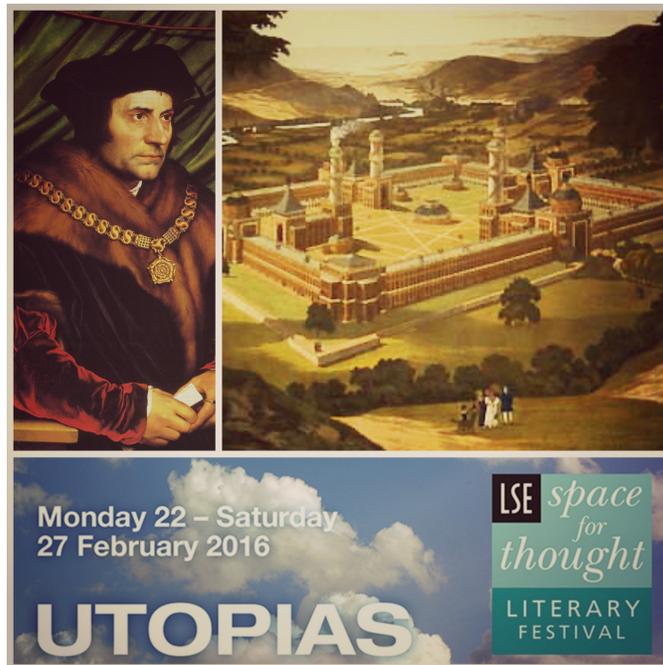


Reading List: The role of arts and literature in developing creative societies #LSELitFest

This week is the LSE Space for Thought Literary Festival with the theme inspired by the anniversary of Thomas More's Utopia. The [free events taking place all week](#) will explore the power of dreams and the imagination and the importance of idealism, dissidence, escapism and nostalgia, as well as the benefits of looking at the world in different ways.

Arts and literature are deeply entangled with our understanding of the social world. To explore these connections further, we have put together a reading list on how arts, literature and the humanities shape our understanding of the social world. The first section looks at the role of arts and literature in developing creative societies, the second looks at how digital humanities research is shaping our understanding of the political, and the final section looks at some of the issues with emerging digital formats for creative content.



The role of arts and literature in developing creative societies

[The arts and humanities play a critical role in the development of vibrant communities.](#)

Providing a historic look at how society has understood the value of the arts and humanities, **Jason M. Kelly** argues that today's scholarship has largely framed itself around the context of the neoliberal commodified university. But there are other ways to understand scholarly value. By drawing from the Community Capitals Framework, he demonstrates how the arts and humanities play a critical role in the civil ecology of vibrant communities.



[From STEM to STEAM: The potential for arts to facilitate innovation, literacy and participatory democracy.](#)

The value of the arts goes far beyond its monetary returns. **Malaika Cunningham** outlines how the arts play a huge role in boosting proficiency within STEM subjects. Creative thinking is needed for truly excellent scientists, engineers and mathematicians, and how better to foster this than a rounded education, which includes arts subjects? Arts education fosters a literate and innovative workforce and strengthens the conditions for a healthy democracy.



Hardship and shame: what Thomas More's Utopia can teach us about modern social security

Thomas More's *Utopia* was published 500 years ago, in 1516, following discussions that had started in Antwerp the previous year. **John Hills** has been part of a European research programme on contemporary poverty reduction in Europe co-ordinated by Antwerp University, and was asked to reflect on connections between More's fable and today's debates. Utopians would generally not behave badly, he writes. Their behaviour was not reinforced by tangible incentives but by a cultural belief in lifetime honours, after death rewards and punishment on one hand, and a fear of being shamed if they behaved badly on the other. Today, he explains, this balance has disappeared.



Prospering Wisely: How research helps us confront the tough choices we face in creating a healthier society.

We are witnessing a growing mistrust, not only in political processes and politicians, but in social institutions as a whole. Inequality is also rising on many crucial dimensions. **Lord Stern** of Brentford, President of the British Academy argues we need a new kind of national conversation, and the voice of the humanities and social sciences must be at its centre. Researchers and scholars help make the complex intelligible, and help us understand human values and possibilities.



