with them.

### 3.2 The Corpus

After consulting the two databases, I chose five DHCs for the corpus. These are the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland; the Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio at the University of Iowa; the Scholarly Commons at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities (IDRH) at the University of Kansas; and the Loretta C. Ducksworth Scholars Studio at Temple University (cfr. Table 1), respectively. The DHCs in the corpus will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter (Empirical Data from the Corpus).

These specific institutions were chosen because they fulfil the criteria mentioned above (all are affiliated with a library at a public university in the US and have a blog) and because they provided the necessary information on their websites. Many other DHCs were considered, but either they did not meet the research criteria, or the information was simply lacking from their website.

University	Name of the Centre	Affiliation	Date Established	Website
University of Maryland	Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities	Library College of Arts and Humanities	1999	<a href="https://mith.umd.edu/">https://mith.umd.edu/</a>
University of Iowa	Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio	Library	2006	<a href="https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/studio/">https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/studio/</a>
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Scholarly Commons	Library	2010	<a href="https://www.library.illinois.edu/sc/">https://www.library.illinois.edu/sc/</a>
University of Kansas	Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities	Library Hall Center for the Humanities College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	2010	<a href="https://idrh.ku.edu/">https://idrh.ku.edu/</a>
Temple University	Loretta C. Ducksworth Scholars Studio	Library	2014	<a href="https://sites.temple.edu/tudsc/">https://sites.temple.edu/tudsc/</a>

Table 1. Digital Humanities Centres Studied in This Corpus

### 3.3 Analysis Methods of the Corpus

Originally, I started investigating quantitative content analysis as a method to perform the corpus analysis. However, after discussing this with my supervisor, we decided that this

would not be the best approach for the type of research I wanted to perform. Hence, I made the decision to focus on a qualitative analysis of content instead (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017), so that I could perform in-depth, close reading of a smaller number of blogs within the timeframe of the internship and develop a set of criteria for the DH Commons blog from this subset.

### 3.3.1 Case Study

A case study is a typically qualitative research method (Bryman, 2012; Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2017) used for the “detailed and intensive” (Bryman, 2012, p. 66) study of “internal features and the surrounding situation” (Neuman, 2014, p. 42) of a case. As Babbie (2010, p. 309) pointed out, there is “little consensus on what a case is.” For this research, ‘a case’ specifically refers to a DHC, its community, and most importantly its web presence. Furthermore, case studies are traditionally limited to the analysis of a single case (Babbie, 2010, p. 309; Bryman, 2012, p. 66). Yet some have argued that studies covering more than one case can still be seen as a “case study” (see Yin, 2009, pp. 258–261; Neuman, 2014, p. 42; Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 51). Yin (2009, pp. 258–259) reasoned that using more than one case will actually make the case study stronger by “[broadening] the coverage,” and thus allowing the researcher to extend the theory formed from case study research (Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2017). This paper follows Yin’s reasoning and is a case study comprising five cases. The use of a case study meant a smaller corpus which was more manageable to analyse within the time limitations of my internship. Meanwhile, by broadening the corpus to five cases instead of one, a slightly more nuanced idea of diverse practices for DHC websites could be given than if I had only focussed on a single case study.

I started by “defining and selecting” a case that I wanted to study (Yin, 2009, p. 255). Based on the types of cases that could be considered – critical cases, unique cases, representative cases, revelatory cases, or longitudinal cases (Bryman, 2012) – I determined that my research should focus on representative cases as the purpose of this study is to look at what the standard practice for a DHC website is and *representative cases* are used to demonstrate typical circumstances (Bryman, 2012; Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2017). Additionally, as I noticed when compiling the corpus used in this paper, a large part of the selection process depends on the availability and relevance of the data (Yin, 2009, p. 255). My choice of cases was limited by a lack of readily available information. I considered many DHCs for the corpus, however in most cases the information necessary to comply with the criteria I set for this research was not freely available on their website.<sup>3</sup>

Once I had chosen the cases for the research, I began the analysis. To strengthen the evidence gathered through analysis, methods of direct observation, the study of archival records, open-ended interviews, focus groups, surveys, ethnographies, etc. are typically used (Yin, 2009, pp. 261–265; Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 52). My approach in this

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<sup>3</sup> I considered including the Digital Humanities Collaborative at the University of North Carolina in the corpus, yet ultimately chose not to because there was no clear information about library or faculty affiliations available on their website.

paper, however, differs from the typical case study design in that it does not use the abovementioned methods. As I was completing my research in a narrow timeframe and during the added variable of a global pandemic, it was unlikely that the use of these methods could be cleared by the ethical commission in time for the deadline. Instead, I chose to conduct my research through document review and content analysis, which rely far less on information gathered from external research participants.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.3.2 Document Review

As Bowen (2009, p. 27) mentioned, “organisational and institutional documents have been a staple in qualitative research for many years.” The term ‘document’ may apply to a variety of sources in both print and digital format (Bowen, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Wildemuth, 2017). For this research, I focussed on websites.

Document analysis refers to the “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Throughout this procedure, I paid attention to the meaning of the document as a whole, its author(s), and “the original sources of information” presented in the document (Bowen, 2009, p. 33). This review of the documents resulted in data that I could review using qualitative content analysis, which allows me to categorise the data into major themes (Bowen, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Wildemuth, 2017).

### 3.3.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method for the systematic analysis of communication (Berelson, 1952; Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017) which may denote any format that carries meaning (Bickman & Rog, 2009, p. 604), e.g. books and magazines but also webpages (Babbie, 2010). While this method had its origins in quantitative research, it can also be used as a qualitative method (Bryman, 2012; Zhang et al., 2015; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). When used as a qualitative method, the focus of the analysis typically lies on the examination of “meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 318). For this paper the emphasis mainly lies on the manifest meaning of the DHC blog websites. Yet while I focussed on the surface meaning, my analysis was done through close reading of the content and not distant reading.

I started by selecting material for analysis and formulating questions to aid the analysis process (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2012). These questions were developed iteratively while reading the blogs and establishing a method for analysis. In general, to get an idea of how the DHCs are run and how they compare to the DH Commons, I looked at the affiliations of the DHCs in the corpus and their staff. Providing an overview of how many people worked at the DHC as well as their positions gave me an idea of the size of the DHC and the type of work the staff of the centre focus on. When studying the blogs, I primarily considered the software used to develop them, how they were organised, and the content of the blog posts. Looking into the software used for these blogs revealed possible functionality limitations that may

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<sup>4</sup> There were some exceptions to this when I had to contact staff at two DHCs for further information. However, this contact was brief and solely focused on gaining small pieces of information and was therefore not considered an interview or a breach of ethical guidelines.

have affected organisational decisions. A blog organisation overview gave me a general idea of what the blog covers in terms of content. Lastly, I analysed the blogs' content by evaluating the types of posts, their authors, and how original research was referenced. As these aspects are linked to the academic relevance of the content, this helped me to establish if and how these blogs could be considered as academic publications. The hundred most recent posts (or all posts if the blog had less than hundred, as was the case for the University of Kansas) were aggregated and analysed to collect this information, providing me with a sizable dataset spanning several years, as well as an idea of what the blog covered and how it developed.

The next step in my research process was 'coding' (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2012), wherein I developed my "operational definitions of key variables" to be used for the actual analysis of the data (Babbie, 2010, p. 333). This part of the process happened in two steps: first, I created a coding schedule (i.e. the form where data would be recorded), and then I created my coding manual (i.e. the list of all possible categories of analysis) (Bryman, 2012; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). The coding schedule I used for this paper was created in Excel (cfr. Appendix A) and included the results of the analysis as well as general information on the DHCs considered in this research. The coding manual I created for the analysis of the blog content had a number of possible categories and subcategories, detailed in Table 2 below.

Categories	Subcategories
General Posts	Tools & Methods
	DH Topics
	General DH News
	Other
Research	Research by DHC
	Research by Others
	Projects
	Other
Events	Lecture, Talk, or Seminar
	Forum, Symposium, or Conference
	Social Event
	Workshop
	Other
Announcements	New Staff/Visiting Scholar
	Deadline
	Call for Papers/Proposals
	Programme Update
	Other
Podcasts	<i>[to be specified further in the analysis]</i>
Other	<i>[to be specified further in the analysis]</i>

Table 2. Coding Manual

I made the decision to only assign posts one category in order to reflect the total number of posts analysed. However, in exceptional circumstances *Events* and *Announcements* posts could be counted multiple times in several categories as, occasionally, these posts make multiple events or general announcements in one post (e.g. a single post announcing five different workshops). To judge which category I would assign to a post, the title or short abstract typically provided enough information. In cases where these did not provide enough clarity for the classification, I read the entire post.

The *General Posts* category deals with topics that are related to DH but are not themselves research or projects at a DHC or university in general. The *Tools & Methods* subcategory comprises posts that focussed solely on explaining tools or methods relevant to DH research. The subcategory of *DH Topics* concerns posts which focus on topics typically associated to DH (e.g. data visualisation, human-computer interaction, etc.) but don't present any specific research paper or project. The *General DH News* subcategory includes posts which cover general updates on relevant news in the DH community. Lastly, there is the *Other* subcategory, which contains posts considered to be relevant to general DH topics but not categorizable in any of the other three subcategories.

The *Research* category is concerned with post on DH related research papers and projects done by DHCs or universities. The first subcategory, *Research by DHC*, covers posts about research actually done by the DHC staff, affiliates of the DHC, or DHC fellows and interns (during their time at the DHC). The *Research by Others* subcategory deals with posts on research by non-DHC affiliated persons at the university or at other universities. The *Projects* subcategory contains posts on long term projects run at the DHC or involving DHC staff which create a concrete output (e.g. the development of data visualisation tools or the creation of a library's special collections). The *Other* subcategory deals with research related posts that do not clearly belong in the above-mentioned subcategories.

The *Events* category covers all posts announcing events hosted by the DHC. The *Lecture, Talk, or Seminar; Forum, Symposium, or Conference; and Workshops* subcategories cover posts on those events. The *Social Event* subcategory contains posts announcing DHC hosted, social events such as lunches, coffee hours, or drinks. Lastly, the *Other* subcategory covers DHC events not included in the other subcategories such as student groups, film screenings, or webinars. Meanwhile, the *Announcements* category deals with all other types of announcements made on the blog site. These are typically more general announcements on the DHC – e.g. the *New Staff/Visiting Scholar* or *Programme Update* subcategories – or announcements relevant to DH students or researchers – e.g. the *Deadline* or *Call for Papers/Proposals* subcategories. The *Other* subcategory deals with posts making less frequently occurring announcements, such as the announcement of a new DH space or service. Finally, the *Podcast* category deals with whether the DHC has a podcast and the *Other* category covers all posts that were not clearly categorizable in the above-mentioned categories.

### 3.4 Difficulties Encountered During the Research

As discussed in detail above, there were some issues with establishing the corpus. Yet, this was not the only part of this research that occasionally posed a problem, the analysis also came with its issues.

Generally speaking, for both this research and my work for the internship, the current Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent government measures posed a serious problem. Especially for the internship this meant that Tess Dejaeghere (the other DH Commons intern) and I now had to collaborate with our supervisor, Merisa Martinez, remotely. This meant adapting to work proactively and independently on a newly established project at KU Leuven Libraries Artes with no clear precedent for what we were trying to do. It also meant trying to coordinate our efforts digitally usually over Skype calls and emails. To do so, we set up a schedule of Skype calls that allowed us to work on the DH Commons site and blog together, allowing me and Tess the liberty to work on it at our own pace while also having Merisa nearby for support. I believe this was the best possible method to continue the internship given the circumstances.

For the research specifically, the biggest problem encountered was the total lack of research on collaboratively created academic blogs linked to a DHC. As stated in the introduction, research on academic blogs as scholarly communication exists and a very small subset of this research even focusses on academic blogs created through group initiatives. Yet, currently no research on DHC blogs exists. This meant that there are no precedents to my research and no other existing literature specific to my topic I could use to measure and compare my findings against.

## 4. Empirical Data from the Corpus

This section will describe the universities in the corpus and the data gathered through the analysis of the corpus. As stated before, my analysis considered the hundred most recent posts on the blogs (or all available posts in case there were less) and investigated some general aspects of the DHC blog sites (i.e. staff and social media) as well as more specific features of these sites (i.e. organisation, content and frequency).

### 4.1 University of Maryland – MITH

Like the University of Kansas, the University of Maryland (UMD) is the state's flagship university and a major research university in the US (*The University of Maryland*, n.d.). The university has a strong focus on both scientific research as well as arts and humanities programmes (*The University of Maryland*, n.d.).

The Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) was established in 1999 and is one of the leading DHCs in the US, together with DH@UVA the DHC at the University of Virginia (*Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH)*, n.d.; MITH, n.d.). While MITH's name reflects its staff's aim to share their research experience and support others in their research ('About', n.d.-a), the fact that this DHC was founded in 1999 also means that the term 'Digital Humanities' was not in common use yet. Instead the term 'humanities computing' was being used and, as Svenson (2009) stated, discourse at the time was primarily focussed on the implementation of new technologies and software in humanities research, thus the choice of the word 'Technology' in MITH's name. Moreover, MITH is affiliated to both the UMD's university library and the College of Arts and Humanities thus suggesting a strong inter-departmental collaboration. The 'People' section on their website shows that this DHC is currently staffed by eleven people: four Directors, six Researchers, nine Affiliates, and two Interns or Assistants (*People Archive*, n.d.).

