



What the digital Dickens! The science and technology of being human

Monday 2 November

Whether you Facebook or tweet - or not - technology has seeped into virtually every aspect of our lives. This year's Being Human festival of the humanities takes a closer look at how academic research contributes to our understanding of the science and technology of being human.

'The arts have always informed science and technology in innovative ways, and a national festival like Being Human is the perfect opportunity to show the real-world relevance of interdisciplinary university research,' said Being Human festival participant Reyer Zwiggelaar, professor of computer science at Aberystwyth University.

Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London in partnership with the Arts & Humanities Research Council, the British Academy and the Wellcome Trust, this year's only national festival of the humanities highlights science and technology through a range of events running from 12–22 November, including:

- [Rebuilding Marvell's Hull with Minecraft](#) at Hull History Centre
In Hull, historians are using the popular game *Minecraft* to bring history alive. With 3D construction software, they'll rebuild a virtual city true to the 17th-century vision of metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell. Work with the game across university departments has earned one of University of Hull academics and Being Human participant Joel Mills, the Association for Learning Technology's award for learning technologist of the year.
- [Quantified romantics](#) at Aberystwyth University
Here again, the inextricable links between science and the humanities are being explored as literary guinea pigs will be wired to sensor wristbands to measure their emotional response to projected images of gothic painting and pages from romantic novels. Do gothic novels really stir the pulse, as their Romantic authors claimed?
- [Sounds that move us](#) at the School of Advanced Study, University of London
Music is essential – and perhaps unique – to human beings. In the humanities, it tends to be thought of as a purely auditory experience, generating emotions and carrying meanings. Going back to the cognitive and evolutionary roots of music, however, it is clear that music, and sounds in general, are used in all cultures in connexion to the other senses, and especially to visual and body movements. Come and explore the 'sounds that move us' in this special evening blending multisensory science and philosophy with talks by musicians and researchers, demonstrations of sonic illusions, digital mapping, and even 'sonic shoes'.
- [Defining digital Dickens](#) at the University of Buckingham
The digital Dickens project allows readers to write their own ending and solve the whodunit at the core of the *Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Set up two years ago it has attracted 15,000 submissions and a surprising 'people's ending'. Now, working with partners, among them schools and London's Charles Dickens museum, the workshops, films, readings, exhibitions and performances will extend this two-year project that uses digital technologies and crowdsourcing to generate interest in the Victorian author's work.

This is just a sample of the more than 300 events on offer at Being Human 2015. For more technology themed events, please visit beinghumanfestival.org/scitechevents2015. Other themes explored include diversity, politics, health and arts and culture. See beinghumanfestival.org/press for more information on these themes.

Find out more about the festival at www.beinghumanfestival.org and follow the latest news on Twitter at @BeingHumanFest.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

- 1. For further information**, please contact: Maureen McTaggart, Media and Public Relations Officer, School of Advanced Study, University of London +44 (0)20 7862 8653 / Maureen.mctaggart@sas.ac.uk.
- 2. Being Human: a festival of the humanities** 12–22 November 2015. Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts & Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, Being Human is a national forum for public engagement with humanities research. The festival will highlight the ways in which the humanities can inspire and enrich our everyday lives, help us to understand ourselves, our relationships with others, and the challenges we face in a changing world, and foster world-class knowledge that is vibrant, vital, and accessible to all. For more information, please visit www.beinghumanfestival.org or follow the festival on Twitter at @BeingHumanFest
- 3. The School of Advanced Study (SAS)**, University of London, is the UK's national centre for the promotion and support of research in the humanities and celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2015. It was officially opened on 15 March 1995, by Sir Anthony Kenny as a federation of the University of London's research institutes and, since then, has established itself as the UK's national humanities hub, publicly funded to support and promote research in the humanities nationally and internationally. SAS and its member institutes offer unparalleled academic opportunities, facilities and stimulation across a wide range of subject areas for the benefit of the national and international scholarly community. In 2013-14, SAS: welcomed 743 research fellows and associates; held 2,081 research dissemination events; received 26.4 million visits to its digital research resources and platforms; and received 202,891 visits to its specialist libraries and collections. The School also leads the UK's only nationwide festival of the humanities: Being Human. Find out more at www.sas.ac.uk or follow SAS on Twitter at @SASNews
- 4. The Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC)** funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: ancient history, modern dance, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, English literature, design, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98m to fund research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. www.ahrc.ac.uk
- 5. The British Academy** is the UK's expert body that supports and speaks for the humanities and social sciences – that rich variety of disciplines that study peoples, cultures and societies, past, present and future. It funds research across the UK and in other parts of the world, in disciplines ranging from archaeology to economics, from psychology to history, and from literature to law. The British Academy seeks to raise understanding of some of the biggest challenges of our time through policy reports, forums, conferences, publications and public events. The Academy receives around £30m a year in Government grants to support its work. But it operates autonomously as a Fellowship of more than 1,000 of the world's most eminent scholars in the humanities and social sciences, elected for their outstanding research. For more information, please visit www.britishacademy.ac.uk. Follow the British Academy on Twitter @britac_news.
- 6. The Wellcome Trust** is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. We provide more than £700 million a year to support bright minds in science, the humanities and the social sciences, as well as education, public engagement and the application of research to medicine. www.wellcome.ac.uk