The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Humanities
Research
Institute.

Invitation to Tender: Development of the Visual Design for the website *Manuscripts Online*

1. Aim

To develop the visual look and feel of a new website called *Manuscripts Online: Written Culture from 1000 to 1500* (MSSO) which will provide federated, semantic searching of a range of online literary and historical research resources. The aim of the design brief is to develop a visual look and feel which is capable of presenting high quality content in a way which is modern, fresh and inviting to a wide range of users.

2. What is *Manuscripts Online*?

Manuscripts Online will enable users to search an enormous body of online primary resources relating to written and early printed culture in Britain during the period 1000 to 1500.

A single search engine will enable users to undertake sophisticated full-text searching of literary manuscripts, historical documents and early printed books which are located on websites owned by libraries, archives, universities and publishers. Users will be able to search the resources by keyword, but also by specific keyword types, such as person and place name, date, author, scribe, manuscript feature and illumination terminology, thanks to techniques which we are using called *automated entity recognition*. Additionally, users will be able to visualise search results using maps of medieval Britain and add their own annotations to the data for public consumption, thereby building a knowledge base around this critical mass of primary source materials.

Automated entity recognition is a Natural Language Processing technique within information science whereby algorithms are able to intelligently identify the occurrences of specific types of words, such as names, concepts and terminology, using three methods: dictionaries (such as a historical gazetteer of place names), lexical pattern matching and syntactic context.

Manuscripts Online will be of interest to researchers and students in the fields of medieval English language, literature and history and it will become a sister site to the JISC-funded Connected Histories website (http://www.connectedhistories.org) which already provides similar search services for the period 1500-1900.

Manuscripts Online is funded by the JISC and supported by the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Sheffield and specialists in medieval studies at the universities of Leicester, Birmingham, Glasgow, York and Queen's University Belfast.

More information about *Manuscripts Online* can be found at http://www.manuscriptsonline.org.

3. Objectives

1. Produce three alternative designs for the overall aesthetic look and feel of the site.

2. Working with the project team, conduct a focus group of representative users to acquire feedback on the designs. The focus group will take place at the University of Birmingham. The designs only need to be at a very early stage for the focus group, with most of objective 1 (above) being undertaken in response to the focus group feedback.

3. After revisions and upon approval by the project team, supply layered Photoshop files of the chosen design for the primary pages (see section 7 below for the primary pages).

4. Audience

The impact of this resource will be felt among academic researchers, postgraduate and undergraduate students, librarians, archivists and professionals within the heritage sector. There are a considerable number of lecturers and postgraduate students in early and late medieval English history, language and literature in the UK for whom *Manuscripts Online* would become a key research resource. Further, there are approximately 139,695 undergraduate students taking modules which involve the study of primary sources dating from the early to late medieval period. This is in addition to the considerable research interest which exists amongst overseas scholars and students for whom English is a common heritage or an influence upon the written culture of their own nation. The USA alone has over 4,068 lecturers in medieval English history, language and literature and the value of *Manuscripts Online* internationally can be seen in the number of USA-based datasets.

5. Specific Benefits of *Manuscripts Online*

- Transcend the 'silo effect' (researchers working with or developing research in isolation of their wider research community).

- Create a critical mass of quality material.

- Enhance the usability and value for money of existing electronic resources.

- Enhance digital literacy via improved resource discovery.

- The resources identified for inclusion in the MSSO federated search service have been selected because of their quality, centrality to literary, linguistic and historical research and for their complementarity.

- The ability to conduct structured searches across major electronic resources, including unstructured texts, encoded texts, and structured databases, both free and subscription-based, will have a transformative impact on higher education research and teaching.

6. Architecture

The site architecture for *Manuscripts Online* will mirror the architecture and functionality of its existing sister site, *Connected Histories* (see http://www.connectedhistories.org):

1. *Homepage* - containing a short introduction, the Quick Search interface and latest news.

2. *Search* - containing all search options, with similar functionality to Connected Histories
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    |--> 2.1. *Search Results* - with similar functionality to Connected Histories

3. *Resources* - containing a list of all searchable resources
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    |--> 3.1. *Resource Page* - a text page describing an individual resource

4. *Workspace*
    |
    |-->4.1. *Login*, 4.2. *Register* or 4.3. *Saved Searches and Forum Threads*

5. *Forum* - a facility for users to discuss their research and discoveries (requiring registration)

6. *API* - a text page for access to API documentation and examples.

7. Primary Pages

Designs should be developed for the following primary pages:

1. Homepage

2. Search

3. Search Results

4. Resources

5. Resource Page

8. Benchmarks

The following technical benchmarks should be borne in mind when designing for our developers:

- Optimise design for 1024x768.

- WAI Level 3 conformity.

- XHTML and CSS valid.

- No images to be used in place of text.

- No flash.

- It is permitted to design with some use of Ajax in mind but this should clearly improve the user's experience.

9. Timetable and Deliverables

Thursday 26th January: deadline for submission

Friday 27th January: vendor selection and notification

February (day to be confirmed): user focus group

Friday 9th March 2012: 1st draft of designs for review

Friday 6th April 2012: 2nd draft of designs for review

Monday 30th April 2012: Finished Photoshop files of the primary pages delivered

10. Ownership

Ownership of all design, content and images will rest with the University of Sheffield, although the designer (whether an individual or organisation) will be recognised as the creator of the work.

11. Making a Tender

Please address your tenders to Dr Sharon Howard <sharon.howard@sheffield.ac.uk> by 5pm on Thursday 26th January.

Tenders should comprise the following:

1. Key contact information

2. A summary of your approach, clearly demonstrating that you have understood the brief.

3. Samples of previous work

4. All costs, clearing indicating VAT