The blog page can be found under the 'Blog' section in the navigation bar at the top of the MITH website. The blog space is provided on the DHC's own page on the general UMD website. The blog is organised using a 'Recent posts list' in a sidebar (cfr. Figure 3). Posts are also tagged according to their topic (cfr. Figure 4), but no overview of the possible tags is provided to navigate the blog. It is however possible to click on a tag in the header of a blog post and this will link through to a list of all posts in that tag (cfr. Figure 5). Blog posts on the MITH blog are typically written by the DHC staff or by affiliates of MITH (also listed under the 'People' section on the website). In total, I analysed hundred posts spread over the first ten pages of the blog.

### Recent Posts

- > Announcing the Spring 2020 Digital Dialogues Line Up  
February 10, 2020
- > Nominations Open, Spring 2020 Digital Dialogues  
October 14, 2019
- > The Cleaners: Movie Night (Oct 30)  
October 7, 2019
- > Mark your calendars! Fall 2019 Digital Dialogues Line Up  
September 18, 2019

**Figure 3.** MITH Blog Organisation: Recent Posts List

**18**  
Sep 2019



### Mark your calendars! Fall 2019 Digital Dialogues Line Up

by Purdom Lindblad | Sep 18, 2019 | Digital Dialogues, News

We are delighted to announce the lineup for the Fall 2019 Digital Dialogue series. We will host eight speakers for six incredible sessions. All Digital [...] [Read More >](#)

**5**  
Sep 2019



### New Team Members at AADHum and MITH

by Trevor Muñoz | Sep 5, 2019 | News

We are delighted to announce three additions to our team this fall. These new hires will contribute to MITH's research, teaching, and public programming in [...] [Read More >](#)

**Figure 4.** MITH Blog Organisation: Tagging

**News**

**10**  
Feb 2020



### Announcing the Spring 2020 Digital Dialogues Line Up

by Digital Dialogues | Feb 10, 2020 | Alerts, Digital Dialogues, Events, News

MITH is thrilled to announce the Spring 2020 Digital Dialogue line-up. This eclectic season covers a range of interesting DH topics including oral [...] [Read More >](#)

**14**  
Oct 2019



### Nominations Open, Spring 2020 Digital Dialogues

by Purdom Lindblad | Oct 14, 2019 | Digital Dialogues, News

We are delighted to open nominations for spring 2020 Digital Dialogue speakers. Digital Dialogues is MITH's signature events program, held almost every week while [...] [Read More >](#)

**Figure 5.** MITH Blog Organisation: Tag Overview

In terms of typical blog content, my analysis of the hundred most recent posts on the MITH blog showed no posts related to my *General Posts* category (cfr. Table 3). Concerning my *Research* category, the blog occasionally features posts on research by the DHC (six posts) or by others (one post), projects (five posts), and one post pertaining to the *Other* subcategory (a progress report on a fellowship at the DHC) (cfr. Table 3). Research is referenced through links in the text of the blog posts.

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
General posts	Tools & Methods	n/a
	DH Topics	n/a
	General DH News	n/a
	Other	n/a
Research	Research by DHC	7
	Research by Others	1
	Projects	5
	Other: progress report of DHC fellowship	1

Table 3. MITH Blog Content: General Posts & Research

Events announced on the MITH blog belonged to one of the following subcategories according to my coding manual (cfr. Table 2): eleven posts on a *Lecture, Talk, or Seminar*; four on a *Forum, Symposium, or Conference*; two *Social Events*; seven *Workshops*; and fifty-five *Other* posts. In case of the *Other* subcategory these were a film screening, two announcements for a student group, six for a reading group, a book launch, a dramatic reading session, an edit-a-thon, one project discussion meeting, and – the largest group of posts – forty-two posts announcing live talks that will be recorded for MITH’s Digital Dialogues podcast (cfr. Table 4).

As regards general announcements, the MITH blog featured three posts on *New Staff/Visiting Scholars*, three *Programme Updates*, two *Calls for Papers/Proposals*, one *Deadline* announcement, and seventeen posts categorised as *Other*. These were an announcement about the retirement of Neil Fraistat (former head of MITH); a job opportunity at the DHC; the introduction of summer interns; three announcements of when the DHC received grants; the announcement of the return of MITH’s podcast (it had been replaced by a video service); a postponement of a podcast live talk; three posts announcing the podcast’s line-up; and three calling for nominations of speakers for the podcast (cfr. Table 4).

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Events	Lecture, Talk, or Seminar	11
	Forum, Symposium, or Conference	4
	Social Event	2
	Workshop	7
	Other: book launch	1
	Other: dramatic reading session	1
	Other: student group	2
	Other: project discussion meeting	1
	Other: film screening	1
	Other: live podcast talk	42
	Other: reading group	6
	Other: edit-a-thon	1
Announcements	New Staff/Visiting Scholars	3
	Deadline	1
	Call for Papers/Proposals	2
	Programme Update	3
	Other: job opportunity	1
	Other: retirement	1
	Other: introduction of summer interns	1
	Other: DHC received a grant	3
	Other: return of the podcast	1
	Other: podcast line-up	6
	Other: call for podcast nominations	3
	Other: postponed podcast talk	1

Table 4. MITH Blog Content: Events & Announcements

Building a Community Data Curation Practice

Digital Archiving through Partnership and Resource Sharing

Home > Dialogues > Building a Community Data Curation Practice



**Jennifer Garcon**  
Bollinger Fellow in Public and Community Data Curation  
University of Pennsylvania  
Twitter: @jgarcon5

MITH Conference Room  
Tuesday, March 24, 2020  
12:30 pm

Figure 6. MITH Podcast Live Event



**Figure 7.** MITH Podcast Page

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Podcasts	Name of podcast: Digital Dialogues	42
Other	Conference report	1

**Table 5.** MITH Blog Content: Podcasts & Other

As evidenced by the data collected above, MITH has a podcast called “Digital Dialogues” in which DH specialists are invited to talk about their field of study (cfr. Table 5). These talks are announced on the blog site in advance and can also be attended live (cfr. Figure 6). My analysis showed forty-two posts directly related to the podcast and its talks. The Digital Dialogues events and podcast have existed since 2005 and are well-established at MITH. Digital Dialogues even has its own page on the DHC website (blog posts related to this topic will link through to that page) (cfr. Figure 7). Lastly, only one blog post could not be categorised into any of the aforementioned categories: a conference report (cfr. Table 5).

#### 4.2 University of Iowa – Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio

The University of Iowa (UI) is a research university and one of the largest universities in the state of Iowa – second only to the state’s flagship university, Iowa State University (*The University of Iowa*, n.d.). The University of Iowa (UI) is best known for its medical department and arts programme. The university is especially well-known for having the leading creative writing programme in the United States, and for hosting the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, which is associated with that programme (*The University of Iowa*, n.d.).

The Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio at UI – or simply ‘The Studio’ for short – was established in 2006 and is affiliated to the university’s libraries. The name clearly demonstrates the aim of The Studio’s staff to support scholarship and provide publishing services to scholars and students alike (‘About’, n.d.-b). The ‘People’ section on the DHC’s website shows there are currently eleven employees at the Studio. These staff include the Head of the DHC, a Senior Scholar, a Program Manager, a Graphic Designer, a Digital Scholarship Librarian, a DH Librarian, a Media Production & Design Developer, a Researcher-Developer Library Assistant, a Public Engagement Specialist, and a DH Researcher (‘People’, n.d.).

The Studio's blog is powered by the UI Libraries Blogs software. The blog uses a categorisation system to organise its posts. An overview of the categories is provided in the sidebar together with the blog's monthly archive (cfr. Figure 8). Posts are mostly written by the Studio's summer programme fellows as well as occasional posts by the DHC staff themselves or guest bloggers. The majority of posts considered in my analysis also revolved around this summer fellowship programme at the studio.



**Figure 8.** *The Studio Blog Organisation: Categorisation & Monthly Archive*

My analysis covered the hundred most recent blog posts spread over the first ten pages of the Studio's blog archive. In the category of *General Posts*, my analysis showed one post on *Tools & Methods* and two on DH topics (cfr. Table 6). The *Research* category, on the other hand, was the most frequently occurring category in my analysis (cfr. Table 6). The studio blog had three posts on *Projects*, one post on *Research by Others* and eighty-four posts on research done by people affiliated to the DHC. The eighty-four posts were updates on the research done by the summer programme fellows. The way references to research were made in these posts varied greatly, some posts provided links in the text, others had a references or further readings type section at the end, and still others offered no references at all.

Category	Subcategories	Number of Posts
General posts	Tools & Methods	1
	DH Topics	2
	General DH News	n/a
	Other	n/a
Research	Research by DHC	84
	Research by Others	1
	Projects	3
	Other: themed research posts	n/a

**Table 6.** *Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio Blog Content: General Posts & Research*

As so many of the posts on the blog already got categorised as research, very few posts remained for the other categories. The Studio blog only covered one *Event* – a conference – and seven *Announcements* – one new staff announcement and six *Other* announcements (cfr.

Table 7). These were four posts introducing the summer programme fellows, one post announcing that Studio staff would be speaking at a conference, and one post announcing that a project affiliated with the DHC had received a grant.

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Events	Lecture, Talk, or Seminar	n/a
	Forum, Symposium, or Conference	1
	Social Event	n/a
	Workshop	n/a
	Other	n/a
Announcements	New Staff/Visiting Scholars	1
	Deadline	n/a
	Calls for Paper/Proposal	n/a
	Programme Update	n/a
	Other: introduction summer programme fellows	4
	Other: DHC staff will speak at conference	1
	Other: DHC received grant	1

**Table 7.** *Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio Blog Content: Events & Announcements*

Two posts were also categorised in the *Other* category of my coding manual: a symposium report and an interview with an expert on endangered data (cfr. Table 8). The studio currently has no podcast.

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Podcasts	Name of podcast	n/a
Other	Symposium report	1
	Interview with expert	1

**Table 8.** *Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio Blog Content: Podcasts & Other*

#### 4.3 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – Scholarly Commons

The flagship university of the state of Illinois, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), is best known for its College of Engineering, Department of Psychology, and School of Information Sciences and, in particular, for the Master's programme in Library and Information Science (*The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, n.d.).

The Scholarly Commons at UIUC was established in 2010 and is affiliated with the university's library (*Scholarly Commons*, n.d.). The centre's name highlights its focus on "interdisciplinary, collaborative, digital and data-driven scholarship" (*Overview*, n.d.). As communicated through personal correspondence with the DHC's staff (see Appendix B), the DHC was named a 'Commons' because staff of the DHC were following naming conventions of "Learning Commons," i.e. "spaces where undergraduates could gather to collaborate," and the staff of the Scholarly Commons wanted to "signal a similar purpose, but for faculty and graduate students" (K. Hogenboom, personal communication, 26 May 2020). Currently, there are nine people working at this DHC: "two full time librarians, one half-time librarian, and a

GIS Specialist [...] as well as an officer support specialist and four graduate assistants" (S. R. Benson, personal communication, 21 May 2020).

The Scholarly Commons blog, "Commons Knowledge," is not included on the DHCs main website. Instead, the site provides a link which redirects to a separate blog page. This blog page is provided through the university's "publish.illinois.edu" service (cfr. Figure 9). This is "[a] blog and microsite publishing service" that uses the WordPress blogging platform to create pages specifically for the university ('Publish.Illinois.Edu,' n.d.).

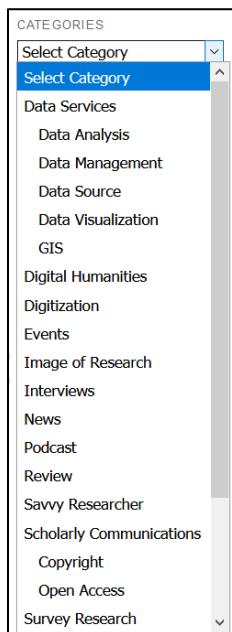


**Figure 9.** *Scholarly Commons Blog Software*

The Commons Knowledge blog uses a categorisation and tagging system at the bottom of each blog post (cfr. Figure 10). The sidebar on the site shows an option to select a category and see all relevant posts (cfr. Figure 11). Additionally, there is also a calendar in the sidebar showing the monthly archive which highlights the days where posts were published (cfr. Figure 12).



**Figure 10.** *Scholarly Commons Blog Organisation: Tagging*



**Figure 11.** *Scholarly Commons Blog Organisation: Categorisation*

APRIL 2020						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			
« Mar		May »				

**Figure 12.** *Scholarly Commons Blog Organisation: Monthly Archive*

Posts on the Commons Knowledge blog are “generally written by a graduate assistant within the Scholarly Commons” and occasionally by guest bloggers, these are typically “other subject specialists and graduate assistants within the Office of Research at the Library” (S. R. Benson, personal communication, 21 May 2020). The blog is mostly used to publish about more general topics related to DH. Occasionally, it features research posts, and more rarely, events or other announcements. My analysis of the hundred most recent posts covered ten pages of the blog’s archive.