Book Review: Humanities in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Utility and Markets

What is the value of the arts and humanities today? This question points to a long and extensively discussed dilemma. This collection of original essays aims to offer examples that show that, rather than relying on the narrowly utilitarian notion of 'research impact' that has developed within current educational policies and debates, it may be more appropriate to look at the ways in which arts and humanities research is already engaged in collaborative endeavours, both within academia and beyond, in order to address the big ethical, political, technological and environmental challenges of contemporary life. Reviewed by **Paul Benneworth**.



Participatory arts projects have the potential to reconnect communities with politics

The vocabulary of 'social return', 'intellectual productive capacity', 'economic generation' may well grate against the traditional values of the arts and culture community but it is a shadow that cannot be ignored. But suggests the true value of the arts lies more in how it responds to the rise of disaffected democrats. In a time of increasing political disengagement, especially amongst the young and the poor, he argues that participatory arts projects provide a way of reconnecting communities.



Digital humanities and the political world

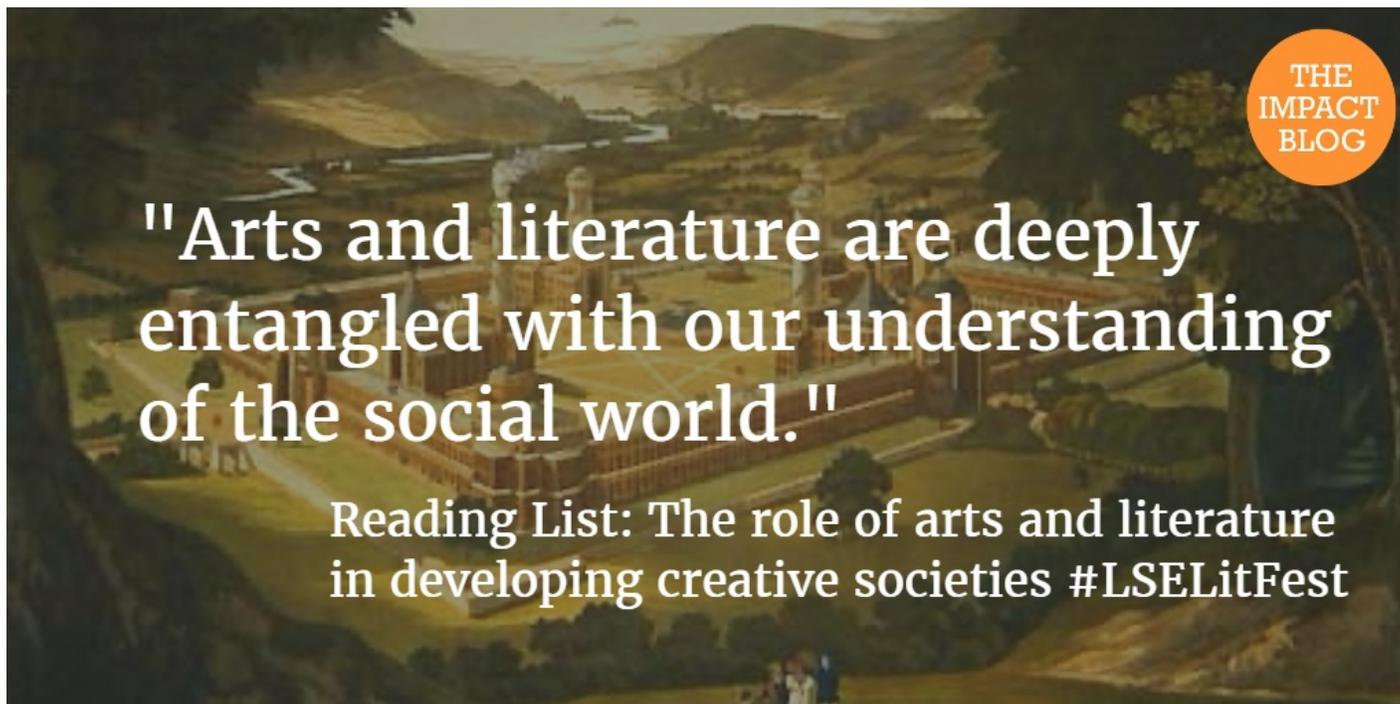
How data does political things: The processes of encoding and decoding data are never neutral.

