



TORCH

The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities

An abstract graphic composed of several overlapping, parallel, diagonal bars in various colors including yellow, magenta, green, orange, and blue. The bars are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some bars appearing to pass over others.

Highlights





From the TORCH Director

At the start of the academic year, TORCH (along with the rest of the Humanities Division) moved into the brand new, state-of-the-art Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a dedicated home for the Humanities at Oxford. For TORCH, this is more than a new home: it represents the culmination of a journey we embarked on in 2013, the year of our foundation.

Interdisciplinarity is in Oxford's DNA: our colleges have traditionally fostered rich informal connections between disciplines. Scientists, medics, mathematicians, linguists, musicians, historians and lawyers live, eat, and learn together. But until 2013, there was no formal space in the Humanities for the kind of multi-faceted cross-disciplinary research which will help us understand and address some of our major world challenges - climate change and climate justice, world health and social inequality, global migration and democratic resilience.

Enter TORCH. We have worked for over 10 years now to create that space, and the results of our steady and encouraging presence can be seen across the Humanities Division and beyond in innovative and impactful interdisciplinary research projects and networks. We have experimented, collaborated and created, while regularly engaging external audiences and supporting the development of researchers' careers. We have also incubated or seed funded many new initiatives. Most notably, in 2019 we launched the Humanities Cultural Programme, which has formed one of the foundation stones of the Schwarzman Centre. The Cultural Programme now stands on its own, a tree instead of a branch, but its roots lie in TORCH.

We are delighted to see the legacy of previous TORCH Directors and staff as well as the exciting work of many researchers we have supported within the launch of the new Centre. We can't wait to see where our new home takes us.

Professor Christine Gerrard (English), TORCH Director
January 2026

What is TORCH?

TORCH is a world-leading interdisciplinary research centre which incubates, supports and delivers ambitious research projects designed to bring Oxford Humanities to the wider world.

How we support research at Oxford:

- Provide space for researchers to meet, experiment and innovate;
- Support researchers with advice, in-kind support, and funding for interdisciplinary projects and networks;
- Collaboration and co-creation: we build relationships across Oxford University and externally with local, national and international partners;
- Our cross-disciplinary Research Hubs bring together brilliant minds to find ways of solving global problems and challenges. Our priority areas are Race & Resistance, Performance, Environmental Humanities, Medical Humanities and Intersectional Humanities;
- Support a wide range of international collaborations via strategic partnerships, individual fellowships and inter-institutional schemes.

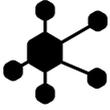
Our **Book at Lunchtime** events platform new publications from Oxford researchers with rigorous discussion. Our **TORCH Talks** are a series of interdisciplinary conversations on the world's most pressing issues such as climate change and A.I.

How can you work with us?

- Project support and idea incubation: talk to us about your idea and how we might be able to help you realise it;
- Join a Research Hub or Network: be part of an engaged group and meet researchers with similar interests;
- Connect with research: if you are not part of Oxford University, we can introduce you to researchers in the Humanities;

Get in touch: torch@humanities.ox.ac.uk

Since our creation 2013, we have:



Grown over 70 new interdisciplinary networks of researchers on a broad range of themes



Supported in-person and online events which have reached audiences of over 200k people



Created a website, newsletter and social media presence which reaches over 400k people annually



Administered over £7 million in funding to support interdisciplinary research



Achieved international reach, including hosting over 45 visiting fellows in Oxford, many from Global Majority countries

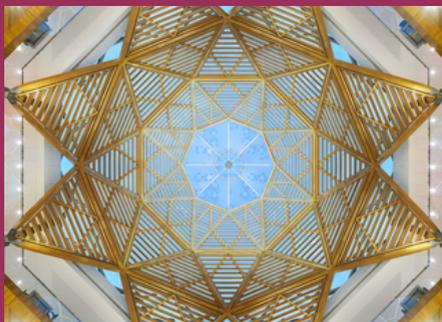


Supported over 4,500 researchers across all faculties of the Humanities Division and at all career stages



Incubated the start of major initiatives such as the Cultural Programme and Digital Humanities at Oxford

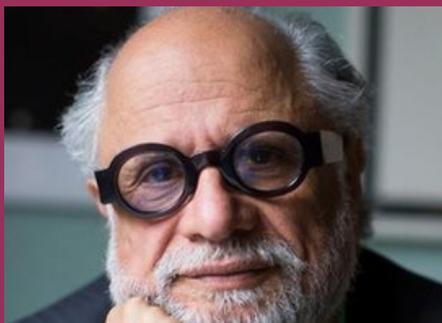
At a glance



In September 2025 TORCH moved into the brand new **Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities**, a purpose-built space for Humanities at Oxford. This represents a huge opportunity for interdisciplinary work across the Division, with new collaborations coming.



The Race & Resistance Research Hub hosted a conference in March 2025 inviting scholars, activists, researchers and professionals from all sectors to participate in an interdisciplinary exploration of the last hundred years of race and resistance.