With respect to the *General Posts* category of my coding manual, my analysis of the Commons Knowledge blog showed nineteen posts on *Tools & Methods*, thirty-two on *DH Topics* (including a series on data visualisation, cfr. Figure 13), three on *General DH News*, and one *Other* post on random facts about copyright (cfr. Table 9). Turning to the *Research* category, this blog had two posts on research done by the DHC, two mentions of *Projects*, and three posts categorised as *Other* (cfr. Table 9). These three were all themed research posts, e.g. a special post of Halloween themed research featuring a data visualisation of the “most haunted places in the U.S.” (Tahmasian, 2019) (cfr. Figure 14). When research was mentioned in a post, it typically featured a references section at the bottom of the post to acknowledge the original publications.

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
General posts	Tools & Methods	19
	DH Topics	32
	General DH News	3
	Other	1
Research	Research by DHC	2
	Research by Others	n/a
	Projects	2
	Other: themed research posts	3

**Table 9.** *Scholarly Commons Blog Content: General Posts & Research*

## Exploring Data Visualization #18

0

Posted on March 12, 2020 by Xena Becker

*In this monthly series, I share a combination of cool data visualizations, useful tools and resources, and other visualization miscellany. The field of data visualization is full of experts who publish insights in books and on blogs, and I'll be using this series to introduce you to a few of them. You can find previous posts by looking at the [Exploring Data Visualization tag](#).*

Painting the World with Water

Creating weather predictions is a complex tasks that requires global collaboration and advanced scientific technologies. Most people know very little about how a weather prediction is put together and what is required to make it possible. NASA gives us a little glimpse into the complexities of finding out just how we know if it's going to rain or snow anywhere in the world.

Continue reading →



Posted in [Data Visualization](#) | Tagged [Data Vis](#), [Data Visualization](#), [exploring data visualization](#) | 0 Comments

**Figure 13.** Scholarly Commons Blog Content: Data Visualisation Series

## Scary Research to Share in the Dark: A Halloween-Themed Roundup

If you're anything like us here in the Scholarly Commons, the day you've been waiting for is finally here. It's time to put on a costume, eat too much candy, and celebrate all things spooky. That's right, folks. It's Halloween and we couldn't be happier!



If you've been keeping up with our Twitter (@ScholCommons) this month, you've noticed we've been sharing some ghoulish graphs and other scary scholarship. To keep the holiday spirit(s) high, I wanted to use this week's blog post to gather up all our favorites.

**Figure 14.** Scholarly Commons Blog Content: Themed Posts

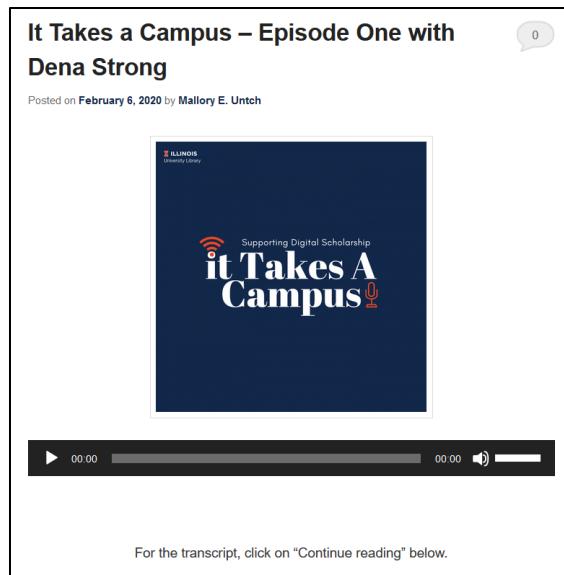
As mentioned above, the Commons Knowledge blog only rarely features posts on events or more general announcements. For the *Events* category, my analysis showed one post categorised as a *Lecture, Talk, or Seminar* and seven posts that fall under the category *Other*. These covered three webinars, one transcribe-a-thon, one film screening, and two DHC project discussion meetings (cfr. Table 10). In terms of *Announcements*, the blog had six *Programme Updates*, two announcements of *Deadlines*, and two posts categorised as *Other*: one announcing a new DHC space and one announcing the upcoming Endangered Data Week (cfr. Table 10).

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Events	Lecture, Talk, or Seminar	1
	Forum, Symposium, or Conference	2
	Social Events	n/a
	Workshop	n/a
	Other: Webinar	3
	Other: Transcribe-a-thon	1
	Other: Film screening	1
	Other: DHC project discussion meeting	2
Announcements	New Staff/Visiting Scholars	n/a
	Deadline	2
	Call for Papers/Proposals	n/a
	Programme Updates	6
	Other: new DHC space	1
	Other: Endangered Data Week	1

Table 10. *Scholarly Commons Blog Content: Events & Announcements*

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Podcasts	Name of podcast: It Takes a Campus	2
Other	Conference report	1
	Interview with staff	10
	Book review	8
	OA survey at UIUC	1

Table 11. *Scholarly Commons Blog Content: Podcasts & Other*



**Figure 15.** Scholarly Commons Podcast: *It Takes a Campus*

The Scholarly Commons recently (February 6, 2020) launched its ‘It Takes a Campus’ podcast on the Commons Knowledge blog (Untch, 2020) (cfr. Figure 15). The blog now features the two first episodes of this podcast (cfr. Table 11). With regards to posts under the category *Other*, the Commons Knowledge site has one post featuring a conference report, ten interviews with staff of the DHC, eight book reviews, and a survey on the use of OA among students at UIUC (cfr. Table 11).

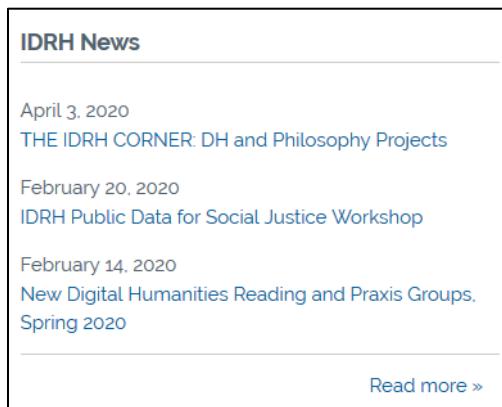
#### 4.4 University of Kansas – IDRH

The University of Kansas (KU) is the flagship university of the state of Kansas and a major research university (*The University of Kansas*, n.d.). The university is best known for its science programmes, particularly in the fields of medicine, technology, and engineering (*The University of Kansas*, n.d.).

The Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities (IDRH) was established in 2010 and is affiliated to the university library as well as the Hall Center for the Humanities and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (*Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities*, n.d.). The focus on research in the DHC’s name reflects the centre’s goal to “prepare and support faculty and graduate students” in their humanities research by offering “resources and training in the practices and tools of the Digital Humanities” (*About IDRH*, 2013). Under the ‘About’ tab on the IDRH’s website it shows that there are currently four staff members at the DHC. They fill the positions of Librarian, Postdoctoral Fellow, Program Assistant, and Graduate Research Assistant (*IDRH Staff*, n.d.).

The “IDRH Corner” blog page itself can be found under “News” in the navigation bar at the top of the IDRH website. The blog space is provided on the IDRH page which is connected to the general website of KU. In terms of organisation, the site uses a standard sidebar configuration on most of its pages. This sidebar features an “IDRH News” section showing the most recent posts on the blog (cfr. Figure 16). This section comes with a “Read

more” option which links through to an archive containing all posts that have ever been published on the blog page (cfr. Figure 17).



The screenshot shows a blog archive page titled 'IDRH News'. It lists three recent posts: 'THE IDRH CORNER: DH and Philosophy Projects' (April 3, 2020), 'IDRH Public Data for Social Justice Workshop' (February 20, 2020), and 'New Digital Humanities Reading and Praxis Groups. Spring 2020' (February 14, 2020). A 'Read more >' link is at the bottom.

Date	Post Title
April 3, 2020	THE IDRH CORNER: DH and Philosophy Projects
February 20, 2020	IDRH Public Data for Social Justice Workshop
February 14, 2020	New Digital Humanities Reading and Praxis Groups. Spring 2020

**Figure 16.** IDRH Blog Organisation: Recent Posts List



The screenshot shows a blog archive page titled 'NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS'. It lists several posts: 'THE IDRH CORNER: DH and Philosophy Projects / Proyectos en humanidades digitales y filosofía' (April 3, 2020), 'IDRH Public Data for Social Justice Workshop' (February 20, 2020), 'New Digital Humanities Reading and Praxis Groups, Spring 2020' (February 14, 2020), 'IDRH is pleased to Co-Sponsor A Workshop Series on Medieval Manuscripts with The Kenneth Spencer Research Library' (January 24, 2020), and 'Sylvia Fernández to join the Hall Center for the Humanities, the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities, and The Commons' (January 17, 2020).

Date	Post Title
April 3, 2020	THE IDRH CORNER: DH and Philosophy Projects / Proyectos en humanidades digitales y filosofía
February 20, 2020	IDRH Public Data for Social Justice Workshop
February 14, 2020	New Digital Humanities Reading and Praxis Groups, Spring 2020
January 24, 2020	IDRH is pleased to Co-Sponsor A Workshop Series on Medieval Manuscripts with The Kenneth Spencer Research Library
January 17, 2020	Sylvia Fernández to join the Hall Center for the Humanities, the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities, and The Commons

**Figure 17.** IDRH Blog Organisation: Archive

Regarding its content, the IDRH blog used to be solely focussed on posts related to events or general announcements and only recently (as of April 3, 2020) started posting about other topics such as research. Information on who wrote the blog posts – DHC staff – is only available for the most recent post when the IDRH started using their blog differently. Posts about events or other announcements have no author listed. In total 76 posts were analysed over the total 8 pages that make up the IDRH blog archive.

For the *General Posts* category of my coding manual, the IDRH blog archive only includes one such post: a statement on diversity policies at the IDRH which was categorised as *Other* (cfr. Table 12). With regards to the *Research* category, the IDRH blog also only had one relevant post – categorised as *Projects* (cfr. Table 12). Though it should be noted that only one of the three projects discussed in this post is affiliated with the University of Kansas. This blog post used links in the text to reference the original projects’ pages.

Category	Subcategories	Number of Posts
General posts	Tools & Methods	n/a
	DH Topics	n/a
	General DH News	n/a
	Other: statement of diversity and inclusion	1
Research	Research by DHC	n/a
	Research by Others	n/a
	Projects	1
	Other	n/a

**Table 12.** *IDRH Blog Content: General Posts & Research*

As mentioned above, the IDRH blog primarily used to focus on making general announcements and on announcing events. Following my coding manual, the *Events* featured on the blog were categorised as follows: fifteen *Lecture, Talk, or Seminar* posts; six *Forum, Symposium, or Conference* related posts; six *Workshops*; three *Social Events*; and thirteen posts categorised as *Other*. In the case of the *Other* subcategory these were a post on a praxis group, two meet & greets, two digital storytelling activities, two transcribe-a-thons, one edit-a-thon, one project showcase, one digital exhibit, one introduction of the DH lab, and two networking events (cfr. Table 13). The posts belonging to the *Announcements* category, were six posts on *New Staff/Visiting Scholars*, five on *Deadlines*, three *Calls for Papers/Proposals*, five *Programme Updates*, and three other topics. These other announcements were a job opportunity, a call for nominating scholars, and the announcement of a new DHC space (cfr. Table 13).

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Events	Lecture, Talk, or Seminar	15
	Forum, Symposium, or Conference	6
	Social Event	3
	Workshop	16
	Other: digital storytelling activity	2
	Other: project showcase	1
	Other: digital exhibit	1
	Other: transcribe-a-thon	2
	Other: edit-a-thon	1
	Other: networking event	2
	Other: introduction of the DH lab	1
	Other: praxis group	1
	Other: meet & greet	2
Announcements	New Staff/Visiting Scholars	6
	Deadline	5
	Call for Papers/Proposals	3
	Programme Update	5
	Other: job opportunity	1
	Other: call for nominations of scholars	1
	Other: new DHC space	1

**Table 13.** *IDRH Blog Content: Events & Announcements*

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Podcasts	Name of podcast	n/a
Other	Interviews with DH specialists	6
	Conference report	1

**Table 14.** *IDRH Blog Content: Podcasts & Other*

## CREATING SCHOLARLY NETWORKS THROUGH THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES: A CONVERSATION WITH MARIAH CRYSTAL

Mariah Crystal, PhD candidate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Kansas, on how digital humanities has opened up opportunities for engaging students through digital pedagogy and creating scholarly networks. Mariah is a [HASTAC Scholar](#) (2017-2019) at KU. Her research focuses on women in the Namibian independence movement.

In the next few weeks, IDRH will be releasing short videos about digital humanities activities at the University of Kansas. This is the second video in the series.



**Figure 18.** IDRH Blog Content: Video Interviews

The blog also contained some other posts that did not fit into any of the other main categories of my coding manual. These were a series of six video interviews with DH specialists (cfr. Figure 18) and a single conference report. The IDRH does not currently have a podcast (cfr. Table 14).

