

2021 Cambridge AHRC International Conference,
supported by the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP

Online, Wednesday 15 – Saturday 18 September 2021

ACROSS DISTANCE

Call for Papers

Distance is a central component of arts and humanities research, both as object of study and as shaping principle. We investigate people, things and ideas from distant times and places. We read from a distance, employing research methods which render proximate interactions between researcher and their research material unnecessary. We are trained to think from a distance, to prioritise informed observations over affective responses.

In the age of social distancing these tendencies have become increasingly conspicuous, as our research materials and methods have transformed to adapt to the demands of the pandemic world. Outside the academy, cultural institutions have moved their public-facing activities online, with virtual exhibitions, livestreamed performances and remote lectures becoming par for the course. Meanwhile, waves of social networking apps – from Houseparty to Clubhouse – have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to plug the gaps in our curtailed social worlds.

Spanning four days and a variety of time zones, this online conference is open to arts and humanities doctoral researchers from the University of Cambridge, the Open University, the University of Oxford, a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School of Cologne University, the Australian National University, the European University at Saint Petersburg, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Stockholm University. The 2021 Organising Committee is delighted to be able to bring students from our international partners together, albeit virtually, to discuss the pertinent notion of distance from a variety of arts and humanities approaches.

We welcome proposals for 20 minute papers and for 5 minute lightning talks. Lightning talk sessions will allow for a longer discussion. Potential topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Forms and technologies of correspondence, whether across time or in the present
- Virtual and embodied encounters; the senses and (the absence of) physical touch
- The circulation of people, things and ideas across geographical and cultural boundaries
- Other worlds; the supernatural; the extra-terrestrial
- Translation and the navigation of linguistic/cultural difference
- The transfer of meaning across spatial, cultural, or temporal distance; semiotics
- The viability of distance as a critical vantage point; navigating positionality

Proposals should include a title, a brief abstract (300 words for papers; 200 words for lightning talks) and a speaker bio (of up to 200 words).

To enable remote participation by our partners at ANU and MIT, we will be holding parallel sessions throughout the day. Please indicate on your proposal submission whether you will not be able to make particular session times. We hope that conference participants will join in other sessions wherever possible.

Please address any questions to enquiries.acrossdistance@gmail.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!