



Contact: Christopher Landman
clandman@u.washington.edu
(206) 616-0632

MELLON FOUNDATION LENDS SUPPORT TO INNOVATIVE PROGRAM IN THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

March 17, 2011, Seattle—The College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Washington has received a \$600,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to underwrite the *Digital Humanities Commons*, an annual summer fellowship program for faculty and graduate students at the Simpson Center for the Humanities that will begin in 2013. All of the funds will be dedicated to an endowment and serve as matching support required by a Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to establish the *Commons*.

The *Digital Humanities Commons* will support innovative and experimental research inspired by new technologies. Where research in the humanities is often undertaken by a single scholar, the *Commons* will enable faculty and graduate students to collaborate together with librarians, engineers, and designers to animate their scholarship with new visualization tools and dynamic databases. For example, humanities scholars are currently using data-mining to understand ancient script and new media to invent new ways of presenting their research online, moving beyond the page to include aural and visual tracks. Through the digitization of artifact and documents, they are helping preserve, frame, and make accessible the heritage of cultures around the world as they migrate to digital platforms. The *Digital Humanities Commons* will build upon such initiatives. It will also support scholars studying the historical, social, and cross-cultural implications of digital culture.

“The Mellon Foundation has been the leader in providing support to institutions of higher education both to envision and advance the future of scholarship in the digital era. I’m thrilled that the Simpson Center, through the *Digital Humanities Commons*, will be a part of this visionary effort,” said Kathleen Woodward, director of the Simpson Center.

“This award markedly advances our progress toward meeting the goal of our Challenge Grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities, and thereby significantly strengthens the capacity of the Simpson Center to support digital scholarship,” said Ana Mari Cauce, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences.

The *Digital Humanities Commons* combines the strengths of a leading humanities center with the outstanding resources in information and communication technologies at the University of Washington. The College of Arts & Sciences is also home to the pioneering Center for Digital Arts & Experimental Media (DXARTS), established in 2002. The College’s faculty members in History, Asian Languages & Literature, Geography, English, and many other departments have undertaken projects deploying digital media, digital databases, and digital collaborative environments.

“The University of Washington is situated within a vibrant Seattle community steeped in a rich history of technological innovation and thus is a perfect location for the digital humanities to thrive,” said Woodward. “With the presence of Adobe, Amazon, Google, and Microsoft alone, Seattle is known throughout the world as a locus for technological development and information management. We want Seattle also to be known for advances in the digital humanities.”

About the University

Founded in 1881, the University of Washington is one of the oldest state-supported institutions of higher education on the West Coast of the United States, and it is one of the preeminent research universities in the world. As Washington State’s flagship university, the UW serves more students than any other institution in the Northwest — more than 92,000 annually. With 16 colleges and schools, the UW offers more than 8,000 courses each year, and confers more than 12,000 bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral and professional degrees annually in nearly 150 fields of study. The UW has grown into the most successful public research university in the nation, receiving more federal research funding than any other American public university, a ranking held since 1974.

About the College of Arts & Sciences

The College of Arts & Sciences provides an education of tremendous breadth and depth to more than 35,000 students while advancing research and scholarship in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. The College has more than two dozen interdisciplinary centers and ties to many other centers, enabling scholars in diverse fields to collaborate on complex research questions in the humanities, demography, labor studies, law, astrobiology, climate change, and other areas.

The College teaches more than 40 languages and offers study abroad programs in London, Rome, Paris, Prague, Spain, Mexico, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other locations. The College also serves the community through the more than 280 performances, 60 exhibits and 100 public programs annually offered through the Henry Art Gallery, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, UW World Series, and Meany Hall for the Performing Arts.

About the Simpson Center

The Simpson Center for the Humanities fosters cross-disciplinary research and inquiry among UW faculty and students, and supports initiatives at the leading edge of change. The Center is known nationally for its public programs in the humanities that promote civic engagement. For the past decade, the Simpson Center has explored how humanities scholars can use digital technologies to transform the way they do research, teach, and share their knowledge.