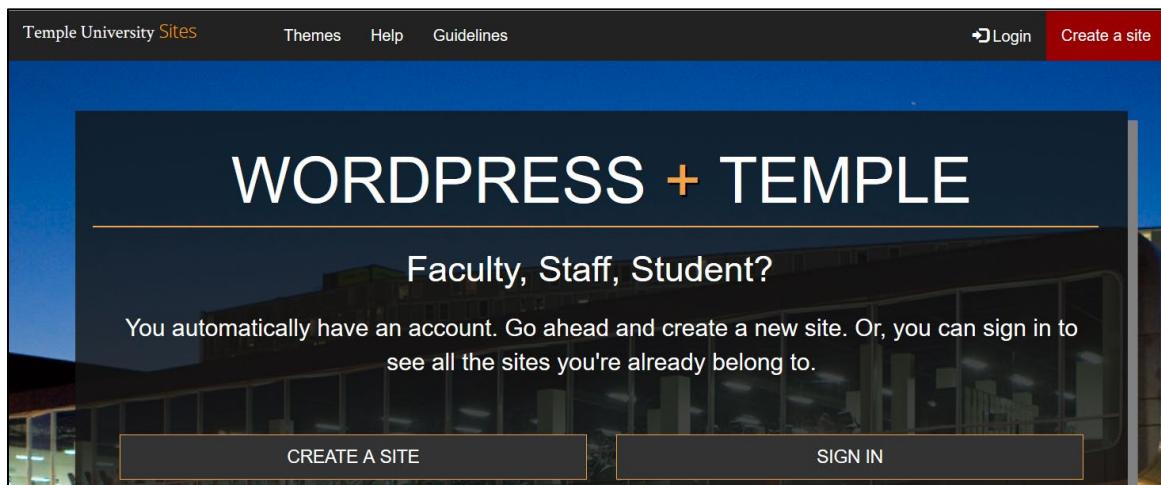
### 4.5 Temple University – Loretta C. Ducksworth Scholars Studio

Temple University is the largest university in Philadelphia and the second largest in the state of Pennsylvania, behind the University of Pennsylvania. It has a strong profile in the fields of “dentistry, law, medicine, pharmacy and podiatry” (*Temple University*, n.d.).

Temple’s DHC is the Loretta C. Ducksworth Scholars Studio – shortened as Scholars Studio – which was established in 2014 and is affiliated with the university’s library (‘About’, n.d.-c; M. Shoemaker, personal communication, 18 May 2020). This DHC was named for a variety of reasons. As mentioned in personal communications with the Scholars Studio’s staff (see Appendix C), this DHC was originally called the Digital Scholarship Center, yet in 2019 the centre changed its name when it moved to a new space and received money from a donor (M. Shoemaker, personal communication, 18 May 2020). Even more interesting here is that some people involved in the naming decisions also “wanted to drop digital from the title” (M. Shoemaker, personal communication, 18 May 2020). This may reflect the bias and apprehension towards DH and DHCs mentioned in the Literature Review (Nowviskie, 2011; Muñoz, 2012; Morgan, 2016; Posner, 2016). By removing the word ‘digital’ from the title, the link to the Digital Humanities becomes less pronounced.

The Temple University Libraries website shows the DHC is staffed by seven people: its Academic Director, the Head of the DHC, a DHC Supervisor, a Digital Scholarship Librarian, an Academic IT and Support Technician, a Makerspace Manager, and a Postdoctoral Fellow (*Staff Directory*, n.d.).

The Scholars Studio's blog is hosted on the DHC's main website and can be found under the 'Scholars Studio Blog' section of the site's navigation bar. It should be noted that this website – including the blog page – is not a part of the library's own digital interface. The DHC site is actually a WordPress site hosted under the "sites.temple.edu" service specifically for Temple University (cfr. Figure 19).

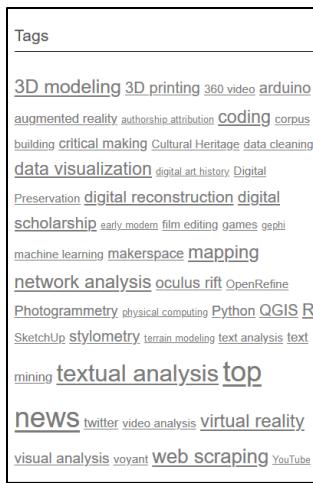


**Figure 19.** *Scholars Studio Blog Software*

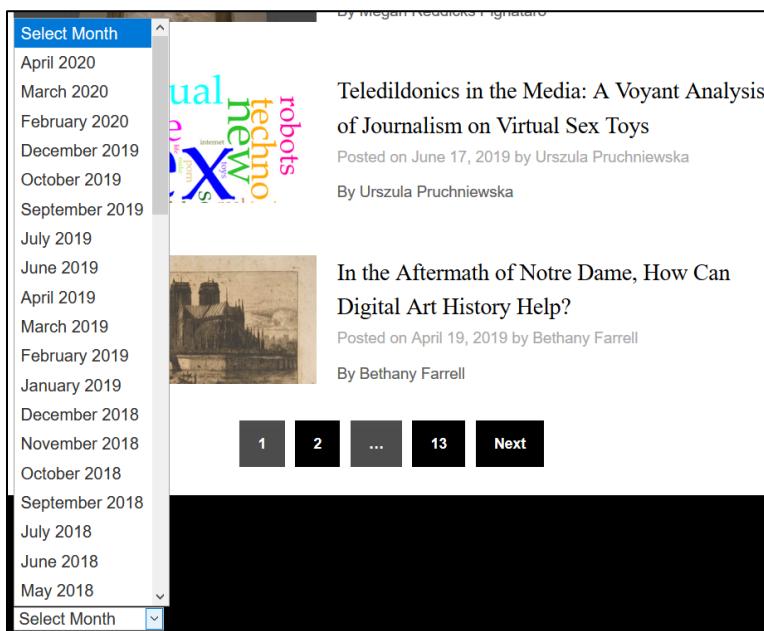
With regards to the organisation, the blog shows a 'recent posts' list in its sidebar (cfr. Figure 20) as well as an overview of tags used on the posts where the size of each term correlates to the number of posts under that tag (cfr. Figure 21). The blog page's footer shows a monthly archive (cfr. Figure 22) and the top navigation offers a dropdown menu which allows the user to select a field of method (cfr. Figure 23).



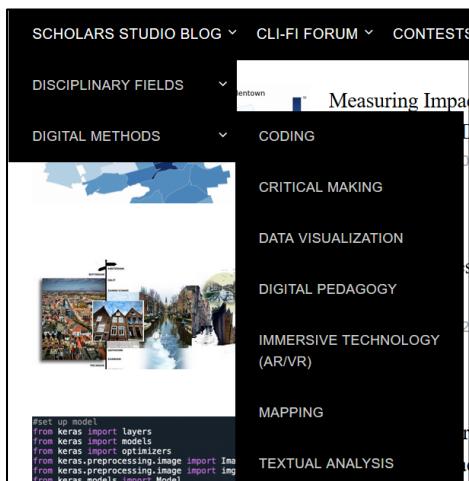
**Figure 20.** *Scholars Studio Blog Organisation: Recent Posts List*



**Figure 21.** Scholars Studio Blog Organisation: Tags Overview



**Figure 22.** Scholars Studio Blog Organisation: Monthly Archive



**Figure 23.** Scholars Studio Blog Organisation: Field & Methods Menu

Blog posts are primarily written by “graduate students who work in the center,” but “staff also contribute, as well as some scholar's[sic] who do work associated with [the DHC] and students who are or were associated with [it] but no longer are” (M. Shoemaker, personal communication, 18 May 2020). My analysis of the hundred most recent posts – spanning six and a half pages on the blog – revealed that typical content of the Scholars Studio blog tends to be general and research related posts. As with the Commons Knowledge blog, events and announcement are rare.

In terms of *General Posts*, the blog features ten posts categorised by my coding manuals as *Tools & Methods* and twenty-seven as *DH Topics* (cfr. Table 15). For research related topics the blog has forty-eight posts on research by the DHC, and five on *Projects* (cfr. Table 15). There is no consistency in how the research related posts cite or link to the original research publications. In some cases, the post will have a link in the text, some have a bibliography or further readings section, and others will provide no link at all.

Category	Subcategories	Number of Posts
General posts	Tools & Methods	10
	DH Topics	27
	General DH News	n/a
	Other	n/a
Research	Research by DHC	48
	Research by Others	n/a
	Projects	5
	Other	n/a

**Table 15.** *Scholars Studio Blog Content: General Posts & Research*

As stated above, posts on events or announcements rarely featured on the Scholars Studio blog (cfr. Table 16). The analysis showed two posts categorised as *Events* and one categorised as *Announcement*. The *Events* posts were one post on a symposium and one categorised as *Other* – more specifically this was an event for the launch of a project's output. The *Announcement* was a post on a data visualisation challenge and was categorised as *Other*.

Category	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Events	Lecture, Talk, or Seminar	n/a
	Forum, Symposium, or Conference	1
	Social Events	n/a
	Workshop	n/a
	Other: launch of game created by DHC	1
Announcements	New Staff/Visiting Scholars	n/a
	Deadline	n/a
	Calls for Paper/Proposal	n/a
	Programme Update	n/a
	Other	1

**Table 16.** *Scholars Studio Blog Content: Events & Announcements*

Categories	Subcategories	Number of Posts
Podcasts	Name of podcast: DH Podcast	1
Other	Conference video	2
	Interview with staff	4
	Photo report	1

Table 17. *Scholars Studio Blog Content: Podcasts & Other*

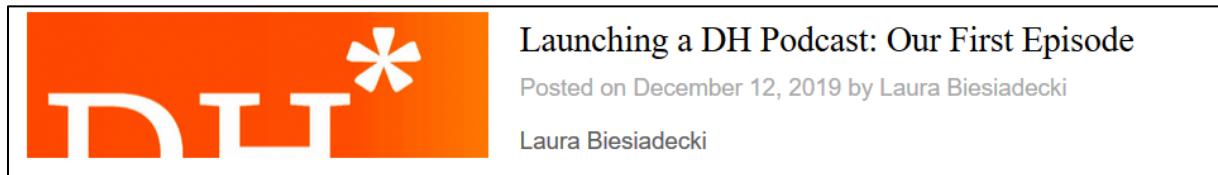


Figure 24. *Scholars Studio DH Podcast*

The Scholars Studio blog features the first episode of their DH Podcast, posted December 12, 2019 (cfr. Figure 24). This is the only post pertaining to their podcast, it has – so far – not been updated since then, presumably due to the Covid-19 pandemic (cfr. Table 17). The blog also contains seven posts which were categorised as *Other*. These are two conference presentation videos, four interviews with staff of the DHC, and one photo report of the Maker Fair in New York.

#### 4.6 Summation of the Data

Results from across the blogs showed some general trends regarding the content of the publications. UMD's MITH showed that the most common category was the *Events* category, followed by *Podcasts*; that *Research* and *Announcements* posts occurred far less frequently; and that there are no *General Posts* and only one post categorised as *Other* in the results. This showed that the MITH blog is mainly focussed on their Digital Dialogues podcast and related events, demonstrating an emphasis on community interaction. Moreover, the use of a podcast on top of a blog and Twitter account shows that MITH is using popular media forms to create a broader platform to draw the attention of their target audience. Data from the corpus analysis shows that other DHCs are beginning to follow in MITH's footsteps. This connects to the fact that MITH is a leading DHCs with a well-established history, as mentioned in the Analysis chapter (*Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH)*, n.d.; MITH, n.d.), and is likely to be a trendsetter for forms of dissemination to be used by DHC staff. It should also be noted that despite MITH's small amount of research posts – due to the blog's focus on their podcast programme – the DHC does have its own research. This information is simply made available through different channels, including their podcast and the main DHC site which includes a 'Research' tab in its menu that provides a clear overview of all MITH's research projects (*Research Archive*, n.d.).

For The Studio at UI the data shown in this chapter revealed that it was focussed on *Research* posts, having hardly any posts in the other categories (all under ten posts). This can be traced back to the fact that The Studio asks its summer programme fellows to post updates on the research they conduct during their fellowship on the blog. Consequently, the blog shows hardly any posts on more general topics and rarely publishes announcements of any

kind. Thus, demonstrating that The Studio has a strong emphasis on its own research, an aim that is also reflected in their mission statement ('About', n.d.-b).

Data of UIUC's Scholarly Commons blog – Commons Knowledge – showed that its most frequent category was *General posts*, followed by the *Other* category. *Research, Events*, and *Announcements* posts also occurred on the blog though far less frequently and the Scholarly Commons just set up their podcast. The emphasis on *General Posts* – and specifically on posts about *Tools & Methods* or *DH Topics* – demonstrates a stronger focus on the field of DH and its community outside of UIUC's own DHC. The prevalence of the *Other* category stemmed mostly from series of staff interviews and book reviews. Interviews with staff or DH specialists in general are common among all blogs (though for MITH this was not included as a separate subcategory in the analysis since their podcast covers these) yet occurred most frequently on the Commons Knowledge blog. As with the *General Posts*, it shows a wish to inform the audience about the DHC and DH topics. Similarly, the blog also provides this more general information through its series of book reviews. This focus on providing general DH-related information could point to a situation similar to that of the DH Commons where the DHC does not yet have its own research projects to promote – or for the Scholarly Commons, at least not as many as some other DHCs might. This argument is supported by what is seen on the general Scholarly Commons website, which also does not advocate any research or projects, and by their mission statement which focussed more on connecting and supporting the community rather than on setting up their own research (*Overview*, n.d.; *Scholarly Commons*, n.d.).

