

Kickstarting the GO::DH Minimal Computing Working Group

Maximum Number of Participants: N/A

Date: Tuesday, July 8, 2014 – 09:00 to 12:00

Facilitator(s):

John Simpson, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Alberta

Overview:

The workshop will be divided into three distinct components arranged to allow all attendees to build their background knowledge and contribute:

1. A series of lightning talks (2-5 minutes) about current research or work being done with or in minimal computing environments. Those unable to attend the workshop but wishing to present would be invited to share videos.
2. A focused brainstorming session directed at collecting ideas and projects that the Minimal Computing Working Group or its members should consider pursuing. It is hoped that some form of participation will be open to those not on site, but this will depend on the infrastructure that is available. This goes for the third stage as well.
3. The selection of a set of tasks, directives, and/or projects that the minimal computing working group will coordinate and support. These will follow directly from the previous stages but these might look something like programs to:
 - provide training to the DH community to use minimal computing tools
 - share/ship computing resources to areas that might better use them
 - track hardware and software use in the humanities on a global scale
 - provide or recommend packages of hardware and software that are effective and proven

At this stage we will also be looking for people to take the lead in running the various initiatives of the working group as they are established, with an eye to ensuring that the direction of the working group remains within the principals of GO::DH.

Audience:

The workshop targets two audiences: those who do DH related minimal computing by choice and those who do it of necessity.

The GO::DH Minimal Computer Working Group uses “minimal computing” to capture both the maintenance, refurbishing, and use of machines to do DH work out of necessity and the use of new streamlined computing hardware like the Raspberry Pi or the Arduino microcontroller to do DH work by choice. This dichotomy focuses the group on computing that is decidedly not high-performance and importantly not first-world desktop computing. By operating at this intersection between choice and necessity minimal computing forces important concepts and practices within the DH community to the fore. In this way minimal computing is also an intellectual concept, akin to environmentalism, asking for balance between gains and costs in related areas that include social justice issues and de-manufacturing and reuse, not to mention re-thinking high-income assumptions about "e-waste" and what people do with it. Anyone interested in these or related themes should attend.