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Report from San Francisco and Chicago

The team from the UK is below – all are members of the Communities and Culture Network+ (CCN+), and/or leaders of networks and projects funded by the CCN+. www.communitiesandculture.org.

Caroline Bassett, Sussex (CCN+); Helen Thornham, Leeds (CCN+); Aristeia Fotopoulou, Sussex, Goldsmiths (SusNet); Edgar Gómez Cruz, Leeds (CCN+); Helen Graham, Leeds (Storystorm).

USA Trip (San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Santa Cruz, Chicago) 4th March- 11th March and 20th-25th March 2013

Funded by: British Consulate

Aims and Objectives:

Our aims were to undertake knowledge exchange, develop and enrich existing contacts, make new contacts, explore future possibilities for collaboration (via research projects), and/or to develop possibilities for exchanges – at all levels including doctoral students. We also wanted to re-assess/produce new inputs to help develop priorities for future funding call designs, future CCN+ plus and other project work, and to develop a focused sense of developing priorities in relation to emerging digital and converged industries (e.g. digital to bio-digital).

These aims were largely met across the course of a very busy week. Not much more could have been fitted into the programme. Of particular value was the range of meetings – from entrepreneurs (e.g. Bigger) to cultural institutions, to academics – and from professors to doctoral students, to practitioners.

Any gaps emerged partly as a consequence of limited planning time in the run-up to the trip (e.g. Singularity University where a longer lead time would be needed). Also, because the trip was brief it was harder to grasp opportunities arising on the ground (e.g. through Jon Swartz for further connections/meetings). For similar reasons a couple of connections that we'd hoped to make in person were made but remained virtual due to time constraint and scheduling difficulties (e.g. Institute for the Future, Warren Sachs, Anne Balsamo). We are confident that these have nonetheless been concretized by the exchanges whilst in the States – as email exchanges and recommendations have been made, and have begun to be capitalized on (through invitations to the UK).

Outcomes and Next Steps:

- (i) Plans are now being developed for exchanges between doctoral researchers and other researchers at Santa Cruz (in the Science and Social Justice Centre and elsewhere e.g. in the digital arts areas), to be mediated by the CCN+ network and located at various universities in the network (e.g. Sussex and Leeds). We plan to fund this through the CCN+ in the initial two years and seek funding to continue this beyond the two remaining years of the grant.
- (ii) Plans are being put in place to design on-going exchanges and collaborations to explore possibilities for visits and projects between network members and the Computer Museum (notably in relation to oral histories, around issues of memory, and hopefully around museum/archive studies and digitalization processes).

- (iii) Discussions began with entrepreneur and Genomera founder Greg Biggers to explore potential collaborations for instance around engagement with specific crowd sourced projects, and around ethics studies. Similarly Andro Hsu (formerly 23andMe) now a tech consultant, would like to find ways to engage further with our research programme.
- (iv) Meetings with Karen Fowler and Pat Murphy produced, alongside more material, contribution to the SusNet programme on sustainability and digital culture (EPSRC/CCN+ funded) and future exchanges are likely to be developed through this network. Andrew Matthews and Jake Metcalf will be invited to the University of Sussex to specifically further this discussion, and participate in research discussions to facilitate this.
- (v) Edgar Gómez Cruz and Asko Lehmuskallio organized a panel presentation for the 2013 IVSA conference in London, in preparation for their meeting – this has since been accepted, and they will use this as a spring board for further collaborative work including a special issue of a journal around the themes of the panel presentation.
- (vi) Jenna Burell and David Silver have been invited to two events at Leeds University: between now and September to participate in discussions and workshops relating to our discussions with them. David Silver has agreed to come, Jenna Burell is consulting her schedule.
- (vii) Alexander Juhasz will keynote at the Queer, Feminist and Social Media Praxis Event (University of Sussex, 17th May 2013) <http://queerfemdigiact.wordpress.com/> she is an affiliated member of SusNet.
- (viii) Anne Balsamo (who we could not meet while in San Francisco), will meet Caroline Bassett in June 2013 in London where they are co-presenting, and discuss further collaborations.
- (ix) Further Skype meetings have been arranged with **Ignacio Siles and Pablo Bokowski** (Department of Communication Studies of Northwestern University) in lieu of the face to face meetings (see below).
- (x) Annette Markham is to be invited to Leeds to participate in interdisciplinary workshops as an outcome of this meeting.
- (xi) Following the success of this visit, the core Communities and Culture Network+ are now planning a second international knowledge exchange visit, this time to the Digital Ethnography Research Centre, RMIT, Australia. We have applied to the Australian Bicentennial Awards to fund one element of this exchange.
- (xii) Aristeia Fotopoulou has applied for a placement at the Science and Justice Centre, Santa Cruz to be funded by the NEMODE (New Economic Models of the Digital Economy Network+) research placement scheme. This, if awarded, would cement these relations, and be organized around a joint project.

