Digital Humanities Planning Tool

## Introduction

The digital humanities planning tool can be used when developing research projects that involve the use of digital methods and the production of digital outputs.

It is important to consider and clarify technical, legal and ethical requirements at an early stage of project planning, as how you propose to address these may affect the viability, quality and cost of a proposal, and will determine who needs to be involved in the project. Your Research Development Manager may use this tool as a basis for discussing the digital component of a proposal.

This planning tool can help you to:

* Identify the technical requirements for delivering the project in terms of personnel, resources and skills, consider how these can be met, and clarify the likely costs;
* Identify legal and ethical considerations that will need to be addressed, such as those relating to copyright and the use of personal and confidential information;
* Identify areas where further discussion and advice may be required.

The tool can inform the planning of a funding application, and will facilitate completion of the data management plan if one is required by the funder.

The tool consists of seven sections addressing: digital outputs and data types, hardware and software, storage and computing, technical skills and support, copyright, other legal and ethical considerations, and preservation and accessibility. Question prompts are provided for each section. Guidance for each section follows.

To use the tool, complete each section as fully as possible. You may not have answers to all the questions, but you can use the tool to identify areas that need to be addressed, and update it as your planning proceeds.

## Contact

Please [contact](https://research.reading.ac.uk/digitalhumanities/contact/) the Digital Humanities (DH) Hub for guidance on all aspects considered in the planning tool.

## Planning Tool

### 1. Digital outputs and data types

Briefly describe the digital outputs that will be produced. For each digital resource, try to identify: the file formats that will be used; the scale or quantity of the data, especially if the volume will be substantial (e.g. 10s of GB upwards); any standards that will be used, e.g. TEI, IIIF, RDF, etc.

### 2. Hardware and software

What hardware and software other than standard Office applications will be needed to implement the digital components? Are the resources available through the University or will they need to be sourced externally? If the latter, will there be a cost to procure or use the hardware/software?

If you will be hosting content online, are there special elements that will need to be delivered, e.g. an interactive online database, or hosting for a digital collection?

### 3. Storage and computing

Where will data be stored? Will storage in excess of 100 GB be required? Specify the likely requirement if possible.

Will virtual machines or high-performance computing be required? Specify your requirements if possible.

### 4. Technical skills and support

What technical expertise will be needed to deliver the project? How will this expertise be provided? List key technical skills required, proposed provider, and any information you have obtained about likely costs.

### 5. Copyright

What copyright materials will be used in the digital methods and outputs? What legal basis will you have for use of the materials? Are there any risks that might affect viability of the project, e.g. if the legal basis is unclear or permissions have not yet been secured?

### 6. Other legal and ethical requirements

Are there other legal and ethical requirements e.g. relating to data protection law and the use of confidential information? How will you address these?

### 7. Preservation and accessibility

How will long-term maintenance and accessibility of digital outputs be managed? What are the infrastructure requirements? What are the likely costs?

## Guidance

### 1. Digital outputs and data types

Digital outputs may be digital resources such as an online database or collection, a virtual reality construct, a digital map etc., or datasets, such as interview transcripts, survey results, etc. Digital resources may consist of an interface e.g. a searchable website, and the underlying data and documentation.

Formats and standards can be critical to interoperability and re-usability, and ultimately the sustainability of digital outputs. The DH Hub provides guidance on [formats](https://research.reading.ac.uk/digitalhumanities/resources/guides/data-management/#file-formats) and [standards](https://research.reading.ac.uk/digitalhumanities/resources/guides/data-management/#standards).

### 2. Hardware and software

You should establish whether hardware and software needs can be met by the University before procuring from external providers. Use of external providers for processing University information may require you to follow approval and procurement processes, to ensure there are required contractual protections for University information and other confidential information, such as personal data. If you wish to procure services from external suppliers, the Hub can support you in consulting your [DTS Business Relationship Manager](https://uor.topdesk.net/tas/public/ssp/content/detail/knowledgeitem?unid=bfa9d5b508134c13bdb776d40e1d9960&origin=searchPreview).

UMASCS provides equipment and services to support digitisation. For more information, please see our [guide on working with collections](https://research.reading.ac.uk/digitalhumanities/resources/guides/collections/) and [UMASCS’ page on digital scholarship](https://collections.reading.ac.uk/research/digital-scholarship/).

The University provides access to a variety of software through [AppsAnywhere](https://uor.topdesk.net/tas/public/ssp/content/detail/knowledgeitem?unid=8da6f4d6-b626-4958-a6bd-cf35ab7c670c" \t "_blank), as well as [online survey tools](https://www.reading.ac.uk/research-services/research-data-management/managing-your-data/online-survey-tools).

The University can provide project websites in the University domain using the WordPress platform free of charge, but there may be costs if a large amount of storage is required on the webserver or if work is needed to develop special functionality. Refer to the DTS guidance on [WordPress websites](https://research.reading.ac.uk/act/knowledgebase/wordpress-websites-for-research-groups-and-projects/). Third-party website providers should only be used if a University website cannot meet project requirements.

