University of Luxembourg

Multilingual. Personalised. Connected.

C²DH
LUXEMBOURG CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY AND DIGITAL HISTORY

INSIDE THE TRADING ZONE

Setting up the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History

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Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

An actor-centered view

Structure of the talk:

- Intellectual framing: C²DH as “trading zone” for “thinkering” with digital tools & infrastructures
- Strategic framing: mission & ambition of C²DH as Interdisciplinary Centre at Luxembourg University
- Pragmatic framing: challenges & opportunities of setting up a new research centre

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Different “waves“ of digital humanities:
  - 1st wave: computational humanities wave (driven by small community of programming scholars, mainly computational linguists)
  - 2nd wave: big expectations wave (revolutionary rhetoric of game-changing nature of digitization; large scale digitization; building of tools / datasets)
  - 3rd wave: critical / reflexive wave (acknowledging both the possibilities and limitations or biases)

Creation and strategic positioning of C²DH is embedded in 3rd wave of digital humanities

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Challenge: To face the growing gap between the fast development of new techniques and tools for doing digital humanities and the rather slow appropriation and critical reflection of such tools and techniques by the academic community

- The ”update” of classical hermeneutics (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Habermas) to the digital age requires a thorough investigation on the technical, infrastructural, and digital environment in which we produce historical evidence, develop historical arguments, and construct historical narratives.

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- ”classical” hermeneutics:
  - concentrated on the philosophical or sociological conditions of possibility to produce evidence-based arguments (“truth”, “objectivity”) in order to “understand”, not to “explain” (Wilhelm Dilthey)
  - Philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic theory of knowledge (Gadamer: Truth & Method): what can we know, under what circumstances and with what validity?
  - Central lessons:
    - Absolute historicity of all knowledge (impossibility of absolute truth)
    - Contextual dimension of knowledge production & appropriation
    - Interest driven nature of cognition & insight
    - Understanding as dynamic process (Serres: randonneur)
    - Tension between “strangeness” and “familiarity”: the in-betweenness is the true space of hermeneutics

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- digital hermeneutics:
  - Tension between “understanding” and “explaining” in Dilthey’s conception of hermeneutics resurges in the age of bid data
  - *Methodological tensions:*
    - Tension between ”quantitative” and “qualitative” research
    - Tension between “distant” and “close” reading
  - *Epistemological challenges:*
    - Tension between “statistical evidence” and “historical relevance”
    - Tension between “exemplary” versus “representative” research designs

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- To deal with those tensions, we need:
  - new heuristics of “in-betweenness”
  - true interdisciplinary skills
  - multimodal literacy

- New conception of academic training / curricula
- Generational challenge: train the trainers!

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Digital hermeneutics as heuristic of “in-betweenness”:
  - „Trying to locate a hermeneutics at the boundary between mechanism and theory (...) Algorithmic criticism proposes that we channel the heightened objectivity made possible by the machine into the cultivation of those heightened subjectivities necessary for critical work“.
    - Stephen Ramsey: *Reading Machines. Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*. University of Illinois Press 2011, p. x.

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Need for multimodal literacy & hybrid practitioners

"We need database literacies, algorithmic literacies, computational literacies, interface literacies. We need new hybrid practitioners: artist-theorists, programming humanists, activist-scholars; theoretical archivists, critical race coders. We need new forms of graduate and undergraduate education that hone both critical and digital literacies. We have to shake ourselves out of our small, field-based boxes so that we might take seriously the possibility that our own knowledge practices are normalized, modular, and black boxed in much the same way as the code we study in our work."

Tara McPherson, 'U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-Century: The Interwinning of Race and UNIX', in L. Nakamura and P. Chow-White (eds.), *Race after the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 35.

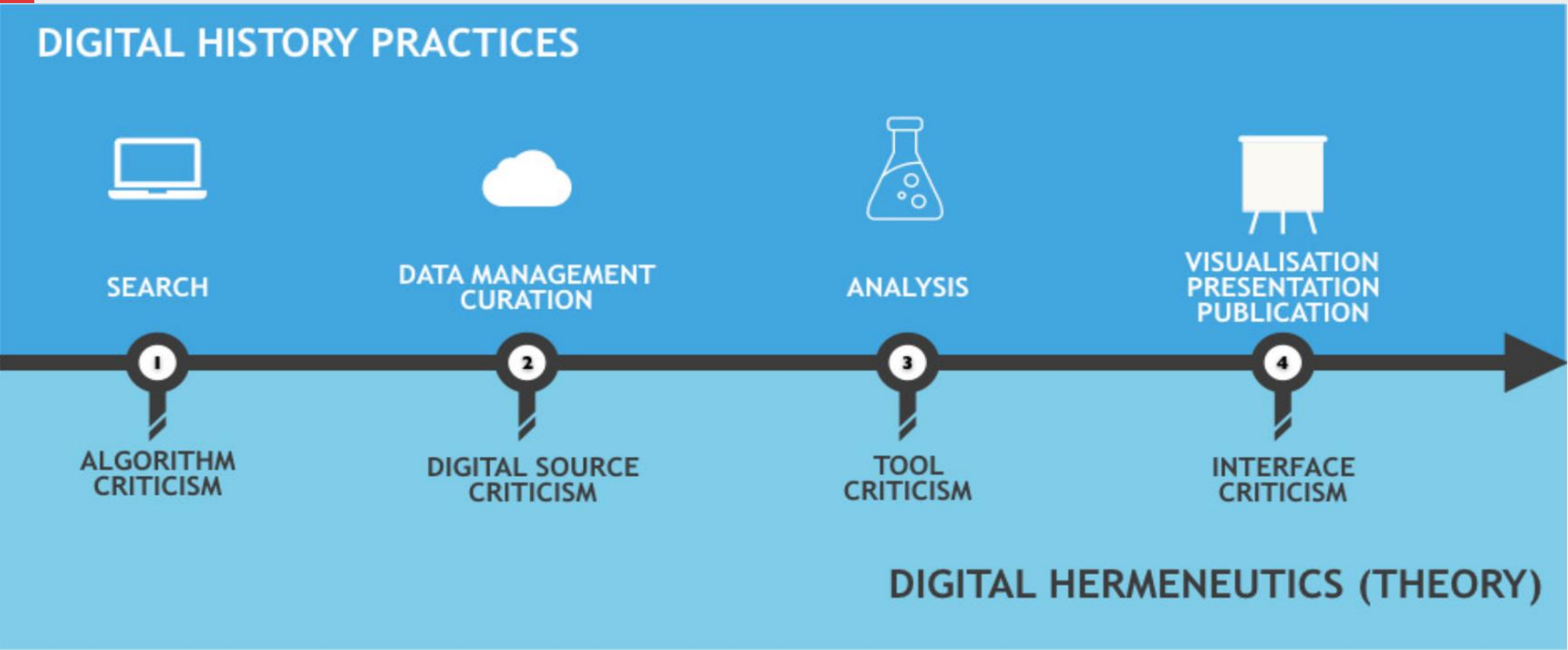
Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Multimodal literacy:
  - Searching: **algorithmic criticism**
  - Documenting: **data criticism**
  - Analysis: **tool criticism**
  - Presentation: **interface criticism**
  - Narration: **simulation criticism**

Inside the Trading Zone of C^2DH

Intellectual framing



Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Reflexive wave:
  - In using software, apps, databases, digital meta-sources, the digital humanities scholar (the experimenter) actively co-constructs his "epistemic object" (Hans-Jörg Rheinberger)

- Kranzberg law: "Technology is neither good, nor bad, nor neutral".

  - Ergo: we need to reflect on the "non-neutrality" of the technologies / infrastructures involved in our research
  - Ergo: we need to open up the "black boxes" we are using in doing our research!

