

## 5. Summary

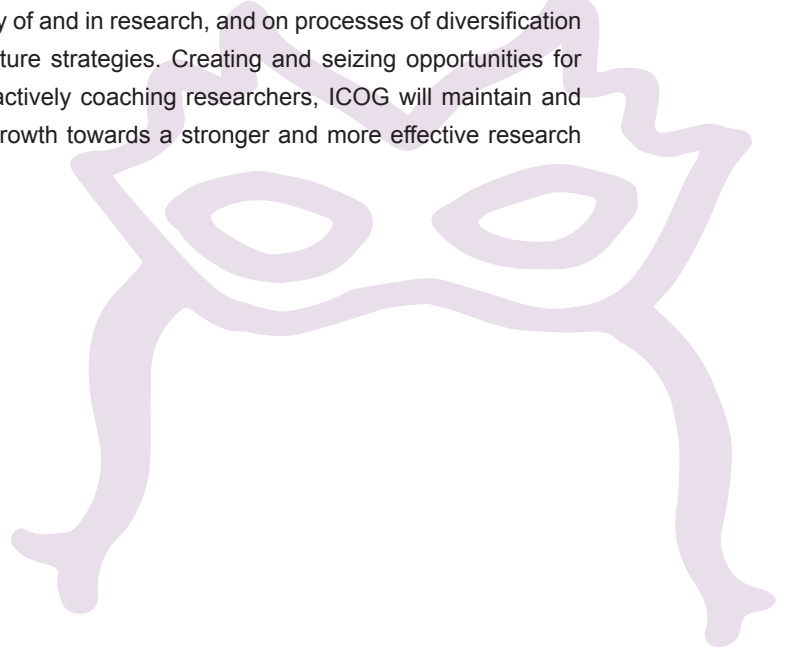
ICOG's is dedicated to the study of culture, aiming for excellent academic research that also has societal impact. Research in ICOG is organized within five thematic research centres, which operate cross-disciplinary and across chronological lines: Centre for Arts in Society (AiS), Centre for Historical Studies (CHS), Centre for International Relations (CIRR), Centre for Media and Journalism Studies (CMJS), and Centre for the Study of Democratic Cultures and Politics (DemCP).

Within the assessment period, ICOG adjusted its governance structure to better distribute the institute's leadership. Each centre is headed by a centre director, who is responsible for planning, coordinating and evaluating research within the centres. Together with the ICOG director, they form ICOG's Executive Committee, which strives to create an open, inclusive and connected research community and to foster an intellectual climate for development and exchange, resulting in excellent academic research with a strong societal impact. To reach these goals, they developed a multifarious strategy, which focuses on the enhancement of research quality, the creation of possibilities for collaboration among individual researchers, groups and research centres, the optimization of the conditions for attracting external funding, the improvement of PhD performance and the raising of the awareness of the importance of generating societal impact. ICOG is further supported by an Advisory Board, which consists of 2 members for each research centre, covering different career stages, from PhD candidates to senior researchers.

Over the past six years, ICOG has increased its research output and grant and funding capture, and has coached its researchers towards the development of new publication strategies. In particular, the growing awareness of the possibilities offered by digital humanities and the strengthening of this profile within ICOG and the Faculty of Arts in general have resulted in a more varied research output, which next to "traditional" publications, also includes digital infrastructures and databases. Websites for professional and general users, as well as publications for general readership and lectures, masterclasses and conferences for a general audience play a pivotal role in translating the research quality of ICOG researchers to societal relevance.

The effectiveness of the development and the implementation of this strategy is evident from the recognition that ICOG researchers receive from peers and societal target groups. Prizes for publications and contributions to scholarly innovation and an increase in grant capture in national and international competition for individual and research groups testify of the high level of ICOG research and researchers and of the effort to promote cutting-edge research and to create conditions for an intellectual climate for development and exchange.

These strategic lines will also be pursued during the next years and will be strengthened by putting more emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration within centres, ICOG, the Faculty and the university at large, on sustainability of and in research, and on processes of diversification in publication, funding and grant capture strategies. Creating and seizing opportunities for promoting humanities research and actively coaching researchers, ICOG will maintain and develop its research ambitions and growth towards a stronger and more effective research leadership.