UMASCS is in the process of developing infrastructure to support interactive online collections and exhibitions, which will provide linked data capabilities and a set of online exhibition templates including map interfaces. (Available exhibition templates currently include: [carousel type](https://collections.reading.ac.uk/art-collections/explore/online-exhibitions/john-golding/), [grid type](https://collections.reading.ac.uk/art-collections/explore/online-exhibitions/virtual-walks/), [hotspots type](https://collections.reading.ac.uk/art-collections/explore/online-exhibitions/pandora/) and [Google map type](https://merl.reading.ac.uk/explore/online-exhibitions/lantern-slides-of-the-open-spaces-society/).) The new infrastructure will be based on standards to support usability and preservation and is likely to be a better long-term solution than creating a bespoke website. Contact the DH Hub to discuss your requirements.

### 3. Storage and computing

Data should be stored in a primary storage location within University infrastructure. If a large amount of storage is required (as a rough guide, upwards of 100 GB), there are likely to be data storage costs, which can usually be included in grant budgets. See the DH Hub guidance on [storage](https://research.reading.ac.uk/digitalhumanities/resources/guides/data-management/#storage).

Computing infrastructure provided by the University can meet high-performance computing needs and support collaborative working using virtual machines. There are costs to use some computing resources, e.g. the Research Cloud platform. Costs can usually be included in grant budgets. The DH Hub provides information about [internal computing resources](https://research.reading.ac.uk/digitalhumanities/resources/links/).

### 4. Technical skills and support

If the academic staff involved in the proposal do not have the technical skills to deliver the digital outputs, these will need to be procured in one way or another. Technical skills might be provided through recruitment, by an external academic collaborator, by UoR DTS colleagues, or by an external contractor. Your Research Development Manager can help you explore your options and the likely cost implications.

DTS colleagues can support delivery of research software engineering elements, such as the creation and modification of research software code, database design and website construction, and a research software engineer can be costed into project budgets. For a discussion with DTS about your requirements, contact the DH Hub or complete the [research project support request form](https://research.reading.ac.uk/act/knowledgebase/request-project-support-from-the-academic-and-research-computing-team/).

### 5. Copyright

If the success of the project relies on use of copyright materials, especially if there is an intention to publish them, it is essential to establish a basis for using the materials. You may also need to include costs for copyright clearance.

Statutory provisions for use of copyright works include the Fair Dealing and Text and Data Mining exceptions to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. The alternative to reliance on statutory exceptions is for usage to be based on permissions. These may be general permissions, for example where a work has been licensed for re-use under a licence such as Creative Commons Attribution, or specific permissions granted ad hoc by the copyright holder, which may be at a cost. There is guidance on legal [exceptions](https://www.copyrightuser.org/understand/exceptions/) and [permissions](https://www.copyrightuser.org/understand/rights-permissions/) at copyrightuser.org.

If you require guidance on use of copyright materials, contact the University’s [Copyright and Compliance Officer](https://www.reading.ac.uk/imps/copyright).

### 6. Other legal and ethical requirements

Legal and ethical requirements might apply e.g. if you are collecting data from research participants, working with archival or pre-archival materials containing information relating to living persons, using personal information that has been published online, or working with information that is commercially confidential.

The Research Data Service provides guidance on [research ethics and data protection](https://www.reading.ac.uk/research-services/research-data-management/data-management-planning/research-ethics-and-data-protection) when working with research data. Academic and Governance Services provides guidance on [research ethics](https://www.reading.ac.uk/academic-governance-services/research-ethics) and matters related to ethical approval for research. Information Management and Policy Services provides guidance on [data protection and research](https://www.reading.ac.uk/imps/data-protection/data-protection-and-research).

The Centre for Data, Culture and Society at the University of Edinburgh has useful [ethical guidance on social media research](https://www.cdcs.ed.ac.uk/files/2021-09/Social_Media_Ethics.pdf).

### 7. Preservation and accessibility

Project websites can maintain the usability of online resources and deliver value both during a project and for many years beyond. But they are not preservation solutions, and without active maintenance they will eventually become non-viable.

If online resources can be hosted in institutional archival infrastructure, this may extend their longevity. For example, when working with an external archive or museum, that institution‘s platform might be the most appropriate location for a digital outcome. Different institutions will have different capabilities, and it is important that the lines of responsibility are clear. UMASCS can advise on issues such as these, which need to be considered when working with a third party heritage institution. The online collection/exhibition infrastructure that UMASCS is currently developing may also provide better sustainability for suitable online resources than a project website.

Where digital resources have been developed, steps should be taken to preserve the underlying data and documentation relating to the design of the resource by depositing them in a data repository.

A data repository should also be used as the place of deposit for datasets created during the research. The University’s [Research Data Archive](https://www.reading.ac.uk/research-services/research-data-management/preserving-and-sharing-data/uor-research-data-archive) can be used for this purpose, but external data centres such as the Archaeology Data Service or the UK Data Service may also be relevant places of deposit, depending on the nature of the data. The Archaeology Data Service is one of the few data repositories that [charges for the deposit of data](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/deposit-data/). The Research Data Service provides guidance on the use of [data repositories](https://www.reading.ac.uk/research-services/research-data-management/preserving-and-sharing-data/choosing-a-data-repository).

Where there are costs for data archiving, these should be included in the grant budget where possible.