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- Open up the black boxes = battle call of Science, Technology & Society Studies (STS)

- "The infrastructures of the digital humanities are, like all the best infrastructures, simultaneously omnipresent and invisible. The digital humanities depend on and operate through a vast, interlocked network of objects, capital, people, and ideologies: ASCII code; fiber-optic cables; tenure lines; server farms; research centers and literature labs; wage laborers and graduate students who scan, attach metadata, and program search functions".

  - Jessica Hurley, Aesthetics and the Infrastructural Turn in the Digital Humanities. *American Literature* 88 (2016) 3: 627-637.

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

- How to “grasp” the epistemological impact of hidden / black-boxed digital research tools and infrastructures?

By putting our hands and heads on!

„Grasping or comprehending reality becomes a double act that also involves gripping on it: ‚comprehending‘ reality in linguistic – theoretical terms, and ‚grasping‘ it through efficiency; the intellectual and the technical form“.

– Ernst Cassirer: „Form und Technik“, in: *Symbol, Technik, Sprache. Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1927-1933* (ed. by Ernst Wolfgang Orth and John Michael Krois), Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1995, p.52.

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

Thinkering

- bringing „thinking“ and „tinkering“ together! (Erkki Huhtamo)
- aim: to turn the „explorative mode“ of distant reading into an „experimental mode“ of knowledge generation
- playful mode of cognition: “heuristic groping” (Olaf Breibach et al.)
- The experimental / playful mode of knowledge production produces what Dilthey had called “Bildung” – it combines problem-based theoretical thinking with personnel experience

Sönke Arens: *Experiment und Exploration. Bildung als experimentelle Form der Welterschließung*. Bielefeld 2011.

Inside the Trading Zone of C²DH

Intellectual framing

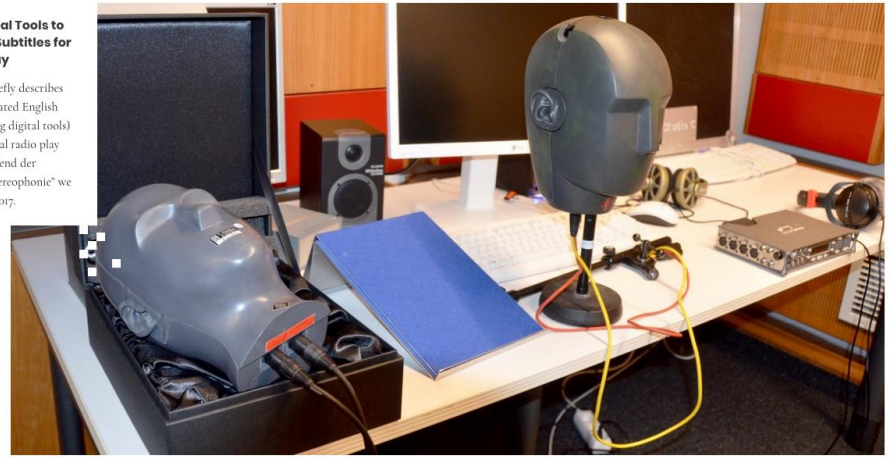
Thinkering

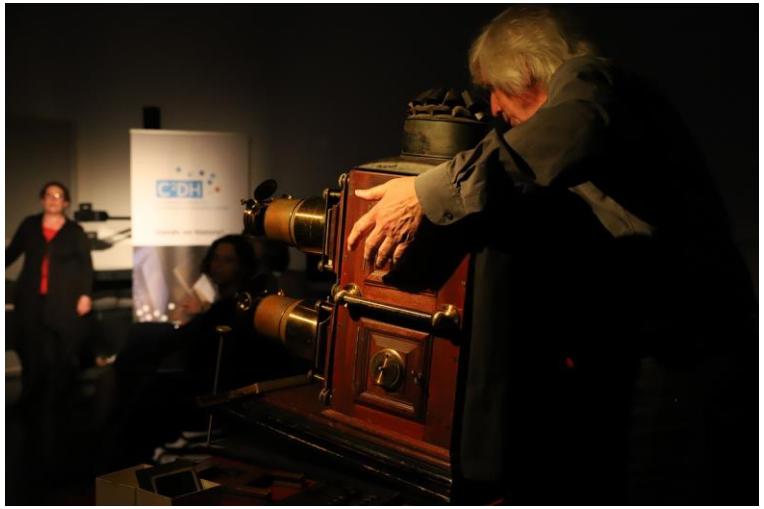
"Thinkering" – composed of the verbs "tinkering" and "thinking" – describes the action of playful experimentation with technological and digital tools for the interpretation and presentation of history. Finding new historical insights and innovative forms of narrative are at the centre of the C²DH's activities.

THINKERING

Using Digital Tools to Generate Subtitles for a Radio Play

This entry briefly describes how we generated English subtitles (using digital tools) for the binaural radio play "Glanz und Elend der Kunstkopf-Stereophonie" we produced in 2017.





The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing

The C²DH

- 3rd Interdisciplinary Centre of the University officially opened on 22nd of May 2017.
- Governmental initiative (including the heritage of former public research centres).
- Focus on high quality research analysis and public dissemination in the field of contemporary history.
- Promoting an interdisciplinary approach with a particular focus on new digital method and tools for historical research and teaching.

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The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