## Case studies

### 1. Research Grants in Time of COVID-19: Stimulating Teamwork and Collaboration between Centres

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, part of ICOG's regular budget intended for conference visits and travel could not be spent. In coordination with the Faculty Board, ICOG allowed researchers to utilize their yearly travel funding to cover other research-related costs. To support the further development of strategic research themes and agendas, and to assure that the limited budget could have a long-lasting impact, ICOG decided to release a Call for Projects and Activities. Next to funds for individual researchers, applications from teams of two or more researchers were prioritized to stimulate collaboration within and across ICOG research centres and interdisciplinary research. Proposals moreover were required to innovatively contribute to the strategic themes of the research centres and have the potential to generate substantial academic and/or societal impact.

ICOG researchers reacted enthusiastically to this call and more than 60 research projects received funding, 45 of which were submitted by a research team consisting of 2 or more researchers. The selected research teams worked on a very broad spectrum of ICOG research topics, ranging from the role the European Union plays in Central Asia (four researchers from CIRR) to the literary field in 2000-2020 (AiS), the study of cognitive interaction with holy texts (AiS and CHS) and picturing paper in global art (AiS and CHS).

The inter-centre collaboration was particularly successful and resulted in joint output and in sustainable research collaboration with a strong impact on the research field, also including graduate students and early-career researchers. A few examples will illustrate these points:

- Suvi Alt (CIRR) and Iva Pesa (CHS) organized a seminar series on "Humanities & Social Science approaches to the climate crisis", with 12 online meetings with a range of international speakers. The presented papers are now being prepared for publication, possibly in the Routledge Environmental Humanities series or in the journal *Global Environment*.
- Julia Costa Lopez (CIRR) and Bettina Reitz-Joosse (CHS) used their ICOG grant to launch the project "Uses of Latin in political discourse". In this project, they investigated uses of the Latin language in current political discourse. For this pilot phase, they specifically focused on the use of Latin by common citizens in 'unofficial' arenas - for example in online fora and on Twitter. Combining the ICOG grant with a project grant from the Young Academy Groningen, they were able to hire a total of three research assistants, who together formed an interdisciplinary and multilingual team able to deal with the diverse set of data under analysis. The project resulted in a [project website](#), the presentation of preliminary results at a student-organized discussion meeting at Leiden University in March 2021, [three case-specific blog posts](#) written by the research

assistants, and a joint interdisciplinary article on the topic. It also attracted additional funding, which resulted in the creation of an interdisciplinary PhD position.

- Kathryn Roberts (DemCP) and Sara Strandvad (AiS) worked on a project on “Creative work(s) after ANT: towards an ecology of artist residencies”. Next to a number of presentations within the framework of interdisciplinary and international research networks (e.g. the Sociology of Arts Research Network (RN2) of the European Sociology Association conference on Social Effects of Art, Helsinki (online), 9-12 March 2021; Saari Well Assembly of residency researchers, 18-22 August 2021, Finland and online), they worked on interviews with artists about their experiences at artist residencies and extensive desk research on residencies (Spring 2021) and organized a tutorial with six ReMa students about residencies (Spring semester 2021). The results of the collaboration have been published in a chapter “Creative Work(s) after ANT: Towards an Ecology of Artist Residencies,” submitted to the book *The Cultural Sociology of Art and Music*, part of the Cultural Sociology series published by Palgrave Macmillan, edited by Lisa McCormick (publication expected in 2022). It also served as a research laboratory for the preparation of an ERC Consolidator Grant application aiming to revitalize sociology of art by means of a global study of artists residencies (planned submission March 2022).

