

Conference Series: COMPUTER SCIENCE & THE HUMANITIES

Partners

American Council of Learned Societies; Coalition for Networked Information; Computer Science & Telecommunications Board, National Academies; NINCH; Princeton Center for Arts & Cultural Policy Studies; and Rice University

Outline

Humanists need to take the lead to guarantee that their intellectual needs shape applied technical solutions. The arts and humanities have had little exposure to the rich possibilities latent within digital technology to enhance and enrich the exploration of the human record. Opportunities are scarce not only for computing humanists to report and discuss their successes and failures but also for rich engagement with scientists with whom they could develop new tools. William Wulf, President of the National Academy of Engineering, has testified that scientists are interested in the challenges humanists can present: "the humanities offer a new opportunity to explore how information technology can be employed in fundamentally different ways that will provide fresh insights and enrich research in other applications."

This series is the third component to date within the Computer Science and Humanities Initiative. It will build on the report from the 1997 Roundtable meeting and the expressed needs of the Building Blocks workshop.

The conference will allow participants to demonstrate exemplary applications of technology in the humanities and relevant applications in the computer sciences; to link discussions between disciplines; and generally to create new opportunities for peer learning from a variety of formats, including formal presentations, project reviews, and interactive sessions focusing on new tools. Using these means, the goals of the conference series will include:

- Laying the groundwork for thoughtful integration of technology on policy and programmatic levels, in higher education;
- Building from campus-based projects to larger scale collaborations among colleges and universities;
- Developing a research agenda of long-term needs and challenges facing computer scientists and humanists, building on the findings of Building Blocks;
- Providing common intellectual ground to help structure strategies and promulgate best practices at the national level;
- Demonstrating exemplary applications in the humanities and computer and engineering sciences for research and teaching purposes, enabling attendees to

- "leapfrog" on existing knowledge and experience when designing their own projects;
- Linking discussions in a variety of fields/disciplines, and among a variety of institutional actors (campuses, societies, etc.);
 - Training the next generation of scholars in both the broader visions/framework of cross-disciplinary collaborations as well as methods relevant for narrower applications of academic technology;
 - Creating opportunities for peer learning in several formats (e.g., formal presentations, informal "fair" demonstrations with hands-on interactivity, etc.);
 - Providing a common and ongoing forum for computing specialists and humanists;
 - Facilitating communication and dissemination about all of the above.

Each 2-day conference would be opened by a nationally known keynote speaker, with the main body of the conference a combination of project presentations, panel discussions on key issues, small group discussions, and a 'fair' of technologies and projects from other sectors, including industry, as points of comparison and contrast. Each conference section will conclude with a summary of the days' events and a presentation focusing on those areas of convergence between the humanities and computer science deemed most promising in light of the proceedings. We also anticipate published reports and a website to publicize results and to facilitate communication between conferences.

The first conference has been fully funded by the Carnegie Corporation.

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- **David Green**, Executive Director, NINCH
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Conference Committee

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