Complete list of meetings:

Jon Swartz with Caroline Bassett
5th March, 2013

Jon Swartz is a veteran technology reporter for USA Today – leading their SF bureau – and formerly of the Chronicle and other computer news specialist journals. Based in Silicon Valley he covers emerging and disruptive tech. The goal of the meeting was an orientation/steer on emerging concerns around digital tech/industries, new social trends (e.g. on use, adoption, industrial issues).

Asko Lehmuskallio (Berkeley) with Helen Thornham & Edgar Gomez Cruz
5th March, 2013

Asko Lehmuskallio is a Researcher in Digital photography at Berkeley and Finland. Our meeting involved discussions of tangible research collaborations and the participation in a map/ideas storming.

Jenna Burell (Berkeley) with Helen Thornham & Edgar Gomez Cruz
5th March, 2013

Jenna Burell researches in digital ethnography, so is of interest for the CCN+ because of the methodological and conceptual issues with which she engages. The goal of the meeting was a straight-forward knowledge exchange and orientation to her field and to invite Jenna to become involved in the CCN+ as an affiliated member.

Andro Hsu with Aristeia Fotopoulou & Caroline Bassett
6th March, 2013

Andro Hsu is VP at GigaGen Inc. and Consultant to Gigagen. He was previously at 23andMe (web-based digital consumer genomics). The goal of the meeting was a discussion of relations between digital technologies and emerging industries/developments e.g. in biotech. To consider issues of experts and expertise and innovation communities, and to explore questions of desire and/in relation to digital ‘knowledge’ (e.g. knowledge arising through digital data/genomic data).

Greg Biggers with Aristeia Fotopoulou & Caroline Bassett
6th March, 2013

Greg Biggers is Chief instigator and CEO at Genomera (<http://Genomera.Com/>). Genomera is concerned with developing crowd sourced health discovery. The goal of the meeting was to understand processes of emergence/destruction of innovation concerns, to explore new forms of ‘digital health’ production, to consider issues of/limits of ‘automated’ community.

Oakland Museum of California with Helen Graham
6th March

Meeting with ‘We/Customize’ Team: Carin Adams, Sean Olsen and Scott Moulton. The Oakland Museum of California is already very well known for community-based exhibition development, interactive and sustained visitor-centred prototyping. For example, Oakland stAristea Fotolopoulouf Barbara Henry and Kathleen McLean recently published a book *How Visitors Changed Our Museum* (2010) which outlines a sustained interpretive planning and formative evaluation process. The meeting was followed by visit to the museum’s permanent displays and later participation (see below).

Martha Kenney, University of Santa Cruz with Helen Thornham, Aristeia Fotopoulou & Caroline Bassett
6th March, 2013

Meeting with doctoral student Martha Kenney, from the Santa Cruz History of Consciousness Programme. The goal of this meeting was to understand how exchanges sympathetic to the research culture at Santa Cruz might be organized between this institution and UK universities involved in the network.

Andrew Mathews and **Karen Barad**, Santa Cruz Science and Justice Centre, with Helen Thornham, Caroline Bassett & Aristeia Fotopoulou
7th March, 2012

Andrew Mathews is Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department/Social Sciences UC Santa Cruz – and an associate of the Science and Justice Group. Karen Barad is Professor of Feminist Studies, in the Humanities Division at Santa Cruz with affiliation to the Philosophy Department and History of Consciousness Department. She is an authority on issues of technology and subjectivity. The goal of this meeting was to discuss interdisciplinarity and to discuss the possibility of reciprocal exchanges between the Science and Justice Group and people in the UK (starting with Sussex and Leeds).