For the University of Kansas' IDRH results of the analysis revealed that the most common category was *Events*, followed by *Announcements*; that the *General Posts, Research*, and *Other* categories held hardly any posts; and that IDRH does not currently have a podcast. IDRH's focus on *Events* – and not *Research* – is easy to explain since they only recently turned their blog into a space that would serve as more than simply a way to announce events. Previously, the emphasis on events showed a clear focus on the interactivity with the DHCs audience. This focus is also reflected in IDRH's charter which focusses on how the DHC will support, assist, and work with the community (*About IDRH*, 2013). However, this can be expected to shift now that other topics are also covered on the blog. It is telling that once IDRH staff decided to make this change their first blog post was an overview of DH research. This could point to the blog becoming more research focussed.

Results of the analysis of Temple's Scholars Studio described in the last chapter showed that its most frequently occurring category was the *Research* category, followed by the *General Posts* category. The remaining categories had hardly any posts in them at all – always under ten posts. The *General Posts* and *Research* categories were closely related in the case of the Scholars Studio. Posts on this blog were typically written by graduate students working for the DHC who were asked to present their research on the blog (M. Shoemaker, personal communication, 18 May 2020). These same students occasionally also wrote posts explaining how to use certain research methods they used in their work or covered more general DH topics closely related to their own research. This shows a strong emphasis on the research aspect of the DHC by allowing DHC fellows to highlight the work they are doing

during their time at the Scholars Studio. This attention to the research is also reflected in the Scholars Studio’s “About” page where they highlight their aspiration to create “collaborative research in Digital Humanities, digital arts, cultural analytics, and critical making” (‘About’, n.d.-c).

Thus, to sum up, the most common category seen in the results of the corpus analysis was *Research*, closely followed by *General Posts*. *Events* and *Announcements* were also frequently witnessed in the data and *Podcasts* and *Other* posts were less common.

## 5. Implementation: KU Leuven – DH Commons

The data presented above was used as the basis for implementing features in the blog and website of the DH Commons, and for building a series of recommendations for future development. This chapter will provide general information about the DH Commons, how the website and blog were created and designed, and lastly, what content will be published on the blog.

### 5.1 General Information about the DH Commons

KU Leuven is “one of the oldest and most renowned research universities in Europe” (*KU Leuven*, 2020). It is also one of Belgium’s largest research universities and is best known for its profile in medicine and science as well as its programme in the arts and humanities (*KU Leuven*, n.d.). The DH Commons is the recently launched DH initiative of KU Leuven Libraries Artes. Currently, the DH Commons has limited staff and no specifically designated funding or physical space.

The decision to formulate the name for the DH Commons was made before I joined the centre for my internship. As explained on the DH Commons site, the term *commons* was chosen

because we wish to contribute to building a DH community at KU Leuven by offering a common ground where people can come together, exchange ideas and experiences, and find partners with whom to collaborate. At the same time, we want to avoid cloistering the digital work within the walls of a designated center and wish to illustrate that it is a core practice in the library’s day-to-day efforts, permeating the entire organization and crossing boundaries with other units. Most importantly, *everyone* is welcome to participate in and contribute to the Commons. (Martinez & Verbeke, 2020).

As we wanted to move these aims from theory into practice, we created a web presence for the DH Commons by constructing a website and blog.

### 5.2 The Creation of the DH Commons Website and Blog

Based on the data gathered through my content analysis of the DHC sites and their blogs, I developed recommendations about how we could construct a web presence for the DH Commons that would reflect design and content practices in similar settings, but that would also be site-specific to the situation at KU Leuven. I then presented these recommendations to my supervisor, Merisa Martinez, for review and approval. After gaining approval for the recommended structural and content changes I wanted to make, I moved into the implementation phase of my internship.

#### 5.2.1 Design of the Web Presence

The DH Commons web presence was configured using the Plone content management system for the KU Leuven websites (*Plone*, n.d.). Space for the “DH Commons” webpage (cfr. Figure 25) as well as a more general “Digital Humanities” page nested directly above the “DH Commons” page (cfr. Figure 26) on the website of KU Leuven Libraries Artes was created before I joined the DH Commons. During our internship Tess Dejaeghere and I helped shape these webpages by making and implementing several stylistic and formatting

recommendations. As this research focussed specifically on blog sites, the main recommendation I made was to develop a blog for the DH Commons.

## WELCOME TO THE DH COMMONS



Original image: [Book of Hours](#). KU Leuven Libraries Special Collections, PA08126. Reused and remixed by Merisa Martinez through KU Leuven's [open image policy](#).

### THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES COMMONS

The Digital Humanities Commons is an initiative within KU Leuven Libraries Artes aiming to bring together interested parties around teaching, training, and research in the Digital Humanities (DH). We consciously named this initiative a Commons because we wish to contribute to building a DH community at KU Leuven by offering a common ground where people can come together, exchange ideas and experiences, and find partners with whom to collaborate. At the same time, we want to avoid clustering the digital work within the walls of a designated center and wish to illustrate that it is a core practice in the library's day-to-day efforts, permeating the entire organization and crossing boundaries with other units. Most importantly, everyone is welcome to participate in and contribute to the Commons.

#### NEED HELP?

Are you interested in learning more about DH? Do you have a dataset, a research question, or a project idea, but don't know where to start? Are you a DH enthusiast looking for like-minded colleagues? Do you want to learn more about training opportunities? Send us an email to [set up an appointment!](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

#### CHECK OUT OUR ZOTERO!

Check out our new Zotero group, developed and managed by our Data Librarian [Nelle Neppel](#) and our Expert in Digital Scholarship [Merisa Martinez](#). Browse our collected DH content or submit a request to join and contribute to our growing body of DH knowledge by adding your own citations and links!

[GO TO ZOTERO](#)

#### LOOKING FOR THE DH AMA?

The Advanced Master's in DH at KU Leuven is coordinated by the [Department of Computer Science](#). Library staff of the DH Commons work closely with this and other departments to offer DH training and teaching.

[MORE INFO](#)

#### WHAT DO WE DO?

Library staff involved with the DH Commons...

- Connect interested students, teachers, researchers and staff across KU Leuven around research or educational projects in DH;
- Organize events such as talks by DH scholars, workshops, summer schools, and conferences;
- Teach and support the acquisition of advanced digital skills for researchers in the humanities;
- Develop DH projects and contribute to the mission and vision of Artes and KU Leuven Libraries as a whole;
- Build partnerships with other DH Centers, research groups, and faculties across Europe, North America, and the Global South.

#### CHECK OUT OUR BLOG!

Read about the DH Commons  
Be a part of the discussion



Launch of the DH Commons on 15 November 2019, with a keynote by Professor Ray Siemens of the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab, University of Victoria, BC, Canada

#### ABOUT US



Merisa Martinez



Demmy Verbeke



Tess Dejaeghere



Laura Uilens

Figure 25. Fully Configured DH Commons Webpage

## DIGITAL HUMANITIES

### FEATURED PROJECT

Discover the 50's in Europe through a unique online exhibition created by the research group [CS Digital](#) at KU Leuven.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)



Original image: [KU Leuven](#). Reused and edited by Ties Dejaeghere.

### Digital Humanities (DH) is...

A collection of interdisciplinary centers, tools, and methodologies which are developed, remixed, reused, and reformed in order to ask new research questions about existing materials and disciplines. It is also a way of performing research and exploring questions that could not (reasonably) be investigated without digital tools and methods. The contribution of KU Leuven Libraries to DH is highlighted in the activities of [our new initiative, the DH Commons](#).

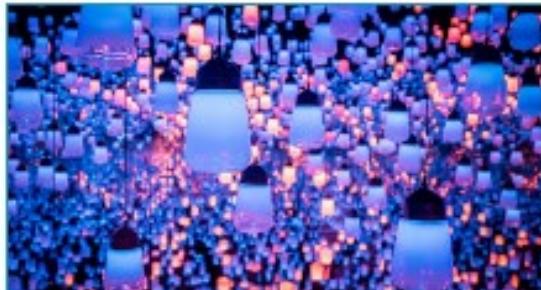
[VISIT THE DH COMMONS](#)

Original image: [The GDEL7 project - Visualisation of the GIG Outlink Graph](#).



### LIBRARIES AND DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Digital technologies have significantly altered how researchers in every discipline produce and disseminate knowledge, and library staff worldwide are collaborating as partners for experimentation and innovation. In the humanities, this culture of collaboration continues to evolve and change. Digital technologies and IT-applications already inform the work of a large group of humanist scholars and scientists, and library staff are consistently sought out for the development and improvement of new research questions and processes.



### USEFUL LINKS

- › [Digitisation and technical imaging](#)
- › [Digitising, preserving and disclosing research materials](#)
- › [Getting started with digital material](#)
- › [LIBS](#)
- › [Research Data Management](#)

## DH PROJECTS AT KU LEUVEN

A selection of DH projects and initiatives at KU Leuven.



### THE MAKING OF TRANSREGIONAL CATHOLICISM



### PHOTO-LIT

Tags: Literature - History - Archival Science



### KALEIDOSCOPE: THE 1950S IN EUROPE

Tags: History - Archival Science -

Figure 26. Fully Configured DH Webpage

A blog could not be hosted on the KU Leuven Libraries website, as the Plone software used by KU Leuven follows a structure and layout that would not be ideal for longer, more descriptive posts. Thus, we began the process of looking for a suitable academic blogging platform. In consultation with my supervisor Merisa Martinez, we made the decision to host the DH Commons blog on Hypotheses.org, “a platform for humanities and social science research blogs” (‘About Hypotheses’, n.d.). This platform was created specifically for academic blogs, “hosts several thousand blogs,” and has an international audience (‘About Hypotheses’, n.d.). Moreover, Hypotheses.org itself is run by the OpenEdition platform, “a comprehensive digital publishing infrastructure” specializing in Open Access digital publications (‘About Hypotheses’, n.d.). Thus, choosing to host the blog on Hypotheses.org was also in keeping with the mission of KU Leuven Libraries to support Open Access research and publication.

An application process must be completed to be awarded a Hypotheses.org blog; this ensures that the blogs on this platform will be appropriately academically rigorous. To obtain our DH Commons blog, Merisa Martinez, Tess Dejaeghere, and I workshopped this application process together. The first step in the application form required an “editorial project presentation,” which included general information about the blog, such as its main language, title, suggested URL, who its authors would be, and the projected frequency of posts (cfr. Figure 27), a classification of the blog type (cfr. Figure 29) and its content (cfr. Figure 30). As the analysis shows that blogs typically reference the name of the DHC, we chose to name our blog “Digital Humanities Commons” like the centre itself. Our main language for the blog is English, as this is the working language of the DH Commons. We proposed that the blog’s authors would be the DHC staff, fellows, and other library colleagues.<sup>5</sup> In terms of frequency of posting, there was no generalizable pattern shown in my corpus analysis, but I recommended to post once a week or a minimum of once a month to keep the blog active and up to date. We chose to publish a slightly adapted version of our editorial project presentation in our first blog post, seen below in Figure 28.

**\* Editorial project presentation**

Please write your answer here:

The blog’s editorial project presentation allows the Hypotheses team and Academic Council to process your application. It should be as precise as possible. It must include the topics it will focus on, the blog’s purpose, and can include the expected readership.

**Figure 27. Hypotheses.org Application for an Academic Blog: Editorial Project Presentation**

<sup>5</sup> As the blog and the DH Commons develop, there may also be opportunities to host guest posts from researchers external to the library and the university.

