

<b>AAPG2021</b>	<b>CulturHist</b>		PRCI
Coordinated by:	Frédéric Clavert / Caroline Muller	36 months	226 499,32
CE27 - Culture, création, patrimoine			

# Cultures historiennes, épistémologie et méthodologie de l'histoire à l'ère numérique

## Historian cultures – the epistemology and methodology of history in the digital age - **CulturHist**

Although historians are writing more and more history which reads like me-story, if pressed to say what their intellectual journey was, they are more likely to say they discovered a magnificent collection of documents than a piece of software. The questions this raises are these: what can we know, and how, about what historians do with their devices, and what guesses can we make about what that implies for history as it is written? (Rygiel 2017, p. 8)

Summary table of persons involved in the project (The consortium did not change since the previous deposit in 2020.)
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(this table as well as the consortium table have been removed for anonymisation purposes)

### I. Proposal's context, positioning and objective(s)

#### a. Objectives and research hypothesis

##### **The theory behind the CulturHist project**

With the massive spread of digital terminals (computers and smartphones) linked together, as they are, by the Internet, in conjunction with the conversion of knowledge into data (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier) by digitisation or the mass production of data directly in digital form, the digital era we live in raises questions about historians' research practices as new methodologies emerge in the human and social sciences. Looking beyond the day-to-day uses of computer technology (e-mailing and text processing), the aim of this project is to reach an understanding of the changes that research in contemporary history (19th-21st centuries) is undergoing in a digital *environment* and *culture* (Doueïhi; Castells). Nevertheless, CulturHist will draw on the know-how developed by other historians in the context of other major historical periods. The aim of the CulturHist project is to inquire into what this digitisation of the discipline entails, while looking at the new practices which historians have done little to explain, such as the intensive recourse to cameras in the lecture room in archive centres, turning the historian into a "hunter-gatherer" (Potin) or the consulting of digital libraries, practices which have profoundly altered the material, tangible culture of historians. CulturHist will set out to throw the spotlight on this new material, tangible culture, to identify the potential risks it involves and its effects on methodology, such as the citing of decontextualized documents which have been consulted online. The project is also interested in the consequences digitisation has for the mediating institutions that create the links between historians and their archives: museums, libraries and archive services.

CulturHist has its sights particularly on the community of researchers, who have done little to make the results and suggestions offered by the digital humanities their own. We want to focus the discussion on a cross cutting issue: the link to archives, as the raw material for writing an account of the past. The habit of working digitally of those historians who do not nowadays verbalise their computer practices is now widespread and is bolstered by policies aimed at making many digitised document collections available online. For example, a search using the Internet Archive wayback machine developed by a not-for-profit company which archives the Web, shows that, in January 2002, *Gallica*, the digital library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (National Library of France), reported having 80 000 documents online, as compared to a little over 5.8 million on 4 September 2019. These days, it is possible to carry out international historical investigations without being in

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physical contact with a document, as was demonstrated as far back as 2011 by the *Data mining with criminal intent* project (Cohen et al.). This means that researchers often become data managers (Cartier et al.). Most researchers now practise these habits, and there is an urgent need to analyse them and adapt initial and further training in history in order to help students and historians grasp how ways of writing history are being changed.

CulturHist intends to find answers to these questions, not just by making an inventory of current practice in the history profession, but also by setting four objectives:

- To bring the toolbox deployed for historical research into the digital era, and to identify and propose an awareness of the methodological risks that would threaten the validity of the historical knowledge produced. What we mean by “risks” here is errors in methodology linked to the digitised or natively digital character of the sources used and which are committed when the corpus of primary sources is being constituted or critically examined, or even because of the way they are read. For example, scanning, even high-quality scanning (Hitchcock), or digitisation policies (Milligan; Putnam) can compromise the validity of the findings of an investigation.
- To analyse how the “great narratives” of the researcher’s profession have evolved in line with technological advances (since the 1980s), including interviews with the people concerned.
- Redesigning archive rooms in the physical, virtual and conceptual sense, in dialogue with the various professionals involved archiving, in order to obviate “misunderstandings” and discrepancies in practices, criteria and time frames between the different professions (archivists, librarians, historians) (Potin).
- To define initial and further training objectives for the new generation of historians.