2025's lecture series in partnership with **Princeton University Press** featured Professor Homi K Bhabha (Harvard University). In 2026 we welcome Dr Anne Lafont (EHESS, Paris) and Professor Clair Wills (Cambridge).



Our **international collaborations** with institutions including Uppsala University (Sweden) and Humboldt University (Berlin) produce events, published work and explore new ways of partnering. In 2026, look out for new opportunities.



Bate To The Future represents our first partnership with Modern Art Oxford, merging academic research and creative practice via collaboration between the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments and artist Appau Jnr Boakye-Yiadom. Exhibition coming in 2026!



Professor Patricia Kingori (Ethox) organised **April Fakes Day 2025**, the second annual event raising awareness on fakes and forgeries in our daily lives. Museums and galleries joined in during April to share their fakes, and Patricia interviewed artist John Myatt.



BOOK AT LUNCHTIME

Book At Lunchtime featured *The Lailashi Codex* by Dr Thea Gomelauri (AMES) and *The Book Makers* by Professor Adam Smyth (English) among others. Coming up we have Dr Alberto Giublini (Uehiro), Professor Elleke Boehmer (English) and more.



TORCH TALKS

TORCH Talks bring together interdisciplinary researchers to discuss the pressing topics of our time with. This year we start off with *Does reading matter?* and *Can arts and culture contribute to more liveable cities?*

Research Hubs

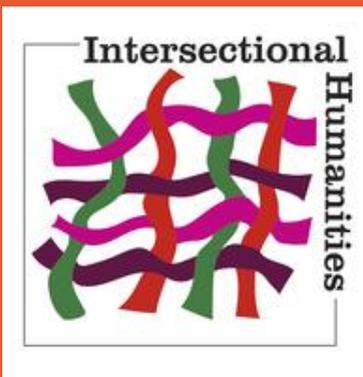
Research Hubs are points of synergy for cutting-edge, boundary-crossing research on political and cultural questions which are central to the Humanities at Oxford. TORCH supports five Hubs:



Environmental Humanities is a community of scholars drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, from literary criticism and theology, to music and history. They are committed to thinking about how their individual areas of expertise might come together to address some of the biggest challenges of the 21st Century, from climate changes to ecological grief, and much more.



Race & Resistance brings together researchers, students, and activists in the history, literature, and culture of anti-racist movements across the modern world. It challenges all forms of racism and hierarchy, and connected inequalities. It seeks to facilitate informed conversations about race, racism, resistance, and liberation within Oxford and beyond.



Intersectional Humanities opens up creative and critical conversations across academic disciplines to reflect on questions of identity while recognising the complex interaction of diverse markers of categorisation and self-understanding. Intersectional thinking strengthens nuance and sensitivity to difference - the need for which is more urgent than ever.

PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

The Performance Research Hub is a space for anyone in the University who has interest in performance as a subject or mode of research. It brings researchers together, generates cross-disciplinary projects and provides new platforms and opportunities.

Spotlight: Medical Humanities

The TORCH Medical Humanities Hub is a network of scholars dedicated to promoting humanities-based interdisciplinary work around health, healthcare, and medicine. In 2024-25:

- The Hub received the 2025 University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Award for Research Culture.
- It continued its Oxfordshire Health Humanities project in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council
- It partnered with the Cultural Programme for its Adventures in Consciousness Season showcasing world-leading academic research and the performing arts.



Networks

TORCH has supported over 70 research networks since its' establishment in 2013. Bringing together researchers at different career stages, TORCH Networks promote interdisciplinary thinking around a vast range of cultural, aesthetic, social and political issues, historical periods and methodologies.

The Networks scheme, which supports groups for up to two years, has facilitated collaborations amongst scholars within the Humanities Division as well as involving those from all other divisions. TORCH Networks build new communities whilst cultivating expansive modes of thinking about some of the most important questions occupying researchers across disciplines today.

Spotlight: Neurodiversity Network

This network is grounded in affirmation of

neurodivergent spaces, which seeks to nurture and promote work-in-progress on neurodivergence and intersectionality. In being neurodivergence-affirming

and centring the knowledge and skills of neurodivergent people, our approach is founded on what Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer call 'cripistemologies': the knowledge and authority that disabled people have to describe their own lives and experiences precisely because we are disabled. We aim to drive forward the field of neurodiversity studies by enabling interdisciplinary conversations about neurodivergence in the humanities in an inclusive and accessible setting. We run two events a term, providing a space for ECRs, established researchers and neurodiversity activists and creatives to collaborate and share ideas.



Interested in starting a new interdisciplinary Network? Calls go out termly and can be found at torch.ox.ac.uk/funding-opportunities

Critical-Thinking Communities

Each year, TORCH supports groups of Oxford DPhil candidates looking to collaborate with other students across faculties and divisions through the “TORCH Critical-Thinking Communities” fund. These communities explore a broad range of issues and critically consider historical, cultural, or aesthetic ideas or methodological issues. All groups include Humanities students, but can also include those from other divisions.