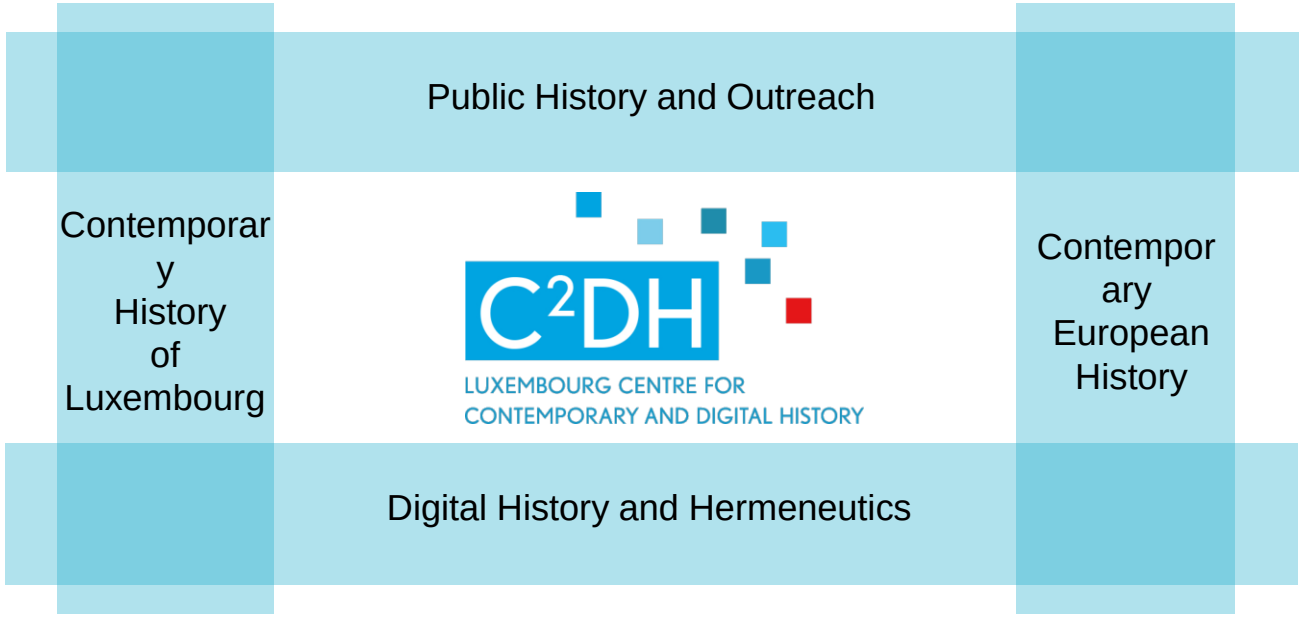
Strategic framing: structure

Contemporary History of Luxembourg

Contemporary European History

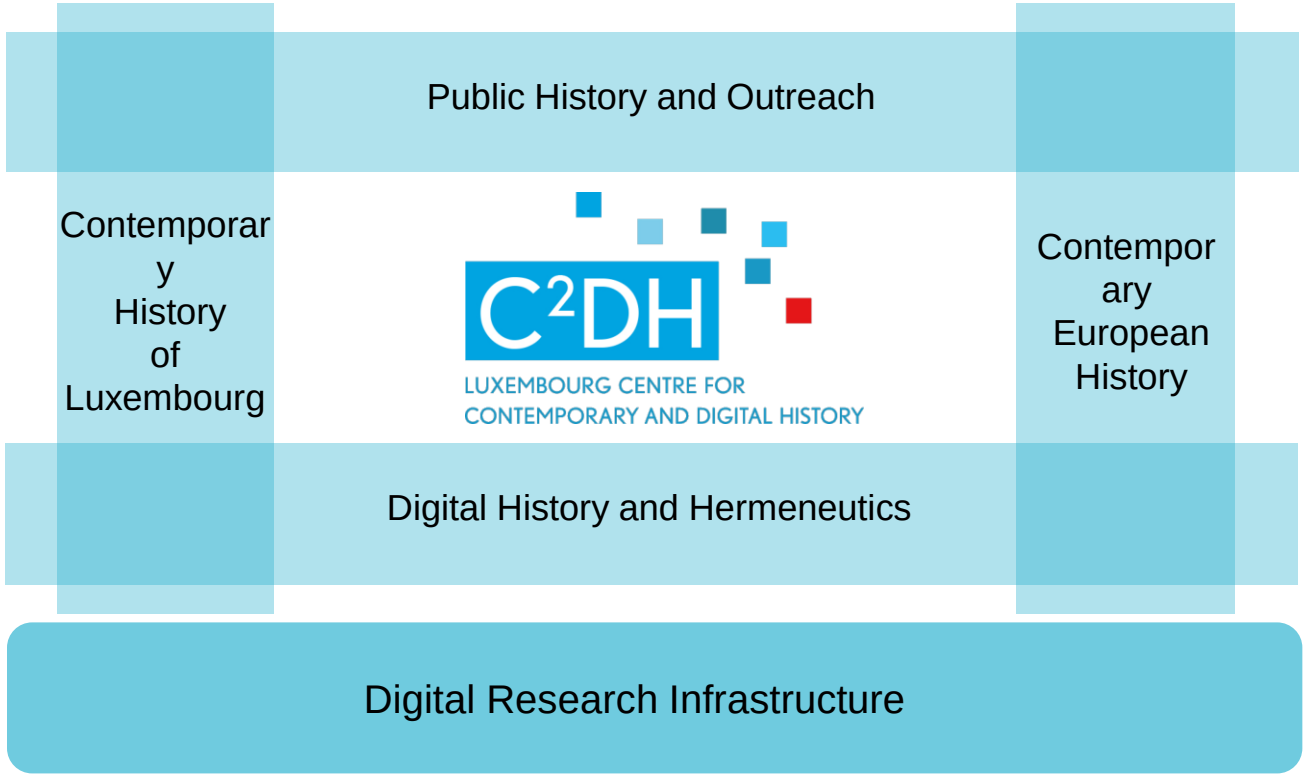
The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: structure



The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

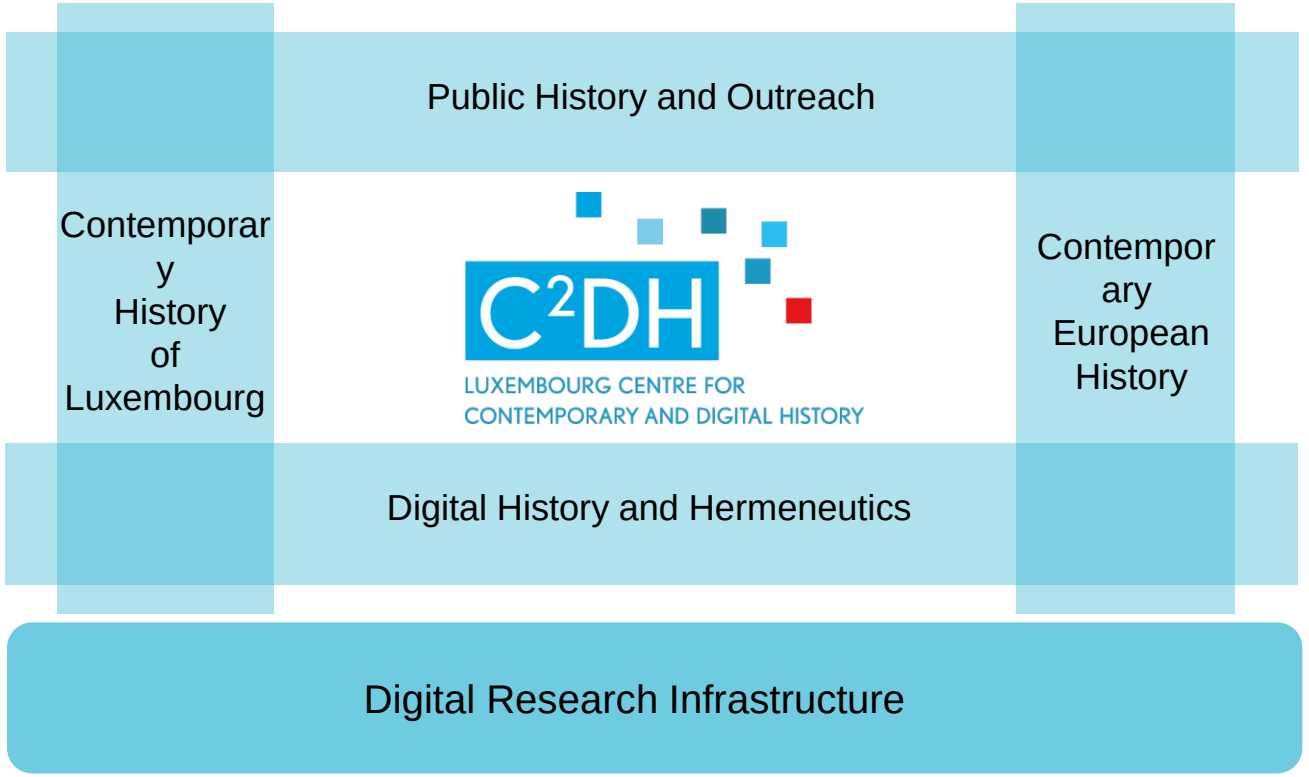
Strategic framing: structure



The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: structure

- FLSHASE
- DH LAB
- GIS LAB
- Media LAB
- FSTC / Computer & Data Science
- Library
- LCSB / SnT