### Scientific and technical obstacles

The main hurdle to be overcome is the diversity of the primary sources that CulturHist will be gathering: investigations in different “locations” or spaces (lecture rooms, the Web), statistics on online consultation of digital libraries, “grey” literature (Master’s degree dissertations, professional literature) and the results of previous ANR projects (*Histinéraires*). This diversity in primary sources will be matched by a diversity in the methods used, blending approaches which are quantitative (observation of statistics on numbers of hits and re-uses) and qualitative. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary character of the consortium (consisting of historians, archivists, computer scientists, etc.) will mean that we can call on expertise appropriate to the sources and methods used.

One of the challenges of disseminating the results of the project will be to propagate them successfully to a wide range of communities organised by separate networks, by time period and purpose, into associations. In France, these are associations such as the AHMUF, AHCESR, SOPHAU, SHMESP, AFHE and SFHU; in Luxembourg, they will include, in particular, the Institute for History, the C<sup>2</sup>DH and the *Veräin vun de Lëtzebuurger Archivisten*.

Communication within the project will be mindful of the effects of interdisciplinarity, taking into account the different professional cultures and, in particular, the vocabulary specific to each discipline: the principles which guide each of the professional bodies do not always overlap (*respect des fonds*, historical method, modelling). The two PIs will take care to strike a balance between the repercussions for each of the institutions involved in the project.

The PIs will keep a watchful eye on how the data collected are displayed, in view of the technical and legal framework (GDPR) which has to be respected. Using the computer infrastructures at the two PIs’ universities and relying on their data privacy officers to support the project will make it possible to set up a sustainable platform for consultation of the project data.

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## Results expected

CulturHist will produce an inventory of professional expertise in relation to the concepts of “document” and “archive” in the digital era. The point of the inventory is to disseminate knowledge and research acquired in disciplinary fields and which rarely percolate through to the circles frequented by historians, despite being relevant to their work (in the areas of archiving and librarianship). It will make for a better understanding among historians of the ways in which part of their working environment (archives, libraries and museums) operates.

CulturHist will also aspire to give archivists, museum curators and historians a better grasp of usages and practices in digitised corpora and of the associated equipment in “virtual” or physical archive rooms. CulturHist aims to respond in this way to the still unresolved question of instrumentation for historians in the digital era.

In addition, CulturHist will be a chance to explore attitudes to the mismatches between how historians view themselves and their work, on the one hand, and their actual practices on the other. These mismatches are likely to give rise to, or to mask, risks linked to usages which have not been clarified. CulturHist will thereby promote an awareness of the challenges posed by the methodology of history in the digital era by encouraging thinking along epistemological lines: how the narrating of history as it is being made, and how the picture the historian paints of himself at work, shape the choices made as the work of historical investigation progresses.

Lastly, CulturHist will put forward tangible proposals for incorporating the results of the project into initial and further training for historians. The results will be presented and disseminated in various forms:

### (1) Working tools and guides to good practice

- A multidisciplinary bibliography available on open access
- A report on the uses made of digitised corpora by historians
- A guide to methodology for researchers: recommendations for the best types of equipment to have in a reading room
- A guide intended for trainers, on incorporating questions relating to history in the digital era into training models

### (2) Data production and analysis

- Source corpus. The two project leaders will find the best compromise between making the data freely available (by publication of the corpus) and respect for copyright and the legislation affecting personal data protection (GDPR).
- Master’s degree dissertations
- Doctoral thesis: “A history of the reading room”

### (3) Presentation of research results

- Articles : **1** - “Cachez cet appareil photo que je ne saurais voir: Day-to-day digital behaviour for the historian”; **2**- “To see or not to see: Arguments for a fresh review of the tools used to interrogate corpora”; **3** - “Beyond the camera: Uses and practices of historians in the (digital) reading room” (international periodical); **4** - Title and subject to be determined with the PhD candidate
- A series of workshops and a closing symposium
- A publication summarising the results

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## b. Position of the project as it relates to the state of the art

In 1989, Arlette Farge published *Le goût de l'archive*: in it, she describes the intimate, emotional, material link which ties a historian to an archive, and in so doing launched a form of anthropology of the historian in the second half of the 20th century. The book was a worldwide success in the French-speaking and English-speaking worlds. It is still a standard work, one that shapes the professional identity of the history-writing discipline: our approaches to research strive, implicitly or explicitly, to conform to it (Rygiel 104).

