

Faculty of Humanities Strategic Research Plan

The Faculty of Humanities is research-focused and student-centred. We value excellence in research, promoting responsible local and global leadership through an emphasis on critical inquiry, ethical reasoning, and intercultural understanding. We value interdisciplinary approaches to discovery and learning, creative engagement and thoughtful action in response to challenging ideas. The critical reasoning and problem-solving skills that constitute the core of Humanities education support the organization and articulation of complex thought and creative expression that deepen our understanding of what it means to be human.

Humanities research at McMaster University is informed by a strong tradition of humanistic inquiry and exchange. We believe that Humanities research assists us to be adaptable, thoughtful, and engaged citizens in a global world by equipping individuals, communities, and lifelong learners with forms of knowledge that address the pressing issues facing the global world today. In alignment with the vision and mission of the Faculty of Humanities, the Humanities Strategic Research Plan (HSRP) aims to promote excellence in our collective research enterprise and to inspire the development of innovative scholarly projects.

Principles

The HRSP is guided by the recognition of five key principles integral to Humanities research:

- I. *Intellectual and Cultural Critique.* Critical analysis, intellectual dexterity, synthesis of knowledges, and effective communication form not only the foundation of Humanities research, but also our individual and collective capacity to influence and act in the world.
- II. *Collaboration.* Humanities research at McMaster fosters openness and collaboration at the intersections of disciplines, nationally and internationally, and within the varied interactions and partnerships between the university and the communities in which we work and live.
- III. *Innovation.* Leading edge Humanities research drives forward creativity and the pursuit of new knowledge that enable us to understand and respond to the demands of a rapidly changing, diverse world in sustainable and renewable ways.
- IV. *Enriched Learning.* Humanities research creates opportunities for students by ensuring quality training and mentorship experiences that prepare individuals for any career path.
- V. *Global Understanding.* Discovery about the thought, culture, and experiences of individuals and societies around the globe, past and present, provide the context needed to develop empathy for others and an understanding of diversity in Canada and around the world.

Areas of Strength and Growth

The Origins of Modern Ideas and Culture. Analysis of ideas and cultures is a fundamental area of Humanities research. There are many examples of strength in this area in the Faculty. The Bertrand Russell Research Centre has significantly expanded scholarship on the intellectual and cultural legacy of Russell's philosophy by providing public access to the materials housed in the Russell Archives (the most extensive collection of material by or about Russell in the world). The Russell Centre, under the leadership of the Canada Research Chair in Russell, Peace and the 20th Century, brings together an international network of researchers that has positioned McMaster as a leading institution worldwide in the study of the history of analytic philosophy. This area of strength is also demonstrated by the internationally renowned journal *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* whose publication of research on imaginative prose, literature, and culture has expanded the frameworks for understanding "fiction" and its origins in the early modern period.

Canadian History and Literature in a Global Framework. This area builds on the work of the L.R. Wilson Chair in Canadian History and the Senator William McMaster Chair in Canadian Literature and Culture. The L.R. Wilson Institute for Canadian History has as its mission the rethinking and reconfiguring of the history of Canada for the 21st century. In the last ten years, the Wilson Institute has become a centre of excellence for training a new generation of historians to think about Canada as having a distinct and important role in the global community. The Senator William McMaster Chair in Canadian Literature and Culture, whose research examines how the international profile of Canadian literature and authorship furthers our understanding of global celebrity culture, as well as earlier contributions to this area of the Canada Research Chair in Diversity in Canadian Literary Cultures (2000-2010) benefits from the McMaster Library's rich archive collection of Canadian historical and literary materials.

Community-engaged Scholarship and Indigenous Research. Engaged scholarship is central to the work of the Peace Studies and Gender and Feminist Research programs and the Centre for Peace Studies, three examples of the Faculty's unique strengths in interdisciplinary knowledge and applied research through experiential learning and social activism. This area also includes the study of democratic citizenship, human rights, global justice, and the public intellectual leadership of the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest, the Senator William McMaster Chair in Constitutional Studies, and the HOPE Chair in Peace and Health. Humanities' historical strengths in community-engaged scholarship are further solidified through supportive relationships formed with the McMaster Indigenous Research Institute and the Indigenous Studies program, and the community-focused principles guiding the work of two Humanities research centres: the Centre for Community-Engaged Narrative Arts, which collaborates with diasporic, LGBT, and Indigenous communities to forge research relationships and methodologies that foreground reciprocity; and the Hope Institute for Peace Research,* which focuses on generating opportunities for civic engagement that promote peace, health, and environmental sustainability at the level of populations, communities, and individuals.