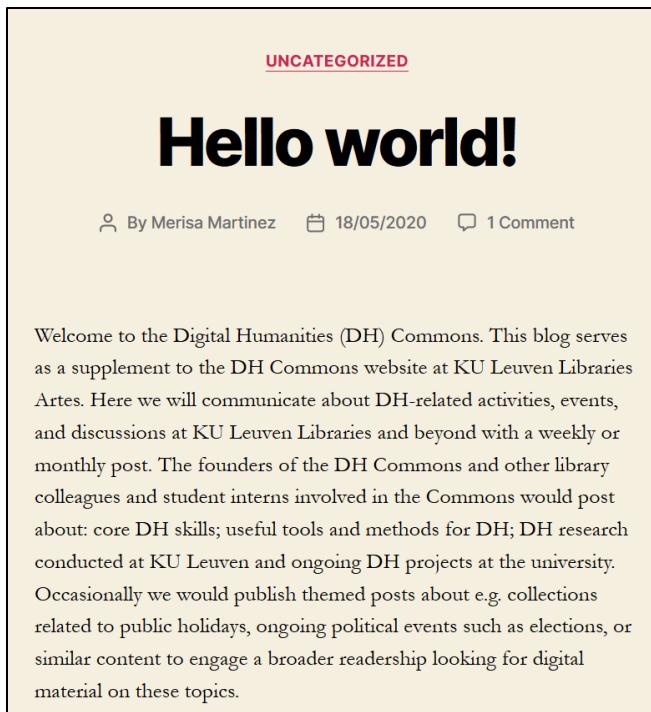


Figure 28. DH Commons Blog 1.0: First Blog Post

The screenshot shows a survey application from OpenEdition.org. The section title is "Type of blog" in red. It asks the user to choose one of the following answers, with a note that "Other (specify)" can be chosen and requires a text input. The user is instructed to choose "only one". Below this, a detailed description explains that the choice of blog type has no noticeable effect on the blog's appearance but facilitates validation and search in the OpenEdition catalogue. The survey was submitted on 29/03/2017 at 16:36. The URL of the survey is https://survey.openedition.org/index.php/admin/printablesurvey/sa/ind... The list of blog types includes: Event blog (e.g. : *Inequality, Education and Social Power* (<http://ies.hypotheses.org>)); Library blog (e.g. : *Rare & Special* (<http://flarbscs.hypotheses.org>)); Researcher's blog (e.g. : *Botanical Letters* (<http://botanical.org>)); Debate and discussion blog (e.g. : *We think History* (<http://wethink.hypotheses.org>)); Master's blog (e.g. : *EN-Globe* (<http://englobe.hypotheses.org>)); Methodology blog (e.g. : *Quanti* (<http://quanti.hypotheses.org>)); Research programme blog (e.g. : *Open Jerusalem* (<http://openjlem.hypotheses.org>)); Publication support blog (e.g. : *Vertigo* (<http://vertigo.hypotheses.org>)); Seminar blog (e.g. : *Mobilité, migrations et diaspora d'Asie du Sud* (<http://midas.hypotheses.org>)); Research organization blog (e.g. : *DARIAH-RE* (<http://dariahre.hypotheses.org>)); Fieldwork blog (e.g. : *Le blog de la grotte des Fraux* (<http://champslibres.hypotheses.org>)); Thesis blog (e.g. : *A muse of fire* (<http://museoffire.hypotheses.org>)); News scan blog (e.g. : *Le Cresson veille* (<http://lcv.hypotheses.org>)); Popular science blog (e.g. : *The Recipes Project* (<http://recipes.hypotheses.org>)); Media blog (e.g. : *Le carnet d'images de l'IFPO* (<http://ifpoimages.hypotheses.org>)); Bibliography (e.g. : *Bibliographie des éditions françaises du seizième siècle* (<http://bel16.hypotheses.org>)); and Other (specify) with a text input field.

Figure 29. Hypotheses.org Application for an Academic Blog: Blog Type

**\* What kind of content would you like to publish?**

Check all that apply

Please choose all that apply:

Tick as many boxes as you wish

- Posts about news
- On-going research notes
- Books reviews
- Conferences reviews
- Announcements in a specific humanities and social sciences field
- Science watch posts
- Presentation of your research team, academic institute, laboratory
- Links
- Bibliography
- Other (specify):

**Figure 30.** Hypotheses.org Application for an Academic Blog: Blog Content

In the second step of the application process, the application asked us to designate whether previous blog content had to be migrated from an existing blog, which was not the case for the DH Commons, as we were just setting up our web presence. Step three asked us to provide a more detailed classification of the blog type according to three indexes: the OpenEdition index (cfr. Figure 31), the Observatoire des Sciences et Techniques (OST) index (cfr. Figure 32), and the Information Science Institute (ISI) index (cfr. Figure 33). Finally, step four asked us to designate the blog's affiliation to an institution as well as to provide contact information for the blog's Editor-in-Chief.

**OpenEdition index**

Check all that apply  
Please select at most 4 answers

Please choose all that apply:

Please select a maximum of 4 subsidiary categories.

- Sociology > Gender studies
- Sociology > Sociology of consumption
- Sociology > Sociology of culture
- Sociology > Sociology of health
- Sociology > Sociology of work
- Sociology > Economic sociology
- Sociology > Urban sociology
- Sociology > Sport and recreation
- Sociology > Ages of life
- Sociology > Demography
- Sociology > Criminology
- Ethnology, anthropology > Cultural anthropology
- Ethnology, anthropology > Political anthropology
- Ethnology, anthropology > Religious anthropology
- Ethnology, anthropology > Social anthropology

**Figure 31.** Hypotheses.org Application for an Academic Blog: Some Categories of the OpenEdition Index

**\* OST (Observatoire des Sciences et Techniques (<http://www.obs-ost.fr/>)) Index**

Check all that apply  
Please select at most 2 answers

Please choose all that apply:

Please select a maximum of 2 main categories.

Economics  
 Education

29/03

/ Surveys OpenEdition.org - Application request for a resear... <https://survey.openedition.org/index.php/admin/printablesur>

Environmental studies, Geography & Development  
 Law  
 Library, Information & Communication sciences  
 Management  
 Political Science & Public Administration  
 Psychiatry  
 Psychology  
 Public Health & Health Care Science  
 Social Work & Social Policy  
 Sociology & Anthropology  
 Language & Linguistics  
 History & Archeology  
 Literature  
 Arts & Humanities  
 Multidisciplinary

**Figure 32.** *Hypotheses.org Application for an Academic Blog: OST Index*

**ISI (Information Science Institute (<http://www3.isi.edu/home>)) index**

Check all that apply  
Please select at most 4 answers

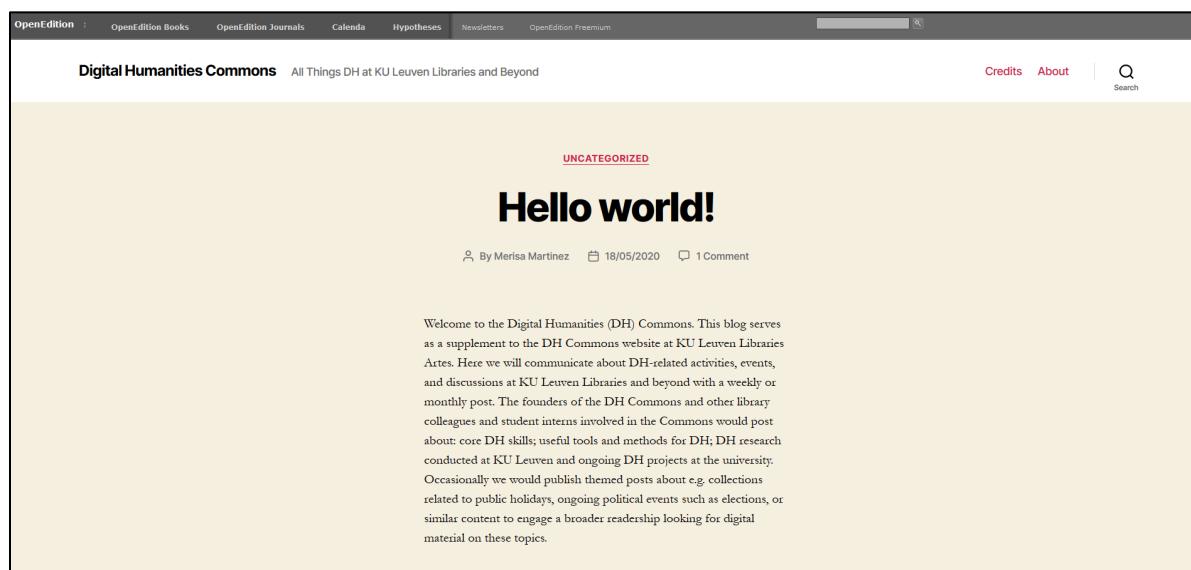
Please choose all that apply:

Please select a maximum of 4 subsidiary categories.

Economics > Economics  
 Economics > Business  
 Economics > Business, Finance  
 Education > Education & Educational Research  
 Education > Education, special  
 Education > Education, Scientific Disciplines  
 Law > Law  
 Law > Criminology & Penology  
 Library, Information & Communication sciences > Information Science & Library Science  
 Library, Information & Communication sciences > Communication  
 Management > Ergonomics  
 Management > Industrial relations & Labor  
 Management > Management  
 Management > Planning and development  
 Management > Transportation  
 Political Science & Public Administration > International relations  
 Political Science & Public Administration > Political Science

**Figure 33.** *Hypotheses.org Application for an Academic Blog: Some Categories of the ISI Index*

Once our application for the DH Commons blog was approved ([dhcommons.hypotheses.org](http://dhcommons.hypotheses.org)), the configuration of the blog site could begin.<sup>6</sup> The blog was initially configured with the standard Hypotheses.org theme (cfr. Figure 34), but other themes were available, and we chose a minimalistic and more modern theme while keeping in mind potential legibility and accessibility issues (cfr. Figure 35) (*Making the Web Accessible*, n.d.). The blog consists of a home page where the blog posts will be shown, a “Credits” page detailing who contributes to the blog site, and an “About” page to introduce the blog. In terms of organisation, I recommended having a monthly archive to keep track of posts and a categorisation or tagging system. The Hypotheses.org platform provides both of these options and an overview of the archive and categories could originally be seen in the blog site’s footer (cfr. Figure 36) but is now available in the blog’s left sidebar. An additional feature in the blog configuration is the option to provide citation information for the blog posts (cfr. Figure 37). Setting this up could more easily replicate the format of academic journal articles, thus providing support to the argument that academic blogs are worthy of consideration as legitimate forms of scholarly communication. Once the blog was fully configured, we created a link to it on the DH Commons website (cfr. Figure 38).



**Figure 34.** *DH Commons Blog 1.0 using the Standard Theme*

<sup>6</sup> All changes made to the blog were documented by uploading versions of the website to the Wayback Machine. See: [web.archive.org/web/\\*dhcommons.hypotheses.org/](http://web.archive.org/web/*dhcommons.hypotheses.org/).

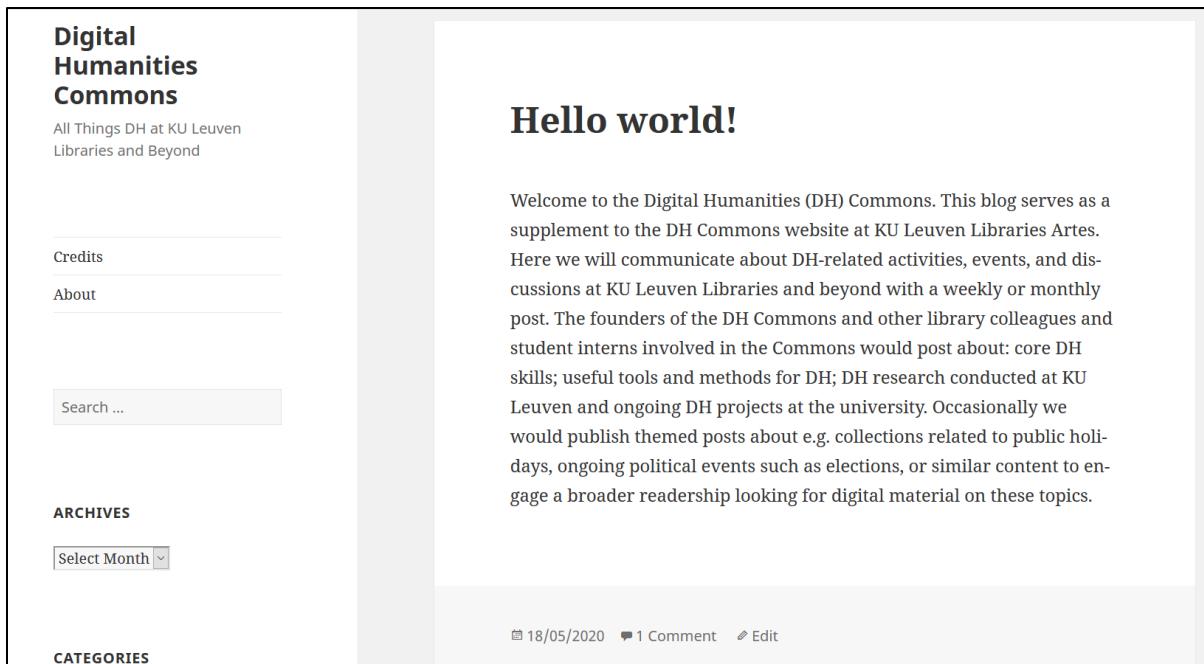


Figure 35. DH Commons Blog 2.0 using the "Twenty Fifteen Hypotheses" Theme

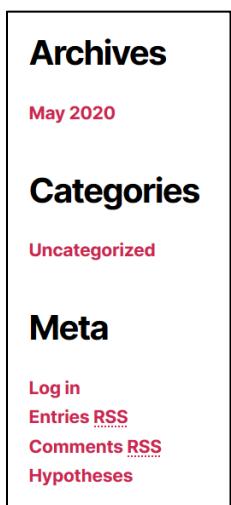


Figure 36. DH Commons Blog 1.0: Organisation

OpenEdition My Sites Digital Humanities Commons Documentation New

Dashboard Posts Media Links Pages Hal Comments Cite Appearance Users Tools Settings Collapse menu

**Cite Settings**

Help readers know how to cite your article correctly. Enter the reference text you wish to appear in the cite box using the editor below. Add the cite box to any page/post using shortcode `[cite]`

Cite this article as: {author}, "{title}, in {em>{sitename}{em}}, {publication\_date}, {permalink}.

