Minutes of co-ordinating and technical committee meeting 9th October 2012

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Attendees:

Vinita Damodaran (VD)
Alan Lester (AL)
George Adamson (GA)
Mark Elvin (ME)

Attendees on Skype:

Rob Allan (RA)
Rob Iliffe (RI)

Meeting commenced 15:00

Introduction

VD introduced the meeting. Attendees were referred to the emailed minutes of the last meeting. It was agreed that the purpose of the meeting was to determine the plan for the December meeting and discuss what materials delegates should send in advance. GA read through the draft schedule for the December meeting. The other attendees stated that they agreed with the schedule.

Key areas of focus

AL suggested that the December meeting should have some concrete outcomes. He stated that we should make clear to delegates at an early stage that ideas will be excluded as well as included. He suggested that any upfront work by delegates should devise suggested pathways for a digitisation project and include details of collaborations that were already in place.

RI mentioned other digitisation projects he was involved in. He suggested that there are only 4 or 5 institutions in the UK that have the infrastructural capacity to cope with a project of this size. He mentioned that there are several templates of how to proceed, with several layers of meta-data. Before the December meeting the questions to be asked concern the logic of production. Two questions are to be asked: "What would an ideal user of the material want?" and "What would a user outside of the UK want?"

RA mentioned projects he was involved in through ACRE, and what ACRE aim to gain from the project. This comprises digitisation of Indian Weather Data. RA stated that it would be important for delegates to mention upfront other funding efforts they were involved in.

ME then mentioned inputting data. RI mentioned the Old Weather project, which utilised crowd-sourcing. RA mentioned that he was involved in this project.

Meeting format and paper from delegates

VD reintroduced the format of the meeting and the potential for a 2,000-word paper from delegates before the meeting. AL reinforced the idea that the meeting should have concrete outcomes and should be ruthless in excluding information. GA asked whether the discussion session on the second day should be focussed on the derivation of research questions. AL agreed.

AL suggested that a 2,000-word paper sent by delegates should be practically driven, and not simply a discussion of the delegates' research. This should include potential future collaborations. To this end VD suggested that the list of delegates be sent to all delegates in advance. ME suggested that practical ideas were good but that intellectual 'fizz' was also needed to bring in funders. VD asked whether we should limit the project to historical data and post-1600 only. AL suggested that the scope should be set very firmly. RI mentioned that in the long term the scope should be very open, to

include pre-1600 and non-written information. The infrastructure of the digitisation project should allow for this. ME agreed. AL clarified that he was not referring to total exclusion of information, but that ideas should be excluded in the short to medium term. RA mentioned that the time period of 1600-1900 currently existed as this provided a good overlap of documentary, palaeo- and instrumental data.

It was agreed that all delegates would be sent a list of other delegates and the projects that they are involved in.

Meeting adjourned at 15.55. AL, RA and RI left.

Meeting recommenced at 16.25 with GA, ME, VD and Jim LIvesey (JL)

Email to be sent to delegates prior to December meeting

JL mentioned that the AHRC networking grant is a two-year project. He agreed with AL that specific outputs are important, but stated that this should be the outcome of the second meeting in Delhi. The first meeting should involved more speculative, blue-sky discussions. To be overly prescriptive in the first meeting would be detrimental to the long-term health of the project. However, JL agreed the technical capabilities of the project should be introduced first in the December meeting in order to allow blue-sky discussions to occur. Therefore any papers sent by delegates before the meeting should involved blue-sky thinking. Three parameters must be taken into account: the technical capacities (computer), the research questions (mind) and the material available (archive).

ME agreed and stated that triage would occur after evolution.

The text of an email to be sent out to all delegates was agreed between JE, VD, ME and GA. This focussed on three questions to be given to delegates. Where do you think important collaborative work in this area is? What are your research goals? What collaborative work are you already involved in? VD and GA agreed to draft this email and to send it to delegates within the next fortnight.

GA asked what should occur after the meeting in December. JL stated that a full report of the meeting should be put together. Certain nodes discussed at the meeting should be selected by VD and GA. Delegates should be sent these and asked to decide whether they agree with the decisions. The Delhi meeting should then be focussed on the specific direction of the digitisation project.

Meeting adjourned at 17:00.

The overall outcome of the meeting is as follows:

- The draft schedule of the meeting was agreed by all delegates. The discussion section during the second day should be focussed on generating several potential templates of a digitisation project, which could then be discussed further and finalised during the Delhi meeting.
- Delegates should send a paper (up to 2,000 words) before the meeting suggesting ideas for a digitisation project. This will be focussed on three questions:
    - Where do you think important collaborative work in this area is?
    - What are your research goals?
    - What collaborative work are you already involved in?
- A request for this paper will be sent to the delegates by GA and VD.