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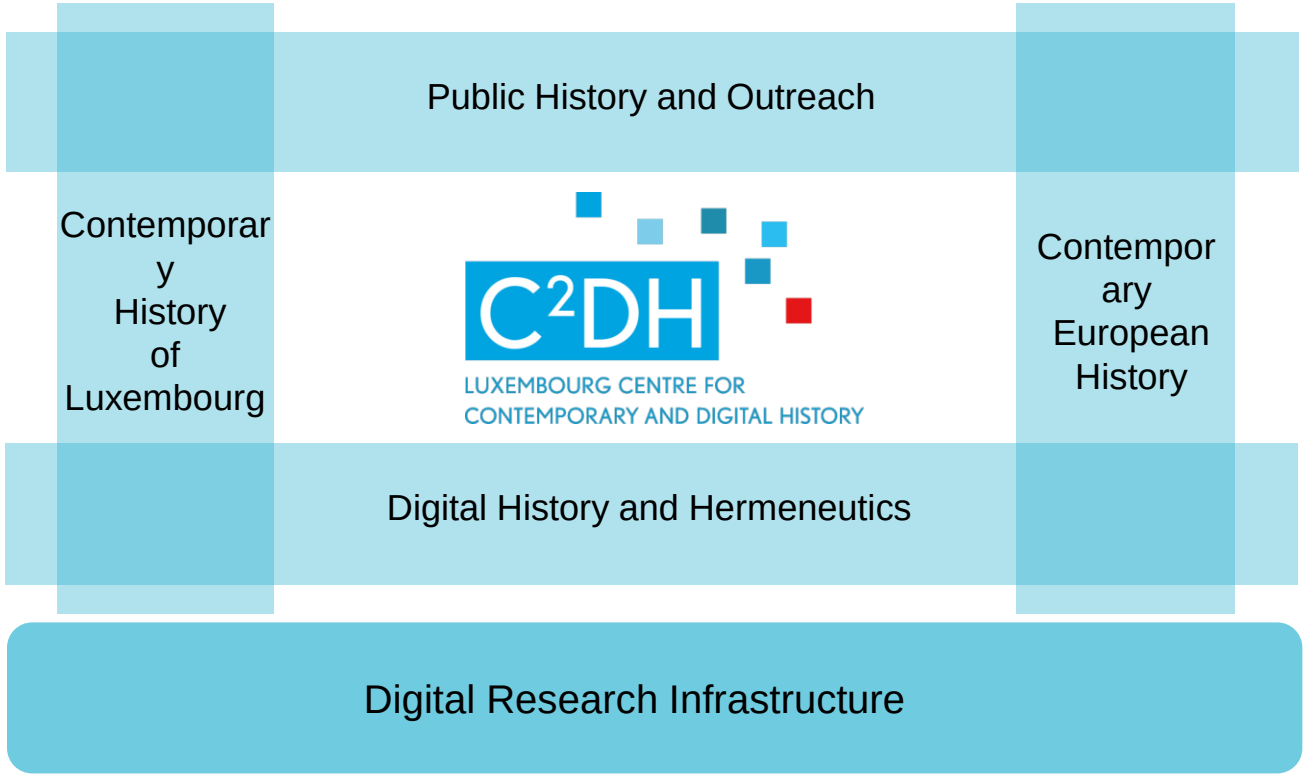
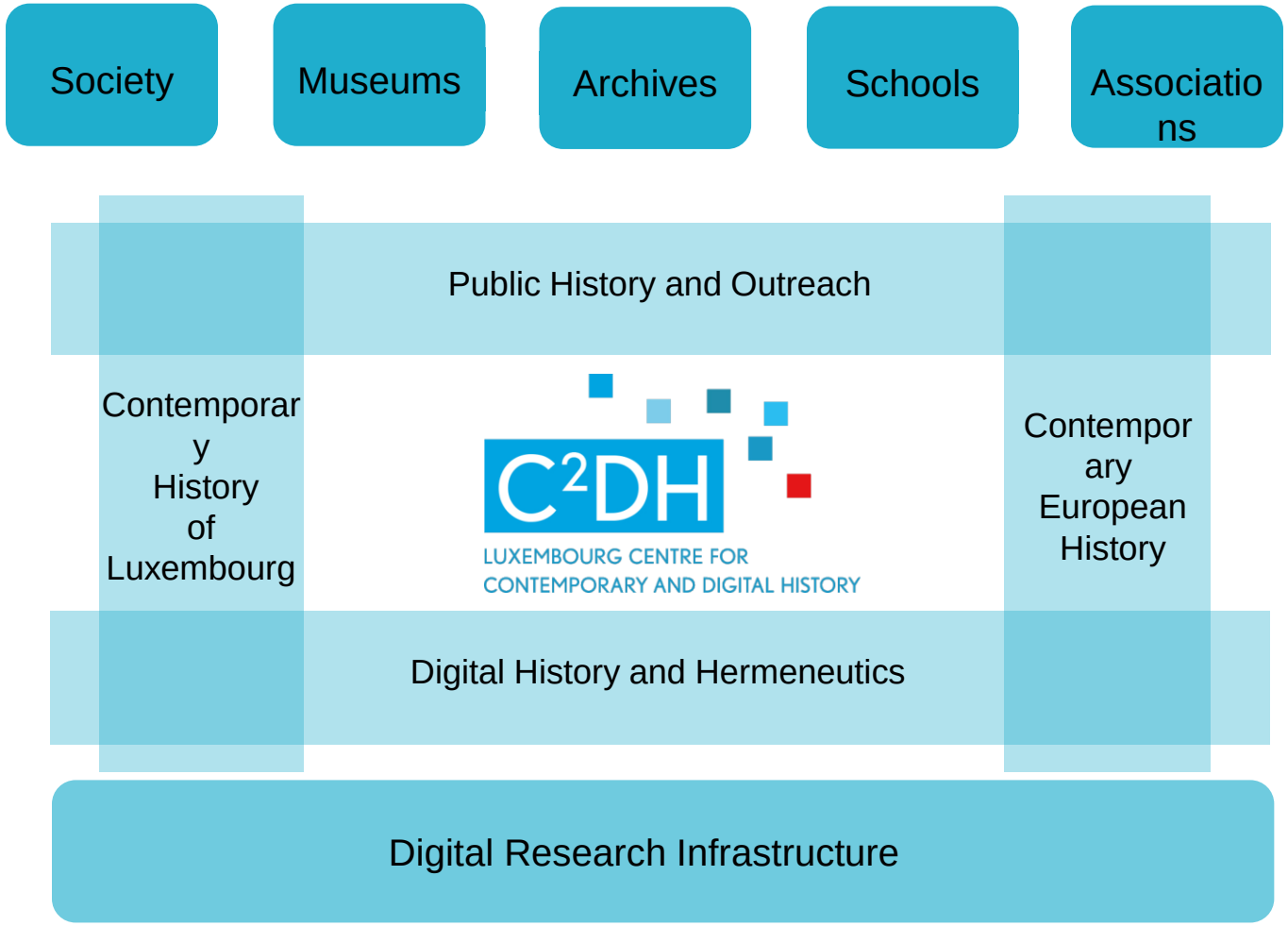


- Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media
- ZZF Potsdam
- Sussex Humanities Lab
- HumLab Umeå