If the exploration by archival and library sciences of the consequences of the digitization of archives began early (Burckard) and gave rise to attempts at disciplinary appropriation (McCrank), the dissemination of the latter to historians has nevertheless remained modest.

While the digital environment does have an effect on the practices of historians, as various publications have reported (Genet and Zorzi; Combe; Anheim and Poncet; Lécosais and Quemener), certain descriptions of time spent in the archives to be found nowadays in history books give partial narratives from the archive which are in keeping with the professional identity of historical scholarship (Takats and Farge; Takats) rather than with actual practice, such as the taking of photos instead of notes in an archive centre (Mullen).

We are growing up in the “information order” (Müller), a system of documentation characterised by “a structure of digital data and information which can be reconfigured by the reader at any time”. It looks, however, as though historians underestimated the consequences of this system of documentation for archives, while digitisation projects have become substantial enough for it no longer to be possible to ignore their consequences.

### *History, digital humanities and CulturHist*

The issue of digitising the historian’s profession is distinct from the major digital humanities projects in history that have sometimes been very widely reported in the media (Abbott; François et al.). Such projects focus on mass digitisation without paying any particular attention to day-to-day digital usages, to the “weak signals” that are just as likely to bring about radical changes in the practice of history. Furthermore, while the digital humanities field has, for several years now, been a source of in-depth thinking about the link between the digital approach and the human and social sciences, its development has had very little effect on most of the practices of writers of contemporary history. That field is still identified as being reserved for researchers at a higher technical level than others, as recent discussions on the French-language digital humanities distribution list have shown (see answers to <https://groupes.renater.fr/sympa/arc/dh/2019-07/msg00012.html>).

On the historical sciences side, several early studies have shown how much the development of computer tools is changing historical knowledge (Furet and Daumard). The question of how this relates to archive documents in contemporary history, however, has not been addressed, even though work has been done on the changes in archives themselves (Genet; Hitchcock). And even if Historians were very quick to use computers and have always given thought to them as they developed from mainframes to personal computers, whatever the period under discussion (Prost and Rosenzweig; Zysberg; Le Roy Ladurie; Thaller).

In the early 2010s, there was a rapid growth in the amount of attention given to this question in France and Italy (Genet and Zorzi). The Internet, the Web and the digitisation of ever larger volumes of archive material sparked off increasingly detailed discussions about the consequences these developments had for the writing of history (Dougherty and Nawrotzki), the practice of it (Clavert and Noiret; Weller; Haber; Koller), mass source processing (Graham et al.). In parallel, the Internet and the Web were becoming increasingly important in the dissemination and sharing of scientific information via online periodicals (Rygiel, Noiret). More recent publications about archives --including with contributions by the two PIs -- take into account the digital question only marginally (Anheim).

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As these developments emerged, historians wondered about their own training, a question which is still open today (Genet; Ruiz and Heimburger; Clavert). The issue now is to make sure that apprentice historians are not undermined by ignorance of the methodological challenges posed by the sources and tools they work with.

