Memorandum of Understanding
Digital Innovation Group

Executive Summary

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) details how third parties can work with and use the services of the Digital Innovation Group (DigInG). The term "third party" refers to anyone who is not a direct member of the Digital Innovation Group such as student workers or staff members working for DigInG. The intention of this MoU is to create a common understanding of expectations and to avoid frustrations on either side.

The DigInG Concept

DigInG has three main goals:

- to develop new tools to support humanities researchers in processing and analyzing their data,
- to contribute to the development of a computational infrastructure for the humanities,
- and to create new educational resources, opportunities, and experiences for students in computer science and the humanities.

One way DigInG realizes the third goal is to employ student workers that help developing software and working on other research related tasks. Students are mentored by staff members to improve skills and foster an understanding of employed methods and research software. This means, however, that progress on projects is often slower than would be expected of a full-time professional software developer or data professional. DigInG will always try to meet deadlines and fulfil its promises, but this structure needs to be taken into account when working with DigInG.

Scope of Expertise and Services

There are several ways third parties can work with DigInG. In the simplest case, DigInG's cyber infrastructure can be used for projects. The different elements of the infrastructure will not be listed here and instead we refer to the DigInG website (http://diging.asu.edu/). We will provide training in the different applications we host and users are invited to submit feature requests for applications to better address their research needs.

Beyond that, we also offer consultation for computational and digital research projects. When using DigInG's consulting services, we can make recommendations regarding tool and method usage, data collection and cleaning processes, and staffing requirements. We recommend using our consulting services as early as the planning stage of new computational research projects to ensure grant proposals include all necessary considerations regarding computational work.

If additional services are required beyond consultation, it is possible to contract with DigInG for certain implementation, development, or data processing services. This includes but is not limited to buying the time of one of our student workers to help with a computational project or paying for some of our staff developer's time to implement certain software components. The details of this kind of arrangement vary case-by-case and we recommend to first make use of our consulting services to determine the needs of a project to then discuss further services.

Expectations and Trainings

When working with DigInG, there are certain expectations from our side. While we provide trainings and introductions to the applications we offer, we cannot provide in-depths teaching of skills required to use some of our services. For example, if one of our applications provides an API to download data, we cannot provide training for a project's student worker in how to write programs that use APIs (although we will make sure our APIs are either well documented or example code is provided). Similarly, if our Elasticsearch servers are used to index a set of documents, we cannot provide training in how to use Elasticsearch. If we see a need for certain skills, we might start offering workshops to address those needs, but we can't provide individual guidance.

If specific expertise is needed to implement a project, we do, however, offer our support for finding suitable student workers by for example participating in creating job descriptions and in the interview process. We also offer to embed students employed from external projects in DigInG by working one or more days a week in the DigInG lab space and participating in standup meetings and other processes employed by DigInG. We also provide guidelines for proper code and release management.

Recognition

Working with DigInG should first of all be understood as a collaboration rather than a service. This means that when appropriate, individual DigInG members should have the choice to become co-authors, and when co-authorship is not justified, DigInG should be acknowledged. Software developed by DigInG should be referenced in any publications that is based on the use of that software.

Financial contributions

While DigInG provides some services free of charge, especially in cases of close collaboration between external projects and DigInG, we will require some financial contributions in certain cases such as "buying" time of a developer or student worker. We welcome joint grant proposals and generally recommend consulting with us before and during the grant writing phase if a collaboration with DigInG is being considered. Since requirements, expectations, and scope of work vary on a case-by-case basis, please contact us to discuss this matter in detail. We welcome students interested in computational humanities work to contact us for guidance and consultation free of charge.