It is difficult to see the political structure of data, because data maintains a veneer of scientific objectivity. But data is inherently a form of politics, argues **Jeffrey Alan Johnson**. Data does not just allocate material things of value, it allocates moral values as well. Data producers encode a state of the world at a given time, which is then decoded by data users to shape social practice. As such, a political theory of data, grounded in distributive and relational information justice, is necessary.



The radical potential of the Digital Humanities: The most challenging computing problem is the interrogation of power

Digital humanities is a discipline that defines itself around the melding of traditional theories and new digital possibilities and offers a rich source of inspiration and reflection for the wider academic community. **Miriam Posner** recently gave a keynote on the discipline's contested relationship with the social construction of data and its profoundly ideological nature. The digital humanities, and the wider scholarly community, face a crucial choice – we can accept the datasets inherited and constructed by powerful institutions, reproducing existing social inequalities, or we can scrutinize data, rip it apart, rebuild it, re-imagine it, and perhaps build something entirely different.



Technology in our daily lives: How to implement digital humanities projects in the classroom.

As students and staff return for the new academic year, the classroom will again occupy centre stage. Instructors may even be thinking about incorporating new digital technology and projects into their curricula. **Adeline Koh** gives a brief overview of an assortment of digital humanities projects that can be easily implemented in primarily undergraduate-focused institutions. Without knowing it, you're probably already using many of the techniques of digital humanists in your life and in your classroom.



"Re-purposing" data in the Digital Humanities: Data beg to be taken from one context and transferred to another.

While scientists may be well-versed in drawing on existing data sources for new research, humanists are not conditioned to chop up another scholar's argument, isolate a detail and put it into an unrelated argument. **Seth Long** critically examines the practice of re-purposing data and finds data in the digital humanities beg to be re-purposed, taken from one context and transferred to another, opening up a wealth of opportunities for research. However, it is still necessary to analyze critically the research from which data are taken and, more importantly, the methods used to obtain them.



The Historian's Altmetrics: How can we measure the impact of people in the past?

How can historians measure the influence of intellectual contribution over time? Scraping from online catalogs and employing a range of digital humanities tools, **Michelle Moravec** looks at women's liberation scholarship and explores the relationships between authors and essays. It is important to critically examine why certain contributions appear in our web searches and others do not. In particular, she ponders what the messiness of certain datasets means for marginalized scholars.



Creative cultural content and emerging digital formats

So you want to reuse digital heritage content in a creative context? Good luck with that.

Although there is a lot of digitised cultural heritage content online, it is still incredibly difficult to source good material to reuse in creative projects. **Melissa Terras** asks what can institutions do to help people who want to invest their time in making and creating using digitised historical items as source material?



What's the matter with ebooks? In our praise for print, we forget the great virtues of digital formats.

Do print versions still have an advantage over electronic formats? Ebook sales may be reaching a plateau but Dan Cohen argues there may be much more dark reading going on than the stats are showing. A huge and growing percentage of ebooks are being sold by indie publishers or authors themselves, and a third of them don't even have ISBNs, the universal ID used to track most books, so these figures may be slow to catch up. Cohen suspects that we're not going to have to wait very long for ebooks to become predominant.



Why books matter: There is value in what cannot be evaluated.

Academic publishing is intricately bound to evaluation. The demand to publish as much as possible has led to the chopping up of research into minimum publishable units across journals that are easily counted, ranked and evaluated. Books, however, are not so easily accounted for. **Julien McHardy** argues the value of books is in this freedom from evaluation which offers the chance to pursue greater care and experimentation. But book publishers may still have to calculate so that calculations do not dominate their considerations.



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