## 2. From Clay tablet to Tablet: Science Communication and Public History

Science communication and public engagement are two of the pillars of the ICOG research strategy. This policy has resulted in a significant achievement by one of the research groups affiliated to the CHS: the award of the KNAW (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) grant within the pilot fund “Science communication by scientists: Appreciated!”. Set up by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and administered by the Academy, this fund is aimed at recognizing and appreciating scientists who make structural efforts for science communication. After an open competition, in February 2021, the research group “History of Reading in Premodern Europe” and over 90 other research groups covering all research fields each received a grant of €10.000 for new activities in the field of science communication. Together with other grantees, the group is moreover involved in the activities of the project “Samenweten”, the national expertise centre for public engagement by researchers, which aims at creating a network of exchange of specific expertise in the field of science communication and public engagement.

The research group, which consists of a full professor, a postdoc, four PhD candidates and several ReMa students studying reading activities and the impact of textual activities in premodern societies, has been rewarded for its success in transforming research results into activities geared at a wider academic and non-academic public, such as the organization of an exhibition, a series of lectures in collaboration with city libraries, a series of lessons for secondary-school pupils (created in collaboration with the University of Groningen Pre-University Academy), as well as the app “Hidden Deventer” (available on Google Play and Apple Store; downloaded more than 2000 times) and an interactive website with 3D reconstructions of reading spaces in late medieval Deventer (designed in collaboration with the Faculty Centre for Digital Humanities). The experience with the use of geolocative media has moreover inspired the start of a new public history project in collaboration with the Groningen University Library. The project aims at connecting premodern books from the Special Collections Department of the Groningen University Library with spaces and places where the books have been produced and used. The envisioned app will significantly increase the visibility of the university and its heritage and will allow users to share in the results of ICOG research projects.

### 3. Citizenship and Inclusion in Digital Societies

Digitalization is changing nearly all the patterns of our lives: our contact with the government, the way we work, our daily news consumption and how we communicate with friends and family. This has tremendous impact on society and ourselves. How are these changes managed? And how do we make sure that all citizens are included in digital societies?

CMJS's research themes "Citizenship and Inclusion in Digital Societies" and "Data Infrastructures & Algorithmic Practices" focus on the implications of digitalization for society and people's everyday life. Researchers collaboratively study how to understand the degrees and processes of in- and exclusion in a digital society from the perspective of citizens themselves. They also analyze the role of developments in data-driven content and curatorial automation (artificial intelligence, algorithms), and what their implications are for social and power relations. Based on their research they aim to make research-informed recommendations to address this societal challenge. One initiative to do so is the "[Digital Literacy Coalition](#)", initiated by the CMJS, in which twenty societal stakeholders collaborate to prevent a looming digital divide in society. Research and educational institutions (ranging from childcare centres to universities), governments, cultural institutions, healthcare and businesses initiate projects in four living labs (education, health, work and digital inclusion) to increase digital literacy in all parts of society. This is coupled with research to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms behind digital in- and exclusion, and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, share lessons learned and scale up successful initiatives. The aim is to make sure that every Groningen citizen moves one level up in terms of digital literacy. For CMJS it resulted in a range of NWO-funded projects, such as "Informed Citizenship for all" (2020-2025) and "Growing up with media: Digital literacy and media literacy in children" (2018-2019). The first project, part of the research programme "Digital Society – The Informed Citizen", approaches digital literacy as indispensable for people to participate in contemporary society. It starts from the precondition that to act as informed citizens, people need to have digital skills, but also the capacity to evaluate news and information, communicate online and understand the implications of online behaviour. However, polls estimate that up to five million Dutch adults are unable to perform basic online tasks, assess online information or deal with privacy. Especially people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are at risk of being excluded from an increasingly digital society. The second project investigates the individual, social and technological factors that determine how children develop digital literacy and media literacy. By taking the experience of the child as a starting point, this project offers a new perspective that provides insight into how children themselves build up an understanding of digital media and how they give meaning to the world around them.

CMJS researchers moreover received funding from the VSNU ("Digital Literacy in the Library"), the Ministry of the Interior ("Living Lab Digital Inclusion"), and local funders ("Digital Academy Noord-Nederland and Regiodeal Oost-Groningen"). This assures that the fundamental research the centre does and the collaborations with societal stakeholders also have an impact on society.