



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

Arts and Humanities Research Council  
Whitefriars  
Lewins Mead  
Bristol  
BS1 2AE

T 0117 987 6500  
F 0117 987 6600  
W [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)

The Lord Carter of Barnes CBE  
Minister for Communications, Technology & Broadcasting  
Department for Culture Media & Sport  
2-4 Cockspur Street  
London SW1Y 5DH

Dear Lord Carter

I am writing to you following the recent publication of the *Digital Britain* interim report (DCMS/BERR, January 2009), which my colleagues and I in the arts and humanities research sector have read with great interest. The purpose of this letter is to outline some comments and further suggestions, as requested in the report.

As you may be aware, there are many ways in which arts and humanities researchers can contribute towards the aims of *Digital Britain*. We are blessed with 14,000 active arts and humanities researchers in the UK (= 25% of all research active academics). Right now the Arts and Humanities Research Council (with an annual budget of about £110 million) is funding some 2,000 of them in a variety of ways. With their driving role in the UK culture ecosystem, arts and humanities researchers are central to the production of the creative content that is absolutely necessary if we are to fulfil our digital future.

We also represent a large body of legal research expertise across the UK, with a number of researchers actively interested in addressing the question of how rights can be managed and exploited in the digital age. In addition, our Council members John Howkins (Chairman of BOP Consultants) and Richard Halkett (Director of Strategy and Research, Global Education Group, Cisco), both renowned experts in the fields of creativity and innovation, have contributed to this response. We actively participate in the cross-Council programme, *Digital Economy*, which aims to support research into the creation of new business models and novel applications of new technology. I am the Research Council Chief Executive who champions the *Digital Economy* programme.

I would like to briefly outline some areas where the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) could support the aims of *Digital Britain*.

**Rights management.** The AHRC is interested in discussing the possibility of a joint, London-based research programme with UKIPO with the specific intent of analysing existing and future digital media business models, and assessing possible regimes for the management and exploitation of rights. This would relate directly to the questions posed in Action 11 of the interim report.

A rights management research programme is timely and relevant to this ever growing area of the UK's economic, cultural and social life, and it would also build upon recommendation 8 of the *Power of Information Taskforce Report* (Cabinet Office, February 2009) to create a new transparent licensing scheme.



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

Arts and Humanities Research Council  
Whitefriars  
Lewins Mead  
Bristol  
BS1 2AE

T 0117 987 6500  
F 0117 987 6600  
W [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)

**Interdisciplinary approach.** This programme would involve a number of sectors, to ensure that an appropriate level of rigour and analysis is made of emerging areas in the digital economy. For example, it would include legal scholars, representatives from the creative industries, economists, members of the FOSS community, artists, scientists, sociologists, systems experts, educationalists, online activists and peers at the British Library. It is imperative that an appropriate level of academic rigour and experience are brought to bear on these crucial issues – areas in which arts and humanities researchers are uniquely placed to deliver constructive, flexible and transparent suggestions for the future of the digital sector.

**Knowledge transfer.** The AHRC has an active and innovative programme of knowledge transfer activities, which include a pilot knowledge exchange programme with the BBC in the area of new media. This programme funds projects in areas like children's participation in online content creation, older customers and their understanding of digital services, and BBC policy on the management of user-generated content. These all relate closely to the cross-Council *Digital Economy* programme.

My colleagues and I would very much appreciate the chance to meet you and your team to discuss how these ideas could be progressed, and to gain a more nuanced understanding of the Government's priorities for this area. If there is any further information I can provide in the interim, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Philip F. Esler".

Professor Philip F. Esler  
Chief Executive  
The Arts and Humanities Research Council