Arts at the Intersection with Science, Engineering, and Health. Researchers are forging connections between Humanities and Science, Engineering, and Health Science through domains of research that explore the cognitive dimensions of music, reading and literacy, and communication. The work of the Senator William McMaster Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience of Language and the Centre for Advanced Research in Experimental and Applied Linguistics examines the cognitive, neural, and social mechanisms of language learning in order to assess impairments and to improve learning methods and outcomes. Cutting-edge research in this area is conducted in several laboratories including: The Digital Music Lab; The Language, Memory and Brain Lab; The Music Acoustics Perception Learning (MAPLE) Lab; The Pulse Lab; The Reading Lab; and The Syntax Lab. The reappointment of the Hannah Chair in the History of Medicine has strengthened the interdisciplinary nature of this area as well as recent initiatives involving the creation of: the Canada Research Chair in Psycholinguistics; the Centre for Ancient Numismatics whose researchers use radiation science to study the McMaster Museum of Art's unique collection of over 300 ancient coins and further our understanding of Classical civilizations; and the Institute on Ethics and Policy for Innovation that uses applied ethics research to address challenges and policy gaps in global health and development.

Engaging Our Digital World. Understanding our past and present relationship with technology will prepare us for meaningful participation in the digital future. Thinking critically about "innovation," and the terms and practices associated with emerging technologies, requires not only imagining new possibilities for how technology might advance societal wellbeing but also working across disciplines in a way that enables us to ask new questions which foreground our individual and collective responsibility to ensure a sustainable future for all. Current initiatives in this area include multidisciplinary research developed in collaboration with the Lewis and Ruth Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship and projects such as the Asper Chair's movement research exploring digital aesthetic feedback; MacGRID's simulation research network that explores avatar virtual worlds and mixed reality systems; the integration of ballet and classical music with motion-capture technology

to create a dance application for people with Parkinson's; "big data" analysis of language use and public opinion data captured on millions of blogs and websites from around the globe; and the examination of self-portraiture and "selfie" culture through art and social media in the "This is Me, This is Also Me" exhibition at the McMaster Museum of Art. Growth in this area will build on projects developed by the new Canada Research Chair in Communication Governance and Policy, the Asper Chair in Communications, and the Centre for Networked Imagination,* which focuses on experimental sound research and artistic expression using live coding. Further expansion will also be connected to the new interdisciplinary PhD program in Communication, Cultural Studies, and New Media.

Strategic Priorities

The Faculty's research priorities build upon the University's vision laid out in *Forward with Integrity*. They also align with McMaster's Strategic Research Plan and Strategic Mandate Agreement, which includes the priority areas of digital information and media, history, society and culture, policy, ethics, and sustainability.

For the next three years (2016-2018), the Faculty of Humanities will prioritize the areas described above, with a special focus on **digital scholarship**. This will mean:

- supporting the integration of digital technology in traditional Humanities disciplines and in each identified area of research strength;
- supporting digital research projects that involve collaborative groups within and across disciplines;
- supporting the integration of students into digital scholarship and pedagogical initiatives; and
- expanding our research enterprise and profile in the specific area described as "Engaging Our Digital World."

In pursuing these priorities, the Faculty will continue to gain global recognition by advancing the frontier of Humanities research through the integration of digital technologies and practices. The term "digital scholarship" encompasses the use of digital tools and methods in research, research-creation, and knowledge mobilization across various disciplines. It also includes scholarship that approaches digital culture itself as an object of study through exploring language, representation, technological mediation, and the relations of power these entail.

By aligning strategic decisions with raising the profile of digital scholarship in our Faculty, we aim to:

1. Identify and seize new opportunities for research funding.
2. Support conditions that lead to research excellence in the fields of Digital Humanities, New Media studies, and Big Data research.
3. Support research and artistic pursuits that connect to media arts, design, and creative industries.
4. Continue working with the Humanities Media and Computing unit on project development as well as strengthen research collaborations with other McMaster initiatives, including but not limited to the Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship, the MACData Institute, and Research and High-Performance Computing Support.
5. Be recognized internationally for excellence and innovation in digital pedagogy, research, and scholarship.

In order to achieve these objectives, we will allocate new resources to support areas of digital Humanities scholarship that display the core principles of Humanities research and demonstrate excellent potential for building wider awareness of the Faculty's leadership and expertise in digital scholarship.

*This proposed research centre has passed a competitive review process within the Faculty of Humanities and will be presented for University-wide review and approval in 2017.