Hypotheses

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THE RECIPES PROJECT

Food, Magic, Art, Science, and Medicine

17/10/2019 BY SARAH KERNAN

Around the Table: Research Technologies

This month on Around the Table, I am chatting with Christian Reynolds, a lead investigator on the US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network. Since the Recipes Project is a partner organization to the network, we wanted to encourage all our readers to become acquainted with this effort to make food-related digital materials more accessible. We hope that after reading about the project, you will visit this survey to assist the US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network.

Could you describe the US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network to Recipes Project readers? What kind of information are you collecting and what will be available through the network?

Food has become an increasingly popular subject of study due to its inherently multidisciplinary nature. Food's universal pervasiveness allows it to become an accessible window into every culture and time period. The materials and texts concerning food offer a continuous resource that spans thousands of years of human civilisation, with a massive corpus of written manuscripts, printed documents (books, pamphlets, menus), and other material culture and ephemera

(including images and sound recordings) available for study.

Many cultural institutions (such as libraries, museums, galleries, archives, etc.) have large collections relating to food. Some of these collections are now (partially) digitised, and accessible to the global research community. However, knowledge of the existence and depth of many of the collections is limited, and there is a lack of communication between cultural institutions and researchers.

A cook is standing in a kitchen with food in pans on the tables in front of him. Coloured lithograph. Source: Wellcome Images.

The AHRC US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network is a platform for US and UK higher education institutions, libraries, other cultural institutions with food-based materials and collections, as well as the researchers who use these collections.

In this pilot stage of the US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network we will be collecting information about the researchers who use food related materials and collections – and what materials they would like digitised as a priority, as well as identifying the range of cultural institutions that have materials currently available for research.
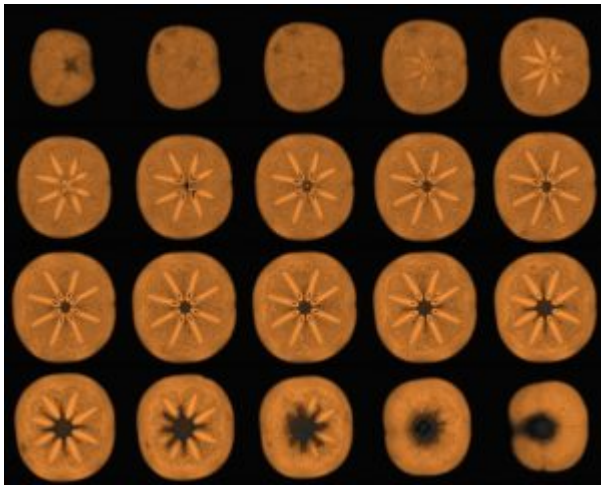
There is also additional funding for digital scholarship research activities between US and UK researchers coming from the AHRC until 2023. This network would be happy to support any other food related researchers and cultural institutions in applying for funding from this scheme.

Is the network focused on certain chronological, geographical, linguistic, or other collection scopes? Or is it inclusive of any food-related digital materials?

AHRC US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network is inclusive of all food-related digital materials across the interdisciplinary food system, to include a wide variety of digitised corpuses and artefacts ranging from digitised cookbooks and food texts, collections in archives (medicinal texts, food manuals, menus, social media

Persimmon, axial view, MRI. Alexandr Khrapichev, University of Oxford. Source: Wellcome Images.

interaction archives, etc) and libraries, through to the use of, and interaction with, digitised economic botany, agricultural, and museum collections. The main limit (due to funding) is that we are currently concerned with only cultural institutions in the US and the UK. However, the content within these digitised archives can relate to any chronological, geographical, or linguistic food related materials.

Will the completed network be open-access for anyone to use? When do you expect it will be available?

The outcomes of the network (reports, webinars, etc.) will be open-access. We hope these will be available in early 2020. We are asking librarians from many of our partner intuitions to provide a short introduction webinar about their collections.

Are any future projects or events planned in coordination with the network? What kinds of future collaborations and research do you envision?

1)The AHRC is planning to fund additional UK-US digital scholarship activities until 2023. As a network we would be happy to support other researchers and groups wishing to apply for this funding.

2) There is a lot of research that can be done with the content currently digitised, however, many archives only have less than 5-10% of their holdings digitally available. Getting this content online, and in a searchable format is a high priority. In this regard, additional funding could be used to run scanathons and transcribathons, to allow more digital content to be unlocked for researchers. This could also encompass citizen science projects to transcribe archives and recipes. Another next step is creating standardised tagging and meta data systems for recipes to allow searching across collections.

Food warmer, England, 1801-1850. Science Museum, London. Source: Wellcome Images.

3) We are currently conducting a survey among food researchers to map what archives and materials the food research community currently uses, and what we – as a community – want digitised. This will allow us to go together (researchers and archives) to funders with a plan for digitising the most needed content.

Are you welcoming suggestions for inclusion of other digital collections? How can our readers contribute?

We are very much welcoming suggestions of other digital collections to include in our list.

The best way for readers to contribute to the network is to fill out the 20 question survey that is mapping the research interests and materials and archives used by the food research community.

This will allow us to identify what archives and materials are being used, as well as see what the community is needing digitised as a priority.

Thanks, Christian, for sharing information about the AHRC US-UK Food Digital Scholarship network! You can reach Christian and the network team on Twitter @AHRCfoodnetwork or via email. If you'd like to feature a project, scholar, or institution on Around the Table, please email Sarah Kernan.

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📁 **AROUND THE TABLE, DIGITAL HISTORY, FOOD AND DRINK, INSTITUTIONS, LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES & MUSEUMS, POSTS, RESEARCH AND WRITING**

\# **AHRC US-UK FOOD DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP NETWORK**