

Scoping a UK Heritage Science Infrastructure. Priorities, Risks and Values.

A report to the Arts and Humanities Research Council

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Scope

- AHRC Infrastructure Policy and Engagement Fellowships (2021)
- Aim of report is to summarise the results of the online survey, consultation workshops and conversations with stakeholders in the heritage science sector, focusing on responses relevant to the ARCHLAB and DIGILAB strands of potential heritage science and conservation research infrastructure.
- Access the report here:
<https://zenodo.org/record/6535848#.ZFIXLezMLoo>

Context

These slides summarise findings from Annex B (pp. 63-85) by Ben Edwards which focus on ARCHLAB and DIGILAB infrastructure needs

Other relevant initiatives at the time of the Fellowship research

- E-RIHS ARCHLAB
- E-RIHS DIGILAB
- Towards a National Collection (TANC)
- CapCo (Capability for Collections)
- HIAS (Heritage Information Access Strategy)

Definitions

- (RICHeS) ARCHLAB
 - Physical and digital archives of technical documentation and data, samples and reference collections accessed at a facility (data flowing to DIGILAB after investment)
- (RICHeS) DIGILAB
 - Digital archives as research resources and advanced digital tools (remote access)

Findings: gaps and challenges

See report (p.74) for long-list of identified priorities, their classification as ARCH or DIGILAB, whether F.A.I.R. and whether addressed by existing initiatives.

- Themes in the priorities for infrastructure investment
 - Sustainability of digital resources
 - Connections
 - Digital technological infrastructure
- Filling gaps in existing infrastructure provision
 - The aggregation of the results of heritage science investigations
 - The discoverability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability of these results, and of localized sample and reference collections beyond the GLAM sector
 - Digital technology to connect curators in the GLAM sector with heritage science technology and expertise to meet GLAM sector priorities
 - Digital technology to foster new and innovative forms of analysis of heritage science data.

Findings: gaps and challenges

Key challenges for RICHeS ARCHLAB and DIGILAB to address (p.78):

- Existence of data repositories and physical archives of the results of scientific investigation may not be known to the wider community.
- The content of physical and or digital archives of heritage science data may not be accessible or available.
- Resources (finance and staff expertise) lacking
- Lack of computer science expertise
- Challenge of creating and maintaining relevant digital collections
- Incomplete understanding of the audience(s) for digital data

Recommendations

Recommendations for the role of the RICHeS infrastructure (p.80)

- Aggregation not centralisation of data
- Training and resources to mitigate against technological obsolescence
- Investment in computing resilience
- Compatibility with TANC programme
- Role of infrastructure to survey and understand users and creators of digital heritage science data

Potential strategy for delivery of recommendations (p.82)

- Phase 1: undertake landscape mapping
- Phase 2: create connections