The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: structure



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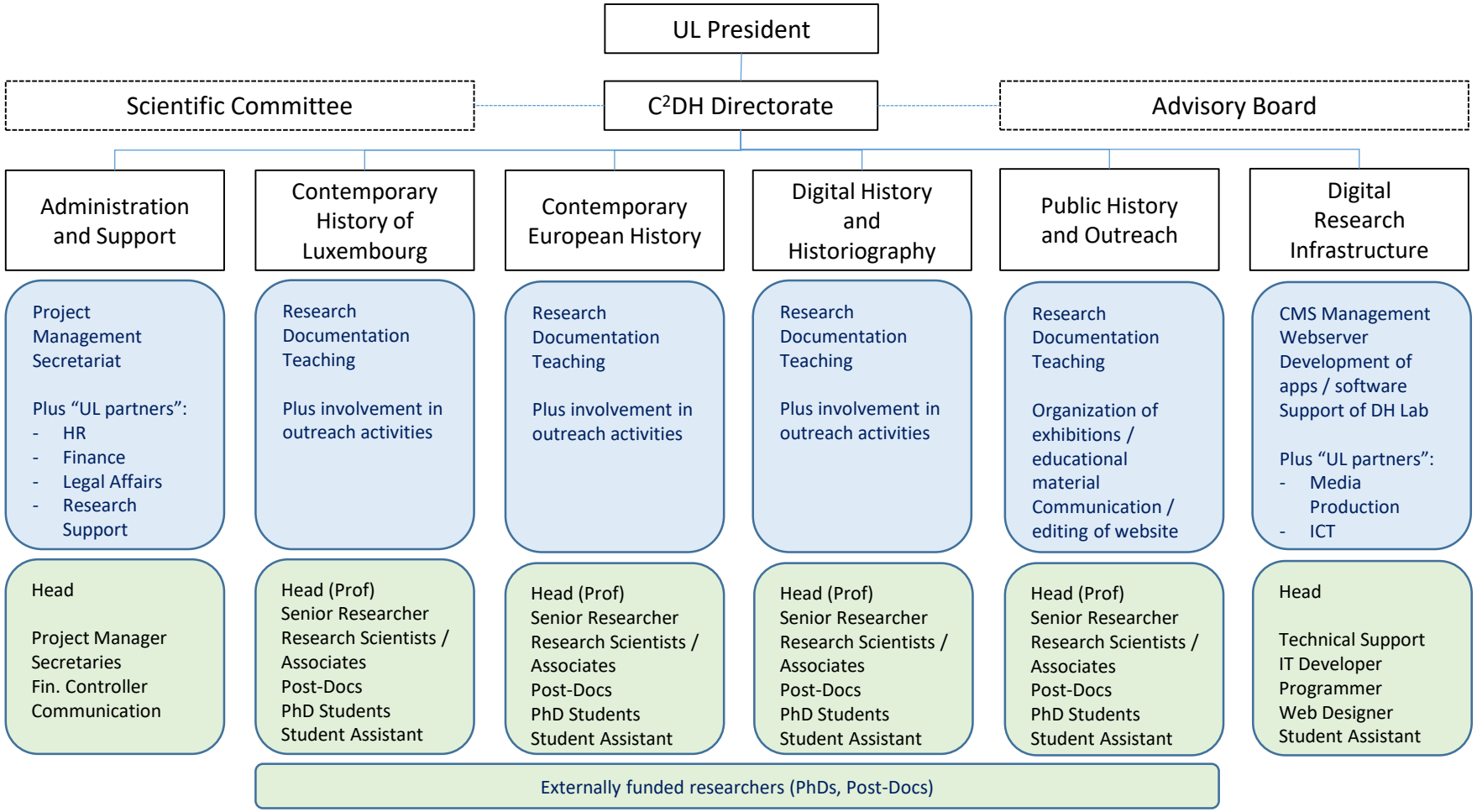
Strategic framing



The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition

National Platform

Luxembourgish and European Contemporary History

International Hub

Digital History and Hermeneutics

UL Mediator

Multimodal Literacy

The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition

National Platform

Luxembourgish and European Contemporary History

CONFÉRENCE

SHAPING THE EUROPE OF THE FUTURE

Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Vendredi 13 octobre 2017, de 10h00 à 12h30

Audimax, Maison du Savoir, Campus de Belval, Université du Luxembourg

CONFÉRENCE D'OUVERTURE

Jean-Claude Juncker, président de la Commission européenne

TABLE RONDE – Des étudiants en dialogue avec des personnalités

Jacques Santer, ministre d'État honoraire, ancien Premier ministre du Luxembourg, ancien président de la Commission européenne

Viviane Reding, membre du Parlement européen, ancienne vice-présidente de la Commission européenne

Claude Turmes, membre du Parlement européen

Yves Mersch, membre du directoire de la Banque centrale européenne, ancien gouverneur de la Banque centrale du Luxembourg

Prof. Dr. Ludwig Neyses, vice-recteur à la recherche, recteur f.f. de l'Université du Luxembourg

MODÉRATION

Prof. Dr. Andreas Fickers, directeur du C²DH

Pour plus d'informations :
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Commission européenne
Représentation au Luxembourg

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The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

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The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition

Research Seminars...

… Digital bricolage: how to deal with 4 million tweets when you are not a data scientist.
Frédéric Clavert, C²DH Senior Research Scientist
When? **Wednesday 21 February 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… German Nuclear Restraint in the Cold War and Today.
Benedikt Schoenborn, C²DH Visiting Researcher
When? **Wednesday 21 March 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… Russische Emigration in Luxemburg im 20. Jahrhundert.
Inna Ganschow, C²DH Visiting Researcher
When? **Wednesday 18 April 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… Industriekultur im Bild. Visuelle Vermittlungsstrategien gesellschaftlichen Wandels in Luxemburg (ca. 1890-1940).
Ira Plein, C²DH PhD Student
When? **Wednesday 16 May 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… #Memorecord: A memory Harvest! Learnings on crowdsourcing Digital Public History.
Anita Lucchesi, C²DH PhD Student
When? **Wednesday 27 June 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

International Hub

Digital History and Hermeneutics

Hands ON History

… Mettre l'histoire de l'Europe en musée ? Expériences tirées de la Maison de l'histoire européenne.
Étienne Deschamps, Archives historiques du Parlement européen
When? **Wednesday 28 February 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… Réagir à l'archive. Sartre et la radio.
Grégory Cormann et Jeremy Hamers, Université de Liège
When? **Wednesday 28 March 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… The Historical Art of Projection. Digital and Experimental Approaches to the Archaeology of the Screen.
Karin Bienek and Ludwig Vogl-Bienek, University of Trier
When? **Wednesday 23 May 2018** | 14:00-15:00 + 15:30-17:00
Where? C²DH DH-LAB, 1st floor, MSH, Campus Belval

… Hands-on Historical Investigations.
Kristen Haring, Stanford University
When? **Wednesday 4 July 2018** | 14:00-15:00
Where? C²DH Open Space, 4th floor, MSH, Campus Belval

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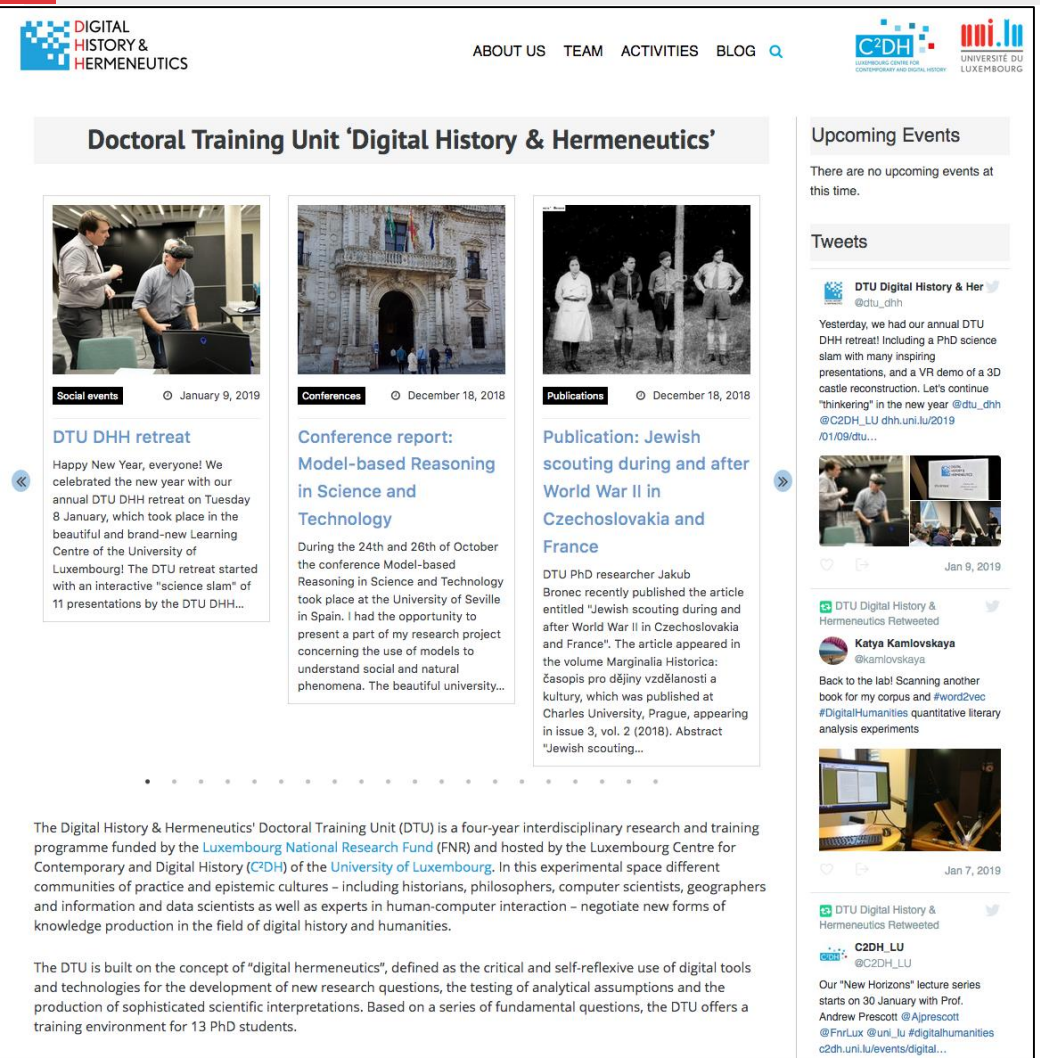
The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition



International Hub

Digital History and Hermeneutics

The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition

IMPRESSO: [Media Monitoring of the Past](#) / Mining 200 years of historical newspapers mit EPFL / Universität Zürich (1.55 Mio EUR)

impresso
Media
Monitoring
of the Past

EUPoPCult: [Populärkultur transnational in den langen 1960er Jahren](#)
DFG/FNR Forschergruppe (Universität des Saarlandes / C²DH; 2 Mio EUR)

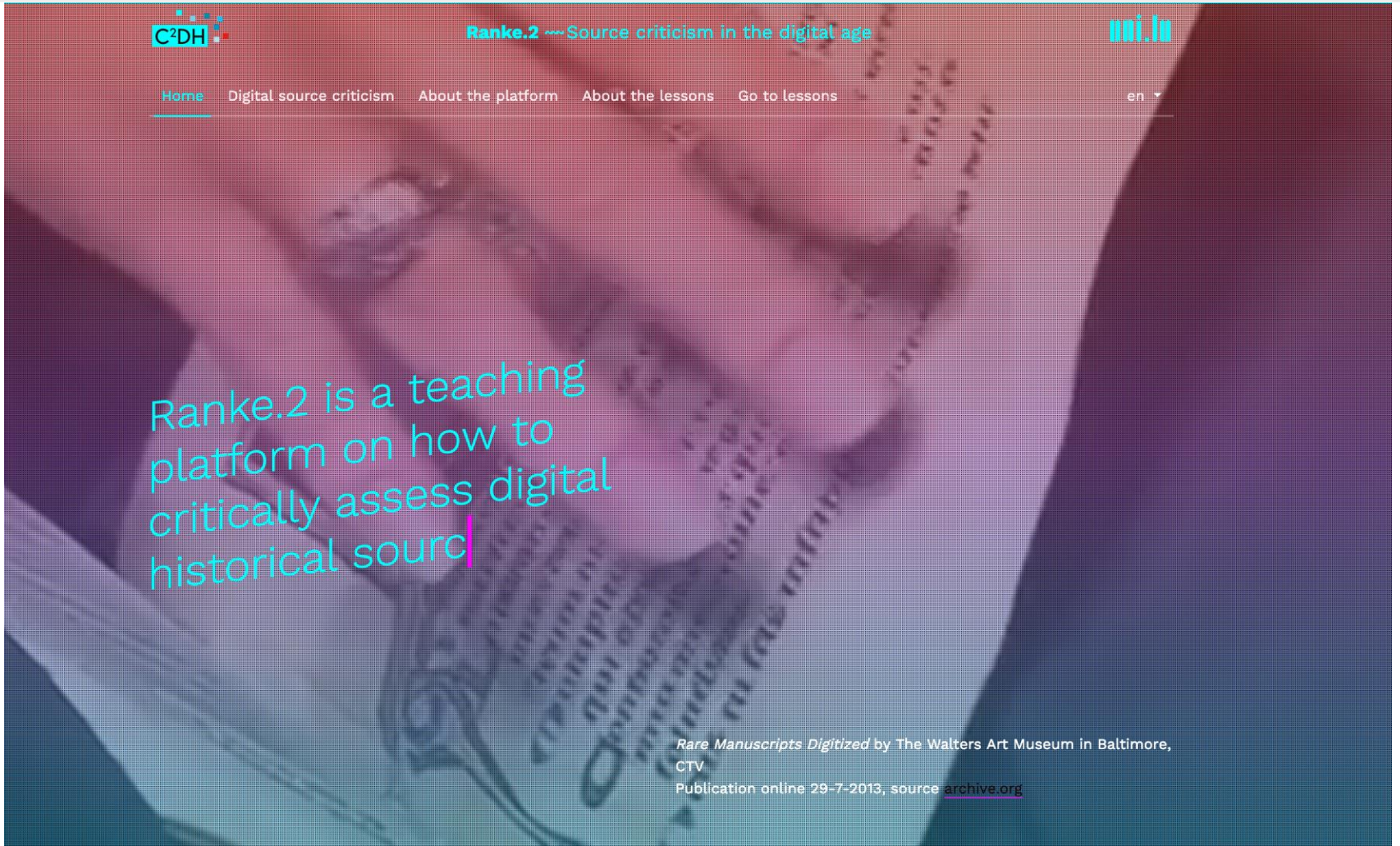
POPKULT60

DoctEU: [Collège doctoral trinational](#): „Histoire internationale interdisciplinaire: perspectives franco-allemandes et européennes sur le 20e siècle“
Paris IV-Sorbonne / Universität des Saarlandes / C²DH: 4 year funding of French/German University

Doktorandenkolleg
Collège doctoral
Trinational

The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition



The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition

UL Mediator

Multimodal Literacy

8 May 2017

Rediscovering Pompeii digitally

Pompeian wall paintings as a source of inspiration for neo-classical domestic interior decorations; a digital approach to art history.

WRITTEN BY :
Floor Koeleman

DIGITAL HISTORY & HISTORIOGRAPHY

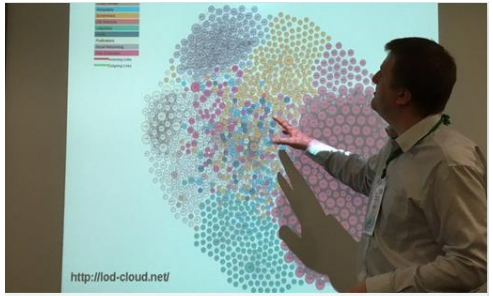
8 May 2017

Digital Humanities and Digital Physics

From the 1940s on the computer starts playing a prominent role, shaping the field of physics. The integration of the computer in this discipline was by no means a natural inclusion, but a process of debate and negotiation of what it meant to "do" physics and what kind of knowledge can be acquired using computers.

WRITTEN BY :
Max Kemman

DIGITAL HISTORY & HISTORIOGRAPHY



12 July 2017

DHOxSS 2017 - Linked Open Data

Last week I attended the Oxford Digital Humanities Summer School and took part in the Linked Open Data workshop. The Summer School started out with TEI courses in 1997, but has now grown to include eight workshop strands for over 250 participants.

WRITTEN BY :
Sytze Van Herck

DIGITAL HISTORY & HISTORIOGRAPHY

23 May 2017

Catching Speech in Arezzo: A Clarin workshop for developing a transcription-chain for Oral History

The challenge of this workshop on 'transcription and technology', which took place from 10 to 12 May in Arezzo, consisted in turning recorded human speech into a textual representation that is as close as possible to what has been uttered.

