

**Project Title:** Citizen Science in the Arts, Humanities, and Heritage

**PIs involved:**

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**Project Proposal**

**Introduction:** Citizen Science and crowdsourcing is not new as a way in which science is conducted: as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was used for wide-scale climate data collection or to create census of birds. The World Wide Web, especially Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies, have created opportunities for researchers and organisations to involve the public as co-creators of knowledge and as participants in research. This is done through platforms for image annotation such as Zooniverse (with over 200 projects and a million volunteers), as well as crowd-sourced digital editions, such as Letters 1916-1923, now based at Maastricht University. The success of these projects and platforms attests to the desire of the public to spend their creative capital as active contributors of knowledge. Citizen Science provides opportunities for researchers to develop projects that not only answer research questions, but that contribute to the public good and promote life-long learning. Despite the long history of citizen science, the humanities and cultural heritage have only recently begun involving the public. The aim of the proposed project for doctoral researchers is to evaluate the usability and interoperability of public humanities tools and platforms through a careful comparison of technical and design aspects as well as an ethnographic study that will involve both user testing and qualitative interviews that will provide the perspective of non-academics. The project will thus fill a gap in understanding why and how the public participate in these projects, but equally importantly, point to new opportunities for arts, humanities, and heritage research and institutions.

**Objectives**

- To survey past and current citizen science/public engagement projects in the humanities/ heritage sectors;
- To systematically outline and compare the technical and design aspects found in public humanities projects;
- To undertake an ethnographic study of researchers and heritage professionals to ascertain the opportunities and challenges of public engagement research/projects;
- To use case studies to analyse the motivations of and benefits to the participants in public humanities/citizen science projects.

- And/or (depending on the candidate's background): to develop a prototype for a sample public humanities project (transcription, image annotation or contributing photographs of heritage sites)

**Setting and Methods:** This research will take place at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Maastricht University. Candidates will, using different analytical methods (such as design thinking, quantitative and qualitative analysis, user testing and/or virtual ethnography) explore the role of professionals and the public in shaping knowledge production. Case studies will be decided in discussion with the supervisors.

**Impact:** Citizen science is widely viewed as having the potential to foster social inclusion and public participation in the production of scientific knowledge. This research will explore issues of how knowledge is produced and circulated, the importance of intra-scholarly communication, and the value of how this knowledge connects with the broader public sphere.

**Techniques to be Used:** Ethnography, virtual ethnography, design thinking, prototyping, quantitative and qualitative analysis, interviews, user-testing.

**Requirements Candidate:** MA in heritage, literature, archaeology, history, media studies, cultural studies and related fields.

**Priority Area:** Humanities and Social Sciences

**Keywords:** citizen science, crowdsourcing, public engagement

### Selected Publications

Schreibman, S., Siemens, R. and Unsworth, J. Eds (2004/2016). *A Companion/A New Companion to Digital Humanities*. Oxford: Blackwell (1296 Citations).

Schreibman, S., Das Gupta, V. and Rooney, N. (2017). Notes from the Transcription Desk: Visualising Public Engagement. *English Studies*. (ScImago Journal and Country Rank: h-index 16).

Schreibman, S., and Papadopoulos, C. (2019). Textuality in 3D: three-dimensional (re)constructions as digital scholarly editions. *International Journal in Digital Humanities* 1, 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-019-00024-6> (3146 downloads since May 2019)

Papadopoulos, C., and Schreibman, S. (2022). History in a Box: Bringing Families Together through Technology. In A. Swinnen, A. Kluvelde, & R. van de Vall (Eds.), *Engaged Humanities: Rethinking Art, Culture, and Public Life* (pp. 245-270). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2rcnqpt.13>