Spotlight: Critical Food Studies

Oxford Critical Food Studies brought together the many disparate researchers across the University and city working on different aspects of the study, history, and consumption of food. It fostered connections among researchers, writers, restaurateurs, and food lovers across Oxford to grow the reputation of the university as a thriving hub for food studies.

The group built connections with institutions like the Bodleian Libraries, research groups like Future of Food and the Food Systems Transformation Group, and local businesses, to arrange a series of events. Termly spotlights have given graduate students in art, anthropology, literature, and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies a platform to share their work.



In February 2025 they collaborated with the Centre for the Study of the Book at the Bodleian to hold an exciting and interactive session on Medieval recipe books. Food historian Marjory Szurko discussed how the discovery of a small Edwardian family cookbook compiled by an alumnus of Oriel College in the recesses of the library inspired her research interest in food history.

International

International collaborations are at the heart of TORCH's mission to support researchers to deepen their interdisciplinary practice. Some of our ongoing partnerships include the University of Uppsala, Sweden, the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK Berlin), and AfOx: the Africa Oxford Initiative.



What is the Black Archive?

Professor Malachi McIntosh (English) and international partners are centring the unique problems faced in research into Black lives in—and connected to—Britain. This project considers the Black 'archive' expansively, focusing on cultural forms of remembrance that offer alternatives to formal archival collections.



A Humanities Framework for Equitable Global Health.

Visiting Fellow Dr Tolulope Osayomi (University of Ibadan, Nigeria) engaged a Humanities framework to centre the lived experiences, values, and priorities of the people and communities whose health is at stake, particularly when these may differ across local and global contexts.



Dropping In and Out Combining archival materials with newly produced texts and artworks, Dr Jessica Goodman (MML) worked with the artist and researcher Professor Mathilde ter Hejne (UdK) on this interdisciplinary exploration of the ways in which the artistic legacies of women and non-binary people are conceived and experienced.

**INTERSECTIONAL
BIAS IN AI:
COMPOSING
CYBORGS -
PER/FORMING
CRITIQUE**

**Intersectional Bias in AI: Composing
Cyborgs – Per/Forming Critique**

Working with the Berlin Open Lab at UdK, Dr Kathryn Eccles (OII), Professor Christine Gerrard (English) and Professor Gesche Joost (UdK) trained an alternative dataset by ‘feeding’ an A.I. system feminist and postcolonial literature, and applying concepts of language and writing styles from female writing and glitch feminism. This software was then used to create a performance.

Spotlight: The Caribbean Oxford Initiative

The Caribbean Oxford Initiative - CaribOx for short - is a new University-wide visiting fellowship and travel grant programme hosted by TORCH. Launched in 2024, it is designed to stimulate purposeful and long-lasting collaboration between researchers from institutions in the Caribbean and across the University of Oxford.

The CaribOx Visiting Fellows for 2024 - 25:

Dr Grace Turner, Chief Archaeologist and Research Officer, The Antiquities, Monuments & Museum Corporation, Nassau, The Bahamas.

Dr Brandon J Bethel, Assistant Professor of Marine, University of The Bahamas

Travel Grant awardee:
Dr Nekeisha Spencer, Senior Lecturer, University of the West Indies Mona



Theatre & Performance

Theatre & Performance is a hive of activity for TORCH. We collaborate with researchers and artists to support multiple projects in this field across theatre, dance, music, spoken word and more.

Spotlight: RSC IF

From A.I. to the role of the artists in social change - a cohort of Royal Shakespeare Company Interdisciplinary Fellows are leading an international research programme to explore the future of creative and cultural practice. TORCH's 2024-5 Fellows were Stephen Bailey and Amahra Spence, who explored experimental performance translation and radical use of space. In 2025-26 we welcome Matilda Feyişayō Ibini and Taio Lawson, who are both investigating different uses of A.I in their performance practice alongside researchers at the University. www.if.rsc.org.uk



Burning Down The House is a new show for 2026 by Breach Theatre based on the work of Professor Kirsten Shepherd (English). In 2024 the company received an Ibsen Scope Award of £3 million to support the development of the piece.



Restoration Comedy for the 21st Century: Adapting Aphra Behn's Rover is a collaboration between Professor David Taylor (English) and theatre company The Thelmas, developing a new version of Aphra Behn's iconic play.



Folk Dance and A.I.: Rethinking Traditions brought dance artist Irina Demina to present her collaboration with data scientist Dr David Samu to train a machine learning algorithm to become a 'machine choreographer'.

Keep in touch



TORCH signposts funding calls, calls for papers and other opportunities on our website. New Network and International Engagement opportunities are released termly.

Our newsletter goes out fortnightly during term time to over 9,500 people. You can follow us on LinkedIn, X, Threads, Facebook and YouTube.

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