WRITTEN BY :
Stefania Scagliola

DIGITAL HISTORY & HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Strategic framing: mission & ambition

UL Mediator

Skills Trainings

Introduction to Programming (Python)

December 8, 2017
By Tim van der Heijden

Dr. Folgert Karsdorp (Meertens Institute, Amsterdam) This workshop provides an introduction to computational text analysis with Python for scholars in the Humanities. Computational text analysis has gained popularity across different fields in the humanities, with successful applications such as computational authorship attribution, personality detection, linguistic profiling, and topic modeling. The goal of the workshop is … Continued

GIS-Analysis, Mapping & Cartography

May 14, 2018
By Tim van der Heijden

Dr. Catherine Jones, Kerry Schiel and Kaarel Sikk (University of Luxembourg) Today historians, geographers and social scientists and like have at their fingertips a myriad of digital resources (digital borne or digitised). They may be formal or informal datasets open for public use or held behind closed doors but common to all is the implicit … Continued

Database Structures

November 17, 2017
By Tim van der Heijden

Prof. Dr. Martin Theobald (University of Luxembourg), Dr. Robert C. Kahlert (KU Leuven) What are (big) data? What are databases? What are database structures? What can we do with them? This skills training provides an introduction to different database systems and applications, and how to work with them in historical research. The training day offers … Continued

Data Visualisation

February 5, 2018
By Tim van der Heijden

Dr. Marten During (University of Luxembourg), Dr. Robin De Croon and Francisco Gutiérrez Hernández (KU Leuven) This skills training provides an introduction to data visualisation as an important skill in digital humanities and historical research, analysis and presentation. The first training day focuses specifically on network visualisation and the use of Palladio as a DH … Continued

Tool Criticism

March 15, 2018
By Tim van der Heijden

Dr. Vincent Koenig and Dr. Carine Lallemand (University of Luxembourg) The ever-growing trend for digital tools is confronting PhD candidates with new challenges when it comes to designing or evaluating technologies and underlying services. The "tool criticism" training offers a critical and reflexive approach to digital tools, to the interaction with those tools and to … Continued

Text Mining

July 18, 2017
By Tim van der Heijden

Prof. Dr. Christoph Schommer, Prof. Dr. Peter Gilles, Dr. Christoph Purschke (University of Luxembourg) Modern computer machines and algorithmic intelligence have made it possible that large amounts of texts can be collected, retrieved, and analyzed from heterogenous text sources. This offers a high potential and many challenges, in particular for the application fields like History. … Continued

Challenges & Opportunities

Pragmatic framing

Favourable ecosystem for C²DH in Luxembourg

- Window of opportunity: new Government 2014 (creation of IHTP in coalition agreement)
- 2019: new ministry of digitalization: promote “Digital Letzebuerg” strategy
- Creation of C²DH as third Interdisciplinary Centre of University: contemporary and digital history as one of 8 research priorities of UL in P4 (2018-2021)
- National Funding Agency for Research: will include DH in new funding priorities (2020-2030)
- “Business model”: private/public or public/public research projects: combining fundamental research in contemporary & digital history with new public history outputs

Challenges & Opportunities

Pragmatic framing

Still some challenges...

- How to turn “theory” into practice? Creating C²DH as experimental space for interdisciplinary collaboration (“trading zone”) has been realized physically/institutionally, but how to promote / realize “interactional expertise” in practice?
- P. Gallison / H. Collins: different types of trading zones, depending on different forms collaboration and communities of practice / epistemic traditions
- At C²DH: main challenge, to facilitate / institutionalize collaboration between humanities scholars and computer or data scientists
  - How to develop a “common ground” / “inter-language”? Skills trainings / co-design of research projects
  - Fickers / Van der Heijden, “Into the trading zone” / *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 2020

Challenges & Opportunities

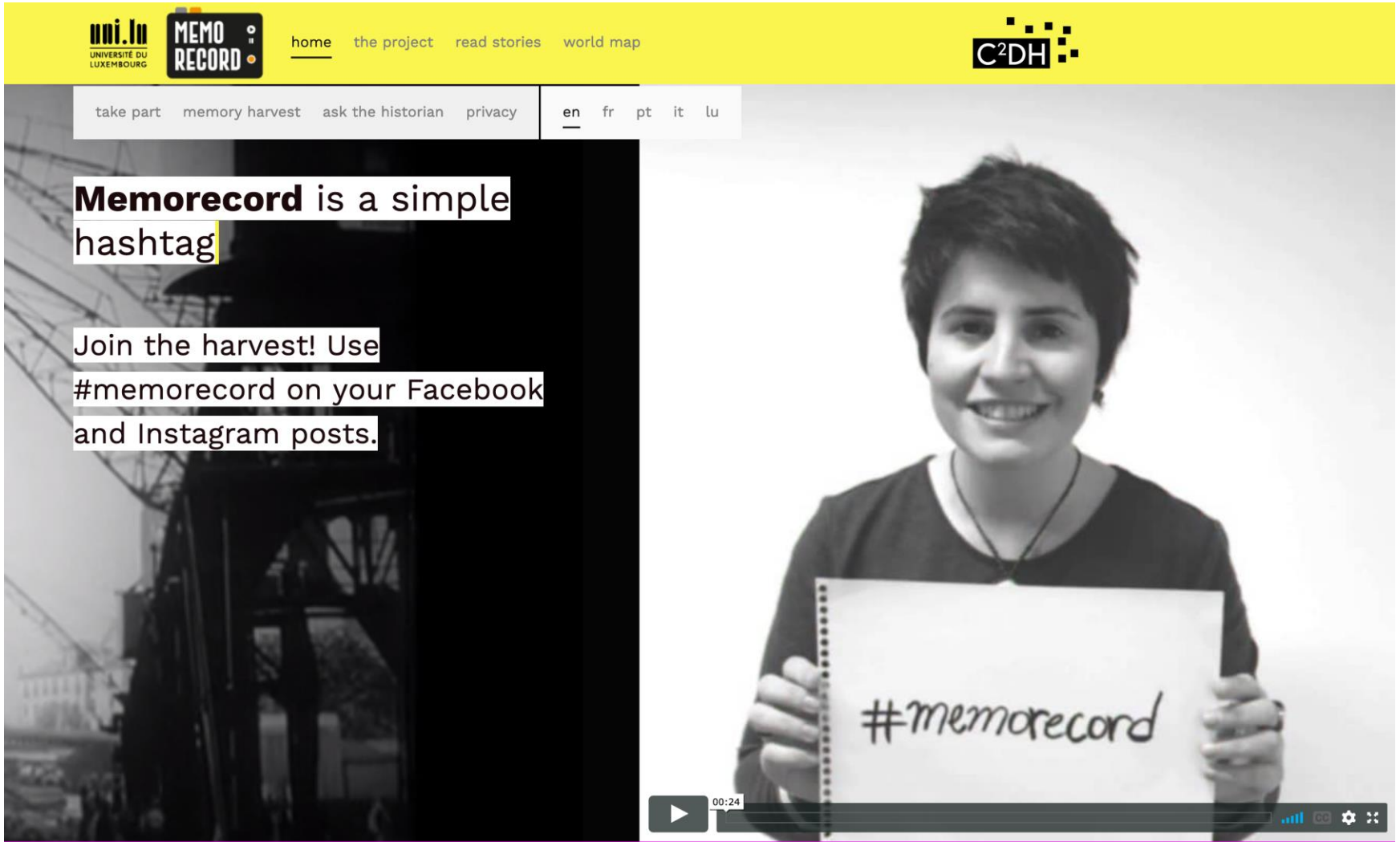
Pragmatic framing

Still some challenges...

- Developing multi-modal literacy in an interdisciplinary setting comes with a prize: it asks for a serious engagement in communication (inter-language), skills (trainings), and curiosity (leaving the comfort zone).
- Tading zones have to cope with “centrifugal forces” (example of DTU): interdisciplinarity not only a challenge for students, but for supervisors!
- The public history element of many research projects at C²DH ask for a professional project management and ”double engagement” of the involved researchers (need for concise time management and recognition/reward system)

Challenges & Opportunities

Pragmatic framing



Challenges & Opportunities

Pragmatic framing

Still some challenges...