**Available templates tags:**

{author} - the post/page author  
 {title} - the title of your post/page  
 {sitename} - your site name taken from Settings > General  
 {publication\_date} - date the page/post was published  
 {permalink} - the permalink of the page/post being accessed  
 {date} - the current date, if "date accessed" is desired  
 Also, you may insert words, HTML tags, and punctuation.

**Samples (similar to [Chicago-style notes](#)):**  
 Blog post: {author}, "{title}, {sitename}, {publication\_date}, {permalink}.  
 Book chapter: {author}, "{title}, in {sitename}, ed. Jack Doughtery (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, 2014), {permalink}.

**Save Changes**

Figure 37. DH Commons Blog: Cite Settings

**WHAT DO WE DO?**  
 Library staff involved with the DH Commons...

- Connect interested students, teachers, researchers and staff across KU Leuven around research or educational projects in DH;
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- Teach and support the acquisition of advanced digital skills for researchers in the humanities;
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**CHECK OUT OUR BLOG!**

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Launch of the DH Commons on 15 November 2019, with a keynote by Professor Ray Siemens of the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab, University of Victoria, BC, Canada

**ABOUT US**



Merisa Martinez



Demmy Verbeke



Tess Dejaeghere



Laura Uilens

Figure 38. The DH Commons Website: Link to the Blog

### 5.2.2 Content of the DH Commons Blog

After developing the design of both the DH Commons website and blog, we began discussions on the type of content that would be published. Based on the data that I gathered and summarised in Section 4.6 above (Summation of the Data), I suggested that our blog should mainly focus on what I categorised as *General Posts* and *Research* in my coding manual. These types of posts were prevalent across my corpus and their use revealed larger themes that reflected the individual focus of each institution. As such, I determined that the DH Commons could implement a similar strategy.

In terms of *General Posts*, the DH Commons staff could write on topics closely related to DH (e.g. data visualisation, human computer interaction, online publishing, etc.); provide information on tools and methods used in DH work in the form of “how to”-posts (e.g. Tableau data visualisation software, useful programming languages, citation software such as Zotero, database software, online publishing platforms, etc.); and occasionally feature themed posts about topics such as “collections related to public holidays, ongoing political events such as elections, or similar content to engage a broader readership looking for digital material on these topics” (Ulens, Dejaeghere & Martinez, 2020). With posts on general DH-related topics, there is the added benefit that we can link these to topics covered in courses of KU Leuven’s Advanced Masters in DH. This would position the DH Commons blog as a useful source of information and a publication venue for DH students at the university.

Furthermore, the blog could also be used to post on DH research and projects at KU Leuven. As the DH Commons does not currently have its own research to highlight, *Research* posts on the blog could on the one hand be used to serve as a platform for fellows at the DH Commons to post their ongoing research. In this manner, interns at the DH Commons could post about their theses on the blog once these are finished. This advertises the type of student research done in cooperation with the DH Commons and allows the students to present their work in a place that makes it discoverable to others writing on the same subject. The second way in which the DH Commons blog could post about research is by highlighting the DH-related projects at other departments and faculties of KU Leuven. This dissemination of project information could be a vital function of the DH Commons, as there is currently no single-entry point on KU Leuven’s websites that lists all DH projects at the university. The DH Commons site and blog would be ideally positioned to serve as a central access point for this information in order to highlight these projects and increase their findability. Moreover, this ties in with Tess Dejaeghere’s thesis research (also performed in conjunction with an internship at the DH Commons) wherein she investigated forms of dissemination and display of DH-related projects on DHC websites.

Additionally, *Podcasts* and *Other* posts would not frequently feature on the DH Commons blog; however, a podcast might eventually be considered when the blog has become more firmly established. As for the *Other* posts, a series of interviews might be interesting to include on the blog. These could be interviews with new staff at the DH Commons or on DH-related projects at other faculties, allowing these people to introduce themselves, present their academic background, and provide information about their work in DH and at the DH

Commons. This would tie in with the DH Commons' mission – as advertised on KU Leuven Libraries Artes' DH webpage – to bring attention to the people who work on Digital Humanities projects both within and outside the library (*Digital Humanities*, n.d.). Furthermore, a series of book reviews (as seen on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Commons Knowledge blog) could be included on the DH Commons blog as this type of content is typically covered in academic journals and strengthens the argument (as explained below) that this type of academic blogs features content similar to traditional scholarly communication formats.

Lastly, when discussing recommendations for the DH Commons, we also raised the topic of how we could aim to bridge the gap between more accepted forms of scholarly communication (such as academic journal articles) and blogs by implementing an open and transparent system of peer review, whereby one author from the DH Commons blog checks over the content, spelling, grammar and citations of another author's submission before it is published. As explained in the literature review, such a system is a common step in most accepted forms of scholarly communication (Piwowar, 2013; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018).

As seen from the data presented and analysed above, the biggest influence on the DH Commons blog was UIUC's Commons Knowledge blog. This DHC appears to be in a similar situation to the DH Commons, in that it does not have a large portfolio of in-house research or projects to highlight. Instead, the Commons Knowledge blog strongly emphasises general DH topics and posts explaining tools and methods as well as some interesting *Other* posts (e.g. book reviews and staff interviews), which is something the DH Commons can do as well. Other important influences on my recommendations were The Studio and the Scholars Studio blogs, as these blogs were mainly research-focussed, and allowed their fellows to publish about work-in-progress, which is also an example that the DH Commons could follow.

## 6. Discussion

Finally, the question regarding what the results of the analysis reveal about how these blogs serve as forms of scholarly communication still remains. The short answer to this is that these blogs are, in fact, a legitimate form of scholarly communication and should be treated and valued as such.

A first matter that should be clarified here is how these blogs are group efforts. As pointed out in the introduction to this paper, this research considers DHC blogs as a specific subtype of academic blogs created by a group of people. Yet while these blogs are in fact a collaborative effort, it should be noted that the majority of the posts are still created by individuals. Nevertheless, these blogs still differ from blogs created by individuals – a type of blog that has been studied in depth, unlike collaborative blogs (Luzón, 2017). Where blogs of individual researchers would, in their entirety, be created by one person, DHC blogs are a collaborative effort of many people working together to cover topics relevant to the expectations and mission of the DHC. Therefore, they are considered as collaborative blogs.

Regarding the matter of how DHC blogs could be seen as forms of scholarly communication, a closer consideration of the authors of these blogs already partially proves their academic merit. The corpus shows that these are typically DHC staff and affiliates. Results of the corpus analysis confirm what sources presented in the literature review stated (Siemens et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2015; Luzón, 2017; Montoya, 2017), that these are mostly librarians and library staff, as well as faculty members and graduate students. Clearly, not just anyone can post on these blogs, as there exists a system of content and stylistic moderation controlled by a university-affiliated DHC and its staff (Luzón, 2017). This already ensures a certain level of academic standard. In cases where the DHC blog may not be published on the university website itself – as is the case for the DH Commons blog – the existence of platforms such as Hypotheses.org points to a rise in interest in academic blogging. In these cases, the application process of these platforms – as described in the implementation chapter – is meant to ensure academic standards.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, typical content of these blogs supports the argument that they should be valued as mainstream scholarly communication. As mentioned in the literature review, there is no consensus on what academic content entails (Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017). Yet, I would argue that any topic traditionally considered as relevant for scholarly communication – e.g. dissemination of research, positions regarding a specific academic topic, data sets, etc. – could be considered as academic content. The blogs examined for this paper – as the results of the analysis show – cover topics typically seen in scholarly communication through formats such as research reports, preliminary results, position papers, and other publications (Anderson, 2018). Additionally, some of the podcasts linked to the DHCs include these topics as well (consequently, research into how academic podcasts could also be considered as scholarly communication forms would be recommended as a future avenue of research). The main difference between the DHC blogs (and podcasts) and traditional forms of scholarly communication is that these blogs are not peer reviewed and are

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<sup>7</sup> Hypotheses.org currently hosts almost 200 community-driven blogs on topics related to digital humanities.

not included in impact metrics. Therefore, these blog posts will not be considered as publications for academic promotions through state-sanctioned measures like the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the United Kingdom (Quah, 2011; Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018).

That lack of peer review is, as mentioned in the literature review, a common argument against blogs as scholarly communication (Batts et al., 2008; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Puschmann, 2014). Indeed, Batts et al. (2008) argued that the lack of objective assessment methods of these blogs is what causes the prejudice against them. Yet, I would argue that these publications do not really need to be assessed objectively to be valued. To begin, posts covering research on these blogs are in many cases experiments with ideas and detailed descriptions of work-in-progresses. These can eventually be reformed into more traditionally accepted publications, and could thus be considered as outputs similar to research reports which are valued as standard forms of scholarly communication (Anderson, 2018). More significantly, there is actually no true objective method to assess this type of writing as it is inherently subjective. As explained in the literature review, publications considered in portfolios for academic promotion are typically valued through peer review, impact, and significant metrics (Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Yet even these are not always objective, as peer review can be biased (Piwowar, 2013; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018) and metrics determining impact and significance are an oversimplified way of determining the value of a publication (Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Hence the reason that the valuation system of publications has often been criticised and new methods and altmetrics are being proposed (Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018).

Thus, while 'objective' assessments of these publications are not necessarily be desirable or even possible, what would be useful is the creation of a community-developed set of guidelines to examine stylistic and content standards present in collaborative academic blogs, like those written under the banner of a Digital Humanities Centre. While my research indicates that there are some unofficial patterns in place, as can be seen from the results of the corpus analysis, this could be due to the fact that DHCs often follow the example of other, longer-established DHCs when they are in the start-up phase (Roh, 2019). In many cases, DHCs will take their cue from leaders in the field such as MITH or DH@UVA. This is evident in the way that the Scholarly Commons at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign followed the example of the Scholar's Lab at the University of Virginia (K. Hogenboom, personal communication, 26 May 2020), and in the recommendations in this research, which was conducted with the aim of providing recommendations for the DH Commons by examining the practices at other centres. Yet, officially accepted community-developed and agreed upon standards do not exist yet.

Nevertheless, these academic blogs already cover the same topics as most accepted forms of scholarly communication, are written by academics, and are held to academic standards. Thus, regardless of the fact that the inclusion of blogs as forms of scholarly communication is controversial (Batts et al., 2008; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017;

Anderson, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018), DHC blogs – which are a specific subset of academic blogs – deserve to be considered with the same care and detail as other, more accepted forms of scholarly communication.

## 7. Conclusion

Digital Humanities Centre blogs are a specific subset of academic blogs, created by academics, and covering scholarly topics. Nevertheless, these blogs are often not considered as legitimate forms of scholarly communication and no research on their workings exists.

This research and the related internship at KU Leuven Libraries Artes were conducted with the purpose of constructing a site-specific web presence for the Digital Humanities Commons that would also reflect practices seen in other Digital Humanities Centre websites and blogs. The thesis focussed specifically on the blog feature seen on many DHC sites and studied how and why DHC blogs could be considered as valuable forms of scholarly communication. The research was conducted as a case study using document review and content analysis methods to analyse a corpus of five American DHC websites and blogs, all affiliated to a public university's library. These criteria were set to ensure a situation similar to that of the DH Commons, that is, a DH initiative affiliated to KU Leuven Libraries Artes with limited staff, and no specifically designated funding or physical space.

Results from this research were primarily used to make recommendations for the development of the DH Commons' own academic blog. This blog is hosted on the Hypotheses.org – a part of the OpenEdition scholarly communications platform, an initiative focussed on the proliferation of open access publications, including academic blogs ('About Hypotheses', n.d.) – and will mainly be used to publish what my coding manual for this research categorised as *General Posts* and *Research* as well as occasionally featuring posts pertaining to the *Other* category, such as interviews or book reviews. This choice of topics will allow the DH Commons blog to not only provide general insights on DH work and to acknowledge work performed by library staff, but also to highlight student research conducted in cooperation with the DH Commons and to serve as a central access point for KU Leuven DH research project information which will increase their findability. Furthermore, the blog itself can be used to manage the limitations of the DH Commons (i.e. limited staff and no specifically designated funding or physical space) as the blog provides a 'space' to participate and interact with the KU Leuven community and will help the DH Commons to expand its presence and attract interest while also offering staff a way to handle the issue of not having enough time or space available in their work setting to develop a portfolio of publications.

Results from my corpus analysis showed that academic, DHC-affiliated blogs should be considered as a legitimate form of scholarly communication. Consequently, these blogs should be awarded the same value as more accepted formats of scholarly communication since, although they do not adhere to traditional rigorous evaluation methods typically applied to these formats (Batts et al., 2008; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017; Anderson, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018), DHC blogs do cover scholarly content, have academic authors, and uphold academic standards through their university affiliations. Moreover, the critique that this format cannot be objectively evaluated (Batts et al., 2008) rests on the false assumption that this type of writing could be assessed objectively. This argument constitutes a large part of the current evaluation system of scholarly communication, however this system has frequently been criticised as being a potentially biased or oversimplified method of evaluation (Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2015; Curry,

2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Consequently, alternative forms of assessment have been proposed (Piwowar, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2015; Curry, 2018; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018) and academic blogs could form an ideal middle ground here between the traditional, rigorous guidelines developed by a third party, and not having any guidelines at all. To accomplish this, DHCs and their respective blogs could develop internal guidelines for academic rigour – as suggested in this paper – and the reorientation of a mindset away from external validation, and back toward building up a portfolio of research that reflects the mission and the quality of a given DHC and its library.

