



Title	Building Sustainable Digital Pedagogy
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## Summary

Over two days in September 2018 Cambridge Digital Library, with support from Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) and Cambridge Digital Humanities (CDH), convened a conference with the aim of drawing focus on how digital tools and resources are used in education and learning, and to explore an opportunity to strengthen the matrix of research, technology and education.

The close relationship between teaching, scholarship and research at Cambridge creates a special environment that cultivates a rich variety of digital resources, technologies and tools that increasingly form the basis of collaboration in research and in teaching. Images have become an essential tool in research and pedagogy – we’ve come a long way from the carousel of slides in a projector. But looking at the images themselves is only one part of the picture. There is also invaluable work in the creation, management and use of data about images as digital objects, facilitating new means of discovery and opening the door to new methods of analysis.

The conference explored the extension of this collaboration into the teaching environment – how we could scrutinize common problems and build networks in the pursuit of education and learning. As part of this, it also looked at what emerging technologies might lead to a focused, efficient, interdisciplinary approach with the aim of making a difference to the broadest spectrum of researchers and students.

## Content Overview

Beginning with a review of current projects and initiatives at Cambridge with a core digital theme, we heard narratives from Stanford University, the University of Birmingham and the University of Oxford. Subsequently we delved into the relationship between academic and commercial collaboration, interdisciplinary perspectives and examples of the benefits of broader understanding of how the digital can coalesce research and teaching. Finally, in an open discussion on successful approaches, the conference explored models from Harvard University and the Wellcome Genome Campus before putting some of the challenges under the microscope.

## Key Points

The challenge: How can we expand the range of things we can do in the classroom or lecture theatre but stay true to our purpose as a University – which is not so much to teach as for students to learn, and what they learn mostly is how to “be”. They need as far as possible to work with the real materials of the subject, and not “teaching aids”.

There are a broad range of stimulating projects and initiatives with a digital focus or theme at Cambridge. While many of these operate on a localised level across a varied range of subjects, there is an increasing sense of their joint impact and interconnectedness. The opportunity to share

a platform at this conference highlighted many areas of similarity, both in problems and solutions, but also generated enthusiasm for further collaboration and sharing of ideas.

Hearing the experiences of some of our peers brought to light some key themes:

- Resources for research and pedagogy can be successfully built through supporting the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF).
- Creating scholarly digital pedagogy with an open and ethical ethos is challenging.
- Disparity in the speed of the development of tools and resources and the pace of the learner's grasp of those developments needs consideration.
- Initiatives of any size have challenges to sustainability, but success is possible so long as they are designed within the constraints of scope and scalability.
- A suggested model road map for sustainable digital pedagogy:
  - Founded on existing work
  - Integral not peripheral
  - Enabling computational literacy
  - Diversity: people, data, technology; discipline
  - Access to data, collections and tools.
  - "Safe space for dangerous ideas".
  - Credit: co-authorship, recruitment, promotion
  - Curation, preservation, discovery, connection. Collaboration generates collaboration.
- The importance and relevance of the physicality of material, and the need to bolster the digital by finding ways to capture and represent this.

Effective commercial and academic collaboration can also be key to the success of digital pedagogy initiatives. The potential concern over the commercial nature of the relationship can be offset by working with development companies with a genuine interest in presenting research in the best possible way. When successful, this link facilitates the use of research in a teaching environment to the benefit of all in the matrix.

The benefits of a diverse and inclusive culture are well established and are central to interdisciplinary collaboration on digital initiatives. Regardless of discipline, scholars need to understand the technical challenges, technical teams need to understand the scholarship and learners need to understand both. The variety of approaches and thinking achieved when disciplines come together provides not only a more holistic outcome, but a better pedagogical experience for all involved.

The matrix of research, technology and learning is an iterative one and the opportunity to learn from the challenges faced by other institutions was important in developing cohesion across the broad range of institutions present. Focussing on the challenges in developing an effective approach to digital pedagogy brought to light the drivers, the vulnerabilities and the technical and human factors involved, and emphasised the role of the library as a central space to address these challenges and bring the various elements together.

## Conclusions

The overarching theme which emerged from the conference was that there is scope to develop a more cohesive approach to pedagogical digital initiatives at Cambridge and much benefit in doing so, not least in the interest of sustainability. In drawing out and bringing together local enthusiasm and developing a sense of community, both the efficacy and sustainability of outcomes could be improved. There was a clear sense of the important role that libraries can play in driving and supporting this activity.