Jake Metcalf, Science and Justice Centre with Helen Thornham, Caroline Bassett & Aristeia Fotopoulou
7th March, 2012

Jacob Metcalf is the holder of an NSF-funded postdoctoral fellowship. His roles include assisting with the UCSC Science & Justice Training Program and conducting independent research on the entanglement of ethics and knowledge in personalized genomics. He facilitated our visit and will facilitate the exchange programme.

Elaine Gan, Digital Arts/New Media Program with Helen Thornham, Caroline Bassett & Aristeia Fotopoulou
7th March, 2012

Elaine Gan is a digital media artist, based UC Santa Cruz in the Digital Arts/New Media Program. Her work explores mapping, art and data visualization and questions of temporality. We discussed her work, and explored the possibility of collaborative work in the future.

Joe Lambert, Center for Digital Storytelling, Berkley with Helen Graham & Edgar Gomez Cruz
7th March, 2013

Joe Lambert is the founder of the Centre and the meeting discussed the rationales and philosophy for digital storytelling, which is interesting to the StoryStorm network within the Network+. Lambert located digital storytelling as part of the 'slow' movement (slow food etc), within notions of wholeness and spiritual and philosophical traditions of mindfulness. Lambert is very hopeful that storytelling creates forms of radical agency and social and political change.

Karen Fowler, Feminist Science Fiction Writer with Helen Thornham, Aristeia Fotopoulou & Caroline Bassett
7th March, 2013

Meeting with author and publishing activist Karen Fowler, co-founder of the Tiptree Awards, exploring connections between science and technology imaginaries and 'real' communities. Discussion of sustainable networks around technology and gender on behalf of the SusNet network (Network+). We filmed a 'talking heads' piece for the website on issues relating to feminism, sustainability and sci-fi.

Steve Beitler, Agilent Technologies with Aristeia Fotopolou
8th March 2013

Steve Beitler Manager, Silicon Valley Government and Public Affairs, Agilent Technologies. Agilent offers expertise for electronic and bio-analytical measurement. Agilent's singular focus on measurement helps scientists, researchers and engineers address their toughest challenges with precision and confidence. The discussion with Steve Beitler was about possibilities for research placements in the company, or/and collaborations for workshops, whereby Agilent could offer space or labs.

Nina Simon, Museum of Art and Culture, Santa Cruz with Helen Graham
8th March, 2013

Nina Simon is a key contemporary thinker in museum practice and has, since 2006, ran an incredible popular and influential blog called Museum 2.0 and is author of open access published *The Participatory Museum*. Since 2010 she has been Director, Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz. The meeting was to visit the museum displays and shape the Storystorm work through knowledge exchange and discussion with Nina Simon.

Building Stories Event, Santa Cruz with Helen Graham
8th March, 2-9pm 2013

Helen Graham also attended a community history event run by artists collective 'Building Collective'. <http://buildingcollective.org/2012/11/02/building-stories-secret-spatial-histories-of-santa-cruz/>

David Silver, University of San Francisco with Helen Thornham & Edgar Gomez Cruz
9th March, 2013

David Silver was an early writer on, and adopter of, the Internet, but refocused much of his academic work towards slow-growing and sustainability. He is of interest to both the SusNet network and Growing Cultures (a project that brings together open data and allotments in the UK). We discussed the relationship between his project on gardening and sustainable food culture in the digital age and the allotment's project of the network. We talked about epistemological approaches to research as activism embedded in specific communities and discussed possibilities for future collaboration in these specific projects but also in a series of exchanges about new approaches to research.

We/Customize Event with Helen Graham
9th March, 1-4pm

Helen Graham attended this event to see the exhibition animated and in process. She was struck by the very relaxed atmosphere. In place of that Science Centre perkiness of 'you're-being-involved' it felt more like a very relaxed party. This made her reflect on ways which the museum was cultivating a kind of normalization of 'participation'. The event is an event, but the participation itself isn't. This raises interesting questions about the shifting expectations of interaction within public institutions.

<http://wecustomize.org/post/45064135730/drumming-up-a-storm-at-we-customize-with-tim>

Pat Murphy, Feminist Sci-Fi Writer, FogCon with Helen Thornham & Caroline Bassett
10th March, 2013

Pat Murphy is a successful SF writer, co-founder of the Tiptree Awards, former programmer for SF Exploratorium, and consultant on technology and culture programmes. The discussion, which took place at FogCon, a 'fan event' in Walnut Creek, explored new forms of storytelling/audience engagement, and discussion of Tiptree Awards and their influence on speculative writing around innovation.

