



**Newcastle**  
University

Humanities  
Research  
Institute

## December 2020 Newsletter

Dear Colleagues,

As we all look forward to the Christmas break and what we hope will be a much brighter and happier New Year, we at the Humanities Research Institute want to take this opportunity to wish you a very happy holiday season and also give you some good news about the research activity we have been supporting throughout the pandemic.

### Developing links with our Research Partners

Following our successful collaboration with the Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) on the Maritime Humanities project, which you can read more about [here](#), we have agreed to work with our colleagues at TWAM to help them open up their vast collections to other researchers. TWAM's museum and archive collections are too big and diverse to summarise here, covering topics as wide ranging as Labour and Trade Unionism, Immigration, Theatre, Industrialisation, Gender, Healthcare, the Environment and more. See this [link](#) and this [link](#) to TWAM for more information.

TWAM is keen to democratise and share its archives so that more of its hidden stories can be told. To that end we have agreed to develop an event that will bring together our researchers with their collections. This event will allow the lead archivist to showcase their collection and allow researchers to learn more about the materials they hold. To help us develop and plan this event, please take a few moments to register your interest [here](#) and tell us about your area of research interest.

### City of Literature

The City of Literature project continues to develop momentum. This partnership

aims to bring together people with expertise in Literature and Literacy within the North East alongside organisations that deliver literary and literacy services within the region. The group aspires to tackle social inequality through improving literacy and cultivating literary art across all sections of society.

We are moving into the next phase of this project, where we would like to bring together academics and partners from across the city and region. Please look out for an invitation later next year to an Open Forum to grow our network, and to think about the future of Archives; Literacy and Reading; Technologies for Reading and Writing; Literary Cultures in the North East. By sharing our expertise and experiences we aim to improve how we tackle social inequality through the written & spoken word.

### **Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People.**

This semester the Humanities Research Institute has been working with **The British Academy** Policy team to share what we are learning about Covid-19 and its impact on Society, and how this might help us to think about future policy. Jenny Richards and James Law oversaw the project, with Hazel Sheeky Bird and Rachel White. We would like to thank researchers from across the HaSS faculty who shared their research and experiences with us. We will share the finished report in due course.

### **Projects**

We are delighted to say that a number of our funded projects have been able to adapt to the ever-changing restrictions that have affected us all, and they are now underway. To highlight a few, our **Healthcare and Artificial Intelligence** project, a collaboration led by Dr Mwenza Blell, Dan Foster Smith, Kypros Kyprianou and Tom Schofield, is looking at the proliferation of new AI health triage apps that are increasingly used to diagnose some health conditions. The project questions the ethical values of these apps and raises questions about how they harvest data. The project will be based around a web-based parody version of a modern Triage app.

Our **Medical Humanities Network** is continuing to explore the role of the humanities in tackling health-related problems. A new strand of research will be undertaken exploring the role that poetry can play in helping people deal with illness. The group also held its first workshop with colleagues in FMS, exploring the way HaSS scholars can help people live with cancer.

The **Performance Network** which we co-sponsor with the [Institute for Creative Arts Practice](#) is continuing to look for new ways that researchers can engage with performance at a time when almost all traditional performance venues and spaces remain closed. At a time when it is almost impossible to experience a performance as part of an audience, Kate Craddock arranged a virtual event whereby participants could watch a streamed production of 'The End' and then follow this up with a post-performance discussion with artists Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas.

Also, please look out for the launch of NUHRI's **Digital Humanities Hub** in the new year!

This is just a selection of the research activity that is continuing despite difficult circumstances and we would like to extend our thanks to everyone involved in the projects we support.

### **Looking ahead ...**

#### **Carry on Researching**

Resilience has become something of a watchword in 2020, and the HaSS Research Institutes Team are impressed by the way many of you have risen to the challenges thrown up by the pandemic.

Yet we know that for those with teaching responsibilities, the demands on your time and energy have been significant and that finding time for research activity has been difficult. Together with our sister institutes for Creative Arts Practice and Social Science, we have devised a programme designed to support your wellbeing and help you to carry on researching, or just think of yourself as a researcher. Some of these events are designed to help you look after your physical and mental wellbeing, while others aim to help with the practicalities of researching and keep in touch with you.

With Rachel Hammersley and Annie Tindley (History, Classics, Archaeology), we are planning a workshop for all colleagues in the faculty currently titled '**Coming up with Plan B: Adapting Research and Practice During and Post-Covid 19**'. This workshop is aimed at those rethinking research plans while archives and other resources are difficult to access, and travel overseas challenging.

With Shirley Jordan (School of Modern Languages), we are also planning a workshop in the early summer on '**Slow Research**'. This is part of our

commitment to rethinking our research cultures post-pandemic with you, our sisters Institutes, and the HaSS-Faculty EDI team.

Please do look out for information on these events arriving in your inbox next year.

### **Discovery Morning with Opera North, 2021**

We will be joined by Opera North, with whom we are exploring a potential research partnership, on the morning of **January 20th**. Opera North already work with our fabulous colleagues in music, but they understand there are many other points of connection between us, with theatre, with creative writing, with fine art and with many other areas (voice, speech, and more), and they are keen to share their research ambitions too. If you are interested in joining us, please email [christopher.okeeffe@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:christopher.okeeffe@ncl.ac.uk) so we can follow up with you.

### **Other Activities**

We are always striving to find new ways we can make it easier for colleagues to pursue their research interests, whether through helping people connect with other individuals with shared or similar interests or through providing opportunities for people to make their research more visible within the university and beyond. To that end, we are currently meeting with the heads and research leads of all the humanities-based schools so that we can discuss and learn about new ways we can help. We will use these discussions, together with guidance from our steering group, to rethink how we can help promote research, and also rethink our research culture post-pandemic.

### **Finally...**

We would like to wish you and those close to you a happy and restful festive break, and we look forward to seeing you in 2021!

Best, Jenny and Chris

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