As European research institutions continue to develop Digital Humanities Centres, a rise in alternative scholarly communication formats will be witnessed, and the use of DH blogs as legitimised forms of scholarly communication will increase – e.g. through the use of academic blogging platforms such as Hypotheses.org. Yet, research on the value of DHC blogs and the recommendation of community-developed guidelines (as mentioned above) is still lacking (Kjellberg, 2014; Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Luzón, 2017). This paper has been an attempt to fill this gap in the research, however as this was a multi-case study, more extensive research on this topic will be needed in the future to build on the findings of this research and allow for generalisation of the conclusions. Moreover, studies on similar popular media formats – including academic podcasts – is recommended, as these formats experience a similar bias as academic blogs. When such research is performed, it will hopefully lead to the rightful acceptance of alternative publication formats as legitimate forms scholarly communication.

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## Appendix A – Coding Schedule

university	University of Maryland	University of Iowa	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	University of Kansas	Temple University
<b>DHC</b>	Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH)	Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio	Scholarly Commons	Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities (IDRH)	Loretta C. Ducksworth Scholars' Studio
<b>website</b>	<a href="https://mith.umd.edu/about/">https://mith.umd.edu/about/</a>	<a href="https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/studio/">https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/studio/</a>	<a href="https://www.library.illinois.edu/sc/digital-humanities/">https://www.library.illinois.edu/sc/digital-humanities/</a>	<a href="https://idrh.ku.edu/">https://idrh.ku.edu/</a>	<a href="https://sites.temple.edu/tudsc/">https://sites.temple.edu/tudsc/</a>
<b>established</b>	1999	2006	2010	2010	2014
<b>main affiliation</b>	library	library	library	library	library
<b>other affiliations</b>	College of Arts and Humanities	n/a	n/a	Hall Center for the Humanities // College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	n/a
<b>number of DHC staff</b>	11	11	9	4	7
<b>DHC staff positions</b>	4 directors / 6 researchers / 9 affiliates / 2 interns-assistants	head of DHC / senior scholar / program manager / graphic designer / digital scholarship librarian / DH librarian / media production & design / researcher-developer / library assistant /	3 librarians / GIS Specialist / officer support specialist / 4 graduate assistants	librarian / postdoctoral fellow / program assistant / graduate research assistant	academic director / head of DHC / DHC supervisor / digital scholarship librarian / IT support / makerspace manager / postdoctoral fellow

		public engagement specialist / DH researcher			
<b>blog software</b>	university websites	U Iowa blogging site	WordPress-based blogging and publishing platform: Publish.Illinois.Edu	university websites	WordPress-based blogging and publishing platform: sites.temple.edu
<b>frequency of posts</b>	irregular - several posts per month vs. months w/o posts or just 1 post	irregular - multiple posts a day, over several days / much more posts over summer bc related to Summer Studio Fellowship Program	regular - monthly posts (min 1/month) EXCEPT some years not over summer	irregular - sometimes 2 on 1 day vs. months w/o posts	irregular - several posts per month/day vs months w/o posts or just 1 post
<b>blog organisation</b>	recent posts list / tagging system: no overview provided	categorisation: overview categories provided / monthly archive	categorisation: overview categories provided / monthly archive / tagging system: no overview provided	recent posts list / other: all posts overview (under 'read more')	recent posts list / tagging system: overview tags provided / monthly archive / other: dropdown menu to sort by field or method

blog authors	DHC staff / DHC affiliates	DHC staff / guest bloggers / other: summer programme fellows	DHC staff / guest bloggers	DHC staff	DHC staff / DHC affiliates / other: students / other: past affiliates
<b>blog content: general posts</b>	n/a	1 tools & methods / 2 DH topics	19 tools & methods / 32 DH topics / 3 DH news / other: 1 random fact	other: 1 statement on diversity	10 tools & methods / 27 DH topics
<b>blog content: research</b>	6 research DHC / 1 research others / 5 projects / other: 1 progress report fellowship	3 projects / 1 research others / 84 research DHC	2 research DHC / 2 projects / 3 themed research posts	1 project	48 research DHC / 5 projects
<b>reference to original research</b>	links in text	no links / links in text / bibliography/references/further readings section	bibliography/references/further readings section	links in text	no links/ links in text / bibliography/references/further readings section

<b>blog content: events</b>	11 lecture, talk, or seminar / 4 forum, symposium, or conference / 2 social events / 7 workshops / 55 other: 1 film screening, 2 student group, 6 reading group, 1 book launch, 1 dramatic reading session, 1 edit-a-thon, 1 project discussion meeting, 42 live talks for podcast	1 forum, symposium, or conference	1 lecture, talk, or seminar / other: 3 webinars, 1 transcribe-a-thon, 1 film screening, 2 DHC project discussion meetings	15 lecture, talk, or seminar posts / 6 forum, symposium, or conference / 6 workshops / 3 social events / other: 1 praxis group, 2 meet & greets, 2 digital storytelling activities, 2 transcribe-a-thons, 1 edit-a-thon, 1 project showcase, 1 digital exhibit, 1 introduction DH lab, 2 networking events	1 symposium / other: 1 launch of project output
<b>blog content: announcements</b>	3 new staff-visiting scholars / 3 programme updates / 2 calls for papers/proposals / 1 deadline / other: 1 retirement, 1 job opportunity, 1 introduction of summer interns, 3 grants, 1 return of podcast, 1 postponement of talk,	1 new staff-visiting scholars / other: 4 introduction summer programme fellows, 1 Studio staff speaking at conference, 1 grant	6 programme updates / 2 deadlines / other: 1 new DHC space, 1 Endangered Data Week	6 new staff-visiting scholars / 5 deadlines / 3 calls for papers-proposals / 5 programme updates / other: 1 job opportunity, 1 call nominating scholars, 1 new DHC space	other: 1 data visualisation challenge

	3 podcast line-up, 3 nominations speakers podcast				
<b>blog content: podcasts</b>	Digital Dialogues: 42	n/a	It Takes a Campus: 2	n/a	DH Podcast: 1
<b>blog content: other</b>	1 conference report	1 symposium report / 1 interview with expert endangered data	1 conference report / 10 interviews staff / 8 book reviews / 1 survey OA use students	6 interviews DH specialists / 1 conference report	2 conference presentation videos / 4 interviews staff / 1 photo report Maker Fair, NY

## Appendix B – UIUC Scholarly Commons Correspondence

### Original Message:

**From:** Laura Ulens <laura.ulens@student.kuleuven.be>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 20, 2020 12:56 PM  
**To:** Scholarly Commons <sc@library.illinois.edu>  
**Subject:** Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

Dear madam, sir,

My name is Laura Ulens, I am a graduate student enrolled in the advanced master's in DH at KU Leuven in Belgium.

I am currently writing my thesis on DH Center websites and their blogs as forms of scholarly communication.

My corpus includes a mention of the Scholarly Commons and Commons Knowledge blog at your university. I was wondering if you could provide me with some information that I have not been able to locate (or not in as much detail as needed for my research) on your websites.

I was wondering if how many people currently work at the Scholarly Commons. Are these the same people listed under "contact an expert" in the about section on your website? If not, could you tell me what positions the DH Center staff hold?

I also could not find any clarification on who writes the blog posts for the Commons Knowledge blog. Is this always the Scholarly Commons staff or are others also asked to participate? If so, do they need to follow specific guidelines for the posts on your blog?

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,  
Laura Ulens

### Reply:

RE: Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

 Scholarly Commons <sc@library.illinois.edu> Markeren als ongelezen

do 21-5-2020 22:28

Aan: Laura Ulens: Scholarly Commons <sc@library.illinois.edu>;

Hello Laura,

Thank you for contacting the Scholarly Commons. We are happy to provide you with information about the Scholarly Commons for your research.

The Scholarly Commons has Two full time librarians, one half-time librarian, and a GIS Specialist on staff as well as an officer support specialist and four graduate assistants.

We do work with many other areas on campus and many other experts, but they are not employed by the Scholarly Commons and generally work on a referral basis, although some units hold office hours in the physical unit.

The blog posts are generally written by a graduate assistant within the Scholarly Commons, but we do have "guest posts" from other subject specialists and graduate assistants within the Office of Research at the Library.

I hope this answers your questions, but feel free to reach back out to me if you have additional follow-up questions.

Best,

Sara  
Sara R. Benson  
Copyright Librarian & Assistant Professor  
Scholarly Communication & Publishing  
University of Illinois Library  
srbenson@illinois.edu  
(217) 333-4200  
Check out my podcast ©hat at <https://www.library.illinois.edu/scp/feed/podcast/copyright-chat>

## Further question:

**From:** Laura Ulens <laura.ulens@student.kuleuven.be>  
**Date:** Sunday, May 24, 2020 at 8:16 AM  
**To:** "sc@library.illinois.edu" <sc@library.illinois.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

Dear professor Benson,

Thank you very much for your reply.

I had one more question about the Scholarly Commons.

I was wondering if the choice of the center's name had any significance?

The DH center where I am an intern also chose to call itself a commons (the DH Commons at KU Leuven) and I know this choice was made deliberately to reflect our aim to build a community and collaborative environment.

The vision outlined on your website seems similar to what we are trying to establish so I was wondering if the reason for naming the center a Commons was also similar?

Kind regards,

Laura Ulens

## Reply:

Re: Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

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← ALLEN BEANTWOORDEN

→ DOORSTUREN

...



Scholarly Commons <sc@library.illinois.edu>

di 26-5-2020 19:55

Markeren als ongelezen

Aan: Laura Ulens;

CC: Benson, Sara Rachel <srbenso@illinois.edu>;

Dear Laura,

I am going to weigh in on this question, since I was part of the group that named the Scholarly Commons. At the time (2008-2009), Learning Commons was the way that academic libraries talked about spaces where undergraduates could gather to collaborate. If you look in the literature, I'm sure you will see many articles about that concept. The group that established the Scholarly Commons was thinking about a name that would signal a similar purpose, but for faculty and graduate students. It is of course open to undergraduates, but we mostly help them with things like their senior theses where they are basically working as junior scholars.

At that time the concept of a digital scholarship center did not exist, and there were not very many library services that would have fallen into that category. One that we did look at was the Scholar's Lab at University of Virginia, and you can see the similarity in how we present ourselves although they provide very different services than we do at Illinois.

I believe that Digital Humanities Centers have been around a lot longer than Digital Scholarship Centers, but I'm sure you've done a lot more research on them than I have! If I've raised additional questions, please let me know.

Best,

Karen

## Appendix C – Temple University Scholars Studio Correspondence

### Original Message:

Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

 **Laura Ulens** za 16-5-2020 17:37 Markeren als ongelezen

**Aan:** asktulibrary@temple.edu;

Dear madam, sir,

My name is Laura Ulens, I am an advanced master's student in DH at KU Leuven in Belgium. I am currently writing my thesis on DH Center websites as a form of scholarly communication.

My corpus includes a mention of the Loretta C. Duckworth Scholars Studio at your university. I was wondering if you could provide me with some information that I have not been able to locate on your websites.

For my thesis I would like to know when the Scholars Studio was established. I saw that the site's archive goes back to 2014. Is this when the project was launched or did it exist before that?

I also could not find any specific information on who writes the blog posts on the website. Am I correct in assuming the authors are graduates at the university presenting their research? If so, do they need to follow specific guidelines for these posts?

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,  
Laura Ulens

### Reply:

[Learning & Research Services] [External] Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

 **Temple University Ask a Librarian <ask@temple.libanswers.com>** ma 18-5-2020 16:09 Markeren als ongelezen

**Aan:** Laura Ulens;

--# Please type your reply above this line #--

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**Matt Shoemaker**  
May 18 2020, 10:08am via System

Hi Laura,

2014 is about the right date for the center, though it was originally called the Digital Scholarship Center. We didn't become the Loretta C. Duckworth Scholars Studio until fall of 2019 when we moved from the old Paley library building to the new Charles Library building. A lot about the physical space and equipment we have access to changed with that move (for the better).

The writers for the blog are primarily graduate students who work in the center and write about their research while they are employed by us. Staff also contribute, as well as some scholar's who do work associated with us and students who are or were associated with us but no longer are. They have some very basic guidelines to follow for their posts that mostly have to do with writing for the web, but nothing too complicated or strict.

-Matt Shoemaker

### Further question:

**Laura Ulens**

May 18 2020, 02:02pm via Email

Hi Matt,

Thanks for your reply.

I was wondering if there was a specific reason behind the name change, or was this just done because you changed to a new location?

Best wishes,

Laura Ulens

Reply:

[Learning & Research Services] [External] Master's Thesis Digital Humanities Center Websites

 VERWIJDEREN

 BEANTWOORDEN

 ALLEN BEANTWOORDEN

 DOORSTUREN

...



Temple University Ask a Librarian <ask@temple.libanswers.com>

ma 18-5-2020 20:16

Markeren als ongelezen

Aan: Laura Ulens;

--# Please type your reply above this line #--

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**Matt Shoemaker**

May 18 2020, 02:16pm via System

Multiple reasons for the name change. Money from naming rights from a donor, new space needed a new name, and some people wanted to drop digital from the title.