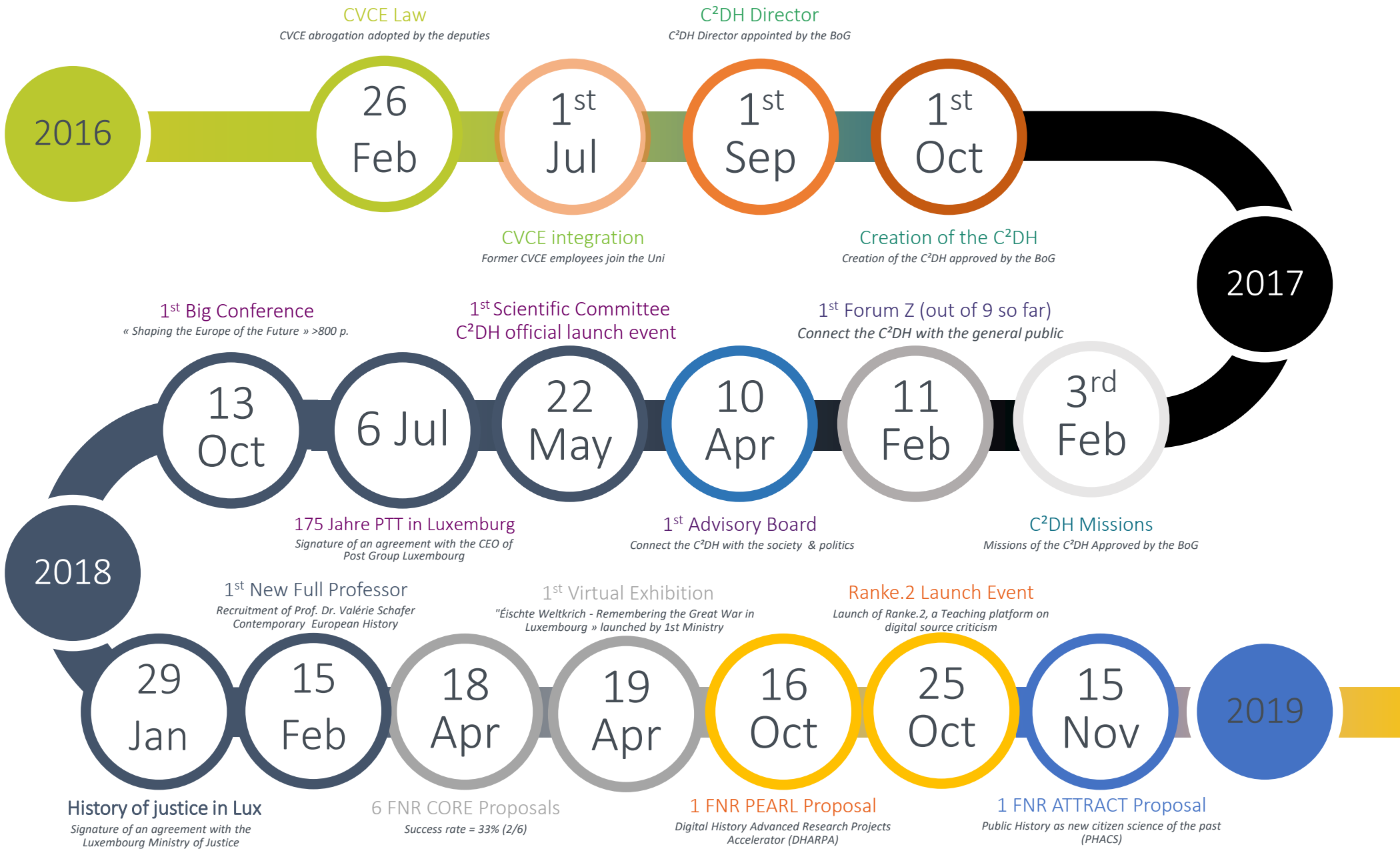
- How to create transparency / traceability in digital history research?
  - Need for an integrative Virtual Research Environment, enabling the “tracking” of all moments of digital data retrieval, cleaning, analysis, enrichment and recontextualiziation

- How to produce multi-modal narratives in digital history?
  - Need for an new publication platforms that allow for a multi-layered presentation and reading of digital history research

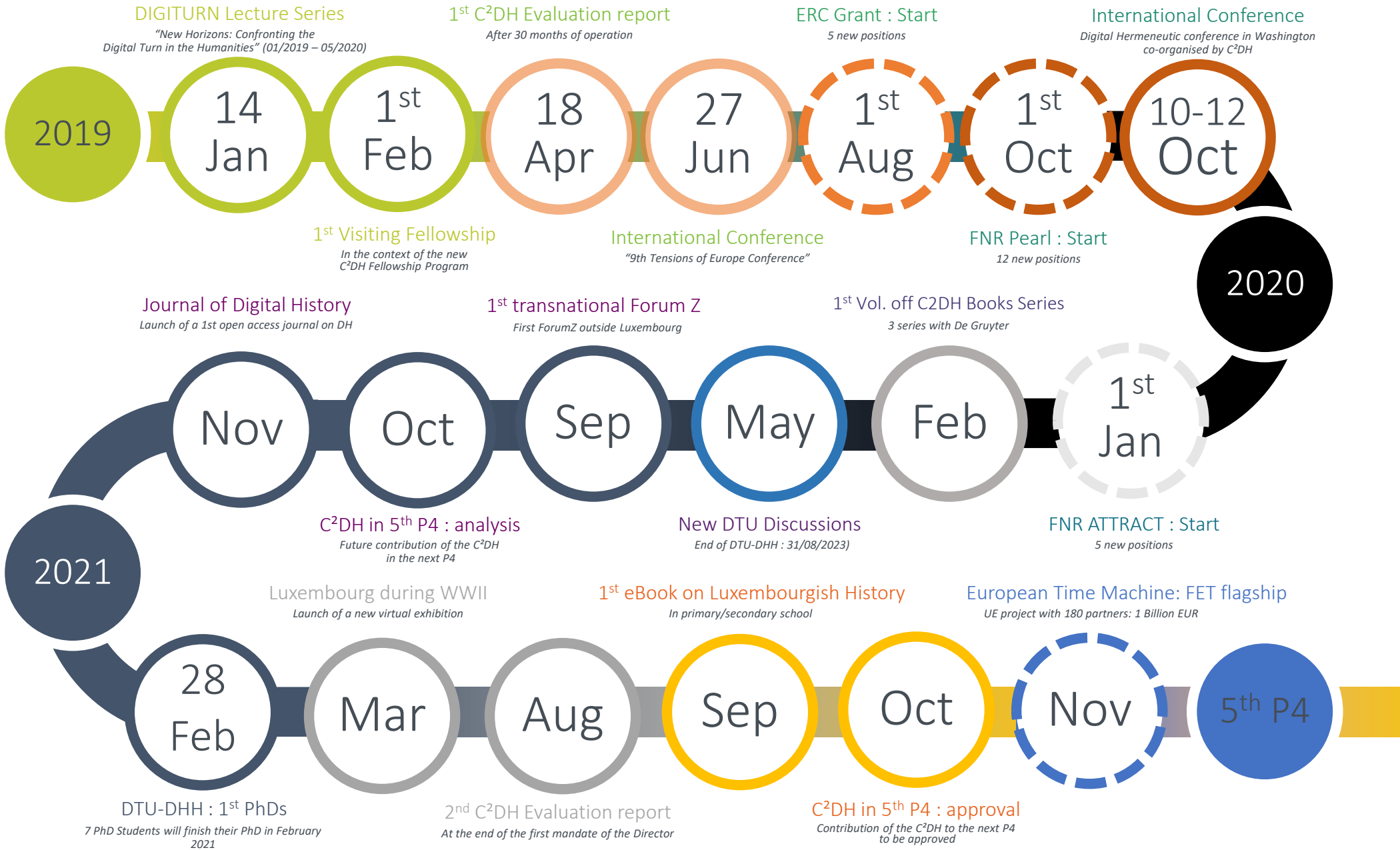
C²DH Story

2016-2018

Past 3 years



C²DH Story

2019-2021

Next 3 years