Marc Smith (social media research foundation and developer of NodeXL) with Edgar Gomez Cruz

10th March, 2013

Marc Smith is probably one of the limited number of people who have moved from academia to the corporate world (Microsoft, 10 years) and then developed a company/tool/approach to do research on the wider sense. An interesting insight on Silicon Valley culture and entrepreneurial worldview. He offered assistance with projects related to the use of NodeXL (for example, the Data Mining Project in the Network+).

Lauren Silver. Computer Museum, Mountain View/Silicon Valley with Caroline Bassett
11th March, 2013

Lauren Silver is Vice President of Education at the Computer Museum, responsible for developing a program to make the Museum and its resources accessible for and responsive to all audiences. Previously at the Cantor Arts Center (Stanford). The goal was to understand the formation of community, consideration of expertise and/in relation to longer life histories, and to consider engagement around digital cultures.

Alex Bochanek, curator and senior manager. Computer Museum, Mountain View/Silicon Valley with Caroline Bassett

11th March, 2013

The intention of meeting with Alex was to discuss the museum programme and to explore in particular issues of oral history/history from below and/in relation to digital archives/heritage and innovation.

Amanda Reilly, Associate Director of grant development. Computer Museum, Mountain View/Silicon Valley with Aristeia Fotopolou.

11th March 2013

We talked about the possibilities of research fellowships offered by the Museum, for study in their archive.

Annette Markham, Affiliate Professor School of Communication, Loyola University, Chicago and Guest Professor, Department of Informatics, Umeå University, Sweden. With Edgar Gómez Cruz

21st and 22nd March 2013

Edgar Gómez had two separate meetings with Dr. Markham:

- 1) To discuss the organization of an interdisciplinary workshop on the themes of methods, ethics or new approaches to the study of new media.
- c) To discuss the current and future agenda of the CCN+.
- 2) Dr. Markham organized a public talk to present Gómez's ethnographic research

Pamela Morris, Assistant Professor, College of Communication, Loyola University, Chicago with Edgar Gómez Cruz

21st March

Dr Morris invited Edgar to give an informal talk in her module: *Research Methods: Discovering and Investigating Stories* and then had a short meeting regarding future exchanges and bibliography guidance in the subject of digital ethnography.

Meghan Dougherty, Director of the Digital Media and Storytelling Graduate Program, Loyola University Chicago with Edgar Gómez Cruz

22nd March 2013

Meghan Dougherty is very interested in the CCN+ research and, as a director of the Master's program she is keen to explore ways to collaborate, for example with the organization of a summer school or adding CCN+ members' publications to the programme's reading list. She

also put Edgar in touch with people of the Rochester Institute of Technology (especially at the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences) to develop a common project about visual media.

Molly Steenson with Edgar Gómez

24th March, 2013

On the recommendation of Dr Annette Markham, Edgar had an informal meeting with Molly Steenson, Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (School of Journalism & Mass Communication) who was in Chicago for the weekend. Molly Steenson is an expert in architectures of information and is currently working on projects related to big data and mobile technologies. Edgar and Molly spoke about the possibility of a partnership in the organization of an interdisciplinary workshop or summer school somewhere in Europe (UK or Sweden, where she and Dr Markham have been involved in different projects) or the Americas.

Ignacio Siles and Pablo Bokowski Department of Communication Studies of Northwestern University.

25th, 26th March 2013 (Canceled)

Edgar Gómez had scheduled meetings with Siles and Bokowski at Northwestern University. Unfortunately, due to a domestic crisis for Siles and severe illness for Edgar, both had to be cancelled and it was proposed that the meeting be held via Skype instead. Both Pablo and Ignacio are leading scholars in the field of Communications and Science and Technology Studies, and there is strong potential for further engagement and collaboration with the CCN+ in the future.

Other forms of contact/engagement developed during the stay:

Interaction with/email contact with the Institute for the Future (Paul Saffo).

(Skype interview to follow on return to the UK)

Organized interaction with/email contact with Marc Weber, Founding Curator of the Internet History Program – to be organized as part of follow up via Lauren Silver, but engagement already under way via email.

Organizing future interaction with Long Now personnel. (Skype interview to be organized on return to the UK).