### c. Methodology and risk management

<b>WP0: Project Coordination</b>	
<b>Leaders:</b> xxx	<b>Participants:</b> All project members
<p><b>General objectives</b> Ensure the project is running smoothly from a scientific point of view, as well as from the data, legal (GDPR) and ethical policy points of view.</p>	
<p><b>Specific actions/Success indicators</b>  <b>(0.1) Ensure scientific monitoring and coordinate the iterations</b>  The overall project's national coordinators (C. Muller and F. Clavert) will regularly validate the progress of the project, exchange information with all partners, make sure that proper scientific and organisational methods are followed, facilitate collaboration among partners and steer the administrative work, the planning of meetings, experiments and follow-ups.  <b>(0.1.1) Kick-off meeting</b>  <b>(0.1.2) Mid-project management meeting</b>  <b>(0.2) Synthesise results</b>  <b>(0.3) Drafting of the Data Management Project (DMP)</b> in line with the recommendations from the ANR. The DMP will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take into account the binational nature of CulturHIST</li> <li>- be coordinated with the tasks 0.4 and 0.5</li> <li>- benefit from the infrastructure of the two PIs' institutions</li> <li>- benefit from the fact that the two PIs participated in DMP-training sessions</li> <li>- respect FAIR principles</li> <li>- schedule from the beginning the preservation of the gathered data in the middle and long terms.</li> </ul> <b>(0.4) Personal data policy</b> to ensure GDPR conformity  <b>(0.5) Ethical policy</b>  <b>(0.6) Recruitment and supervision of the post-doctoral researcher</b> (Rennes 2)  <b>(0.7) Recruitment and supervision of the PhD student</b> (University of Luxembourg) </p>	
<b>WP1: State of the art: building a shared work tool for the partners</b>	
<b>Leaders:</b> Post-doctoral researcher	<b>Participants:</b> All project members
<p><b>General objectives and methodology</b>  The purpose of WP1 will be to produce a review of studies and reports written in highly fragmented disciplinary fields between which there is little crossover, although they all deal with shared questions about the place of documents in the human and social sciences in the digital era: the information sciences, history and anthropology. The culmination of this survey will be an open-access bibliography consultable by all.  This task will involve systematically exploring the available literature (bibliographical corpus), including material that is not easily accessible: "grey", technical and academic literature. Master's degree dissertations will be given special attention, as they are hardly visible in the historiographical landscape. This bibliography will be a way of linking the whole consortium together from the outset of the project by giving material form to the dialogue between disciplines and professions, while setting up an essential tool for the implementation of the other work packages. CulturHist will be able to rely on a corpus already put together by <i>Histinéraires</i> (<a href="https://anr.fr/Projet-ANR-13-BSH3-0005">https://anr.fr/Projet-ANR-13-BSH3-0005</a>), with which links have already been set up.</p>	

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**Specific actions/Success indicators**

- (1.1) **Delivery of an open-access bibliography** available on HAL/orbilu and Zotero, harvested on Isidore  
 (1.1.1) **Updating of the bibliography** to M13 (1.1.2) **Updating of the bibliography** to M25  
 (1.2) **Methodology supervision. Coordination, collection, harmonisation of data**

**Risks**

Finding areas of common ground so that a dialogue can be set up between the volumes of knowledge produced, looking beyond the gaps between disciplines.  
 The need to search for ways of accessing collections which have little visibility, especially “grey” literature, Master’s degree dissertations unpublished but lodged, for example, in the DUMAS base (<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr>) on the French side or with MAHEC on the Luxembourg side.

**WP2: What is a historian in the digital era? Epistemology and professional identity**

**Leaders:** xxx

**Participants:** post-doctoral researcher, PhD candidate, student assistants

**General objectives and methodology**

Although the digitisation of the history profession is happening, there is little trace of it in professional representations. Historians make little mention of their day-to-day digital habits and routines, preferring to focus on paper-based experiences, which are thought to be more in keeping with the definition of the practice of history, as the publication *Généralisations historiennes* (PUF, 2019) shows. This professional identity is undergoing a process of change, with the new links now forming between archivists, amateurs and/or scholars through “public” history. What new forms of mediation are there between the different professions, all of which have an interest in archives? This task also involves understanding what impact the persistence of traditional representations of the historian has on the way investigations are carried out, or, indeed, on whether or not good practice is adopted. We will be examining writing in which historians talk about the behind-the-scenes aspects of their work and explain their methodological choices: blogs, prefaces, dedications, acknowledgements, footnotes, paragraphs expounding their intellectual journey and recollections of being qualified to conduct research.. The analysis of the data gathered will allow us to put forward hypotheses which we will submit for collective analysis through the professional associations.

**Specific actions/Success indicators**

- (2.1) **Corpus definition and set up (academic blogs from hypotheses.org, PhD thesis and Habilitation thesis available on HAL-SHS or theses.fr, interviews (see WP3), small interviews (see WP6), twitter data, facebook groups data. Some other sources may be added. All source will be collected and stored with respect to the GDPR)**  
 (2.2) **Analysis of results and presentation to various associations (AHMUF, AHCESR, etc.).** The analysis of these results will be based on a multiscaled reading (close reading, machine reading, distant reading). The distant reading will be carried out by a topic modelling software (Graham et al.), but also by the constitution of citation and similarity networks with the IRaMuTeQ software (<http://iramuteq.org>).  
 (2.3) **Editing of a collective publication** (symposium proceedings to be written up before presentation)  
 (2.4) **Article** presenting the results

**Risks**

Making sure to work together on describing the representations and their effect on research, rather than writing a history of the representations.  
 Finding a way of disseminating the results of this investigation to the widest possible audience of historians, notwithstanding the great variety of networks and methods involved, by mobilising the association relay bodies as early as possible.

**WP3: Is there a virtual reading room? An investigation of the uses made of digitized corpora**

**Leaders:** xxx

**Participants:** xxx



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### General objectives and methodology

This will involve clarifying how historians tackle corpora digitised by heritage institutions, in two ways. The first is on-the-spot consultation in the facilities provided specifically to give access to digitised collections. The second is remote access through the researcher's workstation, so that the researcher does not have to go to the consultation and conservation centre in person. Researchers then put together a specific corpus out of what is available online; what tools do they use and what obstacles do they face?

We will conduct an inquiry into the uses made of digitised corpora, to gain a better understanding of the interactions between researcher and digitised document, based on the collections held by the various members of the consortium (xxx). We will investigate how access to enormous volumes of source material is perceived, particularly the risk of the illusion of completeness which the figures create (Milligan). To do this, we will set up a round of interviews with historians of both sexes and different generations, taking care to include Master's degree students, and working together with sociologists to make sure that the interview questionnaires are relevant. Periods will be set aside for participatory observation, for which we will call on certain colleagues on a one-off basis. In addition to this approach, there will be a quantitative approach, based on xxx.

### Specific actions/Success indicators

- (3.1) **Establishment of an investigation protocol** (15 to 20 interviews + analysis of statistics on visits to sites which give access to digitised corpora) with the various partners
- (3.2) **Conduct of the investigation**, based on two interns studying for the MAs in Archiving (xxx) and Digital Humanities (xxx)
- (3.3) **Statistical analysis** of usages of online digitised corpora (xxx)
- (3.4) **Collective report**, overseen by the two WP leaders
- (3.5) **Article** presenting the results

### Risks

Essential to involve the institutions to be used as laboratories  
 Access to the data and limits on the information it can provide  
 Difficulty of reaching an audience which is, by definition, remote

### WP4: Usage and recommendations for a "physical" reading room in the digital era

**Leaders:** xxx

**Participants:** xxx

### General objectives and methodology

To identify the hardware and software used for historical research in the present day and its methodological implications: technical options (type of device, photographing facilities, server management, etc.); software options: tools for annotation, enhancement and screen capture. This work will make it possible to draft recommendations in consultation with the various professions involved.

- Define the minimum technical conditions (standard of photography, type of equipment) for searching and reusing corpora in collaboration with a team of computer experts. The XXX team proposes exploring one of our corpora to observe under what conditions smartphone photographs can be used for purposes of automatic text recognition (OCR).
- Understanding certainty and uncertainty in the research process in the digital era.
  - This work will be done in collaboration with students of archiving, history and/or librarianship, whose task will be to compile and analyse the data concerned, on internships or in Master's degree dissertations. They will conduct participatory observations and interviews with historians, archivists and curators.
  - Research by the PhD candidate into the history of reading rooms will be based partly on the results of this WP: he or she will be able to "historicise" present-day practice by incorporating the data supplied into a fuller chronology.
- The data will help in examining serendipity in archive centres in the photographic era, the way in which technology affects documentation choices, especially the ability to take thousands of photos "just in case", without any prior selection. We hope to reach a better understanding of how researchers recreate a virtual reading room on their computer.

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**Specific actions/Success indicators**

- (4.1) **Inventory of facilities already provided in reading rooms at archive centres and libraries:** what tools are available and what is the acquisition rationale that dictates those options? We will make an inventory of scanners, independent or on-demand digitisation stations and heat lamps, and look at restrictions on the use of photographs (intern 3 and student assistant).
- (4.2) **Identify researchers' individual equipment** (scanners, cameras, scanning software)
- (4.3) **Automatic processing of images captured with a smartphone** (computer intern)
- (4.4) **Draw up recommendations to institutions but also historians themselves,** with the additional aim of making each profession aware of the constraints on the other (intern 4 and student assistant)
- (4.5) **PhD thesis:** a history of the reading room. The Luxembourg side will fund the thesis for a period of four years, as stipulated in the FNR.
- (4.6) and (4.7) **Articles** presenting the results

**Risks**

Wide variations in range of facilities at different institutions.  
Ensuring synergy between the professional partners, especially as regards dialogue between French and Luxembourg institutions.

**WP5: Training for historians in the digital era**

**Leaders:** Post-doctoral researcher

**Participants:** xxx

**General objectives and methodology**

The future of history research depends on the training of new historians who will be working in a predominantly digital environment. We will be focusing on two questions in particular:

- **Training in data management,** interrogation of new corpora, understanding the principles of digital archiving, so that future historians can continue to construct a narrative of history based on a clear awareness of the advantages and limitations of the tools they use to compile their corpora.
- **The question of diplomatics in contemporary history.** A question to be asked might be whether the long-standing practice of archive manipulation might be easier and easier to do in an age when primary sources are being digitised *en masse* and new digital records are appearing. We will rely on the Luxembourg Ranke.2 initiative (ranke2.uni.lu)

The aim of this WP will, therefore, be to define what skills apprentice historians need, while considering how to devise a course of education that remains stable despite rapid developments in technology. We will make proposals directed at Bachelor degrees and at research training schemes (Master's degree and doctorate in research) in consultation with the other players involved in such forms of training (xxx).

**Specific actions/Success indicators**

- (5.1) **Inventory of action already taken in this field** (France, Luxembourg, Germany)
- (5.2) **Participation in the ranke.2 website,** creation of new courses
- (5.3) **A guide for teachers responsible for teaching the "digital" aspects in history syllabuses**

**Risks**

Variations in training schemes from one university to another and one country to another. Tailoring the proposals to the teaching context for each form of training without abandoning the general recommendations

**WP6: Dissemination**

**Leaders:** xxx

**Participants:** All project members

**General objectives**

There will be presentation and dissemination work intended for a variety of audiences. Several operations will be



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aimed at the community of historians who are not specialists in the “digital humanities”:

- The already existing website will be enhanced and will document and publicise progress made on the project.
- Organization of a booksprint (collaborative writing session) that will complete and deepen the *gout-numerique.net* online book (6.6.1)
- Small interviews with video captures presenting historians talking about their special link with a (set of) primary sources will be carried about and published online (6.6.2). They will be recorded at the occasion of the more detailed interviews part of the WP3 and will be a way to promote them.
- Two workshops in years 1 and 2, a closing symposium, several publications in periodicals such as the *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* or the *Annales*. We will also disseminate the results through international periodicals (*European History Quarterly*), and certain deliverables (recommendation guides, reports) will be translated into English.
- There will be lectures and communications aimed at a wider audience, via *ForumZ* (Luxembourg), participation in the *Rendez-vous de l'Histoire* in Blois and the *L'Histoire à venir* festival (Toulouse) and a partnership with *Champs Libres* (Rennes), an institution specialising in scientific popularisation. To simplify organisation, *ForumZ* will be tacked onto the final symposium.

#### Specific actions / Success indicators

(6.1) **Consideration of the various spaces and networks to be “covered” in disseminating the results**

(6.2) **Workshop 1**

(6.3) **Workshop 2**

(6.4) **Closing symposium**

(6.5) **Communication to a wider audience:** *ForumZ*, *RVHB*, etc.

(6.6) **Additions to the online book and project visibility**

(6.6.1) **Booksprint**

(6.6.2) **Publication online of short interviews of historians**

#### Risks

Difficulty of covering a very wide field: several professional disciplines and communities

Persuading associations and disciplinary networks unfamiliar with digital issues (not to say alarmed by the term “digital humanities”) that our proposals are relevant

### d. Ability of the project to address the research issues covered by the chosen research theme: Theme 4.2 Culture, Creations, Heritage

CulturHist fits into theme 4.2 “Culture, creation, heritage” in several ways. The project is interested in:

- how history, including cultural history, is produced, and the material and technological conditions in which it is done
- the changes which technology makes to the production of history, and to its ongoing development

The project adopts an approach which incorporates international, interdisciplinary and interprofessional cooperation.

## II. Organisation and implementation of the project

### a. Scientific coordinator and its consortium/its team

#### Implication of the scientific coordinator and partner’s scientific leader in on-going project(s)

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#### Caroline Muller (PI FR)

Caroline Muller has been an associate professor in contemporary history at the University of Rennes 2 since 2018. Her doctorate in history (2017), was a study of the practices of confession and spiritual

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guidance in France in the 19th century based on archive corpora described as “private”: personal diaries and correspondence. At the same time, she opened and has since maintained one of the first research blog about the doctorate on the Hypothèses platform (since 2012, with 159 articles) and has been involved in discussions about the links between history and the digital sphere for several years (the “history and the digital sphere” column, contributions to the methodology blog *Devenir historien(ne)* and *La boîte à outils des historien(ne)s* maintained by E. Ruiz and F. Heimburger). Since 2015, she has devised a full course cycle on digital cultures for historians at the University of Reims Champagne Ardenne, intended for undergraduate students. She has also created a number of training modules for PhD candidates, at the University of Paris 13 or for the NYU branch in Paris (since 2016). She has been invited to present these training courses and the results of them in various institutions (the German Historical Institute, 2019). As a member of the scientific board of the TGIR (Major Research Infrastructure) Huma-Num since 2018, she is in demand as an expert in various contexts: expert opinion for the magazine *Humanités Numériques*, drafting of notes for a special edition of *Bussole* on digital technology in the social and human sciences, scientific committee and evaluation of proposals for communications for various symposia.

*Summary of scientific output* : Books: 1; articles in periodicals with a reading panel: 7; books edited: 3; editions of periodicals edited: 4 (including one currently under way); chapters in books: 3.

#### **Frédéric Clavert** (PI LU)

Frédéric Clavert has been assistant professor of contemporary history at the C2DH (University of Luxembourg) since September 2017. He was previously lecturer in digital history in Lausanne (2015-2017), research engineer at LabEx EHNE (2013-2015), and researcher and coordinator of a “Digital Humanities Lab” at the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe (Luxembourg, 2008-2013) and ATER (*lecturer*) at the Institut d’Études Politiques in Strasbourg (2005-2007). Trained in political sciences and international history, he defended a PhD thesis in contemporary history in 2006 and then turned to Digital Humanities. He then coordinated *L’histoire contemporaine à l’ère numérique* (PIE Peter Lang, 2013) with Serge Noiret (European University Institute, Florence). He has been involved in organising several symposia on digital humanities and history. He is finishing a research project on memories of the Great War on Twitter, which has given him an opportunity to explore the possibilities of text mining in history and memory studies. Since 2016, he has been working with Caroline Muller on a rereading of *Le goût de l’archive* (Farge) in the digital era. He is currently deputy secretary of the International Association for Contemporary History of Europe (a member association of the *International Committee on Historical Sciences*), secretary of Humanistica (*Association francophone pour les humanités numériques*) and member of the board of the *Société pour l’Histoire des Médias*. He is also on the editorial board of the new periodical *Humanités numériques*.

*Summary of scientific output*: Books: 1; articles in periodicals with a reading panel: 12; books edited: 4; editions of periodicals edited: 3; chapters in books: 17.

#### **Links between the two PIs**

Caroline Muller and Frédéric Clavert have been working together since 2016 on the question of the “archive narrative” and the “allure” of contemporary archives in the digital era. They have come at their inquiries from different directions, Caroline Muller through teaching digital culture to historians, Frédéric Clavert through using advanced computer tools (text mining) in his research. They jointly edited the online publication *Le goût de l’archive à l’ère numérique* (<https://www.gout-numerique.net>), a rewrite of *Goût de l’archive* (Farge). In 2018, this joint piece of research led to the holding of a study day at the French National Archives, followed in 2019 by the appearance of an issue of *La gazette des archives* and the holding of a workshop at the University of

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Rennes 2. They have given several presentations of their joint projects (Open Access Week, Strasbourg; Digital Humanities seminar, Toulouse; Diplomatic Archives, La Courneuve; DH Nord 2018 and 2019, Lille). CulturHist draws on this collaboration by sustaining and building on the questions raised, and indeed on the joint work done when Frédéric Clavert was a visiting professor at Rennes 2 (September 2019).

The research centres of the two project leaders complement each other to a high degree. The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C<sup>2</sup>DH) was set up in autumn 2016 and is a research centre reputed for the unsurpassed standard of its work in the study, analysis and public dissemination of contemporary Luxembourg and European history. One of its aims is to act as a key player for reflection on the methodological and epistemological challenges of history in the digital era. The Centre is already the world's major digital history centre in terms of workforce (with a staff of 100+) and has established close cooperation with the [Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media](#), the [Center for Digital Research in the Humanities](#) (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), the [Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis](#) (Stanford University), the [Humlab](#) at Umeå University, the [DHLAB](#) at the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne and the [Trier Center for Digital Humanities](#). These partnerships, as well as the C<sup>2</sup>DH digital research infrastructure, will be of great advantage to CulturHist, making it an innovative research project. The Tempora (EA7468) research laboratory brings together some 50 historians working, in particular, on the link between heritage and history (strand 1 of the scientific project) and on socio-cultural knowledge and practices (strand 3). Research activities with a digital aspect are firmly supported by the University of Rennes 2, which has made assisted change in the human and social sciences in the digital era the nub of its scientific and institutional policy. One sign of this is the special focus on the challenges associated with data (XXX), or the close working relationship with the XXX.

#### University partners

*removed for anonymisation*

#### b. Implemented and requested resources to reach the objectives

*budget removed for the orbilu version*

### III. Impact and benefits of the project

CulturHist will have repercussions for historical research, history teaching in higher education and the fields associated with archives: museums, libraries and archives. By looking at the relationships historians have with their archives and corpora in the digital era, by analysing the risks (biases) linked to non-explicit methodological choices, CulturHist will be helping to throw light on historical method in the digital era at several levels: professional historians, budding historians, by thinking about their training in connection with three Master's courses. By suggesting pathways and making recommendations about lecture rooms, virtual or otherwise, CulturHist will prompt historians in France, Luxembourg and beyond to incorporate into their methods and their thinking the effects that digitisation is having on their practice of history. By working with representatives of heritage institutions – archive centres, museums and libraries – CulturHist will be part of a renewed dialogue between the archive professions and the history professions, a dialogue which is particularly critical at a time of radical upheavals in those professions, and at the very time when the different communities have been tending to move apart since the interwar period. As it is planning at least two events that involve meetings with a wider audience, CulturHist will also be an occasion for publicly

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raising and discussing these new challenges of history in the digital era. CulturHist will thus have immediate effects (identifying the risks inherent in the choices researchers make on a daily basis), medium-term effects (improvements in training) and long-term effects: once more forging strong links between different professions, historians, archivists, library and museum curators, IT researchers and computer specialists.

Although CulturHist will be focusing on the French and Luxembourg cases, the lessons learned from the project can be expanded to include the practices of historians in other countries. From the outset, CulturHist will be keen to look into ways of expanding it into a European project. That will rely on a network of historians which the two PIs are already putting together by going international with the online book *Le goût de l'archive à l'ère numérique* (<http://www.gout-numerique.net>), by translations which are now under way and by organising meetings such as a work day at the University